Reflective Communities: Mentoring Teacher Candidates During the (In)Between Spaces of the Practicum

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This article critiques traditional student teaching formats that fail to examine the social conditions of the spaces between the time of becoming and the place of being educators during practicum fieldwork. The lack of negotiable spaces for student teachers to resolve problematic situations, myths, cultural differences, and relational aspects of teaching have been documented. Exploring the methods of arts-based inquiry, a group of teacher candidates illustrated their experiences of becoming art educators by producing artwork, videos, and narratives. Student teachers then reflected on their shared roles, making other avenues of collaboration available. When the affective domains of learning to teach are shared narratively within a community, it has the potential to create a heterotopic space of compensation, acting as a space of counterbalance for teacher candidates as they navigate identity fluctuations and pedagogical shifts. Through the heterotopic mirror, the practicum becomes as a space of reflection and a stage of rehearsal, allowing teacher candidates to imagine other political and theoretical positions in their new roles. This paper is a call for supplemental communal spaces that can provide additional support and scaffolding for art teacher candidates as they transition through the (in)between space and time of the student teaching practicum.

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Teacher candidates (TCs) embody a liminal space during practicum fieldwork that involves the intersections of space, time, and place. Under traditional formats of student teaching, the practicum occurs during one semester and is performed in mentor teachers’ (MTs) classrooms. As TCs progress through the practicum, some experience a sense of displacement in both place and time as they transition from being college students at a university to becoming professional teachers. Transitional space, “depicts the state when an old paradigm is no longer viable but the new one has not yet taken effect” (Margolin, 2011, p. 9). Since the places that TCs embody are temporal, a transportable space for reflections about the practicum is needed. This article critiques traditional student teaching formats that fail to examine the social conditions of the spaces (in)between the time of becoming and the place of being during practicum fieldwork (Hetrick & Sutters, 2014).

Incubation periods of isolation that occur in student teacher placements have been proven to produce uneven developments in TCs’ pedagogical experiences (Britzman, 2007; Zeichner, 1999). Therefore, additional scaffolding and support in communal spaces are needed as TCs transition through fieldwork experiences.

The social practices of teaching can be visualized through arts-based inquiry and shared narratively within a community of educators. Arts-based inquiry and narrative inquiry can provide a spatial examination of the practicum that focuses on a collective of experiences. These methods assist TCs with understanding multiple interpretations of the social conditions of teaching. This paper addresses the call for the creation of reflective spaces, which are private and yet communal forums for art TCs to practice the skills of negotiation, while sharing multiple strategies, as they are in places of being educators in training.

Traditional formats of student teaching operate under modernistic systems that rely heavily upon the selection of expert mentor teachers and supervisors, who are responsible for successfully stewarding preservice teachers through the practicum (Britzman, 2003). Zeichner (1999) noted that it is impossible to guarantee that TCs will receive quality mentorships from teachers and university supervisors (US). Traditional structures of student teaching triads (TC, MT, and US) have not changed significantly in the last twenty years (Zeichner & Liston, 2013). Although areas of this critique concern mentor teacher and university supervisor roles, this article is not about placing blame or suggesting that these positions be abolished. Rather, this critique will suggest how to potentially improve the methods of preparing TCs for the complex social conditions of the classroom through self and community inquiries that are reflective of fieldwork experiences.

The social conditions of what is considered good teaching are transferred through patterns of expected behavior, tacit knowledge is embedded in the everyday rituals that occur in educational classrooms where student teachers complete the practicum (Britzman, 2003, 2007). These conditions include fluctuating identities, conflicting paradigms, and micropolitical practices in student-teaching placements which are rarely examined in traditional teacher education programs or alternative certification programs (Zeichner & Liston, 2013). This oversight causes some TCs to experience misunderstandings about the roles and responsibilities shared with MTs. Conflicting paradigms also encompass theoretical differences in what the university and public schools want from student teachers and their measurements of success in the practicum (Britzman, 2003).
However, when tacit knowledge is visualized and shared narratively within a community, preservice educators have the opportunity to reflect on those shared roles, making other avenues of collaboration available.

The struggle begins when the biography of the student teacher contradicts the places that teachers occupy (Britzman, 2003). During preservice training, we often ask TCs to narratively describe their biographies of becoming art educators but we seldom ask them to visualize these fluctuations within the liminal spaces of the practicum. Asking TCs to visually reflect about their own educational biographies and identity fluctuations during the practicum, can affect how they adapt to current teaching environments and how they perceive their future as educators (Dixon & Senior, 2009; Hyatt, 2014; Rifà-Valls, 2011).

Visualizing change in one’s identity has the potential to advance alternative social practices and beliefs about teaching. Finley (2008) describes arts-based inquiry as a method for relocating inquiry by making use of affective domains of experiences through other ways of knowing such as, imagination, cognitive, and emotional abilities. This includes bodily knowledge that allows the arts-based researcher to explore contingencies of space and place by investigating internal and external sites of conflict and struggle.

What usually remains unspoken, such as implicit knowledge and taboo discourses about the uncertainty and vulnerability of teaching (Britzman, 2003), can be visualized through arts-based inquiry and further explored through narrative inquiry (Leavy, 2009). Reflective spaces, such as digital communities shared with peers and outside mentors, can assist TCs in negotiating differences, finding their voices, and challenging “the politics of their education” (Garoian, 1999, p. 66). Moreover, these spaces have the potential to challenge assumptions about teaching as we engage in community inquiry, which open up avenues of transparency and transformative practices.

**The (Digital Community) Space**

Designing a digital space for art TCs on a wiki site (Hyatt, 2014), I thought of how to create a temporary forum for preservice educators as they transition between the institutions of universities and schools. The participants were asked to create pseudonyms in order to protect the identities of all parties involved, and to post narratives and images about their fieldwork experiences, as they occurred. The TCs were art education student teachers from two large southern universities. Art education professors invited all 11 of the TCs who participated in the study. Consequently, I did not have control of who the TCs were placed with during the practicum or knowledge of the appointed university supervisors. As an arts-based educational researcher, I acted as connoisseur, advising, appreciating, and critiquing the TC’s images and narratives (Eisner, 1998). Additionally, I assumed the role of teacher educator, providing scaffolding and support when needed and encouraging the TCs to deconstruct their experiences through visual and narrative methods of inquiry.

University supervisors (US) act as liaisons between the mentor teacher and student teacher and many are experienced educators themselves. They work to provide a sense of cohesion from the beginning to the end of the practicum. Therefore, the digital wiki space was not designed to replace a supportive triad (mentor teacher, university supervisor) that guides the TC through the successful completion of the practicum. But rather, the wiki space was intended as a supportive bridge in-between
the time of becoming an art educator, and being a full-time art teacher (Hetrick & Sutter, 2014). Acting as a structural support, anonymous communal spaces can give the TCs a forum in which to ask questions about uncomfortable situations and unresolved conflicts that may otherwise go unspoken, and therefore, unexplored. When TCs avoid such conversations, the messiness of teaching is never fully realized, and myths about what is good teaching remain uncontested (Britzman, 2003, 2007).

**Space: Slices of Experience versus the Linear Storyline**

A digital wiki community can serve as a reflective space that function as a stage of rehearsal, allowing candidates to try different roles or imagine different political positions as educators as they navigate identity fluctuations, pedagogical shifts, and personality conflicts. Such digital communities can become weigh-stations, operating as temporary checkpoints during the time of becoming educators. The potential to open up dialogic spaces that weigh the checks and balances of particular situations during the practicum can happen within a supportive community of one’s peers and outside mentors.

Garoian (1999) speaks of ways liminal spaces enable students to examine history, place, and culture through a performance art pedagogy that confronts “constructed ideas, images, myths, and utopias” allowing students to reimagine, create, and experience new realities (p. xxvi). Becker (1995) states that we need liminal spaces, “moving between the private and the public, taking from the public to examine the private, taking from the private to examine the public” (p. 58). Garoian (1999) further elaborates that in such (in)between spaces, “contention is a desirable state. It is the principle means by which spectators/students become critical thinkers and participate in society as critical citizens” (p. 43). Ignoring contradictions concerning teaching experiences and fluctuating teacher roles and identities, blocks pedagogical connections, which link ideas, theories, and practices together.

It was in this reflective space that TCs shared emotional and complex situations that occurred in various classroom contexts. As such, the space contested what is often portrayed in teacher education as a linear journey of becoming a teacher. The TC’s text and images represent both slices of experience, depicting a particular scene or setting, and narratives that illustrate a complete storyline from the beginning to the end of the practicum. Therefore, digital space can reflect the liminal spaces of teaching as a holistic journey or as a fragmented string of dispersed narratives. Multiple interpretations of experience can then act as a counterbalance, providing a heterotopic space of compensation (Foucault, 1986).

**Space—Heterotopias**

“Depending on their purpose, heterotopias serve as steam-releasing sites, deflecting the forces of change by locating them outside society” (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 191). Foucault’s (1986) paper, *Of Other Spaces*, began to outline spaces of heterotopias, which can be physical, mental, or virtual. Unlike utopias, which are unreal spaces, heterotopias are real spaces that exist alongside our everyday space but are considered other, deviating from the social norms of that particular society (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008; Foucault, 1986). Foucault’s principles of heterotopias state that there are two classifications where norms of behavior are suspended—heterotopias of crisis and heterotopias of deviation. Both have a precise function and reflect the society in which they exist (Foucault, 1986).
Foucault (1986) recognized that heterotopias mirror aspects of spaces and places of the real world, not exactly as they are but as reflections of multiple realities, including those of utopian ideologies. Foucault (1986) used the mirror as an example of a reflective heterotopia that offered a mixed experience between utopia and heterotopia. The mirror reflected spaces that could be considered utopian, allowing one to see themselves where they were not, in imagined or reflected spaces. The mirror itself, as an object, is real. Therefore, according to Foucault (1986), the mirror is a heterotopic space that reflects both the real and the utopian spaces.

Dehaene and De Cauter (2008) explain the function of Foucault’s (1986) heterotopias in “post civil” societies as a way of organizing space through a grid or network. Digital communal spaces for TCs can serve as heterotopic mirrors, enclaves of collective experiences that link together and reveal other pedagogical sites, including institutional spaces separated by time and geography. Wild (2011) speaks of a heterotopic space as a real site that “represents, contests, and reverses culture by allowing difference…Heterotopias are counter-sites, space which contradict the other spaces that we occupy” (p. 424). These heterotopic spaces are reflective places that both separate and connect spatial experiences of differentiation. Collectives can form a recollection of discontinuity that deflects homogenization. Heterotopias can be about a “collective of experiences of otherness, not a stigmatizing spatial seclusion but rather as the practice of diffusing new forms of urban collective life” (Stavrides, 2007, p. 174).

Dehaene and De Cauter (2008) maintain that heterotopias are paradoxically bounded, and at certain times, permeable. Contemporary heterotopic spaces overlap between public and private spaces, which are “necessarily collective or shared spaces” (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 6. Stavrides (2007) believes that the porosity between the experiences of being in places of otherness serves to absorb other ways of knowing, dissolving spatial borders between heterotopic spaces. In this way, the heterotopic space is porous and is reflective of other borders, becoming much like a drawbridge, a penetrable space that separates and connects:

Because this perimeter is full of combining/separating thresholds, heterotopias are not simply places of the other, or the deviant as opposed to normal, but places in which otherness proliferates, spilling over into the neighboring areas of “sameness.” Heterotopias thus mark an osmosis between situated identities and experiences that can effectively destroy those strict taxonomies that ensure social production. Through their osmotic boundaries, heterotopias diffuse a virus of change. (Stavride, 2007, p. 4)

The digital space I shared with the 11 participants on the wiki site was heterotopic, as multiple interpretations and contexts of learning and teaching that the participants encountered were represented through art, videos, and narratives, reflected back into a communal space. The TC’s cultural histories concerning educational practices sometimes conflicted with other students or MTs in their teacher placements. For example, one TC stated that she attended a private religious school that was structured around individualistic learning practices (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). In art classes at her cooperating school, she
expected the same behaviors, whereas children would be given instructions and work on individual projects during the class period. Her MT’s teaching philosophy was closely aligned with a social constructivist approach (Vygotsky, 1978), which recognizes an equal distribution of power between the students and teacher is necessary to facilitate a climate focused on social interactions and shared knowledge. Another TC stated that she encountered a very different situation, as she interpreted her MT’s behavior as strict concerning dress codes, classroom rules, and adherence to administrative regulations. Some of the TCs’ narratives reflected the social conditions present in these institutionalized places. Heterotopic communities can serve to debate the norms of one culture against the norms another, a space that would allow for norms and deviation to be contested and reversed. As art TCs travel through liminal spaces (in)between becoming and being art teachers (Hetrick & Sutters, 2014), a heterotopic community to share, debate, and reflect upon the alternative identities and ways of becoming art teachers has the potential to change the social conditions of teaching by pedagogically spilling over into classrooms (Hyatt, 2014; Wild, 2011).

Crafting spaces of heterotopias can be a form of creative resistance, providing opportunities for reflection on experience. Such spaces can embrace multiple ways of knowing and teaching (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1987). Garoian (1999) defines these resistive spaces as public/private negotiations, which combine action, theory, and activism. A communal space of reflection grants the arts-based researcher room to inquire through authentic modes of inquiry, discovering how to go about illustrating the tensions between what we know and what we have experienced.

Negotiating Conflict in Reflexive Learning Environments

Reflexive learning environments require that we provide thoughtful spaces for preservice educators to critically examine fluctuations in identity that are experienced over time, visualizing the emotions of frustration, uncertainty, and vulnerability that are often present during times of personal change and growth. Arts-based inquiry combined with narrative inquiry can illuminate how TCs handle conflicting situations through various strategies (Diamond & Van Halen-Faber, 2005; Finley, 2008). As the TCs traveled through the spaces of experiencing to the places of being art teachers (Sutters, 2012) many of their images illustrated the shifting social conditions of teaching. The TCs posted narratives and images concerning conflicting paradigms, identity fluctuations, and shared strategies that assisted them in traversing the liminal spaces of the practicum.

Preservice educators and student teachers are not always instructed on how to deconstruct or negotiate conflict during the practicum (Anderson, 2007; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Zembylas, 2007). When TCs are willing to share the unscripted moments of teacher fieldwork, it opens up a dialogic space that invites critical discussions about misunderstandings, complex learning environments, and multiple ways of handling difficult situations. Below is an example of how one TC, MyArtEd, describes a visual strategy he used when dealing with uncomfortable feelings during his teacher fieldwork experience.
Throughout my student teaching semester, instead of getting wrapped up in the awkward or uncomfortable moments, I would force myself to take time to look at the bigger picture and focus on the overall purpose of my time in the classroom. In doing this, I would analyze my experience as though I was looking down from the clouds, mapping out my steps and highlighting the moments that were unforgettable, almost like an aerial map (personal communication, 2012).

Decentering is an intentional yet playful kind of mindfulness, a stepping away from what is known, to see what remains hidden. This strategy presents the TC with a different perspective of a particular situation. “Detachment and connection are most generative when regarded as connected” (Bresler, 2013, p. 45). Detached connection allows the TC to illustrate the external conditions of teaching that affect the internal processes, which has the potential to alter the TC’s interpretations of fieldwork experiences. Therefore, decentering is a strategy that involves both external and internal processes (Bresler, 2013), as expressed by MyArtEd in figure 1. Reflexive spaces can document a TC’s cumulative experience both visually and narratively. In this way, TCs are exposed to multiple avenues of negotiation by witnessing how other student teachers use visual strategies in coping with stressful situations. Creating narratives or works of art is a reflexive way of working through problems and seeing alternative solutions (Leggo, 2008).

As student teachers reflexively reframe the culture of schools, and contribute those experiences in an anonymous community, they may create what Clements (1999) refers to as a “fictive voice,” which can entail the retelling of an event, slightly altered or changed by the participants’ own understanding and cultural experience to generate a more desirable or meaningful narrative. Embracing the fictive voice, however, can also become a way for participants to collaborate, using hindsight to make sense of the story (Clandinin, 2007). In the following sections, the participants’ narratives, images, and videos were shared on the wiki site during, and immediately following the conclusion of the practicum experience.

Examples of correspondence shared between the TCs and me involved further exploration of their stories and images, which investigated issues surrounding the constraints of space, time, and place in teacher fieldwork. As an experienced art educator with over 18 years teaching, I have served in all of the positions in traditional student teaching triads. By far the most difficult position is that of the mentor teacher. As the TCs navigated their new identities as art teachers, I reminded them to be respectful of all parties with the understanding that one day, they too, will be responsible for mentoring student teachers and living constraints of space, time, and place.
Time and Displacement: Fluctuating Identities

The traditional formats of teaching privilege the idea that teaching experience can only be accumulated through the passing of time—a semester for a TC and years for the MT—and in the spaces of MTs’ classrooms. Scholars, including Edward Soja (1989) call for an “interpretive balance between space, time, and social being” (p. 23). Shaped by both spatial and temporal contexts, “teaching is not only embedded in space, but also in time” (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 1002).

TCs live a transient existence during the practicum, teaching in a classroom that is not their own, while being a college student transitioning from university life to a professional career. TC, Pinkchix describes the rift (in)between college and the classroom, addressing feelings of displacement:

Through this semester of student teaching, my mind began to unwind and rethread a new understanding, especially during the high school placement, of the small little world I had created in this little town for the past five years. I noticed when I came home from work and would drive through campus, I gradually started feeling out of place in an area I have called my home for half a decade . . . At stop lights, I would just look at the kids and realize that the freshman were only a year older than the kids I was teaching and, suddenly, I would become incredibly uneasy as I realized how much can change in such a short amount of time. Within the semester, I felt a wide rift grow and mold from my college years to my career years and a creeping feeling sunk into my gut; I belong in the classroom now. (personal communication, 2012)

TC, ArtIsAHammer felt a sense of displacement concerning the fracturing of identity from student to teacher. Spaces to transition with others who are experiencing the same phenomenon could assist student teachers in addressing fluctuating identities.

Student teacher, ArtIsAHammer, created a vimeo presentation of her experiences titled “The Incremental Approach.” “Incremental” suggests slow progress, something increasing in value or something gained. Because of institutional constraints and fragmentation from outdated forms of measuring students’ progress and/or documenting our own practices as teachers, even incremental goals are often difficult to measure. This TC speaks of the everyday realities and struggles to motivate students, something that student teachers and teachers alike face. Even more astute is the way she confronts the myth of becoming a teacher. The journey into becoming a teacher is often portrayed as a mysterious sojourn where a miraculous moment occurs.

at the conclusion of the practicum. A moment that transforms the TC into a full-fledged teacher ready to take on the daily responsibilities of teaching (Britzman, 2003). ArtIsAHammar’s narrative video illustrates that teaching is not instantaneous. It is a process, and sometimes it takes longer for TCs to develop as educators.

**Teacher Roles and Identity**

The practicum is considered an opportunity to explore practical applications of methods and theories in teaching, a time for experimentation and examination of teacher identities. Habitually, institutional criteria mistakenly see the MT as solely responsible for all learning that takes place in the classroom (Britzman, 2003). This situates the MT’s actions or inactions as the problem, in order to provide oversimplified solutions to very complex teaching environments. These social practices are passed on to the TCs, placing great responsibility on the TCs to perform to scripted curriculum methods and mimic the MT, while controlling the classroom and producing predetermined outcomes.

Teacher candidate, Godwilling, explains in her narrative titled “Maybe Not All Teachers Are Cut Out to Be Mentor Teachers” that university experience is not always validated by some classroom teachers and that the MTs roles should be those of a facilitator providing support:

One of the reasons I wanted to write on this topic is because one of my mentor teachers brought this matter to me and we discussed it in detail. She believes that there are mentor teachers that honestly do not understand their function as a supportive role in the classroom. Pre-service students have already gone to school; they have had some classroom experiences. They are not starting from the ground up. They do not need to be taught basics, they need to be supported in front of the students and treated as an equal in order to gain the students’ trust. I believe without this support, the student teacher will be unsuccessful. This is the pre-service students’ opportunity to try and test out techniques they have been theorizing.
about for the last 4 or more years. This is the time when they can find out what works for them and what doesn’t. We should think of it as a dress rehearsal for obtaining tried and true skills to carry with us into our own rooms (personal communication, 2013).

Teacher candidate, Godwilling, describes her journey throughout student teaching as successful stating, “Both of my mentor teachers encouraged me to try different methods of teaching art.” She felt that having MTs who are supportive and respectful creates a sense of collaboration and trust. To visually project her sense of accomplishment, Godwilling views her teaching journey as building blocks to a successful future, (see figure 3). She states that each experience in student teaching adds to her self-confidence, laying the foundation for her to become an integral part of the mentor teacher’s classroom. In, My Success Story, the sliced apple with exposed seeds reveals the fruition of such collaborative journeys, and thus illustrates a hopeful future.

Stereotypes: The Effects on Teacher Identity

Imagery of teachers varies widely. We may consider the stereotypes of the schoolmarm, spinster, or authoritarian nun and contrast them with conflicting images posed in rock anthems like Van Halen’s Hot for Teacher and movies depicting female teachers as sexual temptresses or child predators (Notes on a Scandal, To Die For) (Keroes, 1999; Weber & Mitchell, 1996). Local knowledge can produce its own set of cultural myths about teaching that suppress multiplicity. The teacher-as-saint identity is often portrayed as someone selflessly giving without expecting a reward. On the surface, this stereotype does not seem harmful. While this theme is implicit in many narratives, one TC’s story, pjammy, takes this notion as a central concern as she writes about teaching at-risk students, asking important questions about the role of teachers:

Student teacher, pjammy –

Narrative: A Lost Cause?

In my middle school experience, I came upon some students who were in difficult home situations. I met students with mothers dying from cancer, and overdoses, gang members and arrested parents. These students were barely teenagers, definitely too young to deal with these issues. A boy’s mother was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in prison. He lashed out in class, only did the minimum to pass, and was very disrespectful to my mentor and me. I tried to connect with him and his work. I said, “You really did well on this project,” and he responded, “I know.” He didn’t care about anything I said. He was already apathetic about school. They [students] have no encouragement and support from home. They think they know what is best for them, when they are only 12. They still need guidance and direction. I know this is why I became a teacher, to help guide and direct students through their journey in education, but I know I am not expected to save all of them. At what point do we decide they are a lost cause? At what point do we let them go? How far do we go to save them? (personal communication, 2012).

Although teachers can be positive role-models in students’ lives, the stereotype of teachers-as-saint can make educators feel
guilty if they are not continuously giving of their emotions, time, and money for the betterment of their students’ lives, even possibly to the point of exhaustion and financial ruin. This can directly affect the emotional well-being of a novice educator and lead to burnout and attrition. Below is an excerpt from my response to the student teacher, pjammy:

In reality, you are not expected to save any of them. I think that is an unrealistic goal and dangerous for you to put that much pressure upon yourself as a new teacher. Paulo Freire believes we cannot save others through our teaching but we can enter into fruitful dialogue and contribute towards that learning by being both teacher and student. Learning from our students and sharing our passion and knowledge about the creation of art, as well as engaging with them about issues related to art through critical reflection can be an extremely beneficial and positive outlet for all students. The art you expose them to now may have a positive effect later in their lives. You must not think your teaching is in vain because you do not get an immediate response or a particular response from certain students. These students are dealing with complex issues. Feeling overwhelmed, many of them simply shut down and are not willing to put themselves out there for any kind of evaluation. To answer your question, “At what point do we decide they are a lost cause?” My answer would be, never. We do not make that decision, nor should we. We do what we can, because we never know what each individual will take from those shared experiences in our classrooms (Joana Hyatt, personal communication, 2012).

Britzman (2003) suggests that for educators to allow students to construct knowledge socially—a process wherein all contribute to knowledge—it is necessary to become comfortable with not knowing, embracing vulnerability and uncertainty in the journey. After years of working with preservice educators, my impression is that they are not comfortable with the idea of uncertainty, which is not surprising considering that educational institutions usually do not tolerate, much less embrace, forms of ambiguity. In teacher education, novice educators search for predetermined step-by-step methods that guarantee positive results and provide certainty. As many of them encounter complexity and feelings of crisis in becoming teachers, that search becomes one of desperation and disillusion. Such dynamics are expressed in the response written by pjammy one week later:

I do understand that I am not expected to actually save/turn every student into a lover of art and learning