

SEEING LIFE THROUGH MULTIPLE LENSES: THE VOCATION AND RESILIENCY OF TEACHING ART

by

JACQUELINE MARIE ELLETT

(Under the Direction of Tracie Costantino)

ABSTRACT

In this national study nine K-12 art educators who had been recommended by their peers as highly effective art teachers share their stories of staying in the art room. The qualitative methodologies of narrative and phenomenology were used to examine and interpret the reasons given for staying to gain an understanding of the question, *why do exceptional teachers with 20+ years of experience choose to stay in the art room?* Arts Based Educational Research (ABER) was used to further inform the discourse around teacher retention through interpretive poetry and participant-made self-portraits and reflections. The four themes of vocation, resiliency, reinventing and living-not staying emerged from this study and offer us the opportunity to see the humanness of teaching. Narrative art works were created based on the four themes out of a desire to create and offered another lens of inquiry.

What is learned about the kinds of professional and personal experiences that motivate good teachers to stay in the classroom has relevance for both art education and general education. A significant percentage of new teachers leave the field in their first five years. This study offers implications for those involved in teacher preparation, administrators, and educational policy makers suggestions to keep exceptional art teachers in a long and productive career. Studying the art teachers' narratives within the four themes which emerged offers empathy and understanding of the problems and challenges all teachers face daily. It is my hope

that by reading the stories of the nine art teachers you will gain a deeper understanding of the humanness of teaching and how to support all teachers in meaningful ways to help them become the best that they can.

INDEX WORDS: Arts Based Research (ABER), Art Education, Art Teacher, Longevity, Narrative, Narrative Inquiry, Phenomenology, Poetry, Portraiture, Qualitative Study, Reinventing, Resiliency, Teacher Persistence, Vocation

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated God who has been with me every step of the way and to my family who has endured me through the process of living my research and still loving me. Randy, my husband, for your patience, continued support, and unwavering love. My children, Matthew and Andie, for helping me find my ponderings each time I misplaced them and for keeping the world fresh and new; I love the discoveries you constantly bring to my attention. To my Nona who told me stories of her childhood in Sicily and always believed in me and for my parents who planted the seed of giving, loving and learning.

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PREFACE

(Journal entry, August, 1986).

It is my first day at Rockbridge Elementary. An art room was not included when the school was first built in 1966, nor is one in the plans for the addition that is expected to be complete by this coming spring. I am the first art teacher to enter this building with a paid position. I feel welcomed, excited, and somewhat nervous as I do not have any supplies, a classroom, or a place to call “home”. In just seven short days I will start being an art teacher. What will I do? I continue to add to my list of things “to do” -order a cart, find a room or an empty closet, introduce myself to the custodian. (This was Dr. Foster’s recommendation- he told us often in class, “Make sure you know your custodian! They are often the first person you go to when you need something!”). Maybe I should meet the custodian first.

And so I situate myself within this text...I am an art teacher. I have been teaching since August 1986 and have never regretted my career decision, at least not more than for a brief moment. Some days have been harder than others to get out of bed in the morning and to ready myself for school. Then again, there have been many days that were just as hard to leave school and go home. It seems to be this way with many of the teachers I know: a constant pull as to where we are needed most and where we feel we need to be. It may be at home, it may be at school, sometimes I think it’s that place in between, that place where we go to think and to reflect on what has happened and what we will do next. Teaching is hard, as Patty, a participant in this study, has reflected, “It’s the hardest job you’ll ever love” (Personal Interview, 2010).

Many good art teachers, those who had planned on teaching “forever,” are leaving the profession as soon as they qualify for retirement. The stressors of the economy, educational mandates, fears of displacement and job loss loom heavily on those in education, especially in

the areas that are not looked upon as core curriculum, such as the arts. In October, 2011, I received an e-mail from my curriculum coordinator asking the questions, *How do you measure growth in art in a third grader? How can you prove in a standardized format that growth has taken place over the course of a year?* I was informed that this was part of the new educational initiative, Race to the Top. Our pay would be based on the success or failure of the child. The way I would assess my students needs to reflect the way every other art student in the state is assessed. This is a new requirement that was not present when I began this study 18 months ago, but it reflects the constant demands teachers are asked to respond to in haste.

The primary goal of my research is to give future teachers, both those in art and in other areas of education, as well as policy makers and administrators, a realistic glimpse into what it means to teach art and why nine exceptional art teachers chose to stay. Teachers' narratives offer the possibility for understanding how teacher knowledge is shaped by the complex historical, personal, communal, and professional landscape of schools (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). By exploring and presenting the experiences and meanings shared, my intention is that a greater understanding will be afforded to those who read this research of what it means to teach art in an ever-changing world. Change is sometimes a struggle but, "you do take these things [experiences] with you from what you've learned in the past to build on in the present" (Nancy, Personal Interview, 2010). My hope is that this work will inspire those going into art education to use reflection as a way to begin and continue their journey as teachers. This dissertation is an interweaving of the narrative accounts of nine art teachers plus one, my own reflective voice, contemplating and reacting to the question: Why do exceptional art teachers with 20+ years of experience choose to stay?

CHAPTER 1

LISTENING TO THE PAUSES

(Journal, May 2011)

As a child I remember poking sticks into the small mounds of darkened earth just to watch as the ants came out, attacking the stick moving at once in many directions. Their movement seemed without course, but upon close observation, I discovered that every ant knew its job, knew the direction to move and what must be done to defend its hill. Small white larvae were carried by the nursemaids away from the intrusion; the foot soldiers attacked the stick. Sometimes I was bitten as I balanced on my bare feet, squatting closer to get a better look at the activity before me. I watched in a mix of utter curiosity and amazement, wondering, “How did they know what to do?” I am brought back to the moment, my daydreaming disrupted by the noise. I look across my classroom. So active like the ant hill, each of my students moving, talking, but knowing his or her individual jobs. It’s like this in the art room. The children moving about, a visitor might see it as utter chaos; but closer examination discovers that each child knows which course to take. The art room is often a place of spirited activity. The squeals of delightful discovery mix with the moans of the realization that happens after the inerasable mark has been applied to paper. The activity is constant, or so it seems.

I peek in the supply closet. Emily is asleep on the bed made up of paint-stained smocks and my blue winter coat. The brightly striped cloth used for draping in a still-life is her blanket for the time being. The bright white and pink stripes stand out even more against the greens and blues in the darkened closet. They should be here soon, I hope after my class leaves, when things are quieter. I don’t want her to wake up and be taken out of the security of the closet into this bright room swarming with activity. I’m sure she will be confused; no one was here when she

came in this morning. Emily is not the first, and unfortunately will not be the last, child that the Department of Children and Family Services (DFACS) will take away. This is the one part of my job I utterly hate, seeing children treated as if they were not human, non-feeling. The round burns made by the cigarettes will heal over time, but would she?

Part of being human is our ability to reflect and to wonder, to attach emotions to specific memories. I still think of Emily, and I wonder what happened to her after she left the security of the darkened storage closet. When she smells tempera paint or crayons, does she remember the day she slept in that small space? Will she remember the day she was taken away from her parents and placed with another family? I know I do. As teachers, whether we teach art or English, we remember incidents that impact our lives and the lives of the children we teach. We hurt with them; we feel their exhilaration when they achieve taking even the smallest of steps. The recollection of Emily, along with many other students, still lingers along the edges of my memories. Sometimes they visit me in the night as I sleep or as I linger, watching a bird rummaging through fallen leaves.

The smell of tempera, dirty smocks, moist clay, even a certain look a child may give or a lilt in her voice often bring back the involuntary memories that stay on the “fringe” of my mind (Epstein, 2003, James, 1909). These recollections of the past can be brought about without conscious effort, usually through some type of sensory trigger. Smells and textures have a tendency to transport me back in time, though really that feeling of déjà-vu can happen unexpectedly at any time. As I have been working on my dissertation, I have become highly aware of my memories of teaching that are often brought forth through my senses. It’s as if the act of researching has heightened my awareness of the connections everyday living have to my study. I have always prided myself in keeping my teaching life separate from my home life and

my life at home separate from my teaching. I now believe that to separate or compartmentalize life is not fully possible. As Dewey (1938) suggested, we seek to understand and resolve those situations that trouble or puzzle us. I find my resolve to understand my research keeps me from compartmentalizing my life and my research has become embedded in my living and my living has fostered my inquiry.

This study is an exploration into the teaching lives of nine art teachers. Told here are their stories of living and becoming through teaching art, based on interviews and our shared experiences as an art teacher. This dissertation is not a step-by-step or how-to book on teaching; it is a collection of reflections on the practice, beliefs, values, frustrations, and joys of the lives of art teachers as seen through my layered lenses of interpretation and shared memories. Five of the art teachers who participated in this study also created or selected a representational self-portrait of how they saw themselves as an art teacher. The art mediums of batik, collage, photography, and painting and a personal blog were all submitted as self-portraits. Additionally, I used journal entries as a form of narrative inquiry in which I reflected on the aesthetic moments that led to recalling memories that deepened my connection to the participants and to the stories they had to share. The dissertation is also the story of how I kept getting in the way of my research, interrupting and becoming part of the conversation. I tried to separate myself from my research, but as Riessman (2008) explains, “The researcher does not find narratives but instead participates in their creation” (p.21).

Why Study Narratives of Art Teachers

I began this study wanting to know what personal and professional experiences motivate exceptional art teachers to stay in the art classroom for 20+ years. How do they account for how

their experiences inform their teaching, and what reasons do they offer for their retention in their career? What implications do their narratives have for art education, for general education?

My interest in teacher narratives comes from my personal experiences of being an art teacher in an elementary school and a mentor to more student teachers than I have years in teaching. What can I learn from the teachers I interviewed that will help create a picture of what it means to be good art teachers who motivate and teach their students with compassion? How can their stories awaken policy makers to the possibilities a strong art program offers our children? What understanding can be gained from and passed on to future art teachers as they begin their journeys into the world of school? Why do they stay? *And why do I stay?*

Situating the Self in a Life

When I first began teaching, I started with very little: a budget of \$400.00 for over 800 children, no room, and no supplies. Like a child eager to enter the cold waters of a pool on the first warm day, I enthusiastically jumped right in, submerging myself into the experience of beginning. I had hope, hope for the future and all the possibilities of what could be and what would be. Like most of my student teachers and many first year teachers, I was going to right all wrongs. Fresh out of school or at the start of a new career, teachers every year begin teaching with enthusiasm and commitment, filled with hope. Unfortunately they do not all stay. Today it is more difficult than ever to keep good, high quality teachers in the classroom. In an article on teacher retention Peterson (2008) found that “twenty to thirty percent of beginning teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years” (para.1). Much research, energy, and resources have gone into studying and documenting teacher attrition (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Brill & McCartney, 2008; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Smith, 2003; Farber, 2010; Ingersoll, 2001; Kelly, 2004; Peterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2008), or why

teachers leave teaching, while few studies look at longevity (Nieto, 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2009; Peterson, Perrachione, & Rosser, 2008) and ask the question, *why do exceptional teachers choose to stay?*

Many teachers daily face students who have needs which they are ill prepared to address, school environments that are in poor condition, a lack of collaborative practices and administrative support, and inadequate funding for supplies. Other stressors once not a part of the responsibilities of schools are being placed on teachers as they “are called upon to confront social issues that many believe belong in the home or larger community” (Patterson, Collins, & Abbott, 2004, p. 4). It is not surprising then that many teachers become cynical and leave the teaching profession.

As I write, a world-wide recession is upon us. Furloughs, budget and job cuts are all contributing to the feelings of anxiety and despair so many in education are currently experiencing. Couple this with government initiatives, such as pay for performance, increase in class size, lack of professional development to work with children with special needs, the displacing and nonrenewal of teaching positions, the cutting of programs and financial support, as well as workload increases, and the end result is overwhelmed educators who are uncertain of their futures, questioning whether or not they want to continue teaching. A recent news article (Carney, 2011) highlighted the controversy over Florida’s SB736 which ties teacher pay and evaluations to student performance on high stakes testing. The concern for Florida teachers is not the high expectations of accountability, but the dismissing of due process which would allow dismissal without just cause. This bill is pitting teachers against teachers. One teacher who thought she would teach beyond 30 years is not sure she can handle the pressure of being compared to her colleagues. Another teacher asks, “What is the incentive of having experience

and of having a master's if it's not going to benefit you? (Carney, 2011, Para. 41). Georgia began the 2011 school year looking at how to best implement pay for performance. A pyramid structure for teacher effectiveness is being developed with beginning teachers on the lowest level and most effective teachers (as indicated by student achievement) moving to the top. While as of 2011 the structure is being formed, what to do with non-classroom teachers is uncertain. There is a move to tie non-classroom teachers to student achievement, even those students in their schools who they do not teach. Nothing had been settled as of the writing of this paper.

Taking a look into the spirit of those who overcome obstacles and continue to teach with passion, commitment, and ingenuity even during times of uncertainty may help enlighten us about the growth that takes place when teachers move through their lived experiences. Dewey (1938) informed us that life is filled with tensions and that “problems are the stimulus to thinking...growth depends upon the presence of difficulty to be overcome by the exercise of intelligence” (p.79). Looking closely at the nine narratives of the art teachers in this study brings us closer to understanding the tensions that contributed to the growth that happens through personal and professional experiences. Using qualitative research allowed me to peel away the layers to get to my understanding of the essence of what it means to stay.

Qualitative research is based upon the experiences and stories of people. I am drawn to this form of research. My interest in narrative inquiry emerged from my experiences of stories being shared within my classroom and amongst teachers. The stories that intrigued and motivated my students to want to learn more and the stories other teachers told of their teaching experiences were rich, detailed, and based on their lived experiences.

My theoretical framework is a blended structure based on Dewey's theory of experience and Schön's (1983) construct of the reflective practitioner. Experience and reflection become

synonymous with one another as the nine art teachers bring forth memories of teaching. Both narrative inquiry and phenomenology are looked upon as theory and methodology as I interpret the stories of the nine art teachers within this study. My voice surfaces throughout as a result of reflection and intuitive knowing in the midst of writing.

Using narrative inquiry as my predominant methodology, I reflectively uncovered and explored the four themes of vocation, resiliency, reinventing and living-not staying. Attrition, migration, and persistence in education are explored within the review of literature and compared to the limited research done in art education. The use of pulled poetry is used to view the collected stories through another lens, adding to another level of understanding. Last, I interpret my findings through four art pieces titled for each of the themes that surfaced during my analysis of the collected narratives.

Karen Hankins's (2003) book on her own instruction was a good model for me. This dissertation is set up much like her book. The first chapter states the problem, purpose, and significance of my research; it explains methodologies chosen, as well as participant selection. Chapters one and six are closer to traditional dissertation format, the chapters in between are more storied, written narratively and in a reflective voice similar to Hankins's work. Chapters two through five are based on the themes I identified from the analysis of my interviews: Vocation, Resiliency, Re-creation of Self, and Living-Not Staying. Quotations from the transcribed interview texts are often taken out of sequence, but remain the individual voices of the nine art teachers.

CHAPTER 2

IT'S SO NATURAL...

Qualitative research is a complex process and for me did not unfold in a linear manner. Beginning with the problem or topic of interest, in my case why exceptional art teachers chose to stay, was not as difficult as was formulating the open-ended interview questions that gave me access to the lived experiences that answered the question of “why.” My methodology did not develop in an orderly fashion, and I often found myself jumping from one research design to another, seeing the possibilities in grounded theory, ethnography, narrative research, and phenomenology. Eventually I settled into a blend of narrative inquiry and phenomenology to gain an understanding of my topic.

Interpreting Stories Told: Narrative Inquiry and Phenomenology

She was slightly disappointed when he admitted that he came to the nursery window not to see her but to listen to stories.

“You see, I don’t know any stories. None of the lost boys knows any stories.”

“How perfectly awful,” Wendy said.

“Do you know,” Peter asked, “why swallows build in the eaves of houses? It is to listen to the stories.” (from *Peter Pan*, Barrie, 1911/2003, pp.40-41)

I remember first reading the tale of Peter Pan when I was in second grade. I hid behind my grandmother’s large red and blue checked chair which partially blocked the long bookshelf holding a series of children’s classics. These books were for show and kept in the living room, a place where we children were not allowed to play. I would hide behind this chair out of sight from any adult passing by, engrossed in the tales of faraway lands and exotic characters. Looking back now as an adult, I realize how these stories not only introduced me to other places and lives,

but also helped me in making sense of my world. I, like Peter, am intrigued by the stories of my world. Now as an adult I call that place school.

Stories have been an integral part of my life and using stories as data is appealing to me. In this qualitative study, I used narrative inquiry as both methodology and theoretical framework. I also incorporated the methodological tool of a bridling journal within the theory of phenomenology. These blended methodologies helped me study the connections between lived experiences as a reason to remain in teaching. My discussion of narrative theory takes place within the data, which are the art teachers' narratives, their reflections, and my own running commentary. Peter listened intently to Wendy's stories to gain an understanding of his world and that of the Darling children. Like Peter Pan, I too have tried to make sense of the narratives of the art teachers I interviewed. The use of narrative inquiry and phenomenology has given me multiple lenses through which to study their lives from their individual perspectives.

The qualitative philosophical perspective of interpretivism is the lens through which I have conducted my research. The use of hermeneutics and phenomenology has played a significant role in my theoretical perspective as they both are about understanding meaning more deeply. Narrative is my leading methodology. "The truths of narrative accounts lie not in their faithful representation of a past world, but in the shifting connections they forge among past, present, and future" (Riessman, 2008, p.705). I have tried to capture this shifting of connections amongst past, present, and future experiences in the narratives of the nine exceptional art teachers who chose to stay in teaching.

At the very core of my research are the reflective transcriptions of the interviews I conducted. Trying to listen, not interrupting was difficult, so very difficult. I found that the first several minutes of some of the interviews began with awkwardness; it was as if we were two

dogs trying to sniff each other out to see if we were friendly, safe. Other interviews began with ease, the dialogue flowing as the connection was made solid and a trust was formed. I found myself wanting to jump in and share my stories of similar experiences as I listened to the art teachers tell their stories. I was so engrossed that the interview sometimes turned to conversation.

Getting at the answers to questions was not my goal; understanding the lived experiences of the art teachers I interviewed and trying to understand the meaning they made of why they chose to stay was and continues to be my objective. Those in qualitative research know that the researcher and those being researched are inseparable parts of the research process (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ezzy, 2002; Glesne, 2006; Riessman, 2008; Roulston, 2010; Wolcott, 2009). As Glesne (2006) points out, “The researcher becomes the main research instrument as he or she observes, asks questions, and interacts with research participants” (p.5). The researcher, in essence becomes part of the conversation.

J: *I am interested.* I’m interested in you describing that feeling or thought process of that idea...you may not be able to but we may happen upon it as we talk further; I don’t know. I just thought that was a lovely description.

Nancy: That’s interesting because now that you say it, and you’re getting me to think about it, I mentioned that problem solving, I think it’s just... I think it’s the sense that my dad had in approaching all of that was that lack of limitation. If the student isn’t limited...don’t we try to do that with our kids? We try to empower them, to know that they do not have these limitations of these horrible conditions where they live, all of that. They do not have to accept that...they ..do.. not.. have.. to ..accept..that [stresses and pauses between each word for emphasis]. You know limitation is a human physical kind

of thing...lack of limitation is....That's why I think, you know, the arts are kind of a spiritual thing that a lot of our kids get- because they really lift you up into the area of openness and the abundance of knowledge and the unlimited nature of knowledge, the unlimited nature of solving problems and I think that it really [long pause] it really can help us, I think, a lot.

J: I think so too. I think you're very bright. That's really beautiful, um...I like how you're reflecting back on those "back memories," um, those starting out years and there are probably things you really have not thought back on in a long time, I bet.

Nancy: Oh, absolutely! Can't you tell you're sort of digging stuff up?

J: Yeah [overlapping talk]....I just love what you're saying.

Nancy: So, what was it you said, oh, "What was the catalyst that got you to want to teach?" So, what was the catalyst that got *you* to want to teach?

J: What was the catalyst that....?

Nancy:....was there any one thing or was this something you always knew?

J: No, I wanted to be a veterinarian or a writer.

Nancy: Well, see...you changed, but now you're a writer [laughs], but tell me about you.

J: [laughs too] Well, I am the oldest of four and I did a lot of watching and babysitting of kids. I, as a kid, was just a creative little soul. I used to put on big backyard productions with the kids in the neighborhood and we would hang sheets on the clothes line.

Nancy: Oh, plays...

J: Yeah, these big elaborate productions- you know, making costumes, props- the works. I always created things even as a very small child and so art was a natural part of my being. My uncle loved the arts and so he took me to museums, so there was that and my

mother was and still is a big fan of Michelangelo and so I was raised in this rich Italian heritage in which the arts were looked upon as a sense of pride. My home was the Italian version of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*...you know, the Italians invented the fork, the Italians were the important Renaissance artists, and so on and so on. The whole rebirth of civilization is because of the Italians, according to my grandmother, my Nona, who I loved and adored beyond all else. So, I had this understanding of the importance and pride of my heritage. So, that was always there, and then I ended up getting this art scholarship to go to college and while I had no intention of being a teacher- there were so many teachers in my family. I had seen what that life was with my aunt and uncle and knew how hard they worked and what little they got in return monetarily. That and I have a tendency to go against the grain. But it didn't work out and I ended up becoming a teacher because that's where I felt good.

Nancy: It's absolutely where you belong.

J: So it's kind of funny how that happens and so, yeah... yeah... yep, but I don't want to talk about me, I want to talk about *you*.

Nancy: But *I* was so eager to hear about *you*.

J: Yeah, I understand. I keep wanting to jump in and tell my experiences because, when you talk, I start making connections- you know "teacher talk."

Nancy: I know, it's so natural.

Journaling, Pondering, Opening the Curtains on Narrative

Life is filled with tensions, yet it seems that these tensions are what drive us forward and cause us to reflect on our experiences. A concern in studying the lives of art teachers is that I am an art teacher. I have my biases and assumptions. How do I get out of the way of my research?

Roulston (2010) has commented on the researcher as the instrument in qualitative interviews and notes both “qualitative researchers and interviewers are inevitably part of the studies that they conduct” (p.115). She concludes, “There is no escape from the self” (p.127). One solution is reflexivity, which is different from being reflective. To be reflective means to think about something; reflexivity is looking at one’s self with a critical eye to “self-consciously refer to him- or herself in relation to the production of knowledge about research topics” (p. 116).

I have been keeping a journal of sorts. I have several going in different places, a black 9” x 12” faux moleskin journal I bought from Barnes and Noble. This one seems to travel of its own accord around my house. A small 4” x 6” sketchbook I got in a goodie bag at one of the state conferences sits by my bed watching and waiting for me in case I awake at night with a thought. I also have several journals scattered on the computers, reflecting in the one most readily available at the time that I’m writing, sometimes the old desk top if it isn’t frozen or just trying to be difficult, my small HP notebook, ever ready on my desk, and my laptop from school which seems to be the best working of the three. Then, of course, there are my scattered and smothered ponderings. Napkins, post-it notes, index cards, parts of envelopes, graph paper, coffee sleeves, a piece of fabric, a scrap of lumber, candy wrappers, my left hand and arm, and even torn edges from personal books. Anything that is available and can be written on is fair game for a “ponder” to be penned, penciled, or crayoned. My children have come to know the term intimately as we sometimes go on ponder hunts around the house and in the van when one of my thoughts is misplaced. I have found that most moments of inspiration do not occur at times of convenience, but rather during moments that I do not have access to my laptop or my journal. Places such as the shower, in the truck driving to work, or outside walking the dog, these seem to be those moments when ideas come to visit. Like a good host I allow them to come in and linger, but

often forget they were there if I do not take note quickly. I have taken up the habit of writing on anything and everything. Much in my running commentary begins from these various sources of documented reflections, many often ignited by my ponderings. Sometimes we tell stories in the same way we write them, piece by piece, bit by bit, connecting the lost ponderings with present day life. Sometimes we write stories in the same way we tell them. In narrative inquiry, collecting the story begins with finding the pieces that may be strung about.

Methodology: Once Upon a Time...

While narrative inquiry may be a fairly new methodology to the fields of education and the social sciences, its roots run deep under the larger heading of narratology (Clandinin, 2006). Narratology, according to Felluga (2003) “examines the ways that narrative structures our perception of both cultural artifacts and the world around us” (P1). Even as its theoretical lineage can be traced back to Aristotle’s examination of the Greek tragedy (Riessman, 2008), it is Claude Levi-Strauss’s studies of myth and more notably, Vladimir Propp’s analysis of basic plots of Russian folk tales which served “as the prototypes of all narrative” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.85). Propp presented us with a structure that was common to all fairy tales. He demonstrated how the characters and the events within the stories served as functions of narrative, as well as establishing the structure of a beginning-middle-end. He recognized that the structure of a story “reflected the human effort to cope with the untoward and unexpected in life” (Bruner, 2002, p.109). As Bruner notes, while Propp did not explore “the varied uses beyond mere storytelling to which narrative is put” he “deserves full credit for having launched the modern study of narrative” (p.110). This lineage breaks off into several directions, such as structuralism and formalism, which I will not follow. My point is that while narrative inquiry is fairly new to the field of qualitative research, it did not just appear from nowhere, it does have far reaching roots.

The precise beginnings of narrative study in the human sciences are disputed by the various disciplines and narrative is considered still to be evolving, though in the field of literature it is centuries old. The turn to narrative began in different places, at different times and under different circumstances depending on the scholar reporting the history. As Riessman (2008) notes “differences also turn on epistemological position” and that while “narrative study buds early” it did not flower until the “mid-1980s with challenges to realism and positivism” (p. 14). Today, however, narrative study can be found in almost any discipline and there exists many “cross-disciplinary hybrids” (p. 14).

Some of the beginnings of narrative study have been located during the early 20th century in the Chicago School (sociology). Researchers collected a variety of documents and life histories to examine the experience of various cultural groups, such as Polish peasants. At about the same time anthropologists began studying communities using life history methods (Riessman, 2008).

As part of the realist tradition where “narrative accounts represent a means-one source of data-for the investigator’s analytic description of cultures and lives” stories are collected for historical purposes (Riessman, 2008, p. 14). The purpose is not to analyze the narrative themselves, but to collect stories to document an event, such as narratives collected from survivors of the holocaust. As Riessman has noted, “important social movements of the twentieth century were built from practices of storytelling, and the stories themselves can become objects for close reading and analysis” (p.14).

The beginning of turning away from other qualitative methodologies, known as the “narrative turn”, and the gradual shift away from realism is most often located during the 1960s. Kristen Langellier (2001) noted four movements which shaped this turn:

(1) critiques in social science of positivist modes of inquiry, and their realist epistemology; (2) the “memoir boom” in literature and popular culture; (3) the new “identity movements- emancipation efforts of people of color, gay and lesbians, and other marginalized groups”; and (4) the “burgeoning therapeutic culture-exploration of personal life therapies of various kinds” (p. 699).

Riessman also points out that the use of technology, specifically tape recorders, assisted greatly in the popularizing of narrative as a subfield in qualitative research. The 1980s however, is looked upon as the time when narrative truly bloomed especially in the space of women’s studies.

Bruner (1990) dates the shift to narrative occurring in 1981 when “landmark books, like landmark decisions in the world of law, often provide useful dates for reckoning change” (p. 112). The book he refers to is *On Narrative* which was edited by W. J. T. Marshall and contains essays from the fields of history, literature, anthropology and psychoanalysis. Narrative can be found in virtually every field and discipline in the social sciences and this very brief layout of the possible origins of narrative study, as Bruner so aptly put it “is only part of the story” (p.112).

Understanding Stories through Narrative

The term narrative instantly brings to mind the word “story” or “tale”. Narrative is often used by the media who are presenting a “narrative event”; in much of what we read, “a narrative account”; in the classroom, “write a self-narrative”; and even in the art room, “this is considered a narrative work”. I have found that there is not any one over arching definition of narrative, but several. However they do share the term “story” as their main ingredient. “A narrative” explains Moen (2006), “is a story that tells a sequence of events that is significant for the narrator or her or his audience” (p. 4). Gudmundsdottir (1995) notes “regardless of the discipline or scholarly

tradition, narrative refers to the structure, knowledge and skill required to construct a story” (p. 24).

Riessman (2008) asserts with narrative “in everyday oral storytelling, a speaker connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story” (p.3). Witherell and Noddings (1991) further inform us that while a sequence of events is essential to a narrative it also involves “a storyteller and an intended audience” (p.3).

Narrative then is a sequential tale or story told by someone (narrator/speaker) for the benefit of someone else (audience/listener). It “provide[s] meaning and belonging in our lives” (Witherall & Noddings, 1991, p.1). I have found the stories the art teachers chose to share were representations of how they saw themselves as art teachers. The stories gave meaning and definition to who they are and were of great importance to each one. I know that as I reflected throughout the process I found myself defining more and more who I was, who I am as a teacher and as a researcher. Our stories help validate who we are.

While the term narrative may have many meanings, according to Polkinghorne (2005), narrative within narrative inquiry refers to a form of discourse in which events are arranged in a sequenced whole to form a plot. The plot that I found within the nine narratives of the art teachers was that of the overlapping characteristics of teacher longevity in exceptional art teachers.....Polkinghorne (1988) became deeply interested in the use of narratives to understand people when he began looking closely at how research was done in the social sciences, specifically counselors, psychotherapists, and organizational consultants. He found that those in the social sciences successfully worked with “narrative knowledge” and were “concerned with

people's stories" using case studies and "narrative explanations to understand why the people they worked with behave the way they do" (p. x).

Polkinghorne (1988) described two types of narrative inquiry which were built on Bruner's (2002) two modes of thought: "the paradigmatic and the narrative" (p.101). This was done so as to draw a "clear distinction between (a) analysis of narrative and (b) narrative analysis" (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007, p.462). The first, paradigmatic analysis, "refers to studies in which the data consist of narratives that are then analyzed to produce categories" (p.462). The second, "narrative analysis" refers to "studies whose data consist of actions, events, and happenings but whose analysis produces stories" (Polkinghorne as cited in Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007, p.462). Common to both types of narrative is the use of narrative or story to the research venture. The difference then is in how the narrative or story is used, whether it is the data to be analyzed or if it is the actual end product of the analyzed data. As with all qualitative research, narrative inquiry is interested in people's experience and stories. Polkinghorne (1988) firmly believes that people without narratives do not exist. If this is the case, and I believe it is, then to be human is to be storied. Life then *is* narrative. As literary theorist Barthes noted,

The narratives of the world are without number. In the first place the word "narrative" covers an enormous variety of genres which are themselves divided up between different subjects, as if any material was suitable for the composition of the narrative: ...articulate language, spoken or written; pictures, still or moving; gestures and the ordered arrangement of all the ingredients; it is present in myth, legend, fable, short story, epic, history, tragedy, pantomime, painting,...stained glass windows, cinema, comic strips, journalism, conversation. In addition, under this infinite number of forms, the narrative is present at all

times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives. (as cited in Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 14)

Polkinghorne (1988) explains that “narratives perform significant functions” (p.14). Individually we have narratives of our own lives which allow us to interpret who we are and where we are headed. Culturally, they “serve to give cohesion to shared beliefs and to transmit values” (p. 14).

“What narrative researchers hold in common is the study of stories or narratives or descriptions of a series of events” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.4). Story explains human experience. What counts as a story and how they choose to use it varies for researchers of narrative, but they use narrative some way in their research whether it is, for example, through the use of metaphor, analyzing field notes, or conceptualizing a plotline. Narrative inquiry, made popular by Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin in the 1980s, is concerned with discovering and trying to understand experience through collected descriptions of storied events. Riessman (2008) tells us that the analysis of narrative “allows for the systematic study of personal experience and meaning” which is very appropriate for studying teacher experiences (p.706).

How then is narrative analysis different from narrative inquiry? This is a question I struggled with as I was finding that both terms were often used interchangeably. The *Handbook of Narrative Analysis* by Herman and Vervaeck (2005) begins, “no single period or society can do without narratives” (p. 1). As I continued reading, I discovered that they were referring to literary analysis, not social analysis. Was this similar to the narrative analysis used in qualitative research that Riessman (2008) discusses? I found that indeed it was, and that “narrative analysis refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form”

(Riessman, 2008, p.11) and is used to analyze the “texts” of both works of literature and from individual and group narratives. The attention is on “sequence” in both cases as well as the focus on particular individuals (or characters), in particular places at particular times. There is a concern with preserving the history of the individual in narrative analysis which results “in an accumulation of detail that is assembled into a “fuller” picture of the individual or group” (p.11). Riessman (2008) continues by comparing this to narrative inquiry which is “grounded in the study of the particular”; the interest is in how the narrator arranges and sequences events and uses language and/or images to communicate particular points in a narrative or story (p. 11). In narrative analysis intention and language are studied closely the “*how* and *why* incidents are storied” (p.11). It is “the sequential and structural features that are hallmarks of narrative” (p.12).

To Clandinin and Connelly (2000) narrative inquiry is a way of understanding lived experiences and they often refer to their work as “stories of experience”. Narrative is considered both the phenomenon and the method; central to narrative inquiry are the beliefs that stories give meaning to people's lives, and the stories are treated as data. Based on Dewey's theory of experience (1938), Clandinin and Connelly believe that growth and transformation should occur in the retelling of stories, though this may sometimes be difficult. With narrative inquiry the researcher is constantly negotiating motion in four directions: “inward and outward, forward and backward”; this is based on “Dewey's notion of interaction” (p. 50). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain, “By inward, we mean toward the internal conditions such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By outward, we mean toward the existential conditions, that is the environment. By backward and forward, we refer to temporality –past, present, and future” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.50). “To experience an experience” then “is

to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way” (p. 50). The researcher accomplishes this by asking questions, collecting field notes, interpreting the collected stories (data), and writing up the research after making sure that both personal and social issues were addressed by looking inward and outward, and addressing temporal issues by looking not only to the event in the present, but to its past and to its future.

The relationship between the terms narrative analysis and narrative inquiry is not only in that both methods use narrative or story as their basis for analysis; they both study how stories are socially constructed, both prompt the reader to grow and “think beyond the text” (Riessman, 2008, p. 13) and growth and transformation should occur (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). While meaning has a tendency to be constructed in narrative analysis, and is interpreted in narrative inquiry, both focus on the details, the “how and why a particular event is storied” with “particulars and context” coming to the fore (Riessman, 2008, p. 12-13). “Narrative methods in qualitative research exist in the tension between the tales we live and the tales we tell” (Geelan, 2003, p. 8). This tension is what makes narrative both exciting and challenging.

Phenomenology: Understanding Life-Worlds

Often used to get to the essence of a lived experience or a “practical action” performed within everyday life, phenomenology seeks to “increase one’s thoughtfulness and practical resourcefulness or tact” (van Manen, 1990, p.4). To understand phenomena, such as love, hate, greed, or, as in my research, what it means to stay, phenomenology is used to help in describing how one orients him or herself to the lived experience. This is done through systematic reflection. Husserl explained phenomenology as “self evidently given is, in perception, experienced as “the thing itself,” in immediate presence, or, in memory, remembered as the thing itself; and every other manner of intuition is a presentification of the thing itself” (in Moran &

Mooney, 2002, p. 167). Known as the father of phenomenology, Husserl's goal was to reduce the everyday human encounters with the life-world to their very essence--to the things themselves--to the everyday experience (Moran & Mooney, 2002). It is this intentional act of being that is core for phenomenology. In order to understand phenomenology, it is important to understand the theory of intentionality.

Dahlberg, Dahlberg, and Nystrom (2008) explained intentionality as "the relationship between a person and the objects or events of his/her experience, or more simply, one's directed awareness of an object or event" (p. 47). Intentionality is a part of our everyday lives. When we see or think of a thing we are having a conscious relationship with that which we are experiencing. All experience is an experience of something.

Intentionality, according to Heidegger, is "a structure of lived experiences as such and not coordination relative to other realities, something added to the experiences taken as psychic states" (in Moran & Mooney, 2002, p. 167). Moran and Mooney's (2002) explanation of intentionality from Heidegger's perspective is very helpful; intentionality "signals the fact that the very essence of consciousness – or of 'comportment', as Heidegger preferred to say – "is its directedness towards the object" (p. 247). There are many ways of comporting toward an object, from directly interacting with it in our daily life, such as looking at a painting, to remembering or talking about a thing, as in remembering an experience of snow, or in making up a story. It is that interaction that happens between the person and the "thing" which constitutes intentionality.

The concept of intentionality, then, can be viewed as being concerned with the question of relation. What I mean by this is that intentionality is concerned with the relationship, the sharing, between the content or object of thought (what it is about), and the act or subject being thought. The problem of intentionality, then, is primarily a problem concerning a relationship

with some “thing”. I am in constant relationship with my collected data and various points that I am trying to understand).

While phenomenology is trying to get at the essence of an experience, narrative is trying to understand the experience through collected descriptions of storied events. There is a continual pressing forward and questioning in phenomenology that does not happen in narrative. Narrative takes one back to an experience as it was in its context, phenomenology reflects back on the experience as being in that moment, but pushes forward so that one gains a deeper understanding. Phenomenology as van Manen (2001) explained,

aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences...[it] does not offer us the possibility of effective theory with which we can now explain and/or control the world, but rather it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world. (p. 9)

Narrative aims at drawing conclusions, phenomenology does not; rather it helps illuminate an experience.

I have pulled in a phenomenological lens by reinterpreting the collected narratives with a self-reflective account of my thoughts and discoveries as I go through the process of analyzing and interpreting my collected narratives of nine art teachers. Bridling, a constant questioning and pondering of a phenomena, has been used to incorporate phenomenology by reflecting on a word or theme so as to get to the essence or root of its meaning (Dahlberg, 2006). Polkinghorne (1998) explained that meanings are not concrete because we are continuously reconstructing them. I have been in a constant act of interpreting and constructing meaning throughout the entire research process. Furthermore, each of us is aware only of our own unique realm of meaning. This makes the study of meaning dependent upon self-reflection. In order to begin to grasp the

complex meanings communicated by others, we must turn to language because “language is commensurate with meaning” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 7). We use language every day to negotiate and renegotiate meanings and the most natural way to achieve this is through “the mediation of narrative interpretation” (Bruner, 1990, p. 67).

Narrative inquiry is a particularly suitable methodology for exploring experience, as is evident in the works of Ladson-Billings (1994), Foster (1997), Lather and Smithies (1997), Ayers (2001), Stout (2002) and Hankins (2003) to name a few. Education and educational studies are a form of experience. "Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively" (Clandinin, 2000, p. 19). Each of these listed texts offered exceptional examples of narrative research. Ladson-Billings (1994) documented and gave meaning to and modeling of how “the authenticity of and reality of the teachers’ experiences” were of priority in the process of selection through “community nomination” (p. 146 – 147). (The participants in her study were recommended by teachers, administrators, and parents as well as others in the community). This was intriguing to me and led me in the direction of using snowballing for participant selection. Foster (1997) gave me an exceptional example of narrative text and truly presents us narratives which are in the teacher’s voice. Each chapter is titled by teacher name and is a running reflection on his/her voice. The opening begins with an introduction and commentary and the last page ends in the teacher’s reflective voice. Ayer’s (2001) personal stories often shift from present, to past, to possibilities in the future. Stout (2002) and Hankins (2003) started me on the path to interpretive theory and narrative methodology because the stories I read put me in the moment of teaching that they described. I connected my personal experiences of teaching in an urban school with the experiences Hankins described in her classroom. Both were exemplars on

how to intersperse collected narratives with reflective musings. Lather and Smithies (1997) portrayed the life of women living and dying with aids through the use of narratives. While the narratives of the women with aids were collected through group meetings, rather than individual interviews as I had done, it was the authenticity of voice and the interpretation that Lather and Smithies included that helped me. Both Lather and Smithies along with Hankins were the studies I relied upon the most when physically constructing my dissertation. I too wove my personal reflections with those of the nine art teachers in my study, yet kept my reflections separate by use of font change.

Sometimes we need to say something; sometimes we need a voice. Narrative is one platform in which teachers can say something, where they can have their voice heard as they reflect on their lived experience. It is for this reason that I chose narrative as a theory, as data, and as a methodology. It is also this reason that I brought my teacher voice in with phenomenology.

Arts Based Educational Research (ABER)

Blending the methodologies of phenomenology and narrative inquiry were used to tell the stories of my participants, and allowed me a space to place my voice. Through out my journey as a doctoral student and as a researcher, I have been searching for ways to look at and get to know my data. During this journey I discovered what researchers continually tell us, viewing your data from different perspectives gives us multiple views. I looked a little closer at the methodology of Arts Based Educational Research (ABER) in order to investigate the four themes which emerged from my data. Eisner (1991) tells us the “use [of] resources from the visual world, from music and dance, and from poetry and literature can enable children to grasp what cannot be revealed in text” (p. 246). It makes sense for this same concept to transfer into the realm of research. ABER

indeed does extend this concept. Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund (2008) explained that ABER does “more than help us see an external reality that heretofore has gone unnoticed by *reading* images. They actively form a new visual reality by *creating* images” (p.99). The old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words is not far from truth. To gain a better understanding of the “essence” of the stories I have collected I turned to an arts-based form of research known as portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, 2005). It was based on this concept that I created the four assemblage pieces based on each of the themes: Vocation, Resiliency, Reinventing, and Living-Not Staying. Each assemblage appears at the end of each of the four themed chapters. They are presented for the viewer to apply his/her own interpretations.

In her article, *Reflections on Portraiture: A Dialogue Between Art and Science*, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) tells the voyage she took in finding a methodology to better understand the six schools she studied in her search of “institutional character and culture” and how she documented “the mix of ingredients that made them good schools” (p. 5). Her early experiences of being the subjects of portraits for two different artists, once when she was eight, then later as a young woman, opened the doors to possibilities other than text to understand her subject. Lawrence-Lightfoot tried to capture the essence of the schools by painting an image with words. She created what she described as:

a narrative that bridged to the realms of science and art, merging the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature. I wanted the written pieces to convey the authority, wisdom, and perspective of the “subjects”; but I wanted them to feel as I had felt, that the portrait did not look like them but somehow managed to reveal their essence. I wanted them to experience the portraits

as both familiar and exotic so that in reading them, they would be introduced to a perspective that they had not considered before (p.6).

Portraiture blends the researcher's interpretation, which is in the forefront of the analysis, with the voice of the participant visually. Lawrence-Lightfoot explains, "Even though the identity and voice of the portraitist is larger and more explicit in this form of inquiry, the efforts to balance personal predisposition with disciplined skepticism and critique are central to the portrait's success" (p. 11). The researcher, who is typically the portraitist, needs to be more aware, more "vigilant about identifying other sources of challenge to her or his perspective" (p. 11). Rather than create a portrait of each participant, I altered the method of portraiture by asking my participants to take on the role of co-researchers using any medium of their choosing, whether it be visual images or text, to answer the question; *how do you see your-self as an art teacher and how do you want to be remembered as an art teacher?* Written text, images, and a combination of both were created and collected. Each piece was used to represent the four themes. The five art teachers who submitted self-portraits each reflected on their chosen works participants to tell me why they chose the image or text that they chose. This brings further reflection on both my part and the participants part. I am finding that it is bringing me closer to the essence what it means for each individual to be an art teacher and why they chose to stay.

Pilot Study on Why Teachers Chose to Stay

In order to learn how to conduct narrative inquiry and explore the feasibility in my research topic, I first conducted a pilot study in the fall 2008. I chose three classroom teachers from three different school systems in Georgia. Each teacher taught at different age levels: a third grade teacher, a high school and middle school teacher, and a pre-school teacher. I decided to use classroom rather than art teachers because I did not want to dilute the pool of art teachers I

may have selected participants from for my dissertation research. There are many more regular classroom teachers to choose from than art teachers.

I had originally planned to acquire all of my participants through snowballing, chain, or network sampling strategies. I wanted the experience of snowball sampling so I used this technique to locate two of my participants. I began by contacting those teachers I know whose opinions I respected and asked if they had any teachers they would recommend that they felt were exceptional with more than 20 years of teaching experience and who might be willing to participate in my research study. My third participant was a friend whom *I* consider an exceptional teacher. I was very aware that I knew this person too well professionally and made a conscientious effort to keep an open mind. I found that during transcription this was easier than I originally thought.

Each participant was interviewed in the setting of her choice, and I found that this made those I interviewed much more comfortable. Data gathering methods included field notes and audio taped interviews. The structure of the interview evolved over the course of the pilot study research. Collected data included three 60 to 90 minute interviews which were digitally recorded. I kept a limited journal to record my thoughts and observations during the research process, but found that my notes were not as detailed as they should have been. This is one of my lessons learned. I also discovered the importance of transcribing the interviews myself and keeping detailed notes and reflections of the research process. The criteria I set for an exceptional teacher evolved out of the sampling of my pilot study and it became that s/he must be both a motivator and an encourager and able to engage children in their learning. Exceptional teachers know their subject area and how to teach it. They should have a passion for teaching.

My pilot study is what firmed up my decision to use narrative as a methodology and gave me the practice that I needed. As Josselson and Lieblich (2003) explains, the best way to learn narrative is by doing it. There is no prescriptive, systematic format. This was initially a difficult concept for me to accept, as I wanted to know the right way to do narrative research. I found that in the squishiness of trying to figure out narrative as a methodology I also discovered the richness of the stories shared by these teachers of their experiences. Why they chose to stay was best analyzed using narrative because I felt this methodology naturally captures and portrays what happens in the lives of teachers. I used inductive analysis on my transcribed interviews with initial coding, looking for what jumped out at me as I studied my data, coding “with words that reflect action” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 48). I used “constant comparison” (p. 90) to look closely at my data and found this very helpful in connecting themes (Charmaz, 2006). While I used these forms of analyzing my data in my pilot study, in the dissertation study I turned to Riessman (2008) using thematic analysis and Vagle’s (2010) method of looking at chunks of data to analyze my collected stories from the nine art teachers I interviewed.

Conducting a pilot study affirmed what I knew, that challenges, the ability to be flexible, the successes felt when achievements are made are experienced by teachers in their teaching. The learning through teaching that took place was reflected on with pride by those classroom teachers in my pilot study. “These stories, these narratives of experience, are both personal—they reflect a person’s life history—and social—they reflect the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live” (Clandinin & Connolly, 1998, p.150).

By focusing on the lived experiences of the teachers in my pilot study I learned how to interpret the meanings that they brought to their stories by using the methodology of

phenomenology and narrative inquiry. I learned that looking at the collected narratives through poetry and art creation also allowed me to see deeper and discover meaning I had not seen before.

Using narrative inquiry to study the stories of art teachers allowed me to see and understand their experiences. A story has staying power, stories are what help us to live and remind us of how we have lived. Narrative inquiry makes data real, remembered. Phenomenology helps to focus on the experience as lived by the teller of the tale. Together phenomenology and narrative inquiry helped me become immersed within the lived experiences and remember them.

Dissertation Research Design

Often when we think of meaningful stories, they are the ones we repeat and pass on. This concept helped to frame some of the research design for this study. I wanted to find teachers who had considerable experience in teaching art in K-12 settings as well as teachers who had stories that sustained their careers. I had heard stories about the nine art teachers in my study from different references and recommendations.

Research Questions

What personal and professional experiences motivate exceptional teachers to stay in the art classroom for 20+ years? How do they account for how their experiences inform their teaching, and what reasons do they offer for their retention in the career? What implications do their narratives have for art education?

Sampling Procedure

As noted earlier, snowballing, chain or network sampling is the selection strategy that I used in order to obtain examples of teacher narratives that are information-rich (Glesne, 2006).

This type of sampling is used to “obtain[s] knowledge of potential cases from people who know people who meet research interests” (Glesne, 2006, p. 35). It is important to have criteria in place so that the specifics of the characteristics or traits of the participants are understood by those being asked for recommendations. I looked at a specific group: exceptional art teachers with 20+ years of teaching. The criteria of teaching 20 or more years in art, having three or more recommendations from others in art education as being exceptional art teachers and the willingness to be interviewed were used to start the chain of events that led to a pool of nineteen participants from various areas across the United States. Word of mouth, phone calls, and e-mails were the forms of dialogue used to collect names of participants. It is important to note that while snowballing may sound random, it is actually used to “purposively fill the data needs of a study” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 141). Two primary ways used to locate my participants was through membership of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and through recommendations from art teachers and professors of art education I knew. Art teachers whom I know through NAEA helped me in locating teachers nationally. I asked them whom they would recommend for my study and collected a list of names. I contacted names that were recommended three or more times and talked with these possible participants. I got a feel for whether or not they would be suitable for my study. This feeling was based on more than 24 years of teaching and supervising student teachers and I felt I had a good idea who were what I thought of as exceptional art teachers. Berliner (1987) wrote of exceptional art teachers as those who not only had many years of experience teaching but also reflected on their teaching. When talking to the recommended art teachers I would connect to those who were more reflective about their teaching life rather than about the awards or honors they received. Members in the

Georgia Art Education Association (GAEA) allowed me to make connections in this way as well.

The list of names was narrowed down to nine due to willingness to be interviewed as well as availability. These art teachers all had three or more recommendations from three or more different people. I find it quite interesting that now that I have completed my research some of these same names continue to come up in casual conversations with other art teachers as examples of exceptional art teachers.

Participants

My participants are all art teachers. While I ideally wanted to have a balanced cross-section of teachers from grades K – 12 in urban, suburban, and rural schools, I ended up with a total of nine participants, six elementary art teachers, one middle school art teacher and one high school art teacher, and one art teacher who is between a middle and high school. The nine art teachers are all from the eastern United States. This was not planned as I had put feelers out across the nation. One of the teachers that I was to interview lives in Alaska but was unable to keep the interview appointments we had set. Of the nine art teachers interviewed four had taught in urban areas, two in rural and three in a mix of urban and suburban areas. I interviewed each teacher within different locations, at restaurants, at two different national conventions, one in their home, and one at my house. All of my participants chose the location and time for the interviews. All of my participants are women with the exception of one male elementary art teacher. Each teacher has taught 22 or more years. All but two are still teaching. The two who are no longer teaching retired after more than 30 years in the art room and both continue to be heavily involved in art education at both state and national levels [see Appendix D Teacher Information].

Data Collection Methods

The following forms of data were collected: minimal field notes were taken during the interviews so that I could focus on the person being interviewed; my reflective journal records, my bridling journal, e-mails, ponderings as data. I conducted unstructured open-ended taped interviews that were “dyadic” or one-to-one but had a list of interview questions to give me a starting point (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 142). I also collected written reflections and participant-made artwork from three of the participants. One participant created a blog as her art form and reflection piece. This was created in response to her interview.

Phone calls and e-mailing were used for member check clarification and as ways for the participants to share any thoughts that occurred after the interview. Narrative inquiry reveals that the statement by itself is more meaningful within the context of the story (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1988, 2004, 2005; Reissman, 2008). Taking notes of where, when, and the circumstances surrounding the narrative were done later within my journals. It is important to remember that because experience is not directly observable, a lot of the “evidence” depends on “the participants’ ability to reflectively discern aspects of their own experience and to communicate what they discern through the symbols of language” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). I had hoped to conduct two interviews with each participant and was only able to accomplish that with five of my participants due to availability. E-mail clarification was used for the other participants. Throughout the data collection process I journaled and bridled my thoughts so as to keep fresh my reactions to my data and to document my memories as they rose to the surface. These too became data.

The detailed accounts that I have were generated through the use of open-ended questions. The interviews became conversational. While I had interview questions available (see

Appendix D), I typically let the participant take the lead in the interviews with my interjecting questions to keep the conversations towards stories of why they taught, descriptions of good and bad days and what it meant to them to be an art teacher. I learned in my pilot study that allowing the participant to tell his or her story without interruptions proved more beneficial in the long run. Riessman (2008) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) all recommended listening to the participant even if it means not using the interview questions.

Bridling Plan

My bridling journal is different from my reflective journal. Within my bridling journal I tried to restrain my pre-understandings by looking forward through the use of questioning. This allowed another layer of interpretation to occur. Bridling was introduced by Dahlberg (2006) as a metaphor based upon her experiences with horseback riding. Rather than bracketing one's assumptions and putting them aside, Dahlberg believes that you can't just put aside your experiences; they are there with you always influencing you to some extent. Bridling as a concept draws on Merleau-Ponty's philosophical perspective of the *threads of intentionality*. These are the threads that connect us with the world which could never be cut off but could be tightened and loosened. Dahlberg felt that bridling while horseback riding accomplished much the same thing. The rider has the ability to tighten and slacken the reins on the horse. This metaphor is a clear visual for me. My bridling journal is a place that I can say what I feel and can question myself continually. There are three aspects of bridling as described by Dahlberg, Dahlberg, and Nystrom (2008):

1. Like bracketing, bridling is "the restraining of one's pre-understanding in the form of personal beliefs, theories, and other assumptions that otherwise would mislead the understanding of meaning and thus limit the research options" (p.129 – 130).

2. It is also about the “understanding as a whole” not just the “pre-understanding”- this is done so as to not “understand too quickly, too carelessly” (p. 130). It is an “open and alert attitude of activity waiting for the phenomenon to show up and display itself within the relationship” (p. 130).

3. It is forward looking rather than backward looking allowing “the phenomenon to present itself” (p. 130). The following is a partial example of my bridling about what it means to bridle. See Appendix C for journal entry in its entirety.

(Bridling Journal, December, 2009)

What does it mean to bridle, to truly bridle? I know it is different from bracketing in that we not only look back- but forward. We put aside our assumptions, first guesses to continue questioning. But what if we come back around to where we first began? Why even go through this process- this questioning? Does it bring clarity or, as I sometimes find- more confusion? I have a difficult time focusing in on one thing; my mind has a tendency to wonder and to wander. I am very curious- always have been, probably always will; it's gotten me in trouble many times. It seems that I do not come to a conclusion when I bridle...is this what was intended? Dahlberg (2008) tells us “the things themselves...are always something more than what meets the eye” (p. 121). The core of “phenomenology, hermeneutics and lifeworld research” is an openness to the things themselves which “means to not make definite what is indefinite” (p.121- 122). She speaks of bridling as a way of not imposing ourselves on things- “we do not make definite what is indefinite” (p. 121). When I bridle- am I keeping things indefinite and is this a good thing? Don't we need to come to a conclusion, an end? Is it good, is it healthy to keep questioning and not settle?

I have found that with researching, it is impossible for me to separate myself from my study. Instead, I have decided to embrace this problem by allowing my thoughts and experiences to run parallel with those of my participants. The use of bridling has allowed me to concentrate on my participants while at the same time giving me that place I needed to have my voice heard. I am better able to hear the individual stories that are told which are so similar to my own. I have been bridling throughout the process of my research, as I collected and analyzed my data, as well as throughout the process of writing my dissertation.

Analysis of Narratives

I felt strongly about transcribing my participants' interviews myself rather than having another resource, electronic or human, do this for me. I found during my pilot study that pauses in conversations and sighs were just as important as the written words that were transcribed and often helped in understanding when some comments were more important than others. I found this to be true during the transcription of my collected narratives.

Irving Seidman (2006) recommended performing a three-interview series. The first "establishes context of the participants' experience", the second "allows participants to reconstruct the details of the experience" and the third encourages reflection (p. 17). I did not do this because I found this process not necessary. What I did, however, was use an extension of Seidman's interview series by establishing rapport with my participants through a phone call and e-mails prior to first interviewing them and by following up with phone calls and/or e-mails after the interview.

Something often "underdone in narrative interviewing" is giving the participants time for reflection. Huberman (1995) found that by conducting two separate interviews, participants and researchers had the opportunity to reflect on what was shared during the first interview and were

able to add to what had been said. He found that not all participants had something to say about their pasts and warned that care should be taken “in making assertions about connections through narrative” referring back to “what Husserl called ‘pre-predictive experience’” (p. 136). As Huberman further explained, “Some people have nothing to tell us about their past, in large part, perhaps, because they have told themselves little along the way” (p. 136).

I found repeated remarks, such as “now that you have me thinking” and “I forgot all about that” often said by the art teachers as they began reflecting on their past experiences. I know that my research has made me more aware of my past and has caused me to reflect deeply so that I too have something to say. Many times people need time to think, time to reflect; later when they are doing something unrelated a memory may surface. My participants were given time to reflect during the interviews. I encouraged them to take their time and to think as long as they needed to answer a question or finish a thought. I also gave them the opportunity to leave a thought and revisit it later through a phone call or e-mail if needed. I found that this often resulted in richer information and memories surfacing. “As Polanyi’s notion of tacit knowledge implies, they probably know far more than they can say, their thoughts have moved on to other matters or other concerns” (Huberman, 1995, p. 136).

There are multiple ways to analyze narrative. I chose to use thematic analysis which “can be applied to stories that develop in interview conversations” (Reissman, 2008, p.54). Typically the focusing on themes is established prior to interviewing. My themes were discovered through a reading and re-reading of the text which was found as I “narratively code[d]” (p.131) the texts looking closely at the storied accounts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Both look at coding while reading through the collected data, which begins with the transcribing of the interviews. I used the art teachers’ narratives to help me explain the four themes of *Vocation*; *Resiliency*,

Reinventing; and *Living, Not Staying*. I also drew from my personal experiences as an art teacher, through ongoing reflection as I analyzed both my immediate responses to my data and as a form of personal memoir. This helped me to understand my getting in and out of the way of my research and to trace the connections of the stories of teaching art.

Hankins explains that during the analysis of her writing she would “select out, write-up and rewrite reflectively, always claiming the personally interpretive stance” to present her interpretations of her collected stories (2003, p. 13). My journaling, reflective revisiting of data, was a way in which I keep my interpretation in the open and allowed me to honor the art teachers who have trusted me to tell their stories. During my analysis I did what Hankins did, I selected out sections, wrote them up and then rewrote reflectively. Wolcott (1990) suggests that there is no line between data and method. As is typical with narrative inquiry, I wrote selectively and as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, I worked within the “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” which allowed me to travel in three directions- “inward, outward, backward, forward, and situated within place” by placing my current reflections with the teachers’ narratives which spanned 40 years (p. 49) Working in this space makes us visible and accessible within our lived stories. Sometimes this means that the stories we have kept secret are revealed. In narrative inquiry it is not possible for the researcher to stay out of the conversation. This makes us “vulnerable as inquirers because it makes secret stories public” (p.62).

Vagle’s (2009) description of the “whole-part-whole” plan for analysis was a good extension of Seidman’s three-interview series and helped me to better understand my data. Vagle recommended a first reading of the transcribed text without taking notes, so as to “simply spend some time getting reacquainted with the data” (p. 6). I did this after transcribing all of my interviews. I went back and studied each interview separately, listening attentively to the

recorded interview as I made double marks [//] when something caught my attention in the transcriptions. I did not take notes but wanted to mark the data that stood out to me. Vagle recommends a second reading be conducted as the first, done line-by-line, this time with note taking and citations to the side or in the margins so as to document initial meanings. I went through this process using a pencil. I wanted to distinguish my first impressions from subsequent readings. Parentheses were also placed around “large chunks of text” and four different colored highlighters were used to focus in on the four themes (p. 6). The final line-by-line reading is used for the “researcher to articulate his or her analytic thoughts about each segment (part)” (p. 7). I followed this same procedure when analyzing my data with each transcript.

As is suggested by Vagle, I reviewed the marked transcripts to help me articulate meanings, based on my generated notes and questions. Continued inquiry meant “reading across individual participants’ data, with the goal of looking for patterns and themes” marked with “preliminary titles” (p. 7). While this method is similar to Charmaz’s (2006) inductive analysis in which line-by-line initial coding took place, I found the multi-step process Vagle (2009) took resulted in more storied data which helped in illuminating the four themes that were revealed. I identified the narratives looking for beginning and endings to stories. These were not always evident in the first reading through of the transcripts.

Arts Based Educational Research (ABER)

Blending the methodologies of phenomenology and narrative inquiry in my research assisted me in telling the stories of my participants, while allowing me a space to place my voice, to lay my assumptions so that they were exposed. Journaling, creating, continuous reflection, ponderings that are written on any object that will hold pen or pencil are my modes of expression. Throughout my journey as a doctoral student, as a researcher, I searched for ways to

look at and get to know my data. During this journey I have discovered what researchers continually tell us, viewing your data from different perspectives gives us multiple views.

Eisner (1991) tells us the “use [of] resources from the visual world, from music and dance, and from poetry and literature can enable children to grasp what cannot be revealed in text” (p. 246). It makes sense for this same concept to transfer into the realm of research. Arts based educational research (ABER) does extend this concept (Barone & Eisner, 2006), . Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegesmund (2008) explained ABER does “more than help us see an external reality that heretofore has gone unnoticed by *reading* images. They actively form a new visual reality by *creating* images” (p.99). The old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words is not far from actuality. To gain a better understanding of the “essence” of the stories I have collected, I turned towards an arts-based form of research known as portraiture as another lens through which to analyze my data (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, 2005).

In her article, *Reflections on Portraiture: A Dialogue Between Art and Science*, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) told of the voyage she took in finding a methodology to better understand the six schools she studied in her search of “institutional character and culture” and how to go about “documenting the mix of ingredients that made them good schools” (p. 5). Her early experiences of being the subjects of portraits for two different artists, once when she was eight, then later as a young woman, opened the doors to possibilities other than text to understand her subject. She tried to capture the essence of the schools by painting an image with words. She created what she described as

a narrative that bridged to the realms of science and art, merging the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature. I wanted the written pieces to convey the authority, wisdom, and perspective of the

“subjects”; but I wanted them to feel as I had felt that the portrait did not look like them but somehow managed to reveal their essence. I wanted them to experience the portraits as both familiar and exotic so that in reading them, they would be introduced to a perspective that they had not considered before. (p.6)

Portraiture blends the researcher’s interpretation, which is in the forefront of the analysis, with the voice of the participant visually. Lawrence-Lightfoot explains, “Even though the identity and voice of the portraitist is larger and more explicit in this form of inquiry, the efforts to balance personal predisposition with disciplined skepticism and critique are central to the portrait’s success” (p. 11). The researcher, who is typically the portraitist, needs to be more aware, more “vigilant about identifying other sources of challenge to her or his perspective” (p. 11). Rather than create a portrait of each participant, I altered the method of portraiture by asking my participants to take on the role of co-researchers using any medium of their choosing, whether it be visual images or text, to answer the question; *how do you see yourself as an art teacher and how do you want to be remembered as an art teacher?* Written text, images, and a combination of both were collected by five of my participants. Their selected portraits are placed at the beginning of chapters five through nine. The self-portraits are also within a standalone chapter so the reader can apply their individual interpretation without interruption and see the images and reflective text in their entirety. Initially I had not thought of asking my participants to create a “self-portrait”, it was after data collection that the idea came to me. I asked my participants to tell me why they chose the image or text that they chose. This process brought further reflection on both my part and the participants’ part. I found that this exercise brought me closer to the essence of what it means for each individual to be an art teacher and why they chose to stay.

Looking at both the works of Labov (1982) and Gee (1996) I also created poetry from some of the transcripts. A section of the transcript was studied and words were pulled which describe what has occurred, this is called the complicating action (Riessman, 2008), the significance of the action is then evaluated, and how the action evolved is the resolution and the story ends with a coda that returns the focus to the present. While Labov uses a very structured method for pulling text, it was Gee's methodology (1991) of poetic interpretation that helped me to realize the poems within the text.

The Process of Lifting Poetry

During one of my qualitative research classes I had explored the use of analyzing data by pulling poems based on Laurel Richardson's (2002) article, "Poetic Representation of Interviews". Richardson made me keenly aware that no one type of theory or methodology is best for representing data. Representing data through poetry was intriguing. I selected one interview from my pilot study to examine on a deeper level. Reading the poems in Richardson's article moved me and I wanted to see if that could be done with my selected interview.

In spring 2011 I read an article, "Reconstructing Gloria: A narrative analysis of team meetings" (Crepeau, 2000). What struck me by this article was not the topic of hospital practitioners' relationships with their geropsychiatric patients but how Crepeau came about exposing the feeling through pulled poems to gain an understanding beneath the layers of talk. What role do the interpretive stories about patients by hospital practitioners have on constructing an image of those patients? How do these stories benefit or not benefit both the practitioners and the patients? While these questions were not presented in the article, they are the questions I imagine would be asked based on my interpretation of the article. Reading Crepeau brought

Richardson's article to mind and the experience I had almost two years previously in seeing my data from another perspective.

The article centers around one patient, Gloria, who is described by the practitioners as the "bad," "difficult," or "unpopular" patient" (p. 767). Crepeau is interested in understanding the experiences that those with severe mental illness have within the context of the hospital and the effect practitioner stories have on the care of those patients. The focus is on the lack of understanding the practitioners had of Gloria. Rather than interviewing the practitioners, she watched and documented their meetings. Her questions were asked before or after the meeting, but never during the meeting discussions so as to allow the conversations to remain fluid.

This brought me back to my process of collecting stories. When I interviewed the art teachers, I did question them throughout the interview in order to keep the conversation going. I also chose to write very little during the interviews because I wanted to be completely focused on and tuned in to the stories I was hearing. This was done to keep the conversation fluid, to allow the stories to begin and end in the direction the art teachers took them.

To analyze the team meeting stories of Gloria, Crepeau (2000) used the narrative techniques of Riessman, Labov, and Gee. Both Labov and Gee pull poetry from narratives in a structured way by beginning with a word-by-word transcription and then looking for areas of natural breaks. Crepeau used "as accurate rendering of talk as possible by representing overlapping speech, pauses, enunciation, and other aspects of discourse" (p.769). Within my transcriptions I too documented the overlapping and merging of talk, the silences, pauses and utterances to catch the cadence of the talk and to be able to listen to the thinking and searching for past memories. Labov's categories of discourse were next used to "characterize the telling of a particular story about Gloria" (p. 769). The stories were numbered, titled and contained a

beginning, middle, and end as is found in narrative structure. Crepeau explains, “the stories were told in segments interspersed between other stories or meeting elements” (p.769) yet each fully formed narrative opened with a summary of the story “that situates the story for the listener by telling the particular context of the story” (p.769). These are in line with Labovian techniques as are the labeling of the “compelling action”, “evaluation” and the “resolution” and ending with a coda (p.769). Labov’s working is topic-centered and is kept in order of time and listing of events or actions which are what helped Crepeau use the practitioner’s stories in sequence.

When analyzing the nine transcriptions I too found beginnings and endings of stories throughout the transcriptions. Part of the process of interpretation is not only analyzing the stories, but the initial selection and wallowing through the text to allow the themes to come to the surface and reveal themselves. This occurred as I re-read across all nine of the collected transcriptions of stories. While the narrative technique I chose is based on the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2001) I also pulled poems using a blend of techniques used by Richardson (2007), Glesne (1997) and Gee (in Riessman, 2008)).

Crepeau used Gee’s methodology to further analyze the stories of Gloria. Gee’s method is useful for analyzing longer narratives. Interpretation begins with looking closely at the units of naturally spoken narratives. “Units, lines, stanzas, strophes, and parts” are all elements of planned speech (Riessman, 2008, p. 93). Riessman explains stanzas as “a series of lines that have parallel structure and sound as if they go together; they have a tendency to be said at the same rate and with little hesitation between the lines” (p.93). The use of stanza is central to Gee’s methodology for pulling poetry. Each stanza in *Becoming an Art Teacher* is separated by a line *I didn’t know about everything else which was going to come my way...* Stanzas or strophes can be understood as units of talk or vignettes to feature an action, thought or feeling.

Gee's methodology was what I pulled from to allow me to have greater insight into Patty's story. It was Gee's poetic structure which allowed Crepeau "to discover the logic within the story structure"(770). Many of the elements from the original transcript were removed and she chose to alter Gee's methodology and focused on the "identification of the stanzas, main plot line, and verbs" (770). This too is the technique I used.

Richardson's and Gee's methodology emphasized the importance of alternative views as having the ability to give new insight to bring about a change in attitude. As Riessman (2008) tell us narratives draw on "what it means to be human" (p. 78). In the Crepeau (2000) article Gloria transformed for me from a person who was looked upon more as an object of nuisance to a person who was lonely. It wasn't until I read the poem that I felt her humanness and had empathy for her. This is the emotion I want to trigger in those that read my research. I want to expose the humanness of teaching.

Crafting a Text that Captures the Phenomenon

Inspiration comes to us in many modes sometimes through a song, saying, spoken word or act we witness, encouraging us to take that step needed to move forward. I knew my topic, my methodology and that my discovered themes would be chapters written narratively and interwoven with my autobiographical narratives, reflections and academic knowledge. What I did not know was how do I present this? What format should I take? How will this look and will the reader be able to follow my intent, yet be given the freedom to bring in their own interpretations? Having a good model is most certainly beneficial, especially for one such as myself who could not find a way to begin. For me, my inspiration came from reading *Teaching through the Storm: A Journal of Hope*, by Karen Hale Hankins (2003).

Hankins wrote with a reflective voice as she contemplated the impact her students made on her as a teacher, as a mother, and as a human being. She viewed her journaling as “a place of reflection on and dissection of my own long-held perspectives on teaching, learning, and children” (p.1). I too keep a journal of sorts. Like Hankins and many others who are reflective, I continually work at my practice. Allowing my thoughts to incubate through reflection provided them the needed time to grow and develop, forming new memories and experiences. As teachers we think about our students as “our kids”. They become as much a part of our lives as if we had brought them into the world ourselves. The gift of being allowed to touch lives and at the same time being given the gift of having our lives enriched by those we teach is what keeps teachers, at least myself, in the classroom.

Lather and Smithies (1997) created a multi-voiced dialogue within their book, *Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS*. The voices of the women who tell their stories of living with HIV are held in front of the reader in a place of respected importance. Lather and Smithies include their voices through reflection by way of notes and journal entries in a running commentary at the bottom of most of the pages. These commentaries are continuously moving between an autobiographical reflection and a more academic stance which ties in research methodology and theory. Throughout the book are boxes containing facts about AIDS, and writings from some of the women. The layout of the book makes it accessible to those outside of academia allowing the reader to move, rest, and reflect on the multiple voices presented. I have found guidance in Lather’s and Smithies’ book as I include my voice with the voices of my participants in a way that is both fluid yet separate. The use of a running commentary allows me to situate myself alongside the narratives of the art teachers I interviewed while simultaneously giving space for open reflection, analysis, and interpretation of the stories. It is within this area

that I pull in theory, review of literature and understandings, rather than findings. This format, I believe, will allow the reader to interject their own understanding and interpretations while giving them a space to reflect as well. Within the art teachers' narratives are often references to societal and cultural issues and events, because of this; relevant information is often interjected throughout the passages.

When discussing why teachers remain in the classroom it is important to first look at their experiences. In order to honor and give voice to my participants while also including my reflective voice, I have crafted my text as two dialogues running simultaneously and interwoven. The teachers' narratives are written in storied form using Times New Roman font and excerpts/reflections from my various journals and ponderings are italicized. Qualitative research isn't easy, using change in fonts helped me keep track of the various characters within my study.

Dependability

"Guba and Lincoln (1989) identified dependability as the qualitative parallel to reliability" (in Mertens, 2005, p. 257). While stability over time is regarded as a reliable measure in quantitative research, change is expected in qualitative research. It is recommended that a dependability audit be conducted (Mertens, 2005) by documenting the details of each step of the inquiry process. I have done this by keeping a journal of my research process, by tracking any changes and making certain to disclose emerging patterns to establish dependability in the inquiry process.

Credibility or Trustworthiness

Credibility in qualitative research provides evidence from multiple sources to demonstrate that interpretations are credible. This provides the researcher with the tools needed in portraying the gathered information in as honest and unbiased a manner as possible. Multiple

strategies are available to establish credibility. I used the strategies of peer debriefing in my classes and with another graduate student, member checks with my participants to make sure that I understood a story correctly, and triangulation through the use of nine narratives which are analyzed in various ways, thematic (Reissman, 2008), Vagle's (2010) approach, and Gee's analysis methods (Mertens, 2005). I have personally found that consulting with my peers for credibility has been extremely helpful and find that peer debriefing has prepared me to defend what I'm doing and why. Meeting with those who have already completed their dissertations and having their feedback helped me in staying focused. Using peer briefing with those not in art education helped me in making sure that what I wrote was understandable to someone outside of education. This was important to me because I wanted my study to be accessible to more than just art teachers. Member checks I consider being very important and did this by summarizing what had been said during the interviews and verifying collected data that was in question through e-mail or phone calls.

I have looked historically at societal/educational events that were presented in the interviews as part of my triangulation to help establish credibility. By know what was going on in society during the events spoken about within the art teacher's story gave a broader picture of their experiences. Progressive subjectivity took place in the form of my bridling journal and research journal, which were used to question and document my own developing interpretations. I found that reflecting on my own experiences as an art teacher through the use of my bridling journal has been very beneficial.

Riessman (2008) offered some suggestions for validity of narrative inquiry. First, looking closely at the data one may be able to note if it is historically situated. Are the participant's narratives understandable, do they make sense? Keeping a log or journal was recommended.

Documenting “inferences made during the course of a research project...encourages methodological awareness” and “critical self-awareness about how the research was done and the impact of critical decisions made along the way” all assist the researcher in being true to the data (p. 191).

Confirmability

Confirmability is an area that I have been most concerned about from the beginning of my learning of qualitative research. The use of my journaling, peer debriefing as well as member checks has helped me in establishing “a chain of evidence” that Mertens (2005) talks of to confirm that what I write is what has been shared with me and not a “figment of the researcher’s imagination” (p. 257). I have left a very large data trail.

Transferability

I have established transferability through the use of a detailed “thick description” of the setting in which the interviews took place, the teachers I interviewed, and their descriptions of the culture in which they teach. I have also documented the processes of crafting text and analyzing data through the use of journaling. I have conducted nine interviews; however I question is it truly possible to ever confirm transferability in qualitative research? Each researcher is individual and brings in their own interpretations based on their individual experiences I know the process I used can be duplicated, but the outcomes could be very different. I have used thick description and have found that the themes I investigated resonate with other art teachers I know.

Protection of Human Subjects (IRB)

Due to the nature of this study- adults consenting to being interviewed based on their personal experiences- I continue to foresee no risks to the participants in this study.

Confidentiality will continue to be maintained by the use of pseudonyms for participants, the schools they work in and their locations in all published material. All personal artifacts used (such as transcribed interviews and correspondences such as letters and e-mails) have been made available to the participants for their personal use. I have had two participants request copies of their transcripts which I have given them after taking out the “ums”. These utterances were for my benefit and helped me in picking up the act of thinking. I felt that by leaving in the “ums” it would embarrass the participant and would become the focus for them of their interview rather than the stories shared. See IRB Acceptance page 224.

Subjectivity Statement or Limitations

I began my teaching career in August 1986 in Gwinnett County at Rockbridge Elementary. This was where I learned the most about change, flexibility, diversity and most importantly, the art of teaching. As an insider in the world of teaching I bring with me knowledge of what good teaching looks like, at least my interpretation of what I believe is good. Thus, I also bring with me many biases. I questioned whether or not I would remain honest to the data. I wondered whether those I interviewed would be truthful. These are always concerns in any area of research.

Why ask *why do exceptional teachers choose to stay*? It is my goal to make a contribution to the body of knowledge about teacher retention through narratives shared by exceptional art teachers of approximately 20 years of teaching experience who chose to stay in teaching. I believe the potential for this knowledge to be used to prepare and retain exceptional art teachers, as well as those in other disciplines, is there. Through the use of narrative inquiry/analysis, phenomenology, ABER, and by bridling my own thoughts through reflective

questioning, I believe I have created an honest narrative which captures the passion, commitment and ingenuity with which exceptional art teachers teach. Now, it just needs to be shared.

CHAPTER 3

Review of Literature

Theory of Experience and Reflection

Teachers over time develop “a store of practical knowledge” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005, p. xi) that is both unique and personal to each individual, yet has commonalities with others in the teaching profession. This practical knowledge is molded by the individual life experiences each teacher encounters and the way s/he responds to her/his environment and how these encounters are interpreted. While the commonalities of theory and practice learned in teacher preparation courses and in-service meetings give teachers a common language, it is the individual interpretations of personal experiences which provide rich dialogue for teachers to share with one another. These dialogues result in the storied experiences which give voice to practical knowledge for better understanding of the teaching world (Bruner, 1994; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Eisner, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2003, 2005; Polkinghorne, 2004).

My theoretical framework is based on Dewey’s (1938/1998) theory of human experience. Donald Schön’s (1983) reflective practitioner will also be drawn from to explain the role of reflection and intuitive knowing in the midst of action.

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916/2004) explains the nature of experience as something which “can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined” (p. 133). He states that with the “active hand... we do something to the thing” and the passive element is when “we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences” (p. 133). Dewey elaborates that experience involves change, but unless this

change is connected to a consequence, which can be either positive or negative, it is then a “meaningless transition” and so little or nothing is learned (p. 133). This interchange takes place within various environments which, Dewey informs us, “is whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had” (cited in Rodgers, 2002, p. 846).

According to Dewey’s statement, unless one has an interaction between oneself and another context or environment, whether that is another person, an object, the natural world or an idea, then an experience does not occur. Learning occurs from an experience. To learn from experience then “is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence. Under such conditions, doing becomes a trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like; the undergoing becomes instruction -- discovery of the connection of things” (Rodgers, 2004, p. 133).

Polkinghorne (2004) refers to this interaction between learning and experience as the “background” or cultural understandings which provide people with “a pretheoretical understanding that gives them a sense about others, the world, and themselves” (p. 152). It functions by providing an immediate understanding of how to get things done and what is needed to accomplish the task. When we encounter a complex problem, the background does not necessarily help us by itself, we extend it by employing the “reflective mode of understanding” (p. 153).

“Interaction, then, is the first important element of experience. The second, ...is continuity” (Rodger, 2002, p. 846). In order to understand Dewey’s notion of learning and teaching it is important to understand what is meant by continuity.

Both interaction and continuity are inseparable. They intercept and unite. They are, so to speak, the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience. Different situations succeed one another. But because of the principle of continuity something is carried over from the earlier to the later ones. As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. (Dewey, 1938/1979, p. 42)

In essence continuity allows us to use what we have learned from past experiences to help make sense and gain understanding from new experiences. Keep in mind however, that Dewey does not claim all experiences to be educational nor constructive. Experiences can sometimes be “mis- educative” meaning that they do not allow one to further develop or grow. Rodgers (2002) explains that mis-educative has the potential to offer one experiences that “leads in a callous, insensitive, and generally immoral direction” (p. 847). It can also lead one into “routine action” which means that “one acts without an awareness of the effect one’s actions have on the environment” (Rodgers, 2002, p. 847).

Dewey (1938/1998) cautions that experiences are not complete unless meaning can be given to them. Experience is not cognitive, it “exists in time and is therefore linked to the past and the future” (Rodgers, 2002, p. 848). Reflection is then used to make meaning, to study the interactions and continuities of the experience. It is the meaning we bring of our experiences which makes us human. It is what brings value to our lives.

In his book, *Dewey and Eros*, Garrison (1997) looks closely at the relationship between *eros* or passionate desire and what motivates us to teach and to learn while making connections to Dewey’s educational writings. Garrison tells us “we become what we love” (1997, p. xiii). He further explains that “good teachers passionately desire the good for their students” (p. xiv). While I have only begun reading his book, I like the connection that Garrison is making between

the passion to teach and the lived experiences that mold us to be who we are. The role of reflection is essential to developing the *eros* of education. Garrison tells us, “everyone is a mixture of the actual and the potential” (1997, p. xiv). The teacher-student relationship thus becomes a give and take; teachers can bestow love, values and knowledge onto their students and in return grow and develop more fully. This is a reflective act.

“To reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capitol stock for intelligent dealing with further experiences” (Dewey, 1938/1998, p. 87-88). As was stated earlier, reflection is a cognitive activity in which a person looks back on her/his life's experiences. Being a reflective practitioner, to cite Donald Schon (1983), is to be one who has “a capacity for reflection on their intuitive knowing in the midst of action and sometimes uses this capacity to cope with unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice” (p. ix). In his book, *The Reflective Practitioner*, Schon (1983) explains that when a “practitioner” is reflecting on her/his practice the things of the reflection can vary. These can be the everyday items we encounter or can be based on “theories implicit to a pattern of behavior” (p. 62). This concept is referred to as “reflection in and on action” with the emphasis being placed on the practitioner reflecting both during the action and afterwards to improve practice.

Another way to look at Schon’s concept is to look at it as a think-on-your-feet type of reflection which is made in an instant to respond to a dilemma or situation that needs to be addressed. Many teachable moments are the result of reflection-in-action. Good teachers often take advantage of those teachable moments. Garrison (1997) explains:

The teachable moment occurs when teachers and students engage in meaningful inquiry regarding some problematic situation involving themselves and the subject matter being taught. It is here that teaching, loving, and logic clearly begin to come together. On such

occasions teacher and students share needs, desires, and interests, as well as imaginatively engage in shared creative inquiry. (p. xv-xvi)

Though teachers, me included, often complain about not having time to even think, it is necessary to take the time to reflect on practice. Not reflecting on one's practice has the potential of resulting in mechanical or stagnant teaching. In her paper, "Teachers Developing Practice: Reflection as Key Activity", Postholm (2008) discusses the different levels on which people act in situations. This concept was developed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) and distinguishes various levels of experience from novices to experts. Though this concept is not limited to the field of teaching I will explain it as it reflects teaching practice. *Experts* know what to do because of years of teaching practice. Their craft has become so much a part of them that teaching becomes a natural part of what they do. According to the concept developed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus,

when things are proceeding normally, an expert teacher does not solve problems and does not make decisions, but simply does what normally works. While most expert performance is ongoing and non-reflective, when time permits and outcomes are crucial, an expert will deliberate before acting and thus reflect on his or her own intuitions. This means that rules, the theories about teaching and learning in the teacher profession, are internalized and automatised little by little, becoming a part of the teachers' intuition. (cited in Postholm, 2008, p. 1720)

Dewey (1938/1998) discusses how we, as individuals, "live in a series of situations" in which the experience is inseparable from the situation (p.43). These two principles are continuity and interaction which were discussed earlier. Continuity is that thing which is carried over from earlier experiences and it is what allows one to "simply [do] what normally works" as noted by

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (cited in Postholm, 2008, p. 1720). It is also that interaction experienced during a past situation which allows one to interact or bring forth their past experiences into the present so as to create a new present experience. This explains why no two people can have the same experience in the same situation; their past experiences could not be identical. When teachers encounter problems in their practice, they engage in a process of reflection and inquiry to impose a frame on the problem, draw on familiar repertoire, and formulate and test new hypotheses (Schön, 1983). These hypotheses are drawn from past experiences.

When asking the question, *why do exceptional teachers choose to stay?* it is imperative to look at teacher's past experiences through their reflections on their practice, as well as other experiences they find significant. While their situations may be similar, their experiences will differ.

Retaining Exceptional Teachers

Each year tens of thousands of teachers leave their current school positions for jobs in other occupations, within other schools or school systems, choose to retire, or leave for personal reasons (Ingersoll, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Kelly, 2004; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Brill, & McCartney, 2008; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). Teacher turnover and retention have become major concerns in educational research and policy over the past twenty years (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008) This concern is so great that the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, NCTAF, has titled one chapter of its 2003 study "Teacher Retention Has Become a National Crisis" (cited in Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008, p.7). Many have supported this view and believe that it is due to a high rate of teacher turnover rather than a lack of available teachers (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008;

Ingersoll, 2001; Sabol, 2004) others believe it is due to an imbalance of supply and demand (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006).

In order to understand retention, or how to keep teachers in teaching, we must first understand why it is that they choose to leave and the language used to describe leaving. The term “teacher turnover” is used to explain “major changes in a teacher’s assignment from one school year to the next” (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008, p. 8). Three components often cited for teacher turnover or how teachers leave are attrition, migration and early retirement (Ingersoll, 2001; Sabol, 2004; Brill, & McCartney, 2008; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008). Attrition refers to those teachers who leave teaching for other career options. When teachers move from one school or system to another, this is referred to as migration. Migration accounts for the largest group of teacher turnover within schools and school systems (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008).

Because the teaching work force is made up of what Grissmer and Kirby (1997) call the “graying” work force, more teachers than ever before will be approaching retirement age by 2013. Many, for reasons later discussed in the studies reviewed, will choose to retire early at 25 years rather than wait until their 30th year of teaching. Teacher retirement increases are currently taking place and because of economic instabilities are having little to no negative impact on schools. Teacher retirement is currently benefitting many school districts. Within my own school, for example, three teachers who retired were not replaced. Their retirement meant that instead of losing seven teachers due to budget cuts and increase in class size, only four teachers were displaced and eventually migrated to other schools.

When searching the literature in professional research journals years 1990- 2011, “teacher retention” 8276 brought up more hits than “teacher attrition” which brought up 3374 articles. After narrowing both search phrases with “teacher persistence” the journal entries were

narrowed to 238 and 41 articles respectively. Of the combined 279 articles the subject matter in the abstracts more often than not addressed retention of beginning teachers rather than retention of teachers with experience. Focus was on the first five to seven years of teaching (408), retaining special education teachers (253), and a few addressed teachers in urban schools (118) (Buchanan , 2009, Gilbert, 2011, Nunez, & Fernandez, 2006, Wiebke&Bardin, 2009, Yonezawa, Jones, & Singer, 2011). While there were numerous articles which addressed retention in general education and special education, there were only three articles mentioning retention in art(s) education (Cohen-Evron, 2002 Sabol; 2004; Scheib, 2006). Of these three only one focuses exclusively on art teachers (Cohen-Evron, 2002). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) studies (1997, 2001, 2005) which track attrition, migration and retention of specific subject areas, such as art, was reviewed for more insight into turnover rates specific to art teachers. It must also be noted that much of the research does not address only retention or attrition, but often relates to both categories. Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) note, “studies focusing on retention...might identify factors that relate to teacher attrition” (p.175).

The challenge to retain highly effective teachers affects all school systems throughout the United States. Teacher attrition, or those who leave, account for more than 157,000 teachers leaving the work force each year. Teacher migration accounts for more than 232,000 changing schools, “often in pursuit of better working conditions in wealthier schools” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, P2). Both have tremendous financial and educational impacts on the schools and school systems that lose them. In a recent report put out by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) an analysis of costs related to teacher turnover revealed that the estimated cost to individual urban schools for teacher transfer was \$70,000 per year, with nonurban spending \$33,000 for each teacher (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008,

P4). The cumulative cost for all schools across the nation, which includes costs of recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers, is “\$7.34 billion” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2008, P4). Nationally, this equates to a “range from 20 to 150 percent of that teacher’s salary”(Brill& McCartney, 2008, p.752).

Literature on teacher recruitment and retention (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006) focuses on the characteristics of teachers who enter teaching, of those who remain in teaching, and the characteristics of successful schools and systems that recruit and retain teachers. The rate of turnover was not addressed.

Boe, Cook, and Sunderland, (2008) cited statistical data in their study which addressed attrition and migration. This data had been collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) as part of its national Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TSF). This large-scale national survey “defines attrition and migration behaviorally by tracking changes in an individual teacher’s employment status from one year to the next, as distinguished from simply asking teachers about their intentions to remain or leave in the future” (2008, p.8). Based on the TSF a total of 15.1% of all public school teachers in the survey left or moved schools. This was further broken down to 7.4% left teaching and 7.7% moved to other schools. This data was from school years 1999-2000 to 2000 – 20001.

Ingersoll (2001) reported that the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) found that 30% of the nation’s teachers were in transition during the 1999-2000 school year. 15% were leaving while that same amount was entering the teaching profession. It is not clear how many actually migrated in the NCTAF report, but the overall amount of teachers who stayed, 85%, was fairly consistent with the TSF (84.9%). What is interesting is that the rate of those who leave by their fifth year of teaching is higher than the attrition rate (15%) of

teachers-38.5% (TFS data) of those with five years of teaching experience who do not return the following year (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008).

Reasons for Leaving

As was stated earlier, in order to understand how to retain teachers, there must be an understanding as to why teachers leave. A nine year period from 1991 -2000 was investigated to quantify and analyze the trends of three types of turnover found in the teaching profession, attrition, transfer and migration. The authors looked at both general education teachers (GETs) and special education teachers (SETs) and performed a statistical analysis comparing data collected from the NCES School and Staffing Survey, (SASS) for years 1990-1991,1993-1994, and 1999-2000 and the TFS for those same years. The SASS is a teacher self reporting survey which provides “national information about public school teachers (including public charter school teachers) during the school year prior to turnover” (p.11). The TFS is a 1-year longitudinal component of the SASS and provides “extensive information about various aspects of the turnover of these teachers” (p.11). Of special interest was the examination of the relationships between teacher turnover and years experience.

Attrition (leavers) and migration (movers) were defined earlier in this paper, for the purpose of clarity; transfer (switchers) is the changing or transferring of a teacher from one teaching area to another, such as art education to general education. Both transfer and migration can co-occur. Those who stay in the same school and within the same teaching area are often referred to as stayers (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Using statistical analysis to compute a mean for annual percentage rates Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008) found that attrition rates increased in both GETs and SETs over the course of the three surveys. The attrition rate rose from about 5% in 1991 to 8.7% in 2000. The overall rate

of attrition between GETs and SETs was not significant. The attrition rates by years of teaching experience (this included both full time and part time teachers) showed that teachers with one to four years of teaching experience left at a rate of 8.9% (GETs) and 7.9% (SETs) which supported other research prior to this study (Darling-Smith, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001; Tye and O'Brien, 2002). During the 13 to 24 year range of experience SETs (7.9%) left at twice the rate of GETs (3.6%) and even more significantly, more GETs left at a rate of 10.8% after 24 years of experience.

A variety of reasons were given for attrition: dissatisfaction with teaching (23.8%), to pursue professional development (8.8%), personal reasons, such as pregnancy/child rearing (29.1%), involuntary due to reasons of health or "staffing action" (9.5%), and retirement (28.8%) (p.18). It was also found that many who leave also later returned, approximately half.

Teaching area transfer was about the same for both GETs and SETs and was higher than attrition rates. Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008) note that "both kinds of turnover represent losses of teachers to a teaching area" with almost one fifth of teachers either "switching to some other teaching area or through leaving teaching employment" (p.19). Transfer remained about the same until 12 years of experience when it declined slightly to 10.3% from 11.8% (4 to 12 years experience).

School migration of SETs were higher than GETs. "As with attrition and teaching area transfer, school migration might be higher for public school teachers during their early careers years" (Boe et al, p. 21). A higher rate of migration occurred for both GETs (13.1%) and SETs (19.8%) during the first three years. This rate declines thereafter, 4 to 12 years GETs (9.9%) and SETs (8.5%), more than 12 years GETs (4.2%) and SETs (7.2%).

Looking back over the data analysis by Boe, et al, the total turnover rate increased substantially from 1991-1992 to 2000-2001. "Turnover increased 60% for all public teachers

(from 478,000 to 767,000 annually)” during the nine year period studied (p.22). The teaching workforce grew over this time which accounts for some of this growth. The majority of the turnover occurred in transfer and migration with attrition only accounting for about 30% of the total turnover. What this means is that much of the teaching work force that moves is replaced by other teachers who are transferring teaching areas or migrating to other schools and/or systems rather than from an outside force. So as teachers leave positions, more than likely other teachers with experience will fill those positions. “The problem does not lie in the numbers of teachers available; we produce many more qualified teachers than we hire. The hard part is keeping the teachers we prepare” (Darling-Smith, 2003, p.7).

With all of this said, teacher turnover is still a costly practice. It is a drain financially on the individual school systems and states, it affects student achievement, school functioning, and is seen as a “significant contributor to the shortage of qualified teachers” (Boe et al, 2008, p.24). However, while attrition in public schools is a very real problem it was “less than that in non-business occupations” (such as health care), in addition, attrition of teachers “during their first 3 years, was among the lowest of several occupations studied. Thus, teaching seems to be a reasonably appealing occupation in comparison to others” (p.24-25). Boe, et al, (2008) note that one reason there is a higher attrition rate for beginning teachers is that they “assess the fit of their qualifications and interests to the demands of classroom teaching. As others have noted as well, some beginning teachers are lacking in these respects and should leave” (p.25).

Should policy initiatives be made to combat attrition? No, according to Boe, et al., (2008), the efforts should be with transfer and migration. Teachers seeking other careers attributes to about one quarter of all attrition, while other reasons, such as family leave, health, and advanced schooling make up the majority. Policy changes and initiatives, it is believed,

would make a minimal impact. “Substantial improvement in teacher retention would require massive systemic changes in the culture of public schooling and even greater allocation of public funds. In spite of enormous efforts to improve public education during the past two decades, teacher attrition has increased” (2008, p.25).

The authors emphasize that “a mover is just as costly to a school as a leaver is even though school migration does not represent a loss to the national teaching force”(2008, p.26). Much of this migration occurred with teachers moving to schools within the same school districts. Many of these moves it was noted were involuntary, though specific reasons as to why migration occurs were not given. From personal experiences I believe it is more than likely linked to increases and decreases in student population within each individual school. Many teachers who transfer areas or migrate voluntarily do so because of “opportunity for a better teaching assignment” and “dissatisfaction with administrative support at the previous school” (p.26). Those that move involuntarily may be due to no longer being needed in their current school.

Based on the analysis of findings by Boe, et al., (2008), the majority of teachers involved in turnover are experienced teachers, those transferring, migrating and returning after taking a leave from teaching, rather than beginning teachers who much of the research is based upon. They believe the focus should be on the issues that affect the turnover of experienced teachers, the topics of teaching area transfer and migration.

Retaining experienced teachers is important. The price of turnover is “organizational-a cost that can be managed by school personnel” and financial (Boe, et al., p.27). Organizational disruptions can be addressed by providing induction programs not only for new teachers, but for experienced teachers who are reentering the field of teaching, are moving to new schools, and

changing teaching areas. Another way to reduce costs of turnover is to have consistency in curriculum and instruction. There is a lot of controversy of standardization of curriculum; however, the authors believe that this move would be beneficial. It is recommended that “more research should be devoted to understanding the reasons for teaching area transfer and school migration and for interventions that improve the retention of qualified teachers” (p.28).

In a significant analysis of teacher turnover and teacher shortages conducted by Richard Ingersoll (2001) it was noted that the organizational characteristics and conditions of schools may be what is “driving teacher turnover and, in turn, school staffing problems” (p.499). Both the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Teacher Follow-Up Survey (TSF) were used. Like Boe, et al., (2008), Ingersoll concluded that school staffing problems were not so much a result of teacher shortage, but were due to “excess demand resulting from a “revolving door”-where large numbers of qualified teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement” (2001, p.499). This study also showed that the amount of turnover accounted for by those retiring was minor when compared to other factors such as job dissatisfaction and the pursuing of other careers.

School characteristics, such as urban, suburban, rural, private, public, poor and affluent were examined. It was noted that “high-poverty public schools have moderately higher rates, larger schools, public schools in large school districts, and urban schools do not have especially high rates of teacher turnover” (Ingersoll, 2001, p.501). The rate of teacher turnover in low income urban schools greatly concerns Nieto (2003b), “nearly half of all new teachers in urban public schools quit within five years” (p.15). Many of these teachers are new to teaching and are placed in “low-track classes” and “are often poorly prepared in the subject matter” (Nieto, 2003a, p.1).

The data also revealed that “inadequate support from the school administration, student discipline problems, limited faculty input into school decision-making, and to a lesser extent, low salaries” were all associated with turnover (Ingersoll, 2001, p.501). Ingersoll also noted that those schools that had a higher “sense of community and cohesion among families, teachers, and students” had a higher rate of retention (p.501). In interviewing the nine art teachers for my research I found that only two of the nine had inadequate support from their administrators which made me wonder if this was because these art teachers are flexible and have a tendency to turn bad situations into learning experiences? Is it because this is a small pool of art teachers? The two teachers interviewed that had difficult administrators were Jim and Kay. They both said that they kept to themselves and at the end of the school year requested transfers. Jim was given the transfer, Kay was not. Kay’s principal did leave the school over the summer. Kay said in her interview, “that was the only time I ever thought about leaving teaching. I was devastated when I didn’t get that transfer.”

Tye and O’Brien (2002) conducted a survey of 900 past students who had graduated from Chapman University’s education program in California. Each of these students would have had six to ten years teaching experience, the age group of lowest turnover according to other research (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001). Only 114 people responded to the questionnaire; however what was revealed was that several of the participants had left teaching (no number given) and their reasons for leaving were ranked in order of most important to least: “1. accountability, 2. increased paperwork, 3. student attitudes, 4. no parent support, 5. unresponsive administration, 6. low status of the profession, and 7. salary considerations” (p.26). These findings fell in line with what Ingersoll (2001) reported. What was significant was that “it was the work environment itself that ultimately proved unbearable” (Tye & O’Brien, 2002,

p.27). Perrachione, Petersen, and Rosser (2008) also found that work environment and extrinsic factors are more often than not the cause of attrition. It was interesting that in Tye and O'Brien's survey, salary was of least concern to those who actually left teaching, because the data also showed that those teachers *considering* leaving the profession ranked "salary considerations" as the most important factor influencing their decision (p.27). It may be that the other factors of accountability, increased paperwork, and student attitudes weighed so heavily on those who left that salary was no longer thought of as important of a concern as these other issues.

Ingersoll's (2001) research also revealed that turnover is linked to teaching field and those who teach in the areas of "special education, mathematics, and science are typically found to be the fields of highest turnover" (p.502). Many other studies support Ingersoll's findings and this topic constitutes a large number of the titles I found on research in teacher attrition and retention. Another important finding is that whether a teacher stays or leaves teaching is linked to age. Ingersoll describes a "U-shaped curve" with younger teachers "(less than 30 years)" having a high rate of departure, "middle-aged (31-50 years)" rate of turnover declines and "older (greater than 50 years)" departure rises again (retirement years) (p.508).

Multiple regression analysis was used by Ingersoll (2001) to conduct his study in order "to simultaneously account for variation in turnover, both between teachers within schools and between teaching staffs across schools" (p.509). His findings were as follows: demand for new teachers were not primarily the result of student increase, but because of "preretirement turnover"; only a minority of schools actually experience recruitment problems; both migration and attrition result in replacing staff; and "school to school differences in turnover are significant" (pp. 514-515). One school in a district may have little problems with turnover while another school in that same district has major retention problems. For example, a high-poverty

school that is in the same district as an affluent school will more than likely have a higher turnover rate. “Understandably, schools with teacher recruitment problems are also more likely to have teacher retention problems” (p.515).

Looking closely at both high-poverty urban schools and small private schools, the two school types with the highest teacher turnover, Ingersoll (2001) gives us insight as to the prominent reasons why teachers leave these schools. Staffing cutbacks account for 41% of migration and 12% of attrition. Personal reasons, such as pregnancy and health, are attributed to 33% of migration and 45% of attrition. The most prominent reason for turnover was job dissatisfaction which included changing careers. Interestingly enough, less than one-third of the teachers in these two school categories left due to retirement.

The fact that so many teachers are returning to the workforce through the “revolving door” is a major asset to the field of education and a testimony of commitment to those who do return. There is a concern, however, because “the growing group of teachers with more than twenty years of experience [are moving] into retirement eligibility (the “graying” of the teaching force) and are replaced predominately by those with no experience” (Grissmer& Kirby,1997, P13). Ingersoll (2001) suggests making “improvements in organizational conditions, such as increased support from the school administration, reduction of student discipline problems, and enhanced faculty input into school decision-making and increased salaries”(p.525). These changes could contribute to lower rates of teacher turnover, and alter school staffing problems, aiding in the performance of schools. Darling-Smith (2001) noted that the attrition rate was lower in those teachers who graduated from five-year pre-service programs. This too may be an adjustment pre-service programs may want to consider. Although these changes would be beneficial, it does not mean that they will be easy to accomplish, or that they will be quick.

As was stated earlier, the biggest concern currently is that the two fastest growing parts of the U-shaped curve are the “graying” teaching force and the young-teachers with less than six years experience. These two groups also have the highest rate of attrition (Grissmer& Kirby, 1997; Ingersoll, 2001). Retention of current teaching staff is not only educationally sound, and cost efficient, but advantageous to our school systems who must address the problem of attrition.

What are the Characteristics of Those Who Choose to Teach?

Grissmer and Kirby(1997) reported those with the highest levels of measured ability, based on college entrance tests, did not go into teaching. Those hiring teachers looked primarily at prior experience, classroom management, ability to work with diverse populations, and interpersonal skills. Another characteristic was altruism, those going into teaching believed the field benefited society. Women are more likely to go into teaching than men, and while enrollment of student minorities are increasing, recruitment of minority teachers are not keeping pace with this increase. White women are still the majority in teaching, though other groups (men, Asian, Hispanic and African American) are beginning to increase (Grissmer& Kirby, 1997; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Ingersoll, 2001).

Sabol’s study of the ethnic make up of art teachers in the Western Region of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) also found that white art teachers dominated the field with “91% in urban settings and 97% in rural settings” (2004, p.530). The minority make up of art teachers in this region are as follows: African American teachers make up 4% urban and 1% rural settings; “Hispanic or Latino art teachers also were more common in urban settings (3%) than they were in rural settings (0.2%)” and “American Indian and Asian art educators were the same in both urban and rural settings (1% each)” (p.530).

Rong and Preissle (1997) analyzed the 1990 Census micro-data which represented 5% of the U.S. population and found that in 1990 “Asian Americans constituted 2.8% of the U.S. labor force and 3.2% of the population of 3-17-year-olds, but the percentage of Asian elementary and secondary teachers was only 1.2%” (p.272). Other minority groups included Hispanics who represented 7.5% of the labor force, but only 4.7% of the teaching force, and African Americans who accounted for 9.8% of the labor force, but only 9.6% of the teaching force. These statistics in general education are similar to Sabol’s (2004) findings for art education.

Many researchers have documented the need for an increase of minority teachers in elementary and secondary schools and how the teaching force does not reflect the demographics of the student population (Rong & Preissle, 1997; Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Hankins, 2003; Nieto, 2003a; Sabol, 2004). Foster (1997) describes why African-American teachers are best for African-American students, “these teachers are committed to African-American children and the communities which spawn them: to believing in their potential, to working hard to provide a quality education despite difficult circumstances, to struggling against (and helping their students struggle against) all forms of racial oppression, and to building a sense of connection between students and their communities” (p. xi). While there exists controversy in the area of minority teachers better serving minorities I believe this imbalance continues to be a concern for much of society and the education community.

What are the Characteristics of Those Who Choose to Stay?

Those who decide to remain in teaching share the same characteristics as those who went into teaching- “namely, the perception that among all available activities, teaching remains the most attractive in terms of compensation, working conditions, and intrinsic rewards” (Guarino, et al, 2006, p.184). Durka (2002) refers to the intrinsic rewards as the calling to teach or the

vocation. She believes that those who teach because they have “something to contribute, that one can make a difference, and that one can shape the world and not just be shaped by it” have a longer and more gratifying teaching experience and thus staying power (p.10) In the study by Guarino, et al., altruistic reasons were often given for staying and minority teachers were less likely to leave than white teachers, with white women leaving at a higher rate than white men. It was also found that “those who were initially very certain about their decision to teach were more likely to persist” (p.188).

In 1999 Johnson and Birkeland conducted a survey of 50 first and second year teachers and found that those who left within the first three years “either saw their careers as short-term occupations or had experienced frustration or a sense of failure” (cited in Guarino, et al, 2006, p.188). This point is captured in Foster’s (1997) narratives of teachers, most notably the personal narrative of a novice teacher, Ashallah Williams: “As much as I enjoy teaching, I don’t think I will retire from the profession. Unlike people from previous generations, people from mine don’t expect to work at the same career for their entire working lives. For me teaching is one of the first of many careers” (p.188). Brill and McCartney (2008) reported that for several students who are studying to become teachers, many look at schools as the first of possibly several careers.

School Environment

There have been many studies which show the external characteristic of school environment as having a negative impact on teacher retention. Retention is higher in public than private schools because pay is often more; suburban and rural districts have higher retention rates than urban schools, especially low-income urban schools, (Grissmer& Kirby,1997; Ingersoll, 2001; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2005; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Brill, & McCartney, 2008; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008) and those “with higher proportions of

minority, low-income, and low performing students tended to have higher attrition rates” (Guarino et al., 2006, p.191). Even though higher pay is often found in some inner-city schools, “the combination of pay and working conditions often means that better teachers will migrate to school districts with good pay and better students” (Grissmer & Kirby, 1997, p.54). Many teachers thus migrate to what is deemed as “better schools” especially if the pay is close to what they were making or higher. “The high demand for teachers is not being driven by an undersupply of entering teachers, but by an excessive demand for teacher replacements that is driven by staggering teacher turnover...a ‘revolving door’ occupation with relatively high flows in, through, and out of schools” (Ingersoll, 2001, p.500).

Study of Teacher Retention in General Education

In a study of 201 Missouri public school teachers in grades k-5 with five or more years teaching experience, Perrachione, Petersen, and Rosser (2008) answer the question, “Why do they stay?” (p.25). The focus of the study was on teacher retention rather than teacher attrition and an examination of how both the “personal experiences and influences shape teacher decisions to remain in the classroom” (p.25). The conceptual framework was based on “Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory (1966) of job satisfaction” which “theorized that job satisfaction was influenced by “intrinsic factors” or “motivators” relating to actual job content or “what the person does” and by “extrinsic factors” or “hygienes” associated with the work environment or “the situation in which [the person] does” the work” (cited in Perrachione, et al., 2008, p. 27).

Participants consisted of a random sample of teachers from 30 counties in Missouri, 300 participants were selected and 201 surveys were returned “for a return rate of 67%” (p.28). The 34 questions were divided into five sections which examined teachers’ perceptions of job satisfaction and retention. Descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis were used to analyze the

participants' responses. Teachers replied to sections A and B of the survey using a 7-point Likert scale, section C was a combination of the Likert scale and open-ended questions. These questions were used to collect narratives to better understand teacher perceptions of job satisfaction. Section D was made up of a 5-point scale to answer questions specific to retention. The final section, E, was to record teacher profile and demographics, such as ethnic background, gender, age, and years of teaching.

While the majority of the participants were women (92%) and white (98.5%), the range of years taught were more evenly distributed between the 5- 26+ years of teaching experience. The two largest groups were the 5-10 years of experience (29.9%) and the 15-20 years of experience (23.4%) with those having 26+ years being represented with 13.9% of the participants.

Much research that addresses the area of teacher retention uses quantitative data because numbers are more easily understood and are considered more reliable. The findings in this report are significant "because they provide teachers a more current "voice" and the opportunity to explain their perspectives on the teaching profession" (p.34). The teachers' responses to the open-ended questions provided a better understanding in the area of teacher job satisfaction as told in their voices. The data revealed

intrinsic variables (e.g., working with students, job satisfaction, personal teaching efficacy), as well as "extrinsic variables (e.g., good students, teacher support, positive school environment, small class size) appear to influence teacher job satisfaction. Only extrinsic factors were found to influence teachers' dissatisfaction (e.g., role overload, low salary, parent support, student behavior, large class size). (p.34)

Several factors influenced teachers' satisfaction regarding the teaching profession and the job of teaching. The top three factors for the teaching profession were intrinsic: "working with students, personal teaching efficacy, job satisfaction", the top three reasons for satisfaction with the job of teaching were extrinsic: "good students, positive school environment, small class size" (p.35). The data also indicates a degree of dissatisfaction issues among satisfied teachers that were extrinsic in nature for both the profession: "role overload, low salary, and parent support" and the job of teaching: "role overload, student behavior, and large class size" (p.35). While both intrinsic and extrinsic variables are given for teachers choosing to stay in teaching, those who choose to leave usually do so for extrinsic reasons, such as salary, role or work overload, student discipline, lack of administrative, parent, and community support. According to these findings "satisfaction with the profession of teaching-not the job of teaching-determined retention" which is contrary to previous research (Perrachione, et al., 2008, p. 35).

Though this study had the data of reasons for staying, participant's age grouping, and years of teaching experience, the reasons for staying were not reported by age or experience. The question of "Why do they stay?" was instead answered based on the factor responded to most often by all 201 participants.

Studies of Teacher Retention in Art(s) Education

"In 2004, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released evidence that points to arts and music teachers possibly being greatest at risk for leaving their current teaching positions" (Scheib, 2006, p.5). This powerful statement opened Scheib's article on policy implications for retention of arts educators. He discussed and investigated the possibility of why arts and music teachers are at greatest risk for leaving their teaching positions. The article reports some of the NCES 2000-01 findings on arts and music teachers, the most critical being that

teachers of these assignment areas are subject to the highest migration rate of all assignment areas.

Arts and music (combined category assigned by the NCES for art and music teachers) teachers left their current teaching position for another position more than any other area taught. The rate of attrition for arts and music teachers was fourth right behind the areas of math, social studies, and special education for those who left the profession (leavers) (Scheib, 2006). “Out of the 11.5 percent of arts and music teachers who moved to another position in 2000-01, the great majority (69.8 percent) reported leaving for the "opportunity for a better teaching assignment" (p.5). Looking at the actual report by the NCES the next reasons cited most often for moving given by arts and music teachers were “dissatisfaction with workplace conditions at previous school” (39.6%), “dissatisfaction with support from administrators at previous school” (34.3%), and “dissatisfaction with changes in job description or responsibilities” (36.8%) (Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004, p.16). Of the 192,900 arts and music teachers identified, 15,600 were “leavers” (8.1%) and the reason given most often was “to pursue another career” (35.5%) followed by “retirement” (25.5%) (Luekens, et al., 2004, p.18).

As was noted in previous research (Perrachione, Petersen, & Rosser, 2008) increasing recruitment is often seen as the solution to replacing the movers and leavers in education rather than focusing on retention strategies. Various solutions such as emergency licensing programs, mortgage loans for new teachers, and programs such as Troops to Teach are used to attract new recruits into the field of education. These solutions however, are not always good and the end result is teachers with not enough training (Darling-Smith, 2003; Scheib, 2006). Scheib noted that these solutions are successful at recruiting more pre-service teachers; it does not address the issue of job satisfaction by those already teaching. “If teachers leave their jobs due to an overall

dissatisfaction with their position or career, the solutions we seek to rectify a teacher shortage should focus on these issues” (p.5).

Tye and O’Brien (2002) noted the more one is invested in their training for a job, the longer one stays in the profession, the harder it is to leave” (p.32). Scheib refers to this as “human capital theory” which suggests, as did Tye and O’Brien, that there is

a positive correlation between the level of investment or ownership one has in a position or career and their propensity to remain in that position or career. For teachers, this is reflected in the decreased attrition rate after the first few years of teaching.(2006, p.5).

The longer one stays in teaching the harder it is to leave. Ingersoll’s (2001) U- shaped curve supports this theory “with younger teachers having a high rate of departure”, those who invest more time and training which are those of “middle-aged (31-50 years)” the rate of turnover then declines and “older (greater than 50 years)” departure rises again due more to retirement (p.508).

Another area Scheib (2006) believes influences job satisfaction and professional longevity for arts and music teachers is alienation. Perhaps more than any assignment area, arts teachers are “especially prone to alienation and isolation due in no small part to the specialized nature of their subject area that results in fewer (if any) colleagues with matching backgrounds, experiences, and interests” (p.6). Looking at the art and music teachers I know, there is usually one per school who teach in that area. I am fortunate in that I work with another art teacher. Many of the art and music rooms are also physically isolated from the rest of the staff, and scheduling of classes for these areas are when classroom and special education teachers have breaks (because the art and music teachers have their students). Arts and music teachers often have added workloads which isolate them further from the rest of the staff and faculty.

“Identity socialization” is another area which influences satisfaction and longevity (Scheib, 2006, p.6). Many arts teachers come to teaching through active involvement with their craft (such as creating art and performing music). As students, arts and music teachers often are praised for their ability as an artist or musician, not for their potentiality as a teacher. “While involved in teacher training programs, music education students often identify themselves first as musicians, rather than as teacher candidates” (p.6). This may be true for those in art education programs, especially if they are coming from a fine arts background. This conflict between roles, that of artist or performer, and the role as arts or music teacher might contradict one another as each role is attempted. This is referred to as “role stress” which may be “at the heart of an unsatisfactory work life” (p.6). There is a conflict between the dual roles that the teacher sees for her- or him-self, such as the role of artist and of teacher. Role stress occurs due to “conflicting, overwhelming, or unsatisfactory expectations identified by the person” trying to negotiate the dual identities (p.6).

Scheib (2006) suggested that clear communication of expectations and realities is the remedy for arts and music teachers to overcome role stress and job dissatisfaction. Offering professional development geared specifically towards the needs of arts and music teachers may alleviate many of these stressors.

In an article based on a dissertation research study, Cohen-Evron (2002) explored how beginning art teachers negotiate their teaching identity. *Why Do Good Art Teachers Find it Hard to Stay in the Public School System?* investigated the conflict between the art teachers role and beliefs using qualitative methodology. How these teachers negotiated their identities impacted both their happiness with teaching and whether or not they chose to stay in education.

A questionnaire was initially sent to a random sample (no amount given) of students who had graduated with an art education degree from BeitBerl College in Israel during the previous six years. A response was received from 28 former art students and seven were selected as participants for case studies. Over a four year period data was collected through a series of interviews, observations, letters and personal communications. The data was constructed through the told narratives of the seven participants and later shared with them as “member checks” (p.83). Cohen-Evron explained that the art teachers’ beliefs are co-constructed by themselves and others “within discourses they encountered throughout their lives”; their ideals and expectations “are also partially constructed by the art communities during their studies of art and art education” (2002, p.81).

The conditions of art programs in Israel are similar to those in the United States, such as similar budgets, schedules, and ways of negotiating identity. Art is only mandated in the elementary schools, but the art rooms are separate from the school and are housed in bomb shelters which are converted by the art teachers into temporary art rooms. Both middle schools and high schools offer art as well. Art teachers in Israel experience many of the same problems as art teachers in the United States.

Alienation and isolation are one of the conditions created by the physical environment which contributes to the loneliness the art teachers talk about. Consequently professional isolation is also experienced, though the teaching profession is known for professional isolation, these art teachers describe themselves as “being even lonelier” (p.83). Tamar, an art teacher from a boarding school explained: “No one knows what is going on in the art studio. If no one knows and sees-what you do is limited” (Cohen-Evron, 2002, p.83). The art teachers felt there was no one with whom to share experiences or problems. Feelings of frustration emerged because other

teachers and/or administrators could not relate to them and they, in turn, could not relate to the other teachers and/or administrators. Art teachers' positions were based on their rich educational background which gave them the knowledge and language they needed to resist those that "devalued the art studies and to voice their teaching positions. But at the same time it isolated them" (p.84).

Other challenges which emerged were low status of art as a discipline and conflicts with the educational system. The negotiating of identity (artist vs. art teacher) as reported by Schieb (2006) leads to unsatisfactory expectations. Many of the art teachers, reported Cohen-Evron (2002), had a difficult time transitioning from the teacher preparation courses where art was highly regarded to the low status of art within the educational system. This complaint was mostly voiced by elementary teachers who are expected to "decorate" and "produce holiday art" (p. 86). "As a teacher of studio class, you are considered to be the national decorator... I think that there is a problem when one relates to art as a production of endless outcomes. I also have problem with the decorating according to holidays (Talia, an art teacher at a combined middle and high school)" (p. 86).

The marginal place of art was contradicted by the expectations and beliefs held by the art teachers. Several who felt unappreciated and taught what they saw as unnecessary gave this view of low status as a reason for leaving. Many of the experienced art teachers saw the low status of art within the school as a symptom of a larger problem within the educational system, "such as the lack of budge[t], misleading expectations of art classes ("free and fun lessons"), and parents' rejection of art as an irrelevant subject, expressed a conflict of values and worldviews" (p.87).

Some of the art teachers did not feel marginalized, nor felt the status for art as being low. These teachers worked in schools where their principals viewed art as important, had policies of

collaboration on common goals, believed in problem sharing and had an integrated curriculum. Cohen-Evron (2002) concluded, “It seems that changing the culture of isolation to one of collaboration and toward a more integrated curriculum can create different and more appealing teaching conditions” (p. 90-91).

In the *Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education*, Sabol’s (2004) article on retention of art teachers looks at some of the research in general education since “the generic nature of these issues has direct implications for art education” (p.542). As Eisner (2004) notes in the beginning of the book “art teaching is relatively unstudied by researchers and scholars” and this I have found to be very true (p.6). Many of the same reasons general education teachers gave for leaving are the same reasons those who teach art might give (e.g., stress, working conditions, schedules, class size, low prestige, salary).

Sabol suggested providing induction programs with the needs of various teacher subjects in mind, such as art teachers. These type of programs hold “particular power to help teachers acclimate themselves to the demands of the profession while providing support and guidance in adjusting to them” (2004, p.543).

The profession of education is always changing and because of this it is important to offer staff development geared specifically for art teachers. Offering support through meaningful staff development lowers attrition rates (Darling-Smith, 2001). Sabol (2004) found that staff development in urban (44%) and rural (52%) school districts were offered to art teachers, unfortunately, most were not related to their needs yet were mandatory activities. The “most common professional development support” was given to the art teachers in three ways: 1. professional leave- urban (63%) and rural (75%); 2. provided substitute teachers - urban (63%) and rural (78%); 3. conference registration fees- urban (47%) and rural (68%) (2004,

p.543). Many art teachers who attend the conferences of their professional organizations reap the benefits of staff development which pertains to their interests.

I have found little research pertaining to recruitment, certification and retention of art teachers. Sabol (2004) encourages researchers “from all levels of experience” and who work with all “types of research” to investigate these areas to contribute to the “understanding and development of the field” (p.546).

Retaining teachers is important for many reasons, costs to society and the teacher who has invested part of her/his life to becoming a teacher, and the costs to our children who need teachers that are good and have experience. When we are unable to retain good teachers the loss is great. There is a loss of possible talent, a loss of hope, and an even greater loss of prospect for our children. Retaining art teachers is important, but retaining good art teachers who teach with care, compassion and passionately all contribute to a better education and a better life for our children.

CHAPTER 4

“Come on in but excuse the mess, we’ve been busy living here...”

-Friend, Philip Davis

(Journal, January 18, 2011)

It was announced today that the school system in which I work would have more cuts. Our county has the highest number of foreclosures in the nation for 2010, a 25% decrease in tax revenues, and the school system is 85 million dollars short. Every employee in our system would have to take 13 furlough days in order to break even. The governor of Georgia announced earlier this week that there would be no more furlough days. What did this all mean? There was an anxious buzz that swarmed around the school as we tried to wrap our heads around this new announcement. We had just been told two months earlier that things were getting better, the economy was improving and our school system was financially sound even though other counties around us were experiencing more teacher cuts, school closings and the possibilities of losing programs. How could this happen? What were we going to do?

As I sat in my 15 year old black pickup I looked out the window across the emptying parking lot. Many of the staff were leaving or had already left; the sky was appropriately gray as if to reflect the heaviness we all felt. I turned the ignition, the truck rattled as it started up; the weatherman was talking of the possibility of more snow. I knew what this all meant.....more cuts, more jobs lost, more teachers leaving, but not because of choice.

This study explores the personal meanings and understandings a group of exceptional veteran art educators with over 20 years give to their experiences of staying in teaching. Found by way of recommendations, the teachers I have interviewed are representative of the larger population of exceptional veteran art teachers who chose to stay in the field. These nine teachers

are from areas across the eastern United States: Florida, Georgia, Virginia, New York, Long Island and New Jersey. While this study was not limited to the eastern United States; those that responded and followed through with the interviews lived within this region. Each art teacher interviewed address their living classroom experiences, which in many ways are similar to art teachers everywhere, but as with any experience, the perspectives from which they tell their narratives are each individually unique. To listen to these art teachers as they reflect upon their teaching experiences may suggest what it means for those of us teaching art and addressing similar issues. What can we learn from the lived experiences of these nine art teachers? What can we use, modify or apply to our daily classroom living? Do their stories give credence to what we are doing in our classroom? Do they make us question and reflect, perhaps motivating us to continue toward personal growth and development? Do their narratives lend support, or validate what we are already doing and encourage us to continue in our classrooms? Do their stories empower us; give us the strength and motivation to stand erect with pride and to stay as art teachers?

The stories of the nine art teachers in my study are empowering. The thematic chapters begin with the individual art teachers narratives to place the reader within the theme that is explored. I have used an interpretive hermeneutic lens to better understand the personal narratives of the teachers' stories. Hermeneutics, the reading and interpreting of human text, is often associated with religious text. While the text before you is not religious by any means, there are spiritual connections made by some of the teachers to their teaching. This spiritual connection is made most profoundly in chapter six *Vocation*. Hermeneutics is often used to help interpret a reading of some type of human text, whether it is a journal entry or a transcribed interview. The personal experiences of the teachers I interviewed are the text I have interpreted. I

hope you will make your own interpretations as you read this text. The running commentary woven throughout the text was done through a phenomenological position and is written as a self-reflective account of my thoughts and discoveries as I waded through the process of analyzing and interpreting my data.

Pulling poetry from the interviews became a way of getting to know my data more closely and to represent my interpretations in another manner that might allow both the reader and myself more insight to the art teachers' stories. I begin Chapter five by representing my interpretation using a poem to get at the essence of the emotions of the life journey of becoming an art teacher. The poem pulled from Patty's interview is titled, *I didn't know about everything else which was gonna come my way....* Based on Gee's (1989) methodology of analyzing narratives through the use of listening closely to the pauses and breaks, to the patterns in speech a poem was created. Gee's methodology of analyzing narrative is explained in greater detail within this chapter.

Chapters five through nine includes a self-portrait and self-reflection by either the art teachers or myself as a representation of the themes of Vocation, Resiliency, Reinventing our selves, and Living, not staying. The visuals are used to support and enrich the narratives.

Chapter six, *Teaching Art as a Vocation* begins with Dee's reflection and description of her career as an art teacher as both an avocation and vocation and flows into Nancy's story of struggle with career choice. Though not initially interested in teaching art, she relates to her being called into the profession as "almost spiritual" as she recounts the story of a little boy named Kenny. **Chapter seven** addresses the theme of *Resiliency* and the dominating effect it has had on building character and a quiet strength the art teachers carry with them as they chose with a purpose to stay in the art room. **Chapter eight** attends to the notion that as art teachers we are

continuously growing, transforming and *Reinventing* our selves, spiritually, artistically as both an artist and an art teacher. *Living, not Staying* is ultimately what has kept these nine art teachers in the art room and is explored in **Chapter nine**.

My intention was to initially be a quiet observer, a listener who kept silent and tried to record and document unobtrusively. I found that I couldn't do this; it's not in my nature. As is common to qualitative research, there is ebb and flow: the tide comes in and leaves gifts along the shore; if you hesitate, they are taken back into the sea. I couldn't sit back and watch, listen and receive; I had to jump up, run and collect and muse over my treasures, the stories I was collecting. I've had to deal with this in some manner and so I have kept a journal, both hand-written, and typed within my data. I have also collected what I referred to earlier as my "ponderings". My ponderings are my thoughts, moments of "ahas", observations, quotes and the like written on anything available to me at the moment. And so, while this study is about exceptional art teachers with 20 or more years of teaching experience, it is also about a researcher who is a mother, a wife and an art teacher who is constantly getting in the way and out of the way of her research as she reflects on her own personal teaching experiences in relation to life. As my friend, Phillip Davis once said to me, "Come on in but excuse the mess, we've been busy living here". And so I welcome you, please, come on in, enjoy the stories, but remember, we've been busy living here and what once was, may no longer be and as with all of life things change, they ebb and flow in different directions, and often it's very messy.

CHAPTER 5

Becoming an Art Teacher

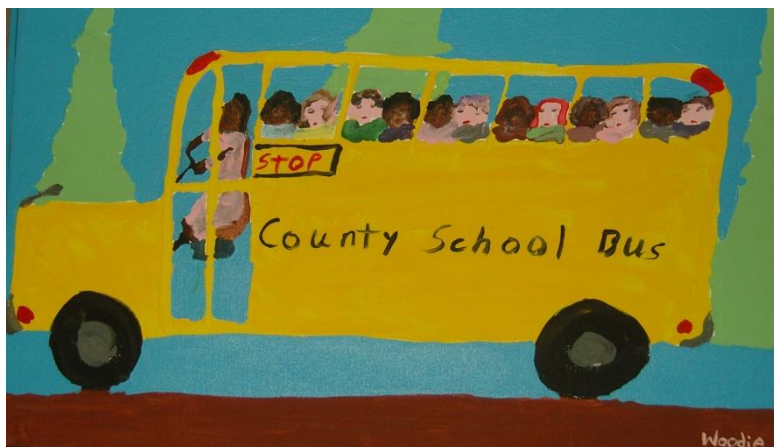


Figure 1. School Bus by Woody Long

Becoming an Art Teacher: I didn't know about everything else which was gonna come my way....

(Journal entry, May 2010)

It must have been a Friday, it had to be a Friday; it was the day before my presentation and so it had to be Friday. I sat waiting on the lower level of the conference center. The intimate sitting space was perfect for my fourth and final interview. Patty had been recommended by not two, but three different people and by countless others at the conference. I had met Patty in the late 1980s when I had attended my first national conference in Atlanta. I liked her a lot, but really didn't know her, and certainly did not know if she was going to fit my criteria of being an exceptional art teacher. Was she one who is both a motivator and an encourager? Does she engage children in their learning, know her subject area and how to teach it, and still have a passion for teaching? As I sat and waited, I watched the leaves as they danced over the cobbled space between the conference center and hotel. The large glassed wall afforded me the perfect area to watch for her.

Becoming an Art Teacher

Remembering

I didn't know about everything else which was gonna come my way...

it's not because we had a wonderful elementary art teacher,
came to the building
once a month
came for a week
classroom teacher
could
sign
up

they had a box in the back of the room
they had those Styrofoam balls
Christmas
ball
ornaments

allowed to paint a painting
it would be a really long time
before you'd get to paint again
you'd take all day
to paint
that
one
painting

Inspiration

I didn't know about everything else which was gonna come my way...

it wasn't that I was inspired
I didn't have one
subconsciously
thought this is a good idea
I can do it for somebody ...
I wanted
to
do
art

that urge that you can't stop
gotta do something
gotta create something
you'll explode
if
you
don't

*Loss**I didn't know about everything else which was gonna come my way...*

I lost my dad at 17
 I knew
 there wasn't going to be anybody
 to
 bank
 roll
 me

logical solution
 to be an art teacher
 I
 could
 do
 art

*Resolve**I didn't know about everything else which was gonna come my way*

just saw that it was
 a wonderful job
 would keep me safe
 would make my way
 something
 I thought
 I'd
 like
 to
 do

just didn't realize
 how much
 I was going to get
 suckered in
 and
 love
 it.

What does it mean to become an art teacher? What is a way to explain the phenomena of becoming that opens up a door to understanding that may not be attainable without living the experience? The four themes of vocation, resiliency, reinventing, and the idea of looking at teaching as a part of living, not staying, are all themes of *why* these art teachers chose to stay in

the art room. But the question of *how* they got there was revealed as well. I begin my section of the analysis and interpretation of the collected art teacher narratives with a pulled poem. This poem offers us a glimpse into what it means to become an art teacher.

I later remember thinking to myself, What stories would she tell? What role would her stories play in my research? My interpretation began the first day I heard Patty talk. I had images in my mind. I remember being surprised with how quickly she trusted me and the brutal truth of her stories. Transcribing is hard work. It takes hours. Patty's one hour interview lasted almost two hours. She had stories that needed to be told, needed to be heard. Using Gee's (1991) methodology I read over my transcription again, listening to the recorder. I could visualize her sincerity as she spoke, her deep voice sometimes falling to a low whisper. I paid close attention to the spoken units that she had created. Her poem evolved over the course of days. Words were deleted, but always kept in order. I thought at first that much of what was said in the beginning was all over the place, there were a lot of, "you knows" and "um's" and "ah's". Words were often repeated "came for a week, came for about one week" and sentences left hanging incomplete. What was I going to do with this? It seems that Gee's method worked out well for this narrative. I removed all of the "you knows", "um's", "ah's", and "ands". I reread. Something wasn't right. I took out all of the "you knows", broke the narrative into units: remembering, inspiration, loss and resolve. I moved the text so that words were arranged in lines, stanzas and parts. The stanzas were based on speed of talk; they are grouped within the same manner as Patty spoke them. This was where listening and following the transcript was crucial. I kept looking at a section on the influence of gangs within Patty's transcripts. I had read these transcripts many times over. I had spent hours listening to her voice, her pauses, the cracks in her voice and most of all the silences. What I found in the beginning of Patty's story surprised me. I didn't realize it,

but her story of why she became an art teacher was right there interwoven within the first several pages of the text.

I discovered the poem, *I didn't know about everything else which was gonna come my way* by using Gee's method as explained in Reissman (2008). Within Patty's "extended narratives of experience" the story of becoming an art teacher through the remembering of childhood inspiration, parental loss as a teenager, and the resolve as young woman coming into her own. (p.93). Riessman speaks of how she first introduces Gee's work to her students by having them listen to the recording he had of a woman suffering from schizophrenia. The speech is disjointed and not clear. By slowing the recording Gee was able to hear how each part fits into the whole. I had difficulty finding story units as I bounced back and forth trying to follow Patty as she began one story and wandered in another direction. Several listenings were needed. Patty apologized several times during our conversation for switching tracks when speaking, "you know, I have ADD, so I'm here and I'm, there; yeah, teaching art is perfect [laughs]". I don't know if my discovery of the story of becoming an art teacher would have been happened if someone else had transcribed this interview for me. I felt as if I had really gotten to know Patty because of my hours, days, weeks, and months spent with her (figuratively speaking).

The poem begins with her experience in elementary school in the art room and about the art teacher who "came to the building...once a month...came for a week". She looked forward to these visits. Her memory is vivid as she describes the "box in the back of the room...they had those Styrofoam balls...Christmas ball ornaments" and the joy of being "allowed to paint a painting" and how long the wait was between art classes, "it would be a really long time before you'd get to paint again". Patty never wanted that day to end "you'd take all day to paint that one painting". Arts programs are often the first to be cut when funds are low. Many students who

were not successful in school have talked of going because it was art, or music that kept them wanting to go back. Of the nine art teachers seven talk of this attraction to school because of the arts. Kay tells us “art saved my life”, Jim, “it was what made me alive”, Patty, “I had to do it, I had no choice”. Art teachers and those who teach in arts education programs such as drama, dance and music, will attest that their programs keep students who are not successful in other areas in school. In October 2009 a report “Staying in School” was issued by The Center for Arts Education looking at the drop out and graduation rates in New York City. Within this report it was stated,

Studies attest to the success of strong arts programs as a means to prevent the disengagement that usually predicts dropping out. Arts education has a measurable impact in deterring delinquent behavior and truancy problems, and students at risk of not successfully completing their high school education cite their participation in the arts as a reason for staying in school. The opportunity for students to engage in the arts—through bands and choruses, dance and theater productions, exhibitions of their original art, and publications of original literary and visual work—has always been a strong motivator for students and can play a key role in tackling the graduation crisis. (p.5)

Patty’s story of becoming an art teacher begins in her elementary art class and continues throughout her life. She became an art teacher because “*I wanted to do art..that urge that you can’t stop, gotta do something, gotta create something...you’ll explode if you don’t*”. Patty had overcome a hardship in her teen years, the loss of her father and the realization that no one was going to “bank roll me”. Through the process of going through schooling she talks to the various roadblocks she has to overcome, finances, difficulties in school, and a less than positive student teaching experience. As she says, “I

didn't know about everything else which was gonna come my way". Her resolve, after remembering her experiences leading up to her becoming a teacher, being inspired through her need to create and the realization of being on her own after the loss of her father, was that a teaching was indeed a "wonderful job". Patty found that teaching art "would keep me safe" and "would make my way" by doing "something I thought I'd like to do". She "just didn't realize how much I was going to get suckered in and love it".

I pulled the poem by arranging the single topic stanzas in the order that they were told. While I knew a shifting of words can take place in narrative, this poem, with the exception of the repeated line, *I didn't know about everything else which was gonna come my way* are presented in the order they were told. Patty emphasized words in her talk. She would slow down and articulate each syllable. I tried to capture this at the end of each stanza by placing a single word on the last three to five lines, such as "and loved it".

Using Gee's methodology helped me tremendously in focusing in on a story I had not noticed but did recognize as it was familiar to me, the evolving into a teacher. The temporal placement of becoming an art teacher was a lifelong event for Patty as it is for most in education. The poem begins during her elementary school experience and ends more than 50 years later in the classroom where Patty says, "just didn't realize how much I was going to get suckered in and love it".

The use of poetry allowed me to dig deeper and muck around in my data. I don't think that any one way is right for all data. As with the stories of Gloria, the stories of Patty need to be viewed and interpreted from different perspectives. A blend of Richardson's and Gee's methodology is but one way to see and hear Patty's stories and those of the other art teachers.

Each of the following chapters contains poems based on the themes. Some of the poems are based on the story of one of the art teachers; some are a blend of all nine.

CHAPTER 6

Teaching Art as a Vocation

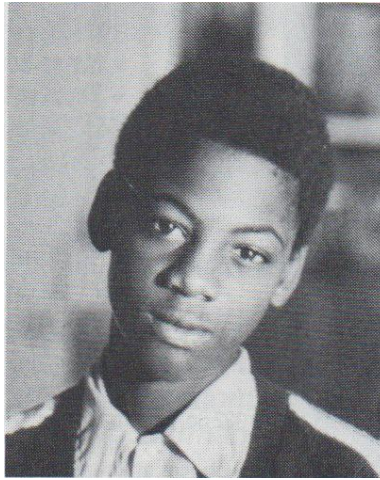


Figure 2. Kenny.

The work of a teacher--exhausting, complex, idiosyncratic, never twice the same--is, at its heart, an intellectual and ethical enterprise. Teaching is the vocation of vocations, a calling that shepherds a multitude of other callings. It is an activity that is intensely practical and yet transcendent, brutally matter-of-fact, and yet fundamentally a creative act. Teaching begins in challenge and is never far from mystery. (Ayers, 2001, p.122)

The photograph of the young boy above is “Kenny”. He changed the life of his art teacher one day. Nancy had been teaching elementary school for a few years when she met Kenny. She later shares his story as one that “to me that just encompass everything we do.”

We each approach teaching from a unique perspective. We bring into our classrooms what we feel will best connect with our individual students and give them another layer of understanding about learning and life. It is an intimate encounter, an exchange of knowledge, understanding and care. Teaching is a journey filled with wrong turns, flat tires, and potholes. As we move along this road of becoming there are also discoveries of potential, wonder, and

sometimes we happen upon places we had not before imagined. Some may say teaching is a noble cause, an act of sacrifice; others may say that it is a job done by those who cannot do anything else (Ayers, 2001, Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005, Farber, 2010, Moss, Glenn, & Schwab, 2005). Those who do not teach rely on their snapshot memories of school as a student (Ayers, 2001). Many who do have talked of the role of teaching as one of the most difficult career choices that can be made (Ayers, 2001, Beattie, 2009, Durka, 2002, Farber, 2010, Moss, Glem, & Schwab, 2005). Others have documented the joys and frustrations in teaching through personal accounts (Ayers, 2001, Hankin, 2003, Foster, 1997, Landson-Billings, 1994). Being under the constant microscope of society puts teachers in a position of great stress yet they continue to teach because it is a calling, “a good fit” (Dee, Personal Interview, 2011) that “feels right” (Ruby, Personal Interview, 2010).

I always felt it was an avocation as well as a vocation. I spent hours doing this, teaching and being involved in teaching and I always focused on what the kids felt and thought versus what teachers or administration thought. I felt it was an avocation, it was something that I was meant to do; it was my calling. Teaching art was just a good fit, you know? And I think that the way the children responded to me made my feelings more tangible. That was always important; that they saw themselves as artists, especially when they did something that they thought was more like an artist, such as painting, was always so important too. I can't imagine having done anything else in my life because it gave me such a deep feeling of satisfaction. You know, I was good at it and it felt right. (Dee, February 2011)

What is a vocation? How does it compare to a job? Religious vocations speak about giving and the relationship of giving freely and receiving fulfillment because of the spiritual

gifts that are received. Is this similar to teaching, the idea of receiving fulfillment in teaching as a gift? In *The Teacher's Calling*, Durka (2002) addresses the issue of the art of teaching as being not just a job, but a spiritual calling where the longer we teach the more aware we become of our limits of understanding our students. She refers to this as "the learned uncertainty of teachers" (p.1). A job is different from a vocation on a core level of commitment. A job is a place where you go, work, and then go home again. There is not the same depth of commitment as there is in a vocation. A vocation focuses "inward to the core of the practice itself" (p.4). Those teachers who see teaching as a vocation "derive their identity from an inner motivation that allows them to shape their roles rather than merely occupy them" (p.4). Dee talks of having "spent hours doing this, teaching and being involved in teaching. "When asked much later (e-mail, November 6, 2011) to tell me how she distinguishes between an avocation and a vocation she replied,

To me, your vocation is your job, or the work in which you are employed. It's nice if you also enjoy your work, but that is not a prerequisite. I look at an avocation as something you enjoy doing, almost like a hobby. For me, teaching art is something that I have always truly enjoyed doing, so it is fun to me. It is also something that spills into other areas of my life, like a hobby. Teaching art was my job, but it was so important to me that it was also a large part of my life. Most of my "leisure" time was spent in some type of pursuit of art or art education. A large number of my friends are also art teachers, so we spend a lot of time talking about or engaging in activities relating to art or art education. Teaching art has been the cornerstone of my life, and almost everything I do relates to it in some way.

While Dee sees an avocation as being a more internal need to be what it is we choose to be, “a calling,” I see that as a vocation. I personally do not see these as words of different hierarchy of being called to a profession, but rather view them as equal in meaning. Because I hear and read the word “vocation” as representing what it is that some feel as a “calling”, I chose to continue using the word vocation rather than avocation.

Dee’s sentiment is reflective of the other eight art teachers that I interviewed. They all talk of their art teaching as being something they bring with them everywhere they go. Ruby, a retired middle school art teacher, continued teaching at the college level art education courses, became active in her state association and later wrote a text series on art education for grades K-12. She continues to this day working on art education curriculum, advocacy and working with art teachers. Jim, who taught elementary school, continues to teach at museums, works with community groups and is involved in all aspects of art education. He too is retired. All of the art teachers in this study are still growing in their education, still have a hand in teaching art and living art in and out of their classrooms.

There is a saying that goes somewhat like this; the beginning of wisdom is understanding that we don’t know everything. Each of the art teachers highlighted knew that they had a lot to learn from the start of their teaching. They all say they are still learning and do so with a need to understand and know more. They all began programs with little to nothing and had to find creative ways to acquire basic supplies and equipment needed to keep their programs alive. Others did not have the depth of knowledge either academically or pedagogically to meet the many levels of needs their students required, such as working with students of different ethnicities, socio-economic status, and learning abilities. When talking to these nine art teachers I found that ingenuity, flexibility, resiliency, the willingness to change and alter their teaching,

living their vocation, as well as this call to teach were common characteristics they shared. Each independently sought knowledge to instill an understanding about their vocations beyond their classroom walls and inspire their students to think beyond the confines of their immediate world. They each also reached out to other art teachers, the community and advocate the importance of art education. As Dee stated, "Teaching art has been the cornerstone of my life, and almost everything I do relates to it in some way." This sentiment is seen throughout all nine interviews and in my personal reflections on teaching.

As an art teacher I too had very little, I saw the middle income urban school I taught in turn into a Title I school in a few short years. The school went from a few people who spoke Spanish to a student body of 1600 who represented 53 different languages; this all happened in a span of about five years. I had to learn how to negotiate a large number of students, who spoke no English, came from less than good homes and who struggled academically. I found that art was the language they all shared. I vividly remember wondering how I can get these kids to talk to one another even though they didn't always speak the same language? I remember the students pointing, picking up pictures and signaling each other with gestures as they created group murals that flowed together. They worked together and created amazing art works that were later published in national magazines and books and hung in galleries, their work sometimes being purchased. The art room was a place where the students were successful. It still is a place of success.

During the late 1980's there was a rapid rise in the number of immigrants coming into the urban area near where I teach. The schools were not prepared for these children and the differences in their cultural backgrounds. These were the years of multiculturalism, the years of staff developments on how to teach children of other cultures without offending them or their

families. I remember physical fights breaking out during Parent Teacher Meetings (PTA) because of conflicts between some of the cultural communities within our district. I remember the lockdowns at school, when my job was running to the outside door and using a lock key to make sure that no one entered the building. I also remember how the custodian and I, along with a few other teachers, would lock the school at 8:00 at night and leave the school dark just like it was when we had opened it that morning for breakfast for the students. I put in long days, and gave a lot, but I felt that I got even more in return. Teaching continues to lift me to fill me with a satisfaction of doing what I was meant to do. Even though all of my teaching situations have not been stellar, I feel that I was supposed to be. I remember my first school, I felt called to teach there. I saw it as more than a job; it was and still remains my vocation.

(Nancy, Personal Interview, 2010).

We try to empower them [our students], to know that they do not have these limitations of these horrible conditions where they live, and all of that. They do not have to accept that...they ..do.. not.. have.. to ..accept..that [stresses and pauses between each word for emphasis]. You know limitation is a human physical kind of thing; lack of limitation is. That's why I think, you know, the arts are kind of a spiritual thing that a lot of our kids get because they really lift you up into the area of openness and the abundance of knowledge and the unlimited nature of knowledge, the unlimited nature of solving problems and I think that it really [long pause] it really can help us [pause] a lot.

Nancy too sees art as being able to empower students to move forward. This is echoed throughout the interviews. How does this happen? The nine art teachers talk of shaping their roles to fit the needs of the students. Kay (Personal Interview, 2011) talks at length about the

challenges of teaching with little to no support both financially and from her administration. Yet it is what she loves. It's what fits.

(Kay, Personal Interview, 2010).

Kay: They were watching me. So, um, so, so I had, [pauses] so there was a friction. He [her principal] was starting a new art program and I was blazing a trail. I had \$150.00 a year to work with and I had seventh through twelfth grade and I had, every nine weeks the classes would change in rotation. So, um, it's not a whole lot of money to work with.

J: Right.

Kay: So I went back to thinking about craft, and, um, I had a good friend who I carpooled with who was a horticulture teacher and he said, "You know, I don't know if you have noticed behind the school there is a sink hole, almost like a cave. You ought to go check it out." He said, "I think there is some kaolin in there, there's some clay." So, um, so I went after it rained, I went over there and sure enough, there was a streak of kaolin. And so I thought, hey, this is what we're going to do. So I got all the kids in the ceramics class. Oh, it wasn't called ceramics class, it was Art I, um, to go out with shovels from the horticulture department and dig the clay in the rain in this, like, sink hole. You know, it was like;[pauses for a description], like you had to get it when it was really squishy, really gooey.

J: Really?

Kay: Yes, because of all the sediment, you know, because you can't see it, you know, when it's dried out. You can't get it out. So we went and, and dug and the kids loved it. And we were able to get a potter's wheel donated and we just started throwing.

Durka (2002) notes that determination, courage, and flexibility are also hallmarks of the call to teach rather than the working in a job. In the snapshot above Kay displays these characteristics by not allowing a small budget and an administrator who was watching her get in the way of her teaching. Being both flexible and seeing the possibilities in the resources that were available to her, she developed a strong visual arts program which later gained recognition for the high level of achievement and creativity the students displayed.

Being called to the vocation of teaching is larger than all of the individual duties, lessons and tasks that are daily performed; it is a deep profound source of joy. The art teachers talked of the impact teaching had and continues to have on them personally. As Kay stressed, “We put a lot into our kids, a lot of time, a lot a lot of love, and we get it all back and then some. You know, like when they come back and tell you how much that, that architecture class they took meant to them and how that art class helped them” (Interview Transcript, 2010). Durka explains, “All along, as we have been teaching others, we have been feeding our soul” (p.80).

Nancy’s Story

(Journal, March 2010)

I glanced at my watch 10:00 a.m. Oh good, I thought, I’m exactly on time. I entered through the glass doors of the second tower of the Hilton Baltimore. I had been looking forward to this conference for months. I would accomplish three things. First, I would get to see many of my old friends, people I have known for twenty years since my first conference. People who were as excited about what was happening in their classrooms as I was and were willing to share new ideas or new perspectives on the tried and true lessons. Secondly, I would get to meet the four people I had contacted and with whom I had contacted and had been in an e-mail dialogue with over the past few weeks. Of these four women I was to interview I knew two. Though I did not

know them well I knew them and they knew me. Both Nancy and Pat had each taught over 30 years and they were both still teaching, Why? They both told me because they love it. Ceci and Kate wanted to be interviewed together. I did not know these women, just their reputations as exceptional art teachers. Both were recommended by several other art teachers from the Southeast. I was concerned about interviewing them together. Lastly, I was anticipating making more connections to find more art teachers to interview for my research.

I look at my watch again. This time it's a few minutes after ten. I look through the windowed wall and watch the leaves as they dance across the cobbled road that is the breezeway between the hotel and the convention center. She approaches slightly bent, a smile on her face. We hug, say good morning and I throw away the container from the blueberry yogurt I had just finished. We sit caddy-corner from each other on the royal blue cushioned chairs next to the floor to ceiling glass wall, light trickles in and hits her gray hair giving the effect of a halo of curls.....

J: So, what influenced you to become a teacher?

Nancy: You got me to think about that and I had never, ever, planned to do-never. I was completely immersed in music and theater and it was only when they asked me to work in both drama and art department that I just said, Yes, which is typical just being asked to do stuff. So, I said, sure I'll do that- sure I'll do that. That's kind of how I got started.

J: Okay, Okay.

Nancy: Yes, and as a favor to my dad. I was living in New York and I was doing all the spongy things after grad school and just having a ball in New York and doing all sorts of things, like theater. And on my way back from Christmas vacation my dad wanted me to meet a friend of his who was from Jacksonville and he knew of this need at the

university. So my dad said, just as a favor to me will you please stop by and talk to them? And I did it and they hired me right on the spot. So, that was really it and I was the youngest faculty member. I didn't know how much they were taking advantage of me because I had five different preparations.

J: Oh wow-what were you teaching?

Nancy: 'Cause I was teaching where I was running back and forth across campus and I was teaching portrait, to scene design, to drawing, to architectural ornament....it was just, just hysterical. Then, on top of all that we were doing shows all the time so we were there way into the night and on weekends building sets and all. They never quite understood that life [pause] and then they'd give us 8:00 classes [morning] after we'd work until 3 AM. So they got their money's worth, they really got their money's worth. But in the long run I looked on it as such a benefit to me because I never would have learned so much so fast if this had not happened. So, I was teaching art history, and theater history and it just made it all come together and it set it up that I could teach, easily teach humanities.

J: Ah, nice, so, from that, that was in Florida, so then you started teaching next at the elementary level?

Nancy: Right. Uh, yes. So, I stopped for a short time because there was a lot of ballet and set design so we did that. Right- after all of that we were transferred from Jacksonville to Miami and that's when I was asked to teach in this elementary art class. And *that's* what did it. I just thought, this is sooo cool. (smiles...pauses). But you know in the back there must have been something; there must have been *something* that planted something about education in my head, because my dad had a private school and the way that evolved was

he was a stutterer, he really had a very difficult time speaking. And he then came back from... I want to say the First World War? And he came back and realized that there was really this need, like veterans and so forth and he started. He really figured out how to correct stuttering and to this day people will say you can't do that. You just have to live with that.

(Journal, September 26, 2011)

Interesting that the examples that we follow, those who inspire us to go into teaching, do not just tell us to be teachers, they inspire us through their actions. This brings to mind the idea from many of my religious classes; that we are always being watched by our children and the children and people around us. We learn by example. If we see good examples, more than likely we will imitate and pursue to replicate those examples. This has huge implications for all educators. We need to be careful what we do and say because our students see how we handle ourselves in many situations. Our actions, whether good or not, have the power to impact our students. This is both humbling and a little scary at the same time. The ethic of care is so important. Noddings often talks of the caring relationship between the teacher and the student as being a powerful one that can help students build confidence to confront obstacles in life.

Nancy: He figured it out. One of the ways he figured it out was that he needed to establish a totally new habit. So he needed to have a boarding school situation so that they were practicing daily, you know at night, in the morning and everything, what they were learning and so that's when they became boarding school. And as soon as it became a boarding school all this other stuff erupted, before the term learning disabilities, you know before all that he was discovering that there were people who couldn't read, that

there were reasons why they couldn't read. And so that same problem solving thing, you know, led to remedial work in education. So that was his school.

J: oh that is remarkable.

Nancy: So, you know, that was obviously a built in motivation that I never consciously thought about, but I was certainly overwhelmed with how much good he did. So, I think that was part of it, I didn't know if that was it but I was truly overwhelmed with how much good he did. You know, I'd work for him over summers and I would come back and it was just wonderful and it meant so much to me. So anyway, that must have planted some kind of seed. And you know. I'd work there in the summers and people would come back and they would say, "Oh I need to see Mr. Parker, he, he saved my life, I need to tell how much he meant to me." It was just so overwhelming. [is talking with much emotion, words often sticking in her throat].

J: Isn't that wonderful to hear about your father?

Nancy: Yeah.....pause. So that must have planted some kind of seed there.

J: Yeah, I think so, I think so. So, did you do a student teaching experience or you did not? Because you came basically right down from New York, [notes ruffling] "went into the university" [both voices overlapping] and then from there went down into Miami?

Nancy: and plunked into an elementary school.

J: Boy, talk about culture change too.

Nancy: Yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah.

J: Temperate...everything, I mean, wow. And, um, you said something...um "planted education in my head" I just liked that phrase, that idea because I can so visually see that taking place.....

Nancy: That's Interesting.

J: I am interested in you describing that feeling or thought process of that idea...you may not be able to but we may happen upon it as we talk further; I don't know. I just thought that was a lovely description.

Nancy: That's interesting because now that you say it, and you're getting me to think about it, I mentioned that problem solving, I think it's just... I think it's the sense that my dad had in approaching all of that was that lack of limitation. If the student isn't limited...don't we try to do that with our kids? We try to empower them, to know that they do not have these limitations of these horrible conditions where they live, all of that. They do not have to accept that...they ..do.. not.. have.. to ..accept..that [stresses and pauses between each word for emphasis]. You know limitation is a human physical kind of thing...lack of limitation is....That's why I think, you know, the arts are kind of a spiritual thing that a lot of our kids get- because they really lift you up into the area of openness and the abundance of knowledge and the unlimited nature of knowledge, the unlimited nature of solving problems and I think that it really [long pause] it really can help us, I think, a lot.

Looking at the arts as a “spiritual thing that a lot of our kids get” connects with the concept of looking at a specific subject area as a vocation, in this case teaching art (Durka, 2002). While Nancy did not originally pursue a degree in teaching, “I had never, ever, planned to do-never. I was completely immersed in music and theater and it was only when they asked me to work in both drama and art department that I just said, Yes.” The trip back to New York from south Florida with a stop in Jacksonville to visit her father's friend brought Nancy out of the big city and away from the theater and into teaching at the college level. Being young she

was taken advantage of with a schedule that kept her on the go constantly. Then she took a detour, “That’s when I was asked to teach in this elementary art class. And *that’s* what did it. I just thought, ‘this is sooo cool.’” She found what felt right, “There must have been *something* that planted something about education in my head.” That something we find is her father. Talking about her experience working with him Nancy tells us, “So, you know that was obviously a built in motivation that I never consciously thought about but I was certainly overwhelmed with how much good he did.” Her description of “fell into it” also demonstrates the journey we take when moving from one place in our life to another to find what it is we love. The story Nancy shared of her father and his dedication and determination to help his students overcome stuttering and the time and commitment he gave is evident in this passage, “So, he needed to have a boarding school situation so that they were practicing daily, you know at night, in the morning and everything.” This was the model she followed. Nancy found her vocation, her love. It was and still remains teaching art and educating the public about art education as well.

As the interview continues Nancy shares the story of Kenny, a boy who ultimately changed her life. Thirty years after this story took place she writes an article about the boy and the effect it has on her and causes her to re-learn and apply the lesson learned from her father of not accepting “limitations.”

Nancy: Um, Kenny was in a mentally handicapped class and, um, he was very old to be in elementary school, you know, he’d been held back and so forth. He just had this look in his eye that I just saw that there was something in there, but my only experience, he came and he was only there for two years and I had no connection with him what-so-ever. He would just kind [of] go around and secretly cut up other people’s papers. I

remember distinctly I had some gold wrapping paper that I was saving for a very special occasion- you know that gold, it's wonderful, you know.

J: Yeah.

Nancy: And he went back and just cut it up to ribbons and so, that[pauses] he wouldn't talk to me, we couldn't establish communications [pauses]. So, this one day we were doing resist and we just talked about how wax pushes the water away and so forth and we talked about the word resist, about how you push against something [can hear hand making a clapping noise] and there was just the tiny little glimmer in his eye that he might be interested in this lesson. So it was going to be this big flower thing that they drew with chalk and they did the crayon and then they painted the dye over it. And he started, and I mean it couldn't have been three seconds, and I saw this big X on the paper and big words, "I cannot do it, I cannot do it, I cannot not, not do it, I cannot do it," and for some reason....of course it was headed to the trash. Something told me to hang on to it and so I did and normally we would try to rescue it and try to get them to solve the problems you know, but whatever, I didn't want to pressure anything. So I just let him start over. And again, he had a perfectly good start and he understood, but it's just, "I cannot, I cannot." So I sat down and talked to him. I turned away from the other kids. I really shouldn't have done that, but I sat down and talked to him about how special school was...I just, I just still get upset....[tears up]

J: I know, I know, you're getting very emotional.

Nancy: but, um.....that everything that you do at school you practice. You know, you practice laughing, you practice writing, and you practice thinking, and you practice everything that you are- you practice you practice in school and all of these things, by the

way including art, are things that you are going to be able to use, you know when you get a job. I said, "You know, is there some kind of a job you'd like to have?" He didn't answer of course, but I said, "It doesn't matter if you're going to be a gardener, or you're working in an auto shop, or whatever, you're going to need to know how to follow directions and you're going to need to show that you can hang on and do the job, you know, that nothing's going to stop you." There was nothing, there was no response during all of this, none, but he at least listened. So, he did start again and he really had a nice piece. About that time class was over and I asked the teacher if they could take their crayon drawings because they were all established, but if they could take them and finish them and bring them back so we could get to dye. And the teacher, he saw what Kenny had written and he said privately, "I'm surprised he did this." So, they left and a little bit later I meet him [Kenny] in the hall and he brought to me this stack of papers. I said, "Oh Kenny, they're done! Is yours there?" And he says, "Bottom" [deepens voice]. So his was on the bottom and it was glorious! It was just glorious! Just a big splash of flower, just a splash! So a little bit later we got the dye out and I put them on display. We had a really wonderful big display area on the way to lunch. So every single person at school would see the display on the way to lunch. And so I put them all proudly up. He hadn't signed his, and so I wrote just the tiniest little "Kenny" down at the bottom corner like that. I later looked and that part had been torn off, but, and this is the part that gets to me. [Becoming very emotional- voice cracking, pauses] but on the back of it... in very little tiny letters he wrote, "I can do it."

J: Awe, gosh...

Nancy: ...I mean, to me that just encompass everything we do.

Duka (2002) stated, “it is much easier to change jobs than it is to switch vocations” (p.3). Nancy grew from this exchange that occurred between her and Kenny. It is as Dee said earlier “the cornerstone” of her career. I wanted to know more about Kenny. Was there a happy ending? Did he suddenly overcome his lack of self-confidence? Nancy told me that she didn’t know what happened to Kenny after he left her school. He was in a special education program and she fears things didn’t go well for him at the middle school from the bits and pieces she heard. Where Kenny went she doesn’t know, but he does stay in her heart and on her mind. He was “glorious” and he could do it, even if it was for just that small span of time in elementary school. “I can do it.”

(Journal, September 3, 2011)

I have listened to these tapes many times. Giving reflection a limited number doesn’t work. To say, listen through your taped interview, then transcribe and listen a third time as many researchers recommend (such as Riessman and Siedman) just doesn’t do it for me. Maybe it’s because I had to leave my writing for seven weeks to attend to family issues. I find that I am listening again, to reacquaint myself with my data. The absence from it, my data, has not made me less aware of what I had heard, but has made me more attuned to what I had not heard.

I am sitting at a conference table in the Carmel Center in Jefferson, Georgia. I am alone, removed from my family, the animals, and the noises of my home. There are not the usual distractions of living at home. The quietness is allowing me to focus, to listen and experience my taped interviews with refreshed ears. I am noticing things I had not noticed before; the contemplative pause, slight sigh that I had not heard above the clamor of the silver as people around Nancy and I ate and talked. She ends with saying, “to me this is what any kind of teacher dreams of, you know...to have touched one student”. She is referring to the story of

Kenny. I know from listening to her stories that she has touched more than one student. This is the one that weighs heaviest on her heart.

I have a student teacher who will be with me beginning in October. I always want to know what led them to the decision of becoming an art teacher. What are their passions and what is it they enjoy. I asked her the same question I ask anyone going into teaching, Why do you want to be a teacher? Why not a painter? (This future teacher is passionate about drawing and painting.) Her reply was simply; “because I want to do something where I’m making a difference” (quote from ponder, August 3, 2011).

Yes, as teachers, whether teaching art, mathematics or drama, very few I would imagine go into the profession of teaching for the money or because it is an easy job. Those who do believe the job is easy usually leave within the first three to five years or stay and find themselves unhappy. The repercussions of the latter are unfortunately not productive and at the extreme can be devastating for the children in their care. It’s not so much about staying in the classroom or in this case, the art room. It’s about the compassion, the passion, the care, the commitment and the goodness that touch one’s heart, their soul (Noddings & Witherell, 1991). Giving those within our care something that they can hold onto to carry them through life is a reward that we as teachers hold dear (Durka, 2002). Some *thing*, some word, some emotion that offers those we teach the tools needed to believe in themselves. It is hard to believe that anyone can accomplish things well in life if no one believes in them. I think that more than loving our students it’s so important to believe in them even when they do not believe in themselves. To allow them to make mistakes, yet support their trying to fix their problems through encouragement and patience. I find that so often we as a society catch our children and do not allow them to fall and skin their knees, or the opposite we let them fall, and turn a cold back to them. It seems that

many are not given the tools or support needed to pick themselves up, dust off the dirt and small rocks embedded in their knees and allow them to limp along with support. I teach a wide range of students. I teach those with an intact family, those living with a blended family or with a single parent, a grandmother or aunt. I teach those living in mansions, others in their car and a few who have been in more foster homes than the number of their years of life on this earth.

(Journal, September 3, 2011)

*I have talked to many teachers, who teach a variety of subject matter. One of the student teachers I had went through an alternative school because she was violent. I remember her telling me that it was her art teacher who saved her. She found that it was in the art room that she was successful. It was in the art room that she worked harder than she had ever worked in her life and that she was successful because she worked hard. She was emotionally supported, was given the materials and space needed to be successful and was taken out of an environment where it was cool to fail (her old school). She was worried about her juvenile record and thought she would never be able to teach. She currently is a high school art teacher in an urban school. She loves her job; she feels that she has been called to teach. She loves giving back. She loves “making a difference”. As teachers, we live in situations where we can touch many lives. To “touch one student” to use Nancy’s words is a gift. We do not know how many lives we affect. We do not know if we have made a difference. In Frank Capra’s film, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, George Bailey doesn’t realize how much he has impacted the lives of the people in his home town until Clarence, his guardian angel, shows him. Eisner tells us that the impact of what we do in the art room goes more often than not unknown.*

Sometimes students will come back and visit and tell their teacher how their lives were touched by that teacher, but most often we will never know. I wonder if our students know how

much they give us too. I wonder if our students realize that because of them teaching art is “the hardest job you’ll ever love.” (Patty, Personal Interview, 2010)

To me this poem, which was lifted from a story unit within Dee’s interview, catches the feeling of teaching as a vocation. Words such as and, but, also, is, the, were pulled out so that the words I interpreted as most significantly capturing the meaning and feeling of vocation were left. The words are arranged to be read rhythmically, italicized words emphasized as Dee had emphasized them within her speech.

Teaching art has been the cornerstone of my life

I always felt it was
 an avocation
 a vocation.
 spent hours doing this,
 teaching
 being involved in teaching
 focused on what kids felt
 thought
 something
 I was meant to do
 my calling.
 just a good fit, you know?
 children responded to me
 made my feelings more tangible.
That was always important.
 saw themselves as artists

painting,
so important
I can't imagine having done anything else
in
my
life
deep feeling of satisfaction.
You know, I was good at it.
It felt right.
Always
truly
enjoyed
doing,
spills into other areas
of my life
a large part of my life.
"leisure" time
spent in some type of pursuit of art or art education.
Teaching art has been the cornerstone of my life,
almost
everything
I
do

relates

to

it

in

some

way.



Figure 3. The Encyclopedia Britannic: Vocation.

Chapter 7

Resiliency



Figure 4. The Art Teacher

The visual image for this chapter is Ruby's (pseudonym) self-portrait batik. Batik is a resilient textile process in which the artist draws or stamps with hot wax and adds colors with a series of layers of dyes. Batik is both a slow and meticulous process which takes dedication and patience to master. The dyes and wax lines flow and move much like water in her self-portrait. Ruby's batik is not just an artifact to be noted; it is also the created data that is part of the analysis, part of her story. What does it mean to be resilient? What does it take to be resilient in teaching? What stories have evolved as evidence of resiliency?

Ruby's Story

I was born into the worst year of the great depression. One in four people were unemployed, strong winds had striped the topsoil off of the once rich earth in the

Midwest affecting farmers and creating what would later be called the Dust Bowl. 1933 was the year Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. It was the year the first concentration camp was opened in Dachau. It was the year that I was born.

My father a dentist, Jewish, upper middle class, my mother stayed at home. We lived in a large apartment on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn, New York, above my father's dental practice. As a child I always wanted to be an artist, a painter, a dancer. I would spend hours drawing, painting, dancing, and oblivious to what was happening in the world around me. I was young when I was sent away. The polio had ravaged my body; I slept, I ached, my body could not, would not move...

I choose this painting to represent my deepest feelings about me teaching art. This is not pretty. It does not flatter me. It's not a representation of my looks. I never looked in a mirror. But it is a picture of my love for and my limitations teaching art.

Infantile polio began to appear in the United States during the 1880s and was thought of as “a disease of unsanitary living” (Rogers, 1995, p.115). In 1907 over 1000 cases were identified in New York and were linked to immigrants traveling from Europe. It wasn't until the 1930s that polio was looked at as a middle class disease and the only recommendation was good hygiene and quarantine. It was about 1939 that Ruby contracted the disease, which is an inflammation of the brain and spinal cord. During this time she lived in Brooklyn, which was one of the hardest hit areas, then Ruby moved to Manhattan. Many children died of this disease or became paralyzed. Ruby was sent away from home to recuperate in a Haverstraw Hospital along the Hudson River about an hour outside of New York where other polio victims were. This was the first rehabilitation hospital in the country (). It was here that Ruby slowly began to relearn how to walk, and learned how to draw.

J: So you, you were born in New York.

Ruby: Oh, yeah, in Brooklyn. And I, I wound up in Manhattan by the time I was in like sixth grade we were in Manhattan. And then I had polio, so I was out of touch for a couple of years.

J: Did you have polio when you were in sixth grade, then?

Ruby: Eleven years old.

J: Eleven years old.

Ruby: And I went off to Haverstraw, New York. There was a rehab hospital there and I spent two years up there. My family would drive up on Sunday to visit, it was kind of sad.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: But, uh, I did well up there and I had, when I got back to school they just skipped me into the right grade again because my, I was so, you know, once I got there and it was the same elementary school I was in before and they just pushed me up.

J: So, when you were in rehab and everything. . .

Ruby: There was school, but it was pathetic.

J: Hmmm.

Ruby: You know, it was, they didn't, it wasn't, I don't think it was standard. But then back then there weren't standards. Everything was independent, everything ran differently. There were no state standards and stuff. Until I got to high school in the forties, mid, early forties, mid forties? Forty-seven I graduated from high school.

J: You were ...in the rehabilitation center for polio, what I mean, I can't imagine being separated from my family that long, especially at that age.

Ruby: It was horrible. I had already been in a hospital in Manhattan for three months and isolated because they didn't know. You know, back in the thirties and forties they didn't know what we know now.

J: Right.

Ruby: And the infection was over as soon as the fever was gone. You weren't contagious anymore, but we didn't know. So I was in a hospital where I was isolated in a cubicle and we could talk a little to each other. We could see each other, but it was hard. We were very isolated for three months. I read a lot and, I guess, just moped. I don't know what, I didn't do much.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: And by the time I got up to Haverstraw, it was so delightful to be out in the sunshine. What I remember most about, it was Bellevue and it was gray, the hospital was horribly, horribly gray, the walls, everything. And it was depressing, and when I got up to Haverstraw, it was just so delightful and sunny and light. It was about an hour out of Manhattan, and it was just a beautiful place and there were a lot of kids there, all with the same problems. We would go to; we had a hot pool, a heated pool.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: And therapy. I mean, we were busy all day.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: With one thing or another. And we had school.

J: Yeah. Now did you work on any personal art work at that point in time or no, or did you not?

Ruby: From the moment I went in the hospital, that's what kept me going all the time. I don't know why I just didn't think of it 'til you asked. But when I was in the hospital the very first day with the fever and all, I had a pencil and I started drawing in the back of the books they had given me. They gave me books to read and I drew. And I'm convinced to this day that the reason my right hand works, my right arm doesn't work.

J: Right.

Ruby: But my right hand is fine because I kept working it. I, I was drawing all of the time I was lying flat on my back. It was just weird. I, I drew, you know, whatever I, my imagination said to draw.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: It wasn't much, but it just kept me busy.

Yeah. You don't have any of those, do you?

Ruby: They were just, it's funny, I, I used to draw girls with hands behind their back because I didn't know how to do hands.

J: Right.

Ruby: And long skirts because I didn't know how to do feet. (laughter)

J: That's great.

Ruby: Over and over... the same thing. And when I gave my mother a gift, a picture of Lee [Ruby's son] as a little five year old, my stepfather looked at it and said, "Well, you finally learned how to do hands." Like with all those years in art school I never learned how to draw people [laughs]. But, but I did a lot of drawing while I was there. You know, and then we had some kind of, uh, I probably did a lot of drawing in, in school, too.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: And in therapy, 'cause they have, when I went up to Warm Springs later, in the seventies, uh, they had, uh.

J: Warm Springs, Georgia?

Ruby: Yeah, they have a hospital there.

J: Right.

Ruby: And it was the hospital that Roosevelt started for polio.

J: Right.

Ruby: And they still were treating polio people. My. . .

J: I did not realize that.

Ruby: Oh, they had a whole section for that.

J: Yeah, I had visited there before, but I didn't know that that was still in use.

Ruby: Well, as long as we're around. I mean it will die out soon 'cause polio's really.

But they are treating muscular dystrophy kids, and, I mean, all different kinds of people there. But I was, I went up there, my, my personal physician in Statesboro had gone through there in his training and he thought that might be a good place for me to figure out what's going on 'cause I was, I went to a doctor in Savannah, they told me it was in my head that my leg wasn't workin' right, that somethin' was wrong. I thought one leg was short, but it was my back was curving.

J: Ohhhh.

Ruby: And, and this doctor measured my legs and told me I was imagining something was wrong. She didn't even look at my back.

J: Huh.

Ruby: But, my, my personal doctor sent me to Warm Springs and that got me with some help with different equipment to use and things like that. They gave me that one arm crutch I used to use.

J: Yes.

Ruby: I can't walk with that anymore.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: I need two hands.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: But, uh, all the time I was teaching, almost, I used that. When I went up to Georgia Southern I walked perfectly, and then every year I started going downhill, walking, walking with a limp and then getting weaker. And then that's when my doctor sent me to Warm Springs.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: And they put, they put all kinds of braces on me and I just, I wore them for a day or two. I couldn't stand it, to be stiff and locked up. I just, I can't teach like that, you know, I just couldn't reach the kids. I know that sounds crazy, but I was wearing a back brace and a leg brace and that made me rigid and I just, I couldn't communicate. I just didn't feel comfortable.

J: You weren't able to move the way you wanted to move. That's what it was, yeah.

Ruby: But that, but I also had a short brace. I wore that all the time I was teaching. A light leg [brace] just to keep my foot from falling. I had a drop, what they call drop foot.

J: Yep, that's what Randy [my husband] has.

Ruby: And I used that all, and sometimes the kindergarten kids would come in and the beginning of the year and they'd look at my foot and they'd ask, somebody would have the nerve to ask me if it hurt. And I took it off, I would show them it's just a shoe with some sticks on it and I would unhook it.

J: Yeah.

Ruby: And, and just let them see it so they knew that it wasn't something that hurt.

J: That's nice.

Ruby: And I think it helped communicate; then they weren't scared.

J: I think that's very nice.

Ruby: So that, that's the kind of thing I always did with kids, that I was always honest with them. If they asked me a question, I answered it if I could.

By focusing on the lived experience of Ruby, a retired art teacher this chapter focuses on the meanings that she brought to her self portrait. Her written reflection delves deeper into her struggles of having had polio and how it affected her career as an art teacher. Ruby loved dancing, music, and the theater. Polio took away her ability to dance but as the dialog above shows it also allowed her gift of drawing to blossom.

The nine art teachers each talk of having to overcome some sort of tribulation, whether it was physical as in the story of Ruby or emotional. Ruby was born during a time of unrest. Life was hard, much as it is now, but different. The technology and communication was at a slower pace and a lot of unknowns were taking place in her world. She was fearful and was uncertain what would happen to her. She talks of being "out of touch for a couple of years" and the isolation away from her family and in the hospital as being "sad". "So I was in a hospital where I was isolated in a cubicle and we could talk a little to each other. We could see each other, but it

was hard. We were very isolated for three months. I read a lot and, I guess, just moped. I don't know what, I didn't do much". She talks of her time in Bellevue as dark, gray, and a gloomy place in contrast to Haverstraw which was beautiful. She was in rehabilitation for a little over three years during this time she was away from family, home and friends. She was eleven at the time. I cannot help but think of my daughter who is currently ten. I cannot imagine having to send her away for three years. So much would be missed, lost. I can only imagine how hard this must have been for Ruby. We are each different in how we handle life, "we cannot teach our students at the deepest levels when we are unable to bear the suffering that opens into those levels" (Palmer, 1998, p. 85). Palmer talks of understanding. We cannot understand unless we have suffered, lived, cried, laughed, experienced life. Ruby lived a hard life but she also had a joyous life. She is very sensitive to others and their ailments, their struggles because she has been there; she has born "the suffering that opens into those levels."

"From the moment I went in the hospital, that's what kept me going all the time." She entered the hospital with a fever, a pencil and began drawing in the back of books she had received. Though the books were for Ruby to read she did what came naturally to her, she drew in them. To this day she firmly believes that it was the drawing that not only helped her in passing the time and keeping her active, the physical act of drawing also is "the reason my right hand works, my right arm doesn't work." Rather than giving in and laying in bed, Ruby found ways to live, by drawing. Later as a teacher she shows her students that she is okay. When the kindergarteners would come to art during the start of school someone would inevitably ask about the brace on her foot. Rather than see it as a limitation Ruby would teach the children about being challenged in life, she did not talk of being handicapped but showed them that she was

okay. She understood the importance of letting her students know she was okay. “I think it helped communicate; then they weren’t scared.”

My experiences as a teacher have shown me that students feel safe if you, the teacher, are safe, reliable, truthful and honest. Ruby was all of those things with her students. She later told me in conversation that she understood those kids who were hurt or had a rough time. This, I believe, is because of her experiences.

Patty also speaks of being resilient and not giving up and being able to go back to teaching after a horrible incident occurs at her school. The memory of that day is vivid, “I couldn’t stop him, I didn’t see him, I couldn’t stop him and I beat myself up over that so much”.

Patty: My worst day was a morning it was bitter cold outside. One of our children was...[long pause] holding the door open when he saw anybody that was coming fifty feet away. And I went up and said, Oh honey, don’t do that all you have to do when you stand there is when you see them all you have to do is open the door like this. I did not realize that he had gotten behind me and had put his fingers in the hinge of the door.

J: Oh, no, oh, no.

Patty: His mother was pissed off because they did not call the rescue unit because he was bleeding. She had to take him to the emergency room and the orthopedic surgeon said the tip of his finger was crushed and recommended surgery. She sued the school board and they settled out of court. I never saw him. I think he’s standing here. I’ve got my hand on the door and I’m pushing and I go to look and I hear screaming from behind me. That’s been the worst day....[long pause]. Yeah....my best days...when they come up and hug me and say, I love you Ms. Parker. But that child has, you know, I couldn’t stop him, I

didn't see him, I couldn't stop him and I beat myself up over that so much. I said to my assistant principal something about, oh, I'm one of those I ended up with a situation that ended up being settled out of court. He said, you too? It happened to him also. Not the same situation, something settled out of court, something you have no control of.

Children come up to me and said, Ms. Parker, you gonna lose your house? I understand they gonna sue you and you gonna lose your house. I got investigated. The school investigator said, not your fault.

J: So, were you supported during the whole thing?

Patty: I never found out about it except the woman who was the guidance counselor at that time, her mother was some kind of mediator and she was involved in it. So, it was settled out of court and I never heard a word about it. To this day, if that had not been a side conversation that I heard I never would have known.

J: What about the child afterwards?

Patty: The child was not allowed to be in my room because he was not allowed to be near me. So how do I grade the child? You don't give a grade because you don't see him so no grade. That was my worst day, because I couldn't protect a child I couldn't see. And when somebody goes like this with the scissors I just lose it.

“To teach is to choose a life of challenge” (Ayers, 2001, p. 137). As teachers we are constantly faced with challenges, many of these challenges, such as violence, unsafe schools, unrealistic expectations, bureaucracy, disrespect, low budgets, unsupportive parents and/or administrators, and test happy systems all contribute to teachers leaving the classroom (Darling-Smith, 2003;Farber, 2010). Hurting a child, even accidentally, is one of the most difficult situations to overcome. Teachers want to make a difference; they want to make a positive impact

on the future every day. “I loved teaching; it was just a great experience. And, and, as it went on, I loved teaching the college students, too, ‘cause that made my job seem like it was worthwhile, like I was sharing what I was doing. Instead of just teaching thirty kids, I was teaching teachers to teach” (Nancy, March2010).

Patty stayed in teaching. Today she teaches within the same school where her worst day of teaching occurred. Although this memory lives inside her daily and she “beat myself up over that so much” she chose to stay and to make lives better in her classroom. “I tried so hard to fix it, so hard” Patty explains, “I’m a fixer, that’s what we do. We try to fix. We fix. If the art work isn’t working we help ‘em fix it. I’m a fixer. Yeah, but that was the worst. Oh God that was *horrible*...I love those babies, I give them love....I give them unconditional love; I don’t want anything in return”.

Jim too talks of resiliency when describing how he was hurt midway through his teaching career. He was told he would never walk again. He too never gave up and learned from his accident how to breathe. This is a technique he later used to help his students become calm in times of anxiety, like when coaching for Odyssey of the Mind, a competition based on creatively solving a problem and competing with other schools.

(Interview, March, 2011)

Jim: Well, personal adversities, for example, I wound up being crippled. I was trimming branches on a tree, uh, on Columbus Day, we had a day off from school and winter was coming and I was afraid the limbs on this tree were going to get covered with snow in the winter and break the line to the household, that kind of silly stuff. And I was trimming branches, I had one foot on the, I had finished cutting the branches; I was going to paint the wounds. I had one foot on the ladder, one foot in the tree and I lost my balance and

fell backward. My foot stayed wedged and I wound up hanging from my ankle. Severed the talus bone in half.

J: Oh my gosh!

Jim: Um, I was told I was never going to walk again. So it was four and a half years on crutches and wheelchair. Someone told me about meditation and visualization and I started doing that. I had fourteen doctors, three medical centers all tell me I wouldn't walk again. So with this meditation and visualization, concentrating on it, I was visually making the blood vessels grow back to the dead bone. So, after a few short years, the bone was now strong enough that they could operate and that, you know, after that I have had over twenty years of walking. I have problems every once in a while, but . . . But the thing that happened as a result of that, I realized the importance of breathing. So I would start, I started doing that with my kids. And that was a technique that I used with kids to help them calm and energize the brain with oxygen and, so that ideas could come.

Each of the stories shared were stories of experiences that were described as “horrible” and “overcoming adversities”. I think it is this overcoming of adversities that all three of these art teachers share. Is to be resilient a character trait or can it be something learned or the result of overcoming some horrific life experience? What is it that allows these art teachers to continue and take bad situations and turn them around to use them as learning experiences, and even teaching experiences?

In *Touching Eternity* Don Forrester touches the lives of his students and teaches them not only about art but about life (Barone, 2001). Barone used transcripts, vignettes and a blend of fiction to tell the story of Don Forrester and the lives he touched. In the beginning of this chapter I took the liberty to create a storied opening that was based on Ruby's interviews. I also took the

knowledge I had of the time period and storied it in my own words. Why? I wanted to situate the reader within the context of the time. In the case of Ruby's story I felt it was important to place the reader in the 1930s, the time period in which Ruby lived and contracted polio.

The image created by Ruby in the beginning of this chapter was also reflected upon. A narrative was pulled from her reflection and resulted in the poem at the end of this chapter. Beattie (2009) explained, "Creating narrative is a process of making sense out of a life in the midst of that life and within the wholeness of the life as it is currently understood" (p. 63). The narrative tells of the struggle with polio, the need to create, to dance, move, be with children and do what she loves: to teach. The poem I pulled is my interpretation, but the image that accompanied the text of selection, the talk that occurred between Ruby and I, tells more than just a story of teaching, it tells a story of struggle; it reveals her essence of how she sees herself as an art teacher.

This process has allowed me as a researcher to get closer to my data, to my participants. A strong trust has formed between my participants and me, mutual respect that is stronger than a friendship; a mutual knowing that is beyond what many families share has been gained. Above all else, I want to pay homage to my participants, I want to honor and represent their stories as truthfully as I can. The use of portraiture has given me yet another level of reaching my goal. My blended methodologies validate what it is I am doing: Portraying the stories of art teachers, who they are, why they teach, and above all why they chose to stay.

My Soul Dances is Ruby's poem of resiliency that was pulled from her portraiture reflection, in its entirety in Appendix E titled *Voices of Five*.

My Soul Dances...

This is not pretty.
 It does not flatter me.
 not
 a representation of my looks...
 But it is a picture
 of me,
 my love,
 my limitations teaching art.

Researching
 women artists,
 Alice Neel
 self-portrait at 80,
 it
 shook
 my
 world.

WHY?

Why all the signs of aging
 to see
 to humiliate?

Gradually
 I realized
 this was a work of pride.
 Pride
 of
 reaching
 eighty.

I had nothing
 to be ashamed of
 at any age,
 at any stage
 of my career.

Beauty,
being ourselves.
Women I was reading
told me
hold
my
head
up,
be proud of who I was.

I started.
batik dyes and waxes.
loved the effects
hot wax on fabric
no going back.

Blocked in the figure
in the chair
hot wax lines,
white.

Not realizing,
setting the meaning of this piece.
Thin lines,
wax heated in my electric skillet,
brushed the flowing lines,
the body.

Yellow, darker colors,
I saw the large breasts,
stood
out
like
headlights.
An unconscious message
in the work.

The hands,
fingers curve gently
resting on the chair

the left one,
 still worked
 restless,
 ready
 to
 do
 something.

My body squeezed,
 whole lower half
 into a confined space.
 My heart blossoms out of the chair.
 Lines,
 vertically stiff or
 curving gently across my lap.
 The lap held many little ones in its day.
 dancers hiding around my legs
 resting
 drooping
 or
 standing vertically
 against
 the rigid verticality of the legs.

Dancers across my bosom,
 swirling with the love
 I
 have
 for
 children.

Head tilts,
 glasses overlarge
 emphasizing eyes that see art
 hair that swirls around
 thoughts swirling in my head.
 physical movement
 now limited,
 ideas
 my love

extremely
active.

Love for all my students,
always had time to listen
to them.

Worked with them
at school,
welcomed in my home

My paintings
full of dancers
flowers,
none tell you
who I am like this one.

My legs may be confined with limitations,

But

My Soul Dances



Figure 5. Reflecting on Resiliency.

This work was created for the viewer to bring his/her personal interpretation to what it means to be resilient. I am inspired by my surroundings. I live in an area that is still rural though Atlanta is slowly making her way towards the area where I live. For me resiliency represents hope, a new day with blue skies, seeing the beauty in what is around us, and accepting and is not always easy. Resiliency, for me, means strength during our most fragile times.

CHAPTER 8

Reinventing



Figure 6. Collage of Kay.

I created this collage to show how I have changed as an art teacher and as an artist. I am always growing, expanding my knowledge and constructing and reconstructing who I am. (E-mail, July 2011).

I've come to understand that I am as unfinished as the shoreline along the beach. If you stand on the sand and watch wave after wave, each leaves the beach looking just a little different. So it is with people--we are all unfinished and meant to transcend ourselves again and again though out a lifetime. (Anderson, 2003, p.xvi)

We are all unfinished. I have been living with the more than 300 pages of interview transcriptions, e-mails, images and Kari's blog. I have been in a constant state of questioning, researching, wondering and reevaluating. I have read across the multiple texts that have been given to me and find that we are all unfinished and in a constant state of reinventing ourselves.

All nine art teachers talk of the adapting and changing that needs to occur in teaching in order to grow both professionally and humanly. Jim taught more than 40 years; during that time he changed, adapted, accepted and celebrated the “opportunities” that came his way.

Jim begins with first becoming interested in art. His parents wanted him to pursue another career where he could support himself. He was in love with art and museums and he began evolving, a constant growing and reinventing of himself through the experiences he encountered.

Jim’s Story

(Jim, Personal Interview, 2011).

Jim: Well, I grew up on Long Island and we always went to the Museum of Natural History in New York City. We went to the Hayden Planetarium, never an art museum. Um, we did a lot. We went through school, we went to the opera, we went to Broadway shows, but we never went to an art museum. But on television I had seen this special. Color was just coming into television at that time and they did this color special with Barbra Streisand called *Color Me Barbra* and the whole first half of it was filmed in the Philadelphia Art Museum and it was the first time I had ever seen an art museum and I wanted to go there. In the summer between graduation from high school finished and before college I signed up for a class on my own in life drawing in Nassau Community College, and that teacher changed my life.

J: Oh, my gosh, who were, who was the . . .

Jim: I don’t even remember his name.

J: Oh, my gosh.

Jim: The first drawing session we had was without a model. I felt at a loss because I had not had any art instruction all through high school and he said, “Don’t worry, you will have less to unlearn,” and our first session of drawing was that day, and I want you to listen, he had us draw a sound. He dropped a book and then he had us draw the sound of a, um, sheet, a window shade, going up. And all of a sudden that being the first real instruction that the drawing experience was not about making it look real, it was about, you know, broadening that. So that influenced me greatly, too. And that, after finishing that instruction my family was going to meet friends of family in Philadelphia, so I asked them if they would let me walk at a certain place and I went into the Philadelphia Art Museum.

J: Ahhh.

Jim: And it was the most amazing experience I had ever had. I saw a Thomas Eakins, which just blew me away. A Rubens that blew me away of Icarus, ah, not of Icarus, um, the god who gave us fire, I forget what his name was. In any event, um, Anacalt (?) [It was Vulcan] So it was this mixture of realism and abstraction in a Rothko which was ... blew me away and, uh, and I think that’s what influenced me the most was not having to make something real and the ability to do it and to get kids excited because I was excited and I think that as long as I continued to do my own artwork I remained excited about it. And that’s what I think is the contagious thing. A lot of people who get into a career, they don’t do their, their own work anymore because being a teacher, it takes a lot out of you, you know, it takes a whole, saps you of energy of your own creative process. I had to do that, I discovered after a couple of years, so I would spend the summers, I would go

away, I would spend a month away just doing my artwork and every time I did that my teaching was more exciting for kids.

J: So it was rejuvenation.

Jim: Yeah, oh, constantly. It took a while to get to that point again.

J: I was just going to ask you because, like, um, during the school year, though, were you able to work on your own art or was that a really hard . . .

Jim: I did, I mean, every day you are working on artwork when you are working with kids, creative thinking, you know, the whole process. You have to be teaching in a way you are creating that they get it, so you are not just doing a project. You know, that, I, I can't stand projects. Yes, learning the skills is important, as long as there is something else attached to that.

J: Right.

Jim: So that it's not just a project. It's some connection on a heart level, an emotional level, a spiritual level, whatever the connection is so it's not *just* that project. Then it's more meaningful and it becomes more meaningful to the viewer, too.

Jim: And so it was a great way to get them exposed, the teachers involved by getting them exposed to images they themselves had not seen. When I did a field trip, I did it with a ratio of five kids to one adult so you had parents coming in who were getting their exposure to art museum and all of a sudden you were having families joining art museums and taking kids because the kids wanted to.

In the narrative above Jim speaks of the teaching that he does as, "not just a project. It's some connection on a heart level, an emotional level, a spiritual level, whatever the connection is so it's not *just* that project". Jim strives to expose his students, the teachers, the parents, and,

later I find within the conversation, the community to the arts. “Then it’s more meaningful and it becomes more meaningful to the viewer, too”. Going beyond keeping his experiences to himself, Jim creates an ever widening circle of whom he exposes to works of arts and moves from being an art teacher in an elementary school to teaching about art to “kids, adults, whoever visits” so that he can expose them to the “big capital A” , art. Bringing both parents and his students to the Metropolitan Museum was “amazing...” He explains, “And then all of a sudden, and the thing that was great was that I had kids and adults constantly saying what an eye opening thing it was because to the majority of people in our culture art is a big capital A that they don’t know about, that they don’t think they know about. If you can open that door so that they can understand on whatever level they can get it, then they are not separate from it and then they open up to it. And it’s amazing, it’s amazing how many kids I have that have gone into the art field. You know I have had thousands of kids since 1970.” Art museums have a long history of being looked upon as a place for the elite in society, and many people are very uncomfortable visiting art museums (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Henry, 2010; Shulman-Herz, 2010). By exposing those around him to art within museum settings, Jim is trying to break social barriers so that art becomes more accessible to everyone.

He continues telling stories of reinventing himself as a teacher, using music, and literature to connect with his students. Teaching more than forty years, Jim has had to adapt to a lot of changes in teaching, but he has done so gladly, describing the changes as “rejuvenating”. We are given the opportunity to learn every day of our lives; it’s just up to us whether or not we choose to embrace what we are offered. We are all unfinished. Jim talks about the thousands of students he has encountered and explains, “Many of them who are not in the art field but are still involved as far, you know, collecting art and supporting art in the community. I know its kids

because they have written letters to me and said over the years. Facebook is an amazing thing all of a sudden. I was coerced into doing it and now I've got kids who are telling me what's happened with their lives and it's amazing. Before I came here [Washington] somebody friended me and it was a kid that I taught when he was in elementary school and he is now an adult. He's an architect here in Seattle."

In his book, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, Elliot Eisner (2002) examines how the arts contribute to the growth and development of the mind. Eisner believes that "work in the arts contributes to the development of complex and subtle forms of thinking", though they are often thought of as having very little to do with "complex forms of thought" (p. 35). The areas of mathematics, reading, writing, and computing are looked upon by many in the academic and political world as the "hard" subjects which are believed "to be the best means for cultivating the mind" (p.xi). Eisner, however, gives compelling arguments that the arts are intellectually demanding and cognitive.

Eisner addresses the biological features of being human, namely our sensory system. Using qualitative terms, he discusses how we, as humans, aesthetically experience our environment. "The senses", he notes, "are our first avenues to consciousness" (p.2). In supporting this belief, Eisner turns to philosopher, Susan Langer, "'seeing', is itself a process of formulation; our understanding of the visible world begins in the eyes" (in Eisner, 2002, p.2). Not only do our senses allow us to survive, they also allow us to see, and to see discriminately. Eisner further explains what begins as a reflex response evolves into our own development which requires "the tools of culture: language, the arts, science, values, and the like. With the aid of culture we learn how to create ourselves" (p.2).

Jim talks of the museum and exposing his students, the teachers by “being passive aggressive and putting up posters of fine art in the teachers’ lounge and the halls [of the school]. Then they’re exposed to it”. Aesthetic education helps to expand the mind and develop deeper understanding of ourselves and our environment. Aesthetic experiences transpire not only in the art room, but transfer to personal experiences in nature as well. While thinking takes place during the process of creating or experiencing a work of art, another experience, which Eisner calls “somatic knowledge,” can, and often does, occur as well. According to Eisner, “somatic knowledge”, also known as “embodied knowledge”, is a feeling, it is when one is “tuned in to the work and being able to make adjustments to the image on the basis of what is felt emotionally” (2002, p.76). Jim talks of his work at a museum and the experience those attending have with a work by the artist Louise Nevelson.

Jim: Okay, we are covering the title and then I say, “Let’s practice this. What material do you think this is made of?” Anything that I can do to stop them from trying to figure out what it is. Suspending that moment of judgment as to whether they like it or not by saying the first thing they have to do is to look for the material and then you, then they decide what the material is and then I throw in the fact, “OK, you think it’s steel. What else could it be if it wasn’t steel?” Plywood painted to look like steel, OK, yeah, so that they understand that it doesn’t have to be a right or wrong answer. Then I give them the final case what about the color? It’s black. Would it be a different sculpture if it was flamingo pink or orange? The fact that, the fact that, uh, (laughter) the fact that, you know, they say it’s black, as if black, the same black as ..., no, there’s shading, there’s shadowed areas. How about details, and having, you know, pick out a detail you like. And so someone will invariably point to a detail and what could that be and everybody

else chimes in on that one detail. We are not doing the whole piece. One detail, what does that remind you of? And invariably with this particular sculpture I'll tell you the things that they come up with. Usually the first piece they talk about is one section of the sculpture most of all and they get imagery of seeds (?) and a disco ball and, um, New Year's Eve, Times Square. There is a section which is lacework, um, it's what is left over from industry. The primary pieces in the center were cut out, that's what they needed. What was left was this lacework which was being thrown away or going to be recycled. That's the piece she wanted and you go over, "what does that remind you of?" And the images that they say usually are a gate, building with lots of windows. How does the gate open? I say. A prison. They go through all these things. They see their own imagery. Well, there's a section with a suspended thing that invariably reminds people of chimes, of an elevator. So what they have come up with is a lot of collective story. And I say, "OK, what one thing contains, you know." Oh, and also bring in sound, it was sound. Is this a loud sound or is it a soft sound. If this was music, what kind of music would this be? So they'll come up with, you know, jazz, heavy metals, made out of metal. So between all that they have said, I say, "OK, what one thing contains the things you have talked about: loud sounds, uh, cars, elevators, buildings with lots of windows, discos, parks with seeds (?) and then they invariably come up with city." And I say the title of this is "City on a High Mountain." I said, now, and they "wow."

J: That's neat.

Jim: And if you had looked at the title first and looked at this work, you would have said "I don't get it." But because you took the time to look closely and took the time to suspend judgment until you have got the chance to get a collective story, then that's that

Wow moment that you really get because you discovered it on your own. Well, it's the same thing when you have a kid doing a work of art or his own project. Helping them get a connection with it so it's not just busy work.

J: Right.

Jim: Now a lot of it is learning the skills and things like that, but by taking the time for them to look at each other's work in a non-judgmental way and valuing that, they learn to also value their own work. Because other people are valuing it, it becomes this collective thing because the act of creating is a lone thing.

J: Yeah.

Jim: But I firmly believe that for me as an artist, it's very hard for an artist to exist in a creative vacuum. You can go so long on your own work, but you need other stimulation. Not that you are copying them, the stimulation of other artists around you working, whether they are judging or you are judging their work or not. Just the act of being around creative people is an amazing thing. That's why I think a lot of people who major in art in college, once they are out of school, whether they are teachers, especially if they are teachers, they forget that they need to do that.

Jim speaks to us of the importance of teaching his students how to take the time to slow down and look at a work of art and to look at each other's art works. He describes this process as helping students to value the works of other and to "also value their own work". While the act of creating is a "lone thing" the process of group critiquing and having others value the work becomes a "collective thing" which benefits all involved. Each time the students evaluate and look at their work and the work of their classmates they are transforming themselves into more appreciative people. Jim next makes the connection with himself as an artist and explains, "It's

very hard for an artist to exist in a creative vacuum. You can go so long on your own work, but you need other stimulation”.

We need to be around others who are creative and we need to create so that we do not forget how important it is to feed our creativity. As Jim tells us we as art teachers need to be within the creative environment around other artists and making art or we will forget that we need that stimulation. This is an ongoing process. As art teachers we are in the process of learning and reinventing ourselves each day from our interaction with our students, our materials and through the process of creating and being artists. I have found personally how making art and trying new mediums or techniques or revisiting projects left undone add to the experiences I have which are then passed along to my students. By being an artist and an art teacher I am in the process of reinventing myself. When I am not creating or being expressive in some manner I feel my teaching is not as good. It is passable, but not as enriching.

Kay speaks extensively of reinventing herself. She too feels that creating art and being an artist, “it’s a way we keep in touch with ourselves. If we are not creating, then it’s hard to teach because we can’t fully connect with what the student is experiencing”. Teaching art should try to “foster the growth of artistic intelligence”, teach students how to see, create, and respond to visual images, “help students recognize what is personal, distinctive, and even unique about themselves and their work”, and to “secure aesthetic forms of experience in everyday life” (Eisner, 2002, p. 42 – 44). Jim did this daily in the classroom and at the museum. Connecting with students now through Facebook has given him the opportunity to see firsthand the impact he has made on the lives of his students.

In 2002 when *Arts and the Creation of Mind* was first published the social networks we have today were not available. People were not twittering or being friended on Facebook. Eisner

explained we really never know what truly is learned in our classrooms because the “most important effects are located outside the classroom” and they may not show up until later in life (p. 49). This still holds true but social networking has been bringing past students back into the lives of the teachers who have influenced them and has closed the gap of not knowing the effects we have on our students. Those students who come back and visit us and tell us how we as art teachers have made positive impacts on their lives validates not only what we do but who we are.

Kay describes how at each school, job, or program she started she was always looking for new and exciting ways to motivate her students or the people she worked with in various settings. Kay started an art program in a system that did not have a long history of art in its schools. The returning students and their stories and the successes she has experienced in her schools have all contributed to how Kay sees herself as an art teacher.

(Kay, Personal Interview, 2010).

Kay: I’m trying ...I’m making this up as I’m going along, I’m testing new waters. I wanted the kids to be, um, to be trusting of me, and I wanted their parents to be trusting of me. They had never, you know, been taught like this before.

J: Right.

Kay: So they were going home and telling their parents that, that they were relating art to history, you know, we were making connections to, you know, language arts. We were writing about what we were creating, uh, we were, we were making dyes with pokeberries like the Native Americans had done. You know, like research, and, think about it, this was before the Internet, before you could just go Google something. You had to interview people, you had to look up books in the library, you had to, you know ...it wasn’t as easy. So, so we did put together a little magazine.

“Making this up as I’m going along and testing new waters” was part of the challenge for Kay. She was reinventing herself from a student to an art teacher. She was exposing students to the arts, making connections historically and through literature. Over the course of 30 years her programs have grown from digging out clay from the grounds behind the school during the rain to nationally recognized art programs where her students have received scholarships to Harvard, MIT, and other top schools across the nation. “Carving out new situations” has inspired her to continue teaching with a high level of creativity and determination.

Kay: So, as far as, like one of the most, I think the most memorable are carving out the new situation, like the new school’s art program, starting the new school where I am presently, uh, where we started with hard hats, you know, walking through, looking at walls that were still movable. Um, where the principal who hired me wanted to know what I thought of the design, what, how I wanted it to look, how I, how I envisioned things happening. You know, where the person trusts me that much.

J: Right, I was going to say that’s an unusual thing, anyway. To be trusted like that.

Kay: Yeah. So, I like the challenge of starting new things, starting up new things, and um, and, um, introducing people to something that they’ve never been exposed to before.

Kay describes an experience that she and a fellow art teacher had with some of her students. They had taken them to the mountains for a weekend. This was an activity many of the high scholars from the city had never experienced. Kay has a way of creating a climate of trust and safety within her classroom. Her students bond and work together. She may have as many as 40 students in the art room at one time working on three different projects because the class may be a blend of photography with introduction to drawing and printmaking. While this is difficult, she sees it as a challenge.

Kay: we took the AP class to the mountains for three days to my cabin and had...an artist's, um, uh, an artist's inspired, nature inspired trip for an artist and we introduced them to, you know, the mountains, and we went into different environments and had them draw waterfalls and do, um, you know, ah, paintings with, um, where they had to make their own drawing instrument and use, we found charcoal and ground it up and mixed it, you know, with water, used graphite like real charcoal.

J: Yeah.

Kay: ...and had them, had them *really* exploring, like getting them up at the crack of dawn and going out to see, to see the light and how it affected the landscape, and photograph, you know, specific times of the day. We did this for three solid days. We wore them out. But we also had fun with them and we bonded with them. We had twenty people in the house, sixteen kids, four sponsors, four teachers, and, um, and I think that has a ripple effect 'cause we only do that for the AP kids.

J: Right.

Kay: So we know that that's the cream of our crop, those are the people who are needing portfolio development, and this is a way of, you know, um, getting them to think about nature and introducing them to Andy Goldsworthy and introducing them to process journals and, um, sketching, preliminary sketches, photograph, uh, photography, photographing things and then coming back and doing preliminary sketches from the photographs. OK, so, um, yeah, it was exhausting, it was tiring, and, then, when we unloaded the van, um, at, at, when we unloaded the cars and the bus at the school, um, they all, and I was exhausted and they were, too. And we were dirty and we were picking leaves and dirt out of our hair and we all stunk, and, um, and I still have, ah, dog poo on

my jeans. [Laughter] But, um, I mean deer poo, but, um, then they gave me, ah, it's like going back to that, revisiting that, um, blue jean wrapped car, you don't think they get it until, they presented me with a card that they had made on the bus on the way back. I was in the lead car, so I didn't see it. But they made the thing in the car and each one of them did, um, a part of this drawing but, using sticks and India ink drawing my house and they all signed their names. And inside each one of them wrote with a different color pen something special that they learned from that experience and, and how it influenced them. And so, I'm a wreck. I'm standing there in the parking lot reading this and all of them are around me, hugging me and thanking me and I'm a wreck. And I'm falling apart, I'm crying, you know, with them and all of their parents are standing there so proud of their kids because they were that thoughtful, you know, to thank their teacher for that. Um, you know, it's not, it's not very many people that in their jobs they get to see, you know, the result of, of the work, you know, the, you know, unless they come back and they tell you, you know, guess what I did? I came back, you know, come back and they tell you, you know, I'm, I'm a junior at Cornell, you know. Like one of my students is a junior at Cornell who, um, I entered in every Scholastic contest that she could get into. But, it's like that card, it just, what other, what other rewarding job do we have that, um, that allows you to know that you have touched somebody immediately, you know. And to know that what you do is, is noble and worthy and, um, and creative and all those great things. You are, you are affecting the future. You are affecting the present, but you are affecting the future. Um, yeah, these are all the taxpayers, the people that will support the arts from generations to come, but, but you're affecting lives, and, um, and the, and, you know, they're, I mean, have you ever known a creative person who

had their, um, you know, their hands cuffed together and they couldn't do what they wanted to do because they had to support a family, you know. I know plenty of people like that that you went to art school with.

She goes on to explain that what she does makes her happy. What she does is what she loves. She knows people who aren't happy in their careers, they have become stagnant they are "working for Coke because, you know, they are married to somebody who wants more money, or maybe they're afraid of what, what people will think of their work, you know. They don't want to be that vulnerable. We're teaching them [students] that artists have to be open to be critiqued, you have to be able to take it, you know. Like, put it out there. The ability to be an artist is to learn to say things visually and, and put it out there. And so through, through bonding with those kids that weekend, it's like that whole thing where you fall back and somebody's there to catch you".

"Somebody's there to catch you". We all need somebody to be there for us, to catch us. Kay's use of metaphor gives us a visual of what it means to have that deep trust in those around you. Her program is built on trust and the need to continually grow with her students. She as a teacher, as an artist, is continually reinventing herself. "All those kids know that they have each other's backs. So when we have a critique, they know that they have each other's back, that they are telling them the truth".

Unlike the other chapters two poems surfaced during the reflecting and writing of this chapter. The first is based on Kay's statement about her collage. It sums up the theme of reinventing ourselves. The second is *Somebody's There to Catch You*. When listening to Kay's voice, this one line attracted me like a moth to light. I had to revisit it and study the words surrounding this line. It made me connect to the idea of feeling safe and secure and knowing that

there was a person who would be there. The nine art teachers talk of creating a safe environment in their classes and this poem echoes their words.

I would re-invent myself each year

To stay
stimulated,
focused
and
engaged

I would re-invent myself each year
new ideas,
methods
and approaches.

I would re-invent myself each year
Taking workshops,
classes,
participating
in
new
inventive
processes,
media
interested
me.

I would re-invent myself each year

Organizing
events like
Portfolio Day
new guest speakers,
trips,
AP art class,
scholarship
contests,
opening day
art rally
would
make
it
a

new
experience
for
me.

Like a student buying new book covers and school supplies,
I would bring something new to the forefront for my classes.

Re-inventing,
re-birth
keeps
it
new
and
fresh.

Pulled Poem #2

Somebody's There to Catch You

My job is to make that happen.
happening organically
like we're just all sittin' around eatin' chili and noodles,
you know, sittin' around a waterfall.
You're throwing it out there just,
create, create, it,
you are meeting them halfway
music...creates an environment that makes them feel good,
that makes them feel happy, makes me feel happy,
makes us all feel mellow.

Somebody's There to Catch You

In my classroom you don't talk this way, you know,
you don't,
you don't cut people down,
you're not mean to people,
you don't destroy their artwork.
You just, you learn to get along
you got to be good to each other
you just got to be helpful.
Everybody's got to help each other,
take turns doing chores.

Somebody's There to Catch You

If they know that you appreciate what they do,

they'll knock themselves out
making it better.

All those

they have each other's backs,
when we have a critique,

they know that they have each other's back, that they are telling them the truth
it's like that whole thing where you fall back and somebody's there to catch you.



Figure 7. Reinventing the Self.

CHAPTER 9

Living-Not Staying



Figure 8. Alteration #4 Kari

I feel that the only choice I have, if I want to remain vibrant within my field, is to remind myself that good teaching is about living in it, not just staying in it (Kari, e-mail, November, 2011).(Kari, Blog, 2011)I am an artist and a teacher. I view both roles as important, but the teacher in me never rests. I'm always thinking of new ways to invite and challenge others to create. The satisfaction of guiding people to realize their creative gifts fuels everything I do.

The concept of living inquiry (Irwin, 2004) is highly present in narrative inquiry and arts-based educational research. Theses methodologies, that form and inform research data and analysis, seem to enable a type of reflexive inquiry that puts into question the context in which the reflective experience occurs (Siegesmund, 2009). Using the narrative stories of art teachers supports the question of how do we continue to shape ourselves and continue living through the process of teaching and art making? What *is* the connection to art making and living our inquiry? How does living an aesthetic experience impact the process of teaching and connecting to students in the classroom? And, is this a key to longevity in keeping good art teachers in the art room?

Arts-based forms of research “empower and change the manner through which research is conducted, created, and understood” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p.897). Creating works of art as research or in a response to research offers another view of interpretation. Selecting art works or creating them as reflections of how the art teachers saw themselves as teachers caused them to make connections to specific experiences that the interviews did not always convey. “Those who can attend to and absorb themselves in particular works of art”, wrote Maxine Greene (1978), “are more likely to effect connections in their own experience than those who cannot” (p. 188).

CeCi and Pam’s Stories

(Ceci and Pam, Interview Transcript, March 2010)

Pam: You know, the kids come and different things have happened in their lives over that week or whatever and you know every day is different... and all day is different.

Ceci: I tell you what I love working with children and love seeing their discovery, their spontaneity... But I love the activeness of my job. And I’m not a person who goes around and says that, but I like being in the classroom. But I’m also reflective because I’ve probably changed something about learning things. Right now I’m excited to go back and try some of this new assessment. I try to stay current and try to find new ways and things to relate to my students. I don’t want to be an old fogey you know. [laugh] Yeah, I try to be reflective and I try to be current, to keep up with my students.

Pam: Yeah, I’ll try new things sometimes I’ll even change the way I was doing things from one class to another.

Ceci: Oh, definitely!

Pam: You know it’s like I need to do this a different way...

Ceci: Yes, it's like the first class..is, um

Pam: a test run. [laughs].

Ceci: Yes, a test run. It's like I try it one way and then I change it.

Pam: We either go it down or we're throwing it out.

Ceci: Yeah- you're right...we've tweaked it. [laughing]

Pam:[laughing says] yeah we throw it out...by the time we figure it out sometimes.

J: Yeah, that's interesting the whole idea of being reflective because I think that as teachers, especially art teachers we're being reflective more so...I think it's because ...

Ceci: Yes, I think as art teachers we have to...in order to be successful. I think that it is necessary because there are new ideas and things are continually changing; there are new ways of doing things and we are growing with these new ideas. If you are not being reflective then I don't think you are as effective and as successful in your teaching.

Pam: I think it's inherent that we reflect because just like any job, you reflect on what's good and what's not. Because doing art you're always making those adjustments in your own personal artwork.

J: Right.

Ceci: Right.

Pam:... and you know, we don't have a job where you sit at a desk and it's all rote, you know, do the same thing every day.

Ceci: Definitely.

Pam: So you're constantly changing what you do with the kids, you know, and it's the same as working in your art. There is this same thing going on in both areas...

J: So true.

Pam: You're constantly making adjustments in the classroom and the same with working on your personal art. You know the one does affect the other, the way...[overlapping voices]

C: It's so true. You're always in action, problem solving...adjusting. It's part of how we live as art teachers. You have to adjust and change.

K: It's like an assessment thing that you get to have a "do over" you know. [laughs].

"To the being fully alive, the future is not ominous but a promise; it surrounds the present as a halo. It consists of possibilities that are felt as a possession of what is now and here. In life that is truly life, everything overlaps and merges" (Dewey, 1934, p.17). The overlapping of voices, the feeding of lines to one another, merging together, this was the experience I had when talking with Ceci and Pam. They had requested being interviewed together. They really didn't tell me why other than saving time. Interviewing two people together was difficult. Transcribing was even more so. I had asked them each to say their names into the recorder before the interview began. This was done so that I could identify who was who as I knew I would have to depend on the sound of voice to distinguish one from the other. During the exchange of dialogue there was a moving back and forth of the reflectivity used in teaching and in creating art. Both women talked of "constantly making adjustments," of changing, of the thinking on your feet that Schön (1983) refers to in thinking in action.

The art room is a lively place. The movement, independence, and self discovery are all experiences that happen in a successful art room. During the interchange of talk that took place between Ceci and Pam, I had very little to interject. They carried the conversation on their own, there were words unsaid that we each knew as experiences all art teachers have. Elbaz-Luwisch calls it the "store of practical knowledge" (2005, p. xi). There is a common understanding

between us so that a detailed description isn't necessary. We each understood the dialogue "because new ideas and things are continually changing; there are new ways of doing things and we are growing with these new ideas. If you are not being reflective, then I don't think you are as effective and as successful in your teaching".

Kari is an advocate for the arts, especially art education. She is an artist and an art teacher. This summer she used her blog as a way of living through what she referred to as the "tsunami" of teaching in the 2010-2011 school year. It was a difficult year filled with program cuts, lost jobs, and unknowns. Kari said, "my blog became my self-portrait of sorts" (e-mail communication, August, 2011). It is from her interview and blog that I pull to create a picture of what it means to be an artist and an art teacher as well as an advocate who is passionate about her work and her life which she says are inseparable.

I had asked five of the art teachers to create self-portraits. I had not been able to contact three of the art teachers, and one had told me about the loss of her mother and overwhelming stresses in her life such that I did not want to burden her. I wonder now if it would not have been a burden, but a way to live through her experiences. As I attempted to construct interpretations of the lived experiences of the nine art teachers I interviewed, I found that I had to bring forth those "lived through" moments of experience that van Manen (1990, p. 41) talks about. I had to dig deep and reflect and recognize and ask...*is this possible?* As an art teacher studying the lives of other art teachers, I would have this question before me. I know the experiences I have had as an art teacher of 25 years. I am also privy to art teacher talk, which offers me an understanding those who do not teach might not know. What Kari talks of is possible, unfortunately it is very real.

(Kari, Personal Interview, March 2011)

Kari: What is happening isn't better. It is not an improvement at all. It's not horrible, it's, um, fun sometimes and the rub that I get is that reminder of I will always get good ideas it's part of who I am, and I'm glad- I mean it's been 21 years and I'm glad I still get new ideas and I still have fun and enjoy doing what I do. I came up with the idea of this art show because we had 2/3 of the program cut and I wanted to show what we had. I look at the work and it's still good- there just isn't that variety. I know that I'll figure out how to make that happen with time, but it stinks. So I brought some samples up to show my principal and he wasn't there so I showed the secretary and she tears up because she knows what I'm going through and I think she was so happy to see that I'm rising to it. And she said, "Kari, you know, I swear if you have to teach volley ball next year, you could do it". And I looked at her and said, "Please don't do that- I can't teach volley ball- I don't want too!" I don't want this to be this endurance test of- let's see what she can jump over now and so the more confident you are, they [administration and faculty] have confidence in your ability, but it doesn't mean you're able to stop the tsunami of disasters within our public education system. It's here and no one talks about it and that really ticks me off. NO ONE TALKS ABOUT IT. We, as educators, can stand up there and be cheerleaders, cheerleaders, cheerleaders, but no one wants to face it because we are having to make decisions we don't want to make or face and decisions are being made for us.

J: So who do we talk to? Our legislators obviously, but people are tired of that because it turns out to be talk- no action.

K: Right. And honestly, you can get support from the parents and administration,

but their hands are tied too. I really think it's going to get worse before it gets better, unfortunately. They [parents] can't afford to pay the taxes, they want the same stuff and they are up against a wall of how are they going to support their family and many have lost their job. We're caught in a really bad storm. I remember last year when this was all shaking down, our governor was elected a year ago November and by February there was that stir. I looked around and ohhhhhh...he lied, he lied to the teachers who elected him. Now we are all face-to-face with his destruction. So that's the other weird piece, you know, yeah, you can educate your parents, you can educate your community, but you know what, they think they are electing someone with some set of values, but you know what? They're still caught in the middle. They want what they have [society] and that makes us look crazy. I don't know what perplexes me the most. This idea that there's a giant more confident work force that once they address issues and get rid of all the dead weight things will get better- meanwhile I think who knows better how to do the jobs than those that have been there and have been doing them successfully? Then on the other side we are being told we[teachers] get paid too much? You know, the rhetoric on the other side has always been that teachers get off all summer with pay and that everything that's going on is because of the teachers....well, they're now buying it. Parents are now believing this because it is such a commonplace blame. It's almost as if it's become a knee-jerk reaction to society's problems...it's because of the schools, it's the teachers fault, they get paid too much money. And that's the worst scariest part and that's what freaks me out. In one breath someone will say, oh, but not you. You do a good job. So, you

know it's personal and at the same time it's not personal. You know.

J: Yes, I do, yes, I really do know.

Kari cares deeply about her vocation as an art teacher and the passion with which she teaches and reaches her students. Noddings (2002, 2003) described caring as “relational” in which there is the giver of care, the “carer”, and the receiver of care, “the cared-for”. Unlike character education, which has its roots anchored in virtue ethics, care theory is more concerned with the caring relationship. Both the carer and the cared-for work together in this relationship; “the carer attends non-selectively for the cared-for” with the cared-for reacting in some positive way to the efforts of the carer (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006, p.122). Students remember the teachers who care, and teachers remember the students they care about.

Teaching and caring have a complex relationship, moments of joy, satisfaction and an overall feeling of good can be experienced, other times it is sadness, frustration, and even anger (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Kari's narrative is of frustration and anger: “It's here and no one talks about it and that really ticks me off. NO ONE TALKS ABOUT IT”.

(Journal, Oct.2011)

Clark Howard, a syndicated consumer advocate and talk show host, mentions on the radio that this recession was different than others in that people are not able to move to go to where the jobs are because they can't sell their houses, and those that are trying to are too upside down in what they owe. The result is increased unemployment, less consumer spending, more people needing state/federal assistance, and state funds depleting. This is what I call one big bowl of crazy. The bottom line is that everyone suffers.

(Kari, June, 2011)

During the twenty-one years I've been teaching, the role of advocacy has changed. In the

past I felt it was about informing the parents, community, administration, and school board members about all of the important things happening in the art room. Advocating our art programs was work, but it was fun. Kinda like show-n-tell.

The role of arts advocacy in the 21st century has become all that we used to do and then some. It has become more political and in all honesty, not as much fun. With attacks on public education reaching epidemic proportions, our role as spokespeople for our programs and our profession is of crucial importance. We must be informed, professional, articulate and make our voices heard not only to the people we focused on in the past, but to our legislators and policy makers.

I consider myself an optimist, but I'm also a realist and I'll be honest, I'm a bit concerned by what lurks around the bend. The upcoming years are going to be an interesting ride. Buckle up, it's only scary when you're going down.

The links to the left are some of the fun (and one not as fun) ways I've advocated for the arts, education, and for kids and families. We can't make a difference if we don't try!

The links are all to service-based or community-based projects in which her students are involved. Being involved not only contributes to others but also allows her students to live and give their art. The Empty Bowl project to feed the hungry and the St. Baldricks Foundation that raises money to fund research to find a cure for childhood cancers are two of the service projects they participate in. While frustrated about the negative impact the economy is having on education in May 2011, Kari told me in a phone conversation, "It's not so much about staying as it is living each day that we teach". Her blog and working on personal artworks daily keep her going. There is not a separation, one affects the other.

(Kari, July, 2011)

Every creative person I know understands that the creative process is a circuitous route. Looking seemingly unrelated things can give you some of your greatest ideas! I've noticed that my best ideas have always come to me when I'm doing something else...like taking a shower, sleeping, working in the garden or by allowing myself to think around the idea that I'm hoping to find. It's harder to get a good idea when I have to have it NOW. Time, space and air help me. It's why summer is such a wonderful gift, not only to my stress level, but also for allowing ideas to flow freely.

It's far less stressful to get lost when you aren't late for something, just as it's far less stressful to think around an idea than to think hard about it with a gotta have it now sense of urgency. One of the best ways I know to "get" ideas is to be receptive and open to letting them find you. It requires us to relax, and believe that they actually will find us! There's action involved in this, it's not passive, but the action isn't in the form of a direct attack on getting an idea, it's done more in the form of looking at stuff, reading, journaling, sketching, talking, listening, making lists, writing things down, taking a nap, etc. – *circuitous*!

Today is the halfway mark of summer vacation. How lucky I feel to have a job I enjoy and the time to find new ideas to keep teaching fresh and fun!"

Summers are times of healing. I'm sure of it. They are times of healing, growing, and expanding the soul, at least this is how I feel about summers. This is the time teachers get a moment to catch their breath, to reflect and to rejuvenate the spirit. Many art teachers use this time to get back to being creative. Jim takes the summer to "rejuvenate"; it is when he dedicates himself to his art. Pam does this as well during the summer months. For Patty, Ruby, Kari, and Ceci it is a year long process of creating with summers being the time to really focus on

themselves as artists. I try, but life is sometimes too busy. Kay said, “It’s something that we as art teacher owe to ourselves, we need to be creating; it makes us better teachers”.

(Kari, E-mail, August 2011)

Bad news....I must admit, I never got around to the requested version of a self-portrait this summer. I found myself immersed in redesigning my websites (teaching myself word press) and blogging my way out of my funk. But the good news is I have gotten myself out of my funk. I'm in a better place in my own head and in my heart!!!

I loooooove the chapter title, "Living, not staying" and I wish I had gotten something concrete together for you. But, truth be told, in many ways "blog" became a self-portrait as it chronicles my summer's journey toward getting my zest back. I expressed to you (and it comes up through my blog) that I was trying in a variety of ways to love my job again. The writing, reflecting and learning is really helping me.

How fortuitous that Kari created a blog that became her self-portrait. Lifting her dialogue with self was yet another way to study her living. Her blog is her living inquiry. She does not separate herself as an art teacher from herself as an artist. In later conversations the discussion came up of her selected work *Alterations #4*. “This is a self-portrait of sorts,” she explains, “my alterations series came right after my graduate work (MFA 2003). My work then was identity and feminist focused”. She continues, “Much has changed in my work since then, but I still feel that what was expressed in my statement at the age of 43 (instead of 36) still holds true for me today” (personal e-mail, November, 2011).

Living-not staying. Nine art teachers, nine stories plus one: my own. I too feel that as an art teacher what I do outside of school, whether it is working in clay, drawing, creating a new recipe or writing, my teaching life and my life as an artist, are not separate. One does affect the

other; the arts, Jim said “A life without music is pretty boring, a life without all these things, and people do it. I don’t need art. No, you need air and food and water and shelter. That’s what you need. But that’s not necessarily living. That’s survival”. Living, not staying.....that’s what all nine of the art teacher in this study did and continue to do. They continue to live as art teachers, as artists.

Good teaching is about living in it, not just staying in it.

I am an artist

and

a

teacher.

I view both roles as important

the teacher in me never rests.

I’m always

thinking

of

new

ways

to

invite

and

challenge

others

to create.

The satisfaction of guiding people

to realize their creative gifts

fuels

everything

I

do.

I feel that the only choice I have,

if I want to remain vibrant

within my field,

is to remind myself

that

good teaching

is

about living in it,

not just staying in it

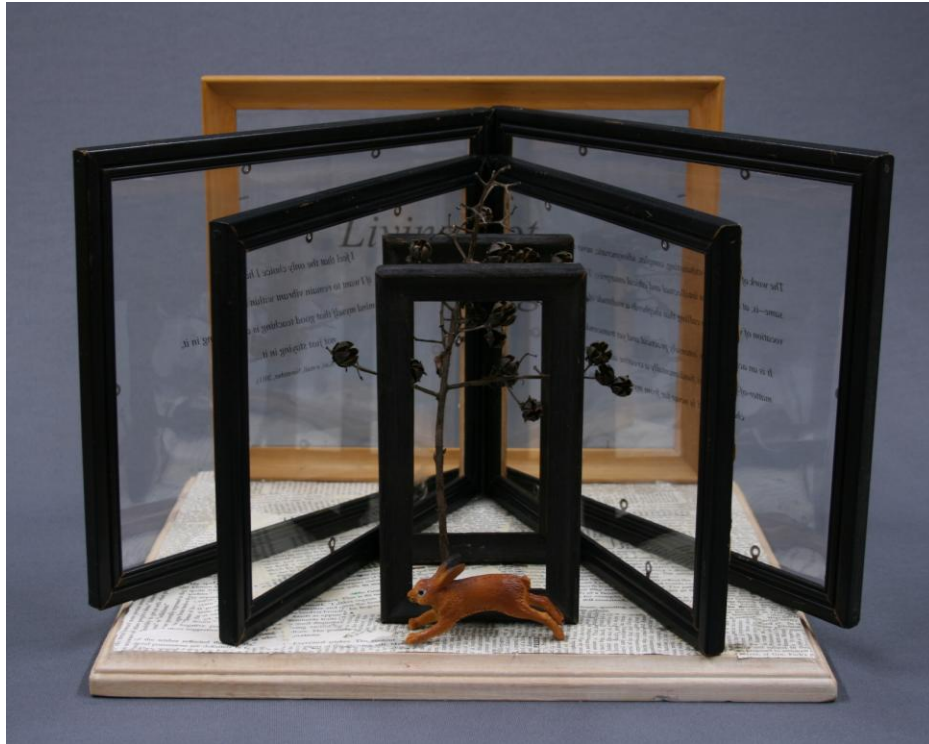


Figure 9. Reflections: Living-Not Staying

CHAPTER 10

Concluding with More Questions

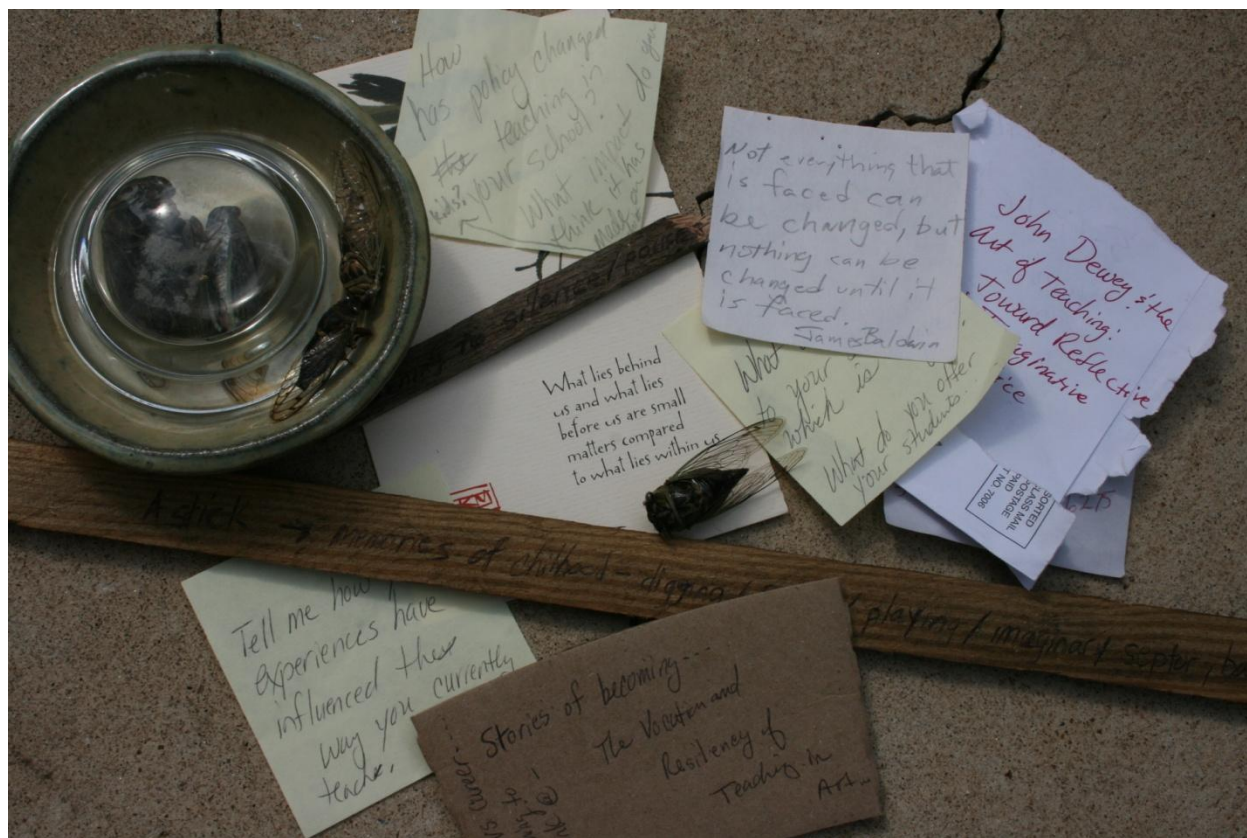


Figure 10. What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us.

(June 7, 2011)

It seems to happen when I'm in the shower or in the tub. I don't know if it's because I'm still for a moment, somewhat relaxed, or removed from the chaos of my life...just for those few moments. These are the times when clarity, solutions seem to present themselves.

I was once very involved with yoga. My teacher would say to me often, "Your mind is likened to that of a young monkey. Try to calm it down." I had a hard time calming my mind and my body. I still do. In the shower, in the tub I seem to be able to calm my jumping mind, my

moving body. The interruptions are minimal, especially between five and 6:30 each morning before my house awakens and the needs start to pull at me.

In writing about portraiture, Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) illuminated for me what it is that keeps pulling at my soul an alternative form of research. I think, eat, drink research right now. This is normal, right? I had skimmed this book before, but I had not had an artist portrait on my mind at the time. Riessman (2008) spoke of looking later at your research, experiences that happen in that space between transcription and analysis, and in revisiting to allow the experiences of time to wiggle their way in between our interpretations. She spoke of how her point of view changed once she became a mother. I am a mother, a wife, a teacher to thousands, a care giver, a student, and a researcher. Each of these roles has an impact on my work. How can it not? I always thought that having lots of experiences was good. It helped me see the world through multiple lenses. I now question...is it *really* good? I feel that all of my roles, my experiences, pull me in all directions, like the tiny spiders that scurried off of their mother's back when I swept her out of our garage. It was a scattering. That is how I often feel. Scattered. Lawrence-Lightfoot explained that she needed another way to see her research. I was missing my participants' personal perspective of how they saw themselves. I wanted to honor them, yet be as honest as was possible in representing that essence of what it means to be an art teacher. Each teacher I interviewed had other career opportunities, careers that would have been easier but not "as meaningful".

Originally I intended to create individual portraits of each of the nine art teachers in my study. It then occurred to me. How do they see themselves? Perhaps I may find another level of meaning by asking my participants to create their own self-portraits. I thought longer on this and remembered my experience of creating the tile mural of self-portraits at my school. The students

were easy to work with in painting themselves on the tiles. The teachers and the staff? *That* was another story.

I cannot tell you how many asked me just to do it for them. They could not draw or paint, or at least that's what they said. No, I was not going to create portraits for them. They had to do it for themselves. I remember going into the cafeteria, placing my arm around the cafeteria manager's shoulders and coaxing her down the hall to the tables set up outside my room. This was an area for everyone to paint their self-portraits. I sat next to her. That evening she and I each created our separate self-portraits. "I'll show you a few tricks, I know you can do it". It may not have been these exact words, but this was pretty close to what I told her. I discovered that not everyone is comfortable with drawing or painting, even if in a simplified version. Reflecting back on this experience prompted me to alter my intention of personally creating my interpretation of each of the art teachers. I decided to ask the participants whom I could contact, or who were willing, to send me a representation of how they saw themselves as an art teacher. Some of the images were personally created, others were borrowed representations. Having the art teachers submit their personal interpretations and reflections of what it means to be an art teacher and how they see themselves was the missing piece. This reflective act added yet another layer of interpretation to my study.

As I went through the process of analyzing their images and personal reflections, my initial themes of humor, care, identity socialization, perseverance/persistence, and personal fortitude, changed to the four themes of vocation, resiliency, reinventing, and living, not saying. Care was a major characteristic that came through all nine of the art teachers' interviews and the five reflections of selected or created self-portraits. Care is woven throughout the four final themes in this study. Eisner (2002) discusses the artistry of teaching as "likely to be realized not

by searching for a formula for effective teaching, but by finding out what one is doing by imagining how it might be made even better” (p.49). As each of the teachers I interviewed talked about his/her experiences of teaching, he/she was reflecting on what had been learned and the people who influenced their lives. They also talked of the compassion and care they gave and received. “When we care, we accept the responsibility to work continuously on our competence so that the recipient of our care-person, animal, object, or idea-is enhanced” (Witherell & Noddings, 2002, p.110). The most prominent pattern to explain why the teachers persevered for 20+ years was their love of and commitment to “my children” or “my kids” as they referred to their students. There is nothing mushy about caring. It is strong, resilient, the backbone of human life” (p.110).

Humor, I found, was a result of resiliency and became a part of this theme. Ruby said at one point in the interview, “you have to just laugh about things.” Patty recommended that we, “laugh, laugh, and then laugh some more” to keep us going when things are not going well. I personally use humor in my class and in my life so that I can deal with the seriousness of situations a little bit better. It helps me move on and turn a bad or not so good situation into something livable and sometimes memorable.

Perseverance/persistence and personal fortitude were all linked together within the theme of resiliency. All nine art teachers spoke within their interviews of the personal mountains they had to climb and the internal motivation of fording forward and not giving up. The word often used to describe some of the horrors in their lives was “challenge”. Life is challenging, it’s what you do with it that makes all the difference. These art teachers chose to look at mistakes, misfortunes, and terrible debilitating events as challenges, obstacles to be overcome or turned into a “good teaching lesson”.

Identity socialization is the focusing on our craft, whether it be teaching art or designing landscapes. It is the idea that we continually work at our craft and talk to others that are like-minded (Scheib, 2006). Reinventing and Living, not staying are the themes under which this previous theme now fell. Within identity socialization there is a need to continually grow in order not to become stagnant or unhappy. It's about the living of what we love to do each day. All nine art teachers said in one way or another, they'd only quit when teaching art was no longer fun or they could no longer do it physically.

The Revolving Door is Still Circling

As noted earlier within this study, thousands of teachers leave their current school positions for jobs in other occupations, within other schools or school systems, choose to retire, or leave for personal reasons each year (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Brill, & McCartney, 2008; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Kelly, 2004; Darling-Smith, 2003; Ingersoll, 2001). Teacher turnover and retention continue to be major concerns in educational research and policy as is evident in the numerous articles that are published each year on this topic. Ingersoll (2001) has referred to this leaving, migrating and returning back to the classroom as the revolving door. Today, I personally see the revolving door within my own school, the schools my children attend, and hear about it from many teachers in all areas of education, as well as the nine art teachers in this study. The big difference that I am experiencing from what Ingersoll so passionately researched years ago is that today many teachers are leaving because of displacement and frustration over educational policies that are being implemented.

The recession that began affecting most of us in 2008 is still current. We hear in the news, read in the paper and on the computer of the budget cuts that are causing so many school systems to live in a bare bones existence. These schools are caught in the uncomfortable dilemma of deciding what to do. The solution for most is to downsize the teaching staff, implement furlough days, increase the costs of medical benefits, and base pay increase on student performance rather than longevity and advanced scholarship. Those teachers who are remaining are being given more work, expected to make greater gains in test scores with the challenges of larger class sizes, students with a wide range of cognitive abilities, students who are transient and who do not always have the home support that is needed. Do teachers need to be held to some type of accountability? Yes, I believe so, but I also believe that a standardized test is not the best measure of proof that a student has learned. As a friend has said to me, “We are not widgets”. As teachers we are human. We teach students that are human. A standardized test does not reflect the lives that are lived in school each day. Standardized tests that have become so dear to so many policy makers do not reflect the humanness of schools, of teachers, or students. The tests do not reflect the “Kennys” who make it to school each day of their own accord, or of those children who do not know if they will be back tomorrow.

The narratives of the nine art teachers show us the humanness of teaching. Their stories are of the love, the care, and the dedication they offer their students. While there have been many studies on why teachers leave, especially during the first few years of teaching, there remains little research on why they stay. Looking at the stories of why art teachers stay has implications for better preparing new teachers who are entering the world of school. The collected stories and reflections offer new teachers a realistic view of what it means to teach. By studying teacher longevity, especially that of teachers who are considered exceptional, we may learn how to keep

exceptional teachers where they need to be, in the classroom. As Sonia Nieto (2003) wrote, “we need to focus on students and those who best teach” (p.128). Listening to the narratives of the teachers I interviewed gives insight into why they chose to stay in teaching, for those of us who choose to listen, a better understanding of the teaching world.

Digging Deeper Beneath the Surface: Creating and Aesthetic Experiences

As I went deeper through the process of analyzing my collected data of interview transcriptions, the collected art works, reflections, and my personal journal and ponderings, I experienced a shift in my perspective. I was reawakened and decided to create a self-portrait as well based on where I was and continue to be within this space moment in time.

Figure 6. What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us is my self-portrait. This is how I see myself right now within this moment of research and teaching. This image is an arrangement of some of my ponderings, quotes, and inspirations in the forms of pottery, glass, concrete, and cicadas. During the course of the last four years I have been living my research. Teaching, creating, and writing have all affected one another. There is no separation. I do not leave teaching at school. I do not leave research at the university or scattered about my house (literally). I do not leave creating art at my potter’s wheel or at my kitchen table. These all travel with me and are scattered around me and within me. My ponderings are my instant thoughts. They are often lost, misplaced, dropped, and then rediscovered. In this image some of my ponderings are scattered on my driveway. The play of textures portrays various areas in my life; concrete is school, the material I walk on in my classroom each day; the material that forms the walls of the school where I teach. It represents strength as well. The paper, my writing, my research—it is representative of higher education and of making a mark on life. The wood scraps with written ponderings, “A stick- memories of

childhood/poking/playing/imaginary scepter, bat, excavator....” elicited the memory of watching ants and poking the hill with a stick. Glass is transparent, yet reflective, difficult to penetrate yet fragile. It is also protective. These are all representative of what it means to be human during different life stages.

Much like my research, I am moving backwards, forwards, visiting the past, living in the present, and wondering about the future. Ceramics, what I love, is my art form most days. It connects me to what is important, my family being involved with the earth. The cicadas represent my curiosities, my questioning, longevity and the end of a cycle. The cicada that is almost center is a 13-year cicada. It has been underground maturing since 1998. This year’s graduating seniors were in kindergarten the same year these cicadas were laid as eggs. This year’s brood will not emerge for another 13 years. They will stay underground, emerging in late spring and transform as they shed their skins into what you see in this image. They too reinvent themselves. They are resilient. When they emerge, the males sing their song. They sing when schools are letting out and welcome in the next cycle of life. The glass dome represents clarity and simultaneously brings forth questioning. What lies beneath the dome of class? Central is the title, *What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us*. When I was diagnosed with two forms of thyroid cancer, this was given to me. This is left for you to interpret based on your own assumptions and understandings.

Within Dewey’s (1938) writings, he spoke of experiences and the effects they continually have on us as we grow in our knowledge. Experience, Dewey told us, arises from the interaction of two principles, continuity and interaction. *Continuity* is the experiences a person has that influence their future, for better or for worse. *Interaction* is the situational influence on one’s experience. In other words, one’s present experience is a function of the interaction between

one's past experiences and his/her present situation. When I was collecting and analyzing the self-portraits, my self discovery took place. These themes that surfaced and revealed themselves were also what kept me staying in the profession. The self-portraits and reflections of the five art teachers who participated in this research study each offered a glimpse into what it means to be an art teacher who has dedicated 20 or more years to the classroom. The self-portraits brought me back to an earlier journal entry questioning what it means to stay.

(Journal Entry, November, 2009)

What does it mean to stay? Is staying just a physical act? Is it holding steadfast to what you believe in, hold dear? Is it done because there is nowhere else to go...or if there is another place, is it no better than where you are? Why do I choose to stay? for convenience, for comfort, security? Why does anyone stay anywhere? How often are people forced to leave- to go against their will? To be displaced- to feel abandoned by a system, a person? It will be interesting to hear why from my participants. What if they chose not to share? What if they are not honest- they lie or tell me what they think I want to hear? Will I be able to tell? Will I know? How will I know, what will I do? I'm not done bridling my thoughts on this topic, but need to stop for now...

Van Manen (1990) explains, "The problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much" (p.46). "Knowing too much" was a concern for me during the research process and so I bridled my assumptions and pre-understandings by questioning myself and what I was encountering. Doing this gave me that place I needed to think, to ponder. I have found that often, rather than finding answers, I found more questions. During the process, I did come to some understandings.

(Journal Entry, October, 2009)

It seems that I do not come to a conclusion when I bridle...is this what was intended?

Dahlberg (2008) tells us “the things themselves...are always something more than what meets the eye” (p. 121). The core of phenomenology, hermeneutics and lifeworld research is the openness “to the things themselves” as Dr. Vagle tells us in class. Dahlberg speaks of bridling as a way of not imposing ourselves on things- When I bridle- am I keeping things indefinite and is this a good thing? Don’t we need to come to a conclusion, an end? Is it good, is it healthy to keep questioning and not settle?

I have found that with researching, it is impossible for me to separate myself from my study. Instead, I decided to embrace this problem by allowing my thoughts and experiences to run parallel with those of my participants. The use of bridling allowed me to concentrate on my participants while at the same time gave me that place I needed to have my voice heard. I am better able to hear the individual stories that are told that are so similar to my own. Dewey (1938) informed us that our lives are intertwined with our experiences and that our experiences are what education is based upon. Keeping this in mind, by investigating the types of personal and professional experiences that motivated effective teachers to stay in teaching, then, is not just the study of education. Instead, as Dewey would say, it is the study of life. “We learn about education from thinking about life, and we learn about life from thinking about education” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxiv).

The nine art teachers who shared their stories with me spoke of being reflective on their teaching and on their creating. The two were not separated but rather were dependent on one another to inform their living. Being an art teacher helps you as an artist and being an artist helps you as an art teacher. They are inseparable.

Studying narratives assists the researcher in understanding how participants experience, live, and tell about their world. Images provided another lens of understanding what the written word alone could not encompass. As human beings we construct stories to better understand our world (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988). And as Richardson (1997) states, narratives are able to act both as a “means of knowing and a method of telling” (p. 58). In this study the collected narratives encompassed transcribed interviews, e-mails, personal reflections, and various forms of art works. Visual and written texts were used together along with pulled poetry to present a particular perspective of life as an art teacher. The process of research felt very much like walking along a trail that was new, yet vaguely familiar.

As I talked with the nine art teachers, I could not help but inwardly reflect on how similar their stories were to my own of teaching. I too had “Kennys” in my classes over the years, children who said, “I can’t” and who never believed in themselves. I too saw myself called to the profession of teaching, though once I swore I’d never be a teacher. I found that teaching was and remains my calling. I too am passionate about what I do. Like Kari, Jim, Dee, and the rest of the art teachers, I love every minute of it and keep going back even after a sleeping child is taken away by DFACS. As the nine art teachers spoke, I listened closely to their recorded voices, read their personal reflections, and studied their representations of self-portraits. The four themes of vocation, resiliency, reinventing, and living, not staying emerged.

What was Learned

What is learned about the kinds of professional and personal experiences that motivate good teachers to stay in the classroom? I learned that there are character traits that drive those who are exceptional. All nine of the art teachers were intrinsically motivated and felt called to teach. Teaching wasn’t just a job; it was a vocation, or avocation to use Dee’s words. The nine

art teachers did not come to teaching art by the same path. Ceci and Kay knew from the beginning that this was what they wanted to do. Ruby and Nancy came to teaching art by way of theater. Jim fell in love with art and then teaching art. Patty, Kari, and Pam were artists who wanted to continue creating but needed steady income; all three discovered an inseparable passion between creating and teaching art. All nine art teachers found that in order to be a good art teacher they needed to feed themselves spiritually through art making and reflection. How do you foster intrinsic motivation? Can this be done? How is passion in teaching fostered? Is this possible? More questions arose as I began interpreting the art teacher's narratives and my understandings.

Each of the nine art teachers also possessed an inner strength, a drive to overcome life's obstacles, life's challenges. Some of these were physical challenges. Others were emotional challenges, such as going against the will of their parents or families who did not support the idea of their son or daughter going into teaching. How do you teach one to be flexible? How do you teach determination? How can we instill a sense of worth in our students so that they too can hold onto the strength and fortitude needed to overcome adversity? Can this too be done?

Flexibility, willingness to learn new things, to adapt to new situations and ways of doing things were also characteristics shared by the nine art teachers. Each one remained in the process of reinventing themselves, thinking reflexively, adjusting their teaching and learning so as to keep up with society. A need to constantly learn more, adapt to new situations, being "a fixer" were essential to continue teaching at the level the art teachers expected from themselves. Can high expectations of self be taught? How do you foster self-growth? Can this be done?

Why did these nine art teachers choose to stay in the art room teaching when they could all do something else and had opportunities to do something else? Because, as Kari wrote, "I

feel that the only choice I have, if I want to remain vibrant within my field, is to remind myself that good teaching is about living in it, not just staying in it”. How do we teach this? I really do not have an answer to this question but later implications offer some suggestions that come close.

Discoveries along the Pathways of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is not a journey along a straight pathway, there are twists and turns and sometimes these lead into areas that are dark and unwelcoming, or not clearly visible. Van Manen (1990) describes the research process as “things turn very fuzzy just when they seem to become so clear” (p. 41). This reflective chapter is not about the end of my journey as a doctoral student but rather of the things that I have discovered along the way and the questions that have come to the surface.

Using narrative and phenomenology has allowed me to gain both a better understanding and a memorable view of the lives of teachers who chose to stay. These methodologies encouraged keeping intact their stories told from their perspectives and in their voice that other forms of analysis do not always give (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005; Riessman, 2008).

I found that many paths could be taken in studying art teachers. As I researched about teacher preparation, turnover, retention, and narratives of teaching, I discovered something in all of this. While there was ample information on the first seven years in teaching, why teachers left the profession, and the role of the teacher in the classroom, there was little on longevity or why teachers chose to stay, particularly those looked upon as exceptional teachers. My reading and researching took me down the path of staying and researching what it means for exceptional art teachers to stay in the art room for approximately 20 years.

Each of the nine art teachers had to face personal challenges, some physical, others financial, many emotional. Teaching is hard; it is, to quote one of my participants, “one of the hardest jobs you’ll ever love”. While my research is not complete, because I truly believe this research is only partially done and so much more can be questioned, I am coming to the end. *Sometimes we need to hear, speak and open our eyes to what is happening in the classroom. I struggle with separating myself from the stories I’m hearing.* (Journal Entry, June 11, 2010)

Caught in Translations

John Dewey’s continuity and interaction further influenced me. My present experience of looking through the layers of stories made a connection with my past experiences of experiencing the works of Joseph Cornell. I had the need to create portraits of the four themes that emerged within my study. This did not come out of the task of creating but the desire to create. This was part of my need to further reflect on the themes that emerged and the discoveries I was making.

(Journal, April, 2009)

I remember seeing my first Joseph Cornell in a magazine when I began teaching. It was intriguing to me and made me think of the small boxes of sacred relics my grandmother had. I have one- it is a small plastic domed shape box with a tortoise shell cover which opens on two hinges. Within on velvet backing is a metal figure of the Virgin Mary. There is an intimacy that comes from viewing items within a box. The items, images, collected things seem more special because they have been placed with such care. The container creates an intimate holding place for the viewer to commune with the collected objects and images. These remind me so of the altar pieces I have seen from many cultures; especially the iconic images within the niches of Mexico which pay homage to departed family members. Milagros or small metal charms are

sometimes placed within the altar pieces. Objects that hold personal symbols are part of these shrines. I think of them as memory boxes.

It seems natural to surround oneself beyond life's necessities with objects that bring forth recollections or provide inspiration. These objects can range from lovely decorative pieces bought in high-end boutiques to a simple rock found on a walk that has the right texture and fit for the palm. As humans I think we surround ourselves with things that inspire us and if we are open and willing, I believe we are moved to reflect and observe on a deeper level. Eisner (2002) calls this deeper level of observation an aesthetic experience.

During my dissertation journey I found myself often experiencing life on a deeper level; I discovered that I was living my inquiry especially in times of interaction with nature and daily living. I found that the simplest of things became as intriguing and thought provoking as opening a cabinet filled with curiosities. Having an aesthetic moment influenced my research and I found that even during the times of trying to get away from my research it followed me much like a shadow waiting for the right lighting to reveal itself.

In early June 2011, I needed a break from my research. I had the need to get dirt under my nails and feel the earth. My son helped me and we began digging in the dirt to ready an area for tomato plants that were patiently waiting to be placed in the ground. As we dug we unearthed a nest. White creamy soft eggs were exposed tumbling forward away from the shovel's blade. Lustrous white pearls seemed to be spilling forth from moist fragmented clumps of dark earth. The creamy smooth texture contrasted against the darkness of the soil. Some of the eggs were partially hidden while several lay fully exposed, frail looking in the luminous sunlight dancing upon them as we stood back. Noting the oval shapes I knew they were snake eggs. I had only seen images of them in books, never in real life. As I bent closer the musty smell of the moist

earth filled me and I was at once taken in. Finding the snake eggs and recognizing their frailty and the necessary time of incubation for them to be brought to life, caused me to see parallels to researching. Themes, like the eggs, did not emerge until after the appropriate incubation period occurred. It was during the research incubation period I worked and analyzed my data waiting for themes to reveal themselves which were still buried beneath the dirt. Not until I began digging deeper, asking my participants to create their own self portraits and write a reflection on them that the themes of vocation, resiliency, reinventing, and living-not staying emerged from the earth as creamy eggs readying to open.



Figure 8. Snake Eggs.

Using the methodology of narrative inquiry based on phenomenological theories allowed me to gain insight into the vocation of art educators and gain a deeper understanding of the motivation behind life long careers. The themes I began with were not the themes that later emerged as the essence of my data. Rather, I found that by putting on my waders and mucking

around in the mud of daily living and allowing the incubation process to occur allowed me the time and experiences needed to see the recurring themes.

I have found that attending to daily experiences with and through the research was indeed participating in a living inquiry. The voices of the art teachers began to merge and morph based on the theme based renderings of their interviews, collected artworks, and reflections that I had collected as data. Moving from a traditional narrative inquiry study to a more arts-informed study, I was able to include personal visual analysis of narratives. I had a reawakening of how art making and being attuned to the aesthetic experiences we have impacts the quality of the research I conducted and the teaching I do in the classroom. Attending to daily experiences has offered me another path to follow; that of looking at my collected data through Arts Based Educational Research. While I know only a little about ABER, I am aware of the possibilities this methodology could bring as yet another perspective on my collected data. I feel that the research I have done is just the beginning of understanding the impact the storied lives of the art teachers who remain in the classroom and teach with passion, commitment, determination and care can have on better preparing art teachers in the future.

Implications for Teacher Preparation and Educational Leaders and Policy Makers

This qualitative study does not offer definitive answers about how to keep exceptional art teachers in the classroom throughout a long career but rather offers understandings of what it means to stay. The four themes of vocation, resiliency, reinventing, and living, not staying emerged from this study and offers us the opportunity to see the humanness of teaching. What is learned about the kinds of professional and personal experiences that motivate good teachers to stay in the classroom has relevance for both art education and general education. A significant

percentage of new teachers leave the field in their first five years, it is critical that school administrators develop practices to mentor new teachers and help them succeed.

Teacher Preparation

Teaching is very different today than it was in 1986 when I began pushing an art cart through the halls of my very first school. The profession, it seems to me, was better respected and those of us who decided to become teachers looked at it as a lifelong career. Today, more and more teachers see teaching as a first or second career but not as an only career (Foster, 1997). Teaching is hard. There are days that are ugly and times when you will swear that you'll never go back. Then, you do get up that next morning and you do go back into your classroom and you find that you have one of the most rewarding and important careers there are. Each day you are engaged with what it means to be human; care, humility, compassion, and your preconceptions are challenged.

The four themes of vocation, resiliency, reinventing, and living, not staying, offers a future teacher a glimpse into what it means to teach. Here are some final thoughts for those of you who will become teachers, those of you who are teachers, and for those of you who teach teachers to share with your students:

- Teaching is hard; it is life consuming. It needs to be done because you are passionate about working with children or adults. It is not an easy job. You do not get three months off for summer vacation. Your day does not end at 3:30 every day, or whatever time is written on your contract. You cannot go out to lunch; you do not have weekends off. The media, politicians, and unfortunately the general society blame you for why our children do not succeed.

- You are a hero. You are looked upon with love and respect by most of your students. You are a warrior. You stand up and defend the rights of your students, you accept them the way they come to you, and see more in them than they see in themselves. You are a counselor. You are who they confide in, who they trust; you are the “fixer” of torn papers and hurt hearts. You are a teacher; some say it is one of the most honorable jobs that exist. I believe as Patty said, “It’s the hardest job you’ll ever love”.
- Remember to feed your soul. Do this in whatever manner that nourishes you. All of the nine art teachers found that by being an artist and an art teacher had positive impacts on their teaching and on their creating. The act of creating rejuvenated their spirits and made them better teachers. Be reflective; keep a journal and if you cannot find your journal because it gets misplaced, write a ponder. Being reflective is one of the keys to being an exceptional teacher, whether it is in art or mathematics (Berliner, 1987, Darling-Smith, 2003, Dewey, 1938, Hankins, 2003, Schön, 1983).
- Make connections with other teachers in your school. You need to go to them to see how you can connect your curriculum to theirs. The outcomes are enriching experiences for your students and for you; friendships and peer support, as well as respect are created by doing this. You will find that as you work with other teachers, they will come and seek you out for advice and how they can connect to what you are doing. Support your peers. Talk with other art teachers.
- Take classes, workshops, and belong to your professional organization. You need to act like a professional if you want to be treated like one. Present what you are

doing in your classroom to other teachers, within your school, school system, and at conferences that address your area of interest. According to Berliner (1987), experience and working at our craft are what are necessary to become experts within our fields. Become an expert.

- Step out of your comfort zone and try to see obstacles as challenges. Try new things. Teaching art is not just teaching drawing and painting if you teach kindergarten through high school. You need to know how to weave, work in clay, and try new media. While you are in school learning to become a teacher take more methods classes. Having a variety of experiences helps you in becoming a better art teacher and ultimately benefits your students. “Make sure what you are teaching is worth their while” (Jim, 2011).
- Remember to always be human. This is what separates us from the assembly line and the test scanners. Each day you wake up remember, you are teaching someone who is precious, maybe not always in our eyes, but they are someone’s baby and they deserve the best we can offer.

The narratives you have read do not offer us solutions. As Hankins (2003) noted, they offer us “interpretations that we can live with, interpretations that sustain the children and” ourselves (p.149).

Educational Leaders and Policy Makers

It is my hope that those in the position of making educational policies and those who lead within our schools, such as administrators and superintendents and school boards, gain an empathy and understanding of the problems and challenges all teachers face daily. It is my hope that by reading the stories of the nine art teachers you will gain a deeper understanding of the

humanness of teaching and how to support teachers in meaningful ways to help them become the best that they can. The trickle-down effect ends with our future, those students within our care.

Here are some final thoughts for education leaders:

- Become a student again. Step inside a classroom and spend a day volunteering, or better yet, spend a week teaching. See what it feels like to be a teacher, experience the variety of children and criticisms teachers receive, and the unending tasks that are given to them. Farber (2010) talks of how informative and effective this act might be in increasing respect of the profession and “in elevating the dialogue about education to a place of initial empathy and understanding” (p. 154).
- Set up mentoring programs so that new teachers are not left on their own, wandering around the school trying to figure out the logistics of navigating a new environment. Many school districts have mentoring programs for new teachers the beginning of their first year; mentoring needs to be an ongoing process. Mentoring needs to be available for those teachers who migrate from other schools, other systems, and other areas of teaching or who are returning to teaching after being away (Ingersoll, 2001).
- Get teacher input. Educational policies should not be made without teacher feedback. Teacher feedback needs to be representative of many teachers, not just a few. Teachers offer policy makers and administrators years of practical experiences that reflect an understanding of current educational practices and the social challenges that are faced daily. If you want valid input that will bring about real and lasting improvements in education, go ask a teacher. They know what is real, what is not and what will and will not work; they live it every day.

- Teaching is not easy. It is more than just a job and teachers deserve the respect and value that they have earned for their hard work and commitment. You have the power to elevate the dialogue about education and the good work teachers do. Bring to the public's attention the many good things that are happening within our school. Foster a positive outlook on the future of education. The public listens to the media and what you say can have adverse effects on education. Do not make sweeping statements about education. Ask yourself these two questions: Will your comments advance the goals of education? Will they support teaching America's children and supporting its teachers?
- Be open to teacher feedback. Support them in their endeavors to grow.

Ingersoll (2001) has been very passionate about the revolving door in education. Dewey (1938) has told us of the importance our experiences have on how we react and learn. As educators, administrators, supervisors, school boards, policy makers, and all other who have a critical eye on education, we must work together and listen openly and honestly to each other. I continue to have hope and belief in education. I think that in order to keep exceptional art teachers and those who teach in other subject areas, we need to begin by listening to the narratives of teachers' experiences of living as teachers.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Below my two research questions are a set of interview questions which will be used to guide the initial interview. As true to interpretivism and qualitative research, these questions may change to fit the participant's point of view.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What types of personal and professional experiences motivate exceptional art teachers to stay in the classroom for approximately 20 years? And why?
 - a. What influenced you to become a teacher?
 - b. Describe your student teaching experience. Explain how your teacher preparation helped and/or hindered you as a teacher.
 - c. What are some of your fondest memories of teaching?
 - d. What significant teaching experiences can you recall?
 - e. Who was your favorite teacher- why?
 - f. Do you bring your teaching home with you?
2. How do their experiences inform their teaching?
 - a. What experiences do you remember that have made an impact on your teaching?
 - b. Are there any experiences that have changed the way you teach?
 - c. What makes you happiest about teaching?
 - d. How do you learn best? How do you teach best?
 - e. Describe what it is like to teach.
 - f. Have you ever thought about leaving the classroom? Why? Or Explain.

- g. Describe your worst day of teaching. Why did you return after this event?
 - h. What is the best piece of advice you got before teaching?
 - i. After looking back on your experiences, what does it mean to you to be a teacher?
3. How might the findings inform efforts to prepare and retain effective teachers?
- a. What piece of advice would you share with someone who is interested in teaching art?
 - b. What do you wish you had known or done prior to starting your teaching career?
 - c. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appendix B: Interview Participant Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "Personal Narratives: Why do Exceptional Art Teachers with 20+ years experience choose to stay?" which is being conducted by Jackie Ellett, Department of Art Education at the University of Georgia, (706-654-1503) under the direction of Dr. Tracie Costantino, Department of Art Education, University of Georgia (706-542-1640). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information related to me returned to me, removed from the records, or destroyed.

I understand the reason for this study is to investigate the perspectives of exceptional art teachers who have been teaching approximately 20 years to find out why they have chosen to remain in the classroom and how this might inform teaching practices and teacher retention. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following:

- 1) Answer questions about my personal experiences leading up to my teaching, my actual teaching experiences and reflect on the meaning of these experiences.
- 2) Participate in one to three semi-structured interviews conducted by Jackie Ellett. The first interview will last approximately 60 -90 minutes, subsequent interviews will be used to verify information, to check for accuracy or to gain additional insight as needed. The second and third interview, if necessary may be in person or by telephone and will not exceed 30 minutes. All interviews will be audio recorded then transcribed by Jackie Ellett
- 3) Jackie Ellett may contact me by e-mail or telephone and may send me her interpretations of my interview to clarify my information.

The benefits for me are that the reflection on my personal teaching experiences may help me understand, validate and improve myself as a teacher. The researcher also hopes to learn more about what characteristics make up an exceptional versus an effective teacher and how my personal experiences may contribute to the knowledge of good teaching practices as well as how to retain these type of teachers in the classroom.

No risk is expected from this study. I will receive a copy of my interview transcripts once the study is complete. No individually-identifiable information about me or provided by me will be shared with others without my written permission, except if it is necessary to protect my welfare (for example, if I were injured and needed physician care) or if required by law.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research study, now or during the course of the project and can be reached by phone at: 706-654-1503 or e-mail at: jckye@uga.edu.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of researcher: Jackie Ellett

Signature

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Telephone Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Total years teaching: _____ Total years teaching art: _____ Current teaching level: _____

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.: Jackie Ellett 676 Antrim Glen Rd. Hoschton, GA 30548
Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant in this study should be addressed to The Chairperson,

Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411;

Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix C: Bridling Journal Excerpt

What does it mean to bridle, to truly bridle? I know it is different from bracketing in that we not only look back- but forward. We put aside our assumptions, first guesses to continue questioning. But what if we come back around to where we first began? Why even go through this process- this questioning? Does it bring clarity or, as I sometimes find- more confusion? I have a difficult time focusing in on one thing; my mind has a tendency to wonder and to wonder. I am very curious- always have been, probably always will; it's gotten me in trouble many times. It seems that I do not come to a conclusion when I bridle...is this what was intended? Dahlberg (2008) tells us "the things themselves...are always something more than what meets the eye" (p. 121). The core of "phenomenology, hermeneutics and lifeworld research" is an openness to the things themselves which "means to not make definite what is indefinite" (p.121- 122). She speaks of bridling as a way of not imposing ourselves on things- "we do not make definite what is indefinite" (p. 121). When I bridle- am I keeping things indefinite and is this a good thing? Don't we need to come to a conclusion, an end? Is it good, is it healthy to keep questioning and not settle?

While I could not find any one definition in her book on bridling; Dahlberg (2008) gives us three aspects of bridling : 1. Like "bracketing" bridling is "the restraining of one's pre-understanding in the form of personal beliefs, theories, and other assumptions that otherwise would mislead the understanding of meaning and thus limit the research options" (p.129 – 130). 2. it's also about the "understanding as a whole" not just the "pre-understanding"- this is done so as to not "understand too quickly, too carelessly" (p. 130). It is an "open and alert attitude of activity waiting for the phenomenon to show up and display itself within the relationship" (p.

130); and, 3. it is forward looking rather than backward looking allowing “the phenomenon to present itself” (p. 130).

Is it possible then to not impose oneself on things? Is it possible to be open enough to allow things to reveal themselves? Will bridling allow me to focus and see how I find myself researching my study? Or, perhaps not focus- maybe this is the point, maybe this slowing down causes one to focus on multi possibilities, but not to focus on one thing (intentionality?); perhaps the idea is to focus on the possibilities? This “pointing forward”- perhaps like riding a horse you are focused on the end of your path, but you must first move through the forest, pass the trees, through the field... all important parts of the journey to get to that final destination. Perhaps this is how to uncover the hidden meanings? Will bridling allow me to allow the phenomena to be “illuminated” and allow me to see “in what way their meanings are made explicit” (p. 131)? Will I be able to acknowledge my past experiences, put them aside and, as Dahlberg says point forward for understanding? Will this technique help me in understanding myself as a reflective researcher? What happens if and when I discover that something really isn’t what I thought it might be? What if I discover this after the fact- do you go back and change your assumptions? I like the questioning and pushing forward....I hope that I can keep my research fresh and not supply my understanding with meaning, but allow the phenomena to reveal itself- (Journal entry, November 22, 2009).

Appendix D: Teacher Information

Participant Information				
Name	Gender	Years Experience	Years Retired	Teaching Level
CeCi	Female	27	0	ES
Dee	Female	30.5	1	ES, HS
Jim	Male	35	0	ES, M
Kari	Female	21	0	MS, HS
Kay	Female	26	0	HS, M
Nancy	Female	37	0	ES, C
Pam	Female	30	0	ES
Patty	Female	44	0	ES
Ruby	Female	36	22	ES, MS, HS, C
HS – High School MS – Middle School ES – Elementary School C –College M- Museum Ed.				

Teacher Information

Appendix E: Voices of Five

Nine art teachers were interviewed for this research study on why art teachers of 20+ years chose to stay in the classroom. Of the nine art teachers five created or selected works that reflected how they see themselves as art teachers. Each of the five art teachers who submitted images also reflected on their work or told a story to support the selected images. The voices of five are presented here untouched so that you, the reader, can draw your own conclusions, make your own interpretations to form your own understandings. As those who write qualitative research often tell us, we each bring our own interpretations based on our experiences (Bruner, 1990 ; Clandinin&Conelly, 2001; Polkinghorne, ;Riessman,2008)

Dee's Self-Portrait



I would like to be remembered as the art teacher who loved what she taught and helped to instill a love of art in her students. When I was just starting out in my career, whenever I would tell someone I was an art teacher, they would tell me their tale of woe about how horrible their

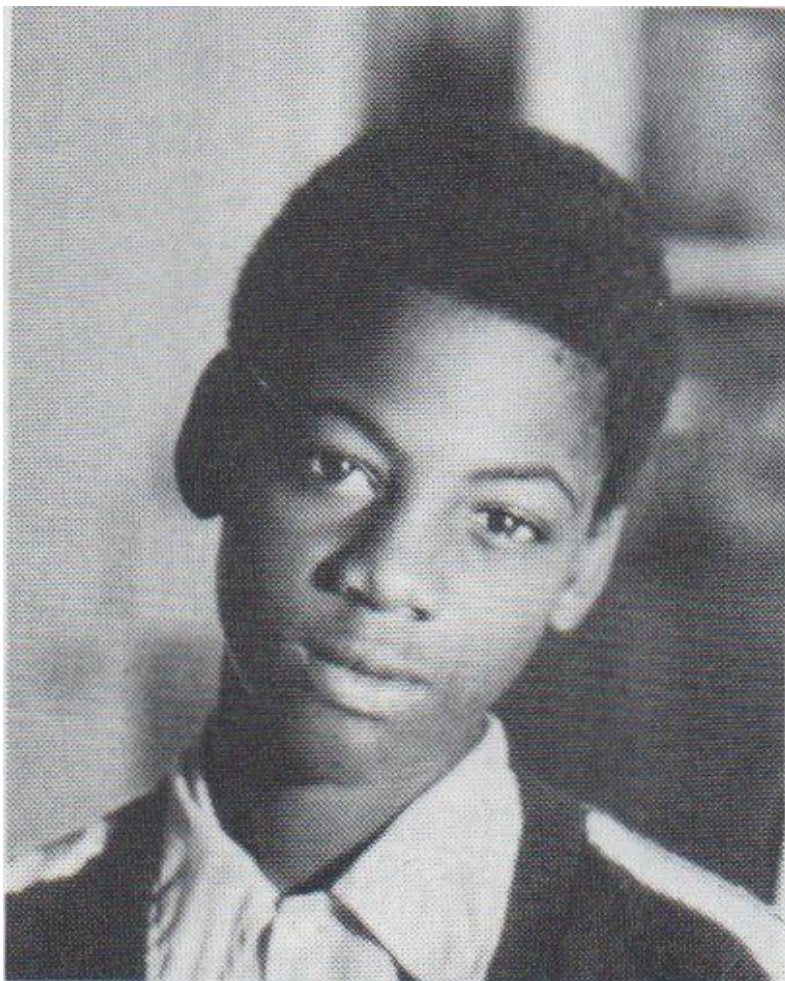
art teacher had been. I decided early on that I did not want to be someone's horror story art teacher! I did not expect my students to become professional artists, but I did want them to understand the importance of art: what art was all about, where it came from and how it was made. My hope was that they would respect the artistic process and become appreciators and supporters of art and members of museums. It would be an added perk if they became artists themselves. I still have contact with two of my former students who have become elementary art teachers themselves, and that makes me happy.

I felt my responsibility as an art teacher was to give the students a background in the technique or artist we were studying. I also gave them parameters for the assignment, but usually not a specific thing they had to draw, paint, sculpt, etc. Elementary age students need a little help to get their ideas started, but they can certainly generate plenty of thoughts once they begin work. I tried to encourage their creativity and let them go their own way as much as possible, although at times I did have to rein them in a little.

Why I chose this piece to reflect me as an art teacher:

I purchased this Woody Long painting of a school bus not long after he painted it in 1995. It was the first of what has become for us a fairly large collection of Southern folk art. The painting hung in my office window at school for several years. As most of my students had never visited an art museum or gallery, I wanted them to see an original artist's painting on canvas. One reason this painting "speaks to me" as an artwork is that it looks amazingly similar to the artwork my students were making. I felt the students could relate to it and it would help to give them confidence in the artwork they were creating. Over the years my interest in and love of folk art has grown and I'm sure it's because of the directness and honesty of the work. In that way it's like children's artwork, which I truly love.

Nancy's Self-Portrait



The Kennys who make us want to come back tomorrow.

Looking back over an art teacher's journey of many years, the story of Kenny seems to say it all. Art teachers work very hard, under sometimes intolerable conditions, yet encounters with students like Kenny explain away all the challenges, and provide rewards beyond measure. A Thursday seemed to be a brighter day, and in spite of habits of destructive actions, non-communication and other problems, I knew that success for Kenny was possible. I consistently refused to accept the label of "mentally handicapped" and intuitively felt that he could achieve so much more than he led us to believe. So on this brighter day, when I saw a slight glimmer of

interest in his eyes, I tried to put aside what I feared as a two-year failure to “reach” him, and proceeded with the crayon resist lesson that allowed us to explore the behaviors of wax and dye.

He quietly watched and listened, and actually tried several times to begin a paper. He started with a big X, and the words “I CANNOT DO IT” and moved toward the trash. I gently nudged him to continue to try, and talked about the whole idea of practicing things in all his classes that would help him in a job, and the joy of doing a special drawing that only he could do. Finally he did start a strong drawing, but class was over, and his teacher agreed that the students could finish them in his class, so that we could later apply the dye. When I later met Kenny in the hall, I asked if his was in the stack he had, and he said deeply, “Bottom.” And here was this strong and confident drawing all ready for the dye. When the papers were dry from the dye, I mounted them on our special board where everyone could see on the way to lunch, and later noticed that the little “Kenny” I had written in the corner on the front, had been carefully torn off. But the best part was on the back: In tiny letters he had written, “I can do it.” Sometimes we become so overwhelmed by the day’s challenges that we don’t record these experiences, except in our hearts. But we remember. And it’s the Kennys who make us want to come back tomorrow.

Climbing Our Mountains: Challenges and Opportunities

I continue to be grateful for all the challenges:

- A budget of .18 per child for the year turned into the opportunity to develop a sophisticated and nationally recognized program of *assemblage*, as well as other honors and grants.
- Working in a school that served five homeless shelters and an impoverished inner city neighborhood enabled me to understand our children and learn about working with special populations. How do you teach a child

- ~ who hurts from being burned, battered, or bruised?
- ~ whose inner demons keep him tapping, tipping chairs, sucking his clothes?
- ~ whose prostitute mother has him deal drugs?
- ~ who simply says "No, I won't, and you can't make me."?
- ~ whose mother says your rules (like keep your hands to yourself) are stupid, and curses the teacher?
- ~ who throws chairs, or screams, or runs away, or bites?
- ~ who goes to 7 different schools a year, is frequently absent, or drops out of school?
- ~ who has to use a dresser drawer as a toilet and a hole in the wall as a trash can?
- ~ whose parents can't read your notes and have no phone?
- The assignment to teach for a year in the newly-decorated teachers' lounge, with nothing wet or messy, resulted in a major grant, "Ties That Bind," exploring historical / cultural fiber arts and taught me the value of themes and extended explorations toward mastery.
- Living with the yearly threat that arts programs would be cut from our district, the 10th largest in the country, helped me learn about practical arts advocacy.
- And living with it all - exploding knowledge, global communication and technology, student mobility, joblessness, rapid change, drugs, crime, poverty, moral and environmental decay, war . . . enabled me to share real world experiences with interns and students in my university classes.

Well, that's our mountain. In a story by Goethe, a traveler said, " . . . if the mountain weren't there, the road would be much more convenient and shorter; but there it is, so you must get over it." How? Well, first, you have to love the challenge. And every time we meet and overcome an obstacle, we grow. In an episode of Star Trek, Captain Kirk explained to an alien

being, "We humans need obstacles to strengthen us; without them, we weaken and die." So - art teachers are **STRONG!**

Margaret Mead described our dilemma: "We are now at the point where we must educate people in what nobody knew yesterday, and prepare in our schools for what no one knows yet, but what some people must know tomorrow." Obviously, we can't teach facts that don't yet exist. But adequate arts experiences can teach us to think. Bernard Baruch shared this: "During my 87 years I have witnessed a whole succession of technological revolutions. But none of them has done away with the need for character in the individual, or the ability to think." Performing any art requires courage, critical thinking, discipline; studying the arts fine-tunes our senses, develops discriminating judgment, and enriches our lives. The arts help us know and respond to others; they nurture our intuition; they stretch our outlook; they feed our souls; the arts strengthen our productivity and sense of workmanship; they are "the signature of a civilization." Art teachers believe that the arts can help us all climb our mountains. We long to see our children find a view beyond self, refuse to accept limitation, become curious and awake, know the wonder and love of learning, feel the brotherhood of all mankind, help heal our world. Maybe over that mountain we'll find the garden of Edward Matill's gentle statement, "Children may be likened to a handful of seeds from many flowers. Under good conditions, they all bloom and have their own beauty. Our classrooms are the earth for these seeds, and when fertile and rich, they bring forth the best." (a former President of NAEA)

Continuing Matill's analogy about children as flowers, I think of art teachers as gardeners whose infinite varieties of blooms, and who must meet each need with just the right site, soil, water, sun, food, and the watchful, loving eye that rejoices in the triumph of individual growth. Our gardening is sometimes fatiguing and messy, but the fruit is sweet.

(And then there's the fun.)

~ 2nd grader: Our teacher is not here. (Well, who taught the class?) Oh, we had a prostitute!~

~ Answers to roll call: Present, president, pregnant.

~ Kindergartner, at observation time: The principal is going to come abuse our class tomorrow!

~ 3rd grader: (and not so funny) The principal helps you out when your mother beats you up.

~ 1st grader: I had to ride the bus today; my mommy's home because she had her boobs tied.

Ruby's Self-Portrait



My Soul Dances

I choose this painting to represent my deepest feelings about me teaching art. This is not pretty. It does not flatter me. It's not a representation of my looks. I never looked in a mirror. But it is a picture of my love for and my limitations teaching art.

I loved every moment of it - from teaching kindergarteners what happens when you mix red and yellow to helping college students master their first teaching experiences. I truly believe most of my students loved coming to my studio/classroom.

When I started teaching art I could match the best of you jumping on tables and moving furniture. One day I moved all the chairs out of my room except 10 and pushed the tables up against the wall. With five chairs at one end of the room and five at the other I tied ropes to the chairs to represent warp threads. Then, with some appropriate music playing, I had each of the kindergarteners with weft threads in their hands sing "over and under" as they climbed over and under the warps to understand, kinesthetically, what it was like to weave. And then I quickly pulled all the furniture back in to the room for my next class.

And then there was the time I stapled paper under the tables so that middle schoolers could understand how Michelangelo felt painting on that ceiling. When the music teacher decided to put on a production of *Oklahoma* I leaned on my theater background to direct and choreograph the high schoolers. I helped the art students build scenery that could be packed up on a truck and moved to several neighboring counties. I had the biggest laugh when my rural, South Georgia kids had trouble reading the script. Hammerstein had written the words in an Oklahoma dialect. (The people who settled Oklahoma came from Georgia) I had to translate for them. We practiced after school. When I realize that every young man in that cast brought their own guns and holsters to school every day during the last week, I am amazed that everything went smoothly. But this was the sixties and things were different then. Every morning the boys would check their equipment in the principal's safe, and every afternoon they would pick them up and bring them to the auditorium!

Thanks to Wachowiak's classes at UGA I would collect the most exciting stuff for still life lessons. I got a mannequin from Minkovitz's department store. Got an old typewriter from the business teacher, a bicycle wheel, fabrics with wild prints, stuffed animals. Everyone could draw something in that arrangement. I would point out that the edge of the leg of the table was a vertical line, and the top had horizontal lines. Then we'd trace some of the curves until they all felt confident. They could start anywhere in the composition, draw one thing, then draw what was next to it, what was under it, above it, and so on. By the time they had filled the page they were ready to paint. I would get a high just watching them change from "I can't draw" to "Oh! That is a round shape" as they studied the objects before them.

I was never very good in ceramics in college. I had a boring professor. I would leave the studio and go down to the sub-basement to work on the scenery for my next theater project. But my college participants taught me all I needed to know and I had so much fun working with clay. One year the 8th graders built houses using slab construction. We could only fire one at a time, but they were beautiful. I figured out how to fire kindergarten animals. I'd put them in the kiln when they had dried, but I'd set the kiln on low and left the leather-hard animals in the kiln 24 hours with the lid cracked open so that all the moisture had left. Then I'd close the kiln and fire it up. I never lost a critter.

I found a wringer from an old washing machine, two of my college participants built a printing press and we made some of the best linoleum prints with it. Another year my grad assistant built benches for my listening center. He took apart some old wooden storage units, and before I knew it we had a listening center in one corner of the room. That way I could stand in front of the group and know that every eye was on me. That was so much easier than running around the room trying to keep their attention while I gave directions or led a discussion.

Waking up to go to work was exciting. What was going to happen today that will be different from yesterday? Every year I would explain to the new kindergarten students that it took me a while to learn their names. I would put their paper at their seat with their name on it, and I asked them to keep the name side up so I could lean it. There was one boy named Jason. He would be at the front door every day when I came in. And every day we had the same dialog: "Hi, Mrs. Dr. Roens, my name is Jason." and I would return, "Good morning, Jason" He made sure that I knew his name! I learned it very quickly. Jason and I remained friends throughout his years at Pittman, He was always the one who volunteered to wash the brushes, or collect the papers, and so on.

But then in 1975 post-polio syndrome snuck into my life at the prime of my career. I had to slow down. Everything that had been paralyzed back in 1944 gradually weakened again. I refused to retire. That would be giving up and I was not going to let polio win. I limped down the halls. I brought a special chair to my classroom that the orthotics department at Warm Springs invented just for me. It had a sling so that I could use my right arm, and wheels so I could glide from one table to the next. I fought retirement, and did not give in until I was several years beyond my 30 in the classroom.

This self-portrait tells you how I felt.

At the time I was creating the work, I did realize what it would say about me. I had been researching women artists for the second edition of ArtTalk, and Alice Neel's self-portrait at 80 shook my world. My first reaction was: WHY? Why would she put out all the signs of aging for the whole world to see and humiliate herself? Then gradually I realized that she did this work with pride. The pride of reaching eighty. She made me realize that I had nothing to be ashamed of at any age, or any stage of my career. There was beauty in just being ourselves. All these

women I was reading about told me to hold my head up, and be proud of who I was. So I started. I had to work with my batik dyes and waxes. I loved the effects I could get with them. But working with dyes and wax had one major condition: Once you painted the hot wax on to the fabric there was no going back. I blocked in the figure in the chair with pencil and started the hot wax lines that would stay white. Some thin one were drawn with my electric jaunting tool, and a few were brushed in. At the time I did not realize how I was setting up the meaning of this piece. I started making thin lines with my electric jaunting tool. But for the body I used the wax heated in my electric skillet and brushed in the flowing lines for the body. Then I added my first light color, yellow. When it dried I waxed the areas that were to remain yellow. I was not until I added the darker colors that I saw the large breasts. They stood out like headlights. They were the first unconscious message in the work. Look at the hands. The right one rests calmly on the arm of the chair with fingers that curve gently resting on the chair while the left one, the arm that still worked has fingers that look restless and ready to do something. The lower part of my body is squeezed into that armchair. I intended to make the legs very vertical and stiff, but I did not realize I was squeezing the whole lower half into a confined space.. And then the upper torso, the part with my heart just seems to blossom out of the chair. All the lines on the lower half are vertically stiff or curving gently across my lap. The lap held many little one in its day. The dancers that are hiding around my legs are resting and drooping or standing vertically. They match the rigid verticality of the legs.

But the dancers across my bosom are swirling with the love I have for children.

And then there is the head. It tilts at a diagonal. The glasses are overlarge emphasizing the eyes that see art. The head tilts at the diagonal and the hair that swirls around it indicates the thoughts that are swirling around in mu head. So, without realizing it at the time I told the viewer

that although the physical movement of my body is limited, my ideas in the tilting head, and my love in the large bosom are extremely active. The bosom, which I could never have planned consciously, indicates my love for all my students from the youngest kindergartener to the seniors getting ready to teach and the graduate students who are already teaching. I always had time to listen to them. I worked with them at school and they were welcome in my home in the evening. When a high school boy was running away from home, he came to my house and told me where he was going so that someone he trusted knew where he was.

All of my paintings are full of dancers and flowers, but none tell you who I am like this one. It says my legs may be confined with limitations, but *My Soul Dances*.

Kay's Self-Portrait



I created this collage to show how I have changed as an art teacher and as an artist. I am always growing, expanding my knowledge and constructing and reconstructing who I am. (E-mail, July 2011).

To stay stimulated, focused and engaged I would re-invent myself each year with new ideas, methods and approaches. Taking workshops, classes, participating in new and inventive processes with media interested me. Organizing new events like Portfolio Day or new guest speakers, trips for the AP Art class, scholarship contests, opening day art rally, etc would make it a new experience for me. Like a student buying new book covers and school supplies, I would bring something new to the forefront for my classes. Re-inventing, re-birth keeps it new and fresh.

Kari's Self-Portrait



Alteration #4

Ninety Percent of the millions of cosmetic plastic surgery procedures performed each year are performed on women, willingly. The absurdity of it all inspired my alterations series, because my idea of growing older gracefully does not involve a knife or a needle. As I attempt to make sense of these disturbing trends, I make art. Initially inspired by the marks surgeons draw on the bodies of patients and the skins we live in, my dress pattern collages allow me to draw my own lines connecting my body to its purpose.

Much has changed in my work since then, but I still feel that what was expressed in my statement at the age of 43 (instead of 36) still holds true for me today.

I am an artist and a teacher. I view both roles as important, but the teacher in me never rests. I'm always thinking of new ways to invite and challenge others to create. The satisfaction of guiding people to realize their creative gifts fuels everything I do.

Kari's Blog

During the twenty-one years I've been teaching the role of advocacy has changed. In the past I felt it was about informing the parents, community, administration and school board members about all of the important things happening in the art room. Advocating our art programs was work, but it was fun. Kinda like show-n-tell.

The role of arts advocacy in the 21st Century has become all that we used to do and then some. It has become more political and in all honesty, not as much fun. With attacks on public education reaching epidemic proportions, our role as spokespeople for our programs and our profession is of crucial importance. We must be informed, professional, articulate and make our voices heard not only to the people we focused on in the past, but to our legislators and policy makers.

I consider myself an optimist, but I'm also a realist and I'll be honest, I'm a bit concerned by what lurks around the bend. The upcoming years are going to be an interesting ride. Buckle up, it's only scary when you're going down.

The links to the left are some of the fun (and one not as fun) ways I've advocated for the arts, education, and for kids and families. We can't make a difference if we don't try!



The St. Baldricks Foundation raises money to fund research to find a cure for childhood cancers. The Foundation does this by offering grants to innovative doctors and cutting edge research and facilities. There's just one catch, you shave your head and raise money for the foundation through sponsorships. That's me on the right, with one of my students who raised over \$2,000 by herself!

I initiated a team at my school in 2005. In the four years we shaved our heads, our small school (faculty, students and community) have raised over \$25,000 for childhood cancer research. In 2008, over 10% of our faculty went bald and many others rallied around the cause!

When art students (who by nature are instinctively gutsy) step up to change something BIG...they get noticed and they feel pretty darn good about themselves in the process.



Haddon Township High School has hosted three Empty Bowls Dinners and has raised over \$12,000 for our local food bank. Our version of this national service project features a meal of homemade soup and bread in handmade bowls. For our three dinners, our art students, faculty and community members created over 1,900 bowls. Isn't that amazing?

This service project is awesome! There are many different ways to offer it at your school as well. It doesn't have to be a massive undertaking, but there is something wonderfully satisfying to know that you are responsible for bringing your entire community together to share a meal and celebrate the creative and philanthropic endeavors of your students and school.



To celebrate Picasso's 125 birthday, we went all out! We created a 15 foot wide version of Guernica (small compared to his) and presented a multi-media assembly to the entire sixth grade! What a blast.

got ideas?

Posted on July 25, 2011 by [admin](#)

Every creative person I know understands that the creative process is a circuitous route. Looking at seemingly unrelated things can give you some of your greatest ideas! I've noticed that my best ideas have almost always come to me when I was doing something else...like taking a shower, sleeping, working in the garden or by allowing myself to think around the idea that I'm hoping to find. It's harder to get a good idea when I have to have it NOW. Time, space and air help me. It's why summer is such a wonderful gift, not only to my stress level, but also for allowing ideas to flow freely. It's far less stressful to get lost when you aren't late for something, just as it's far less stressful to think around an idea than to think hard about it with a gotta have it now sense of urgency.

One of the best ways I know to "get" ideas is to be receptive and open to letting them find you. It requires us to relax, and believe that they actually will find us! There's action involved in this, it's not passive, but the action isn't in the form of a direct attack on getting an idea, it's done more in the form of looking at stuff, reading, journaling, sketching, talking, listening, making lists, writing things down, taking a nap, etc. – *circuitous*!

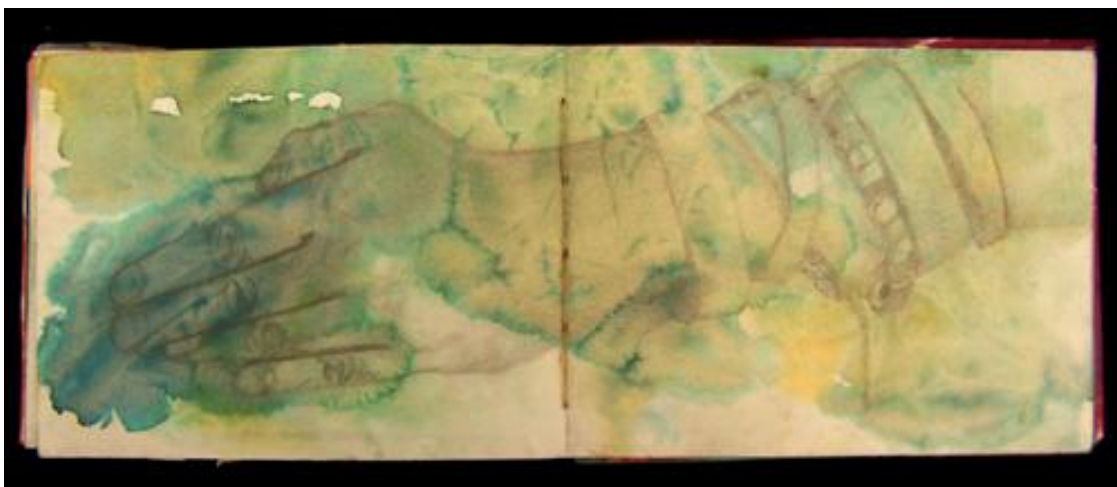
Today is the halfway mark of summer vacation. How lucky I feel to have a job I enjoy and the time to find new ideas to keep teaching fresh and fun!



Due to budget cuts, the only high school art elective currently offered at Haddon Township High School is called Creative Arts. I am the only art teacher for the HS and MS - (1,100 students). 2010 was the first year this course was offered. Previously, there were nine high school art electives; now there are three. The rest of the work featured on this site is from the crafts program that I taught at HTHS for 15 years.

The Creative Arts course is taught during three periods per day and provides 9th through 12th grade students with a variety of 2 and 3 dimensional experiences in drawing, painting, bookarts and ceramics. Students can take the course more than once, allowing for sequential learning to develop.

The work featured on the left was created during the 2010-2011 school year. It has been a challenge both emotionally and physically to bounce back from the devastating loss of our award winning program and having the world's best colleague right next door. I'm still very bummed.



"Clipped", the HS Art Show, was held at a local gallery in May 2011. It featured work on papers that were clipped together and hung from a metal clip that each student designed and fabricated out of copper, brass and nickel silver. The students worked on these papers throughout the year as they engaged in various drawing and painting experiences. After the show, their "papers" became the pages of a coptic book.





The University of Georgia

Office of The Vice President for Research
DHHS Assurance ID No. : FWA00003901

Institutional Review Board
Human Subjects Office
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Athens, Georgia 30602-7411
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APPROVAL FORM

Date Proposal Received: 2010-03-11

Project Number: 2010-10707-0

Name	Title	Dept/Phone	Address	Email
Dr. Tracie Costantino	PI	Art Lamar Dodd School of Art 270 River Road 706-542-1640		tcost@uga.edu
Ms. Jacqueline M. Ellett	CO	Art Education 706-654-1503	676 Antrim Glen Rd Hoschton, GA 30548	jckye@uga.edu

Title of Study: Personal Narratives: Why do exceptional art teachers with 20+ years experience choose to stay?

45 CFR 46 Category: Administrative 2

Parameters:
None;

Change(s) Required for Approval:

Receipt of Recruitment Materials;
Revised Application;
Revised Consent Document(s);

Approved : 2010-04-09 Begin date : 2010-04-09 Expiration date : 2015-04-08

NOTE: Any research conducted before the approval date or after the end data collection date shown above is not covered by IRB approval, and cannot be retroactively approved.

Number Assigned by Sponsored Programs:

Funding Agency:

Your human subjects study has been approved.

Please be aware that it is your responsibility to inform the IRB:

- ... of any adverse events or unanticipated risks to the subjects or others within 24 to 72 hours;
- ... of any significant changes or additions to your study and obtain approval of them before they are put into effect;
- ... that you need to extend the approval period beyond the expiration date shown above;
- ... that you have completed your data collection as approved, within the approval period shown above, so that your file may be closed.

For additional information regarding your responsibilities as an investigator refer to the IRB Guidelines.
Use the attached Researcher Request Form for requesting renewals, changes, or closures.
Keep this original approval form for your records.

Chairperson or Designee,
Institutional Review Board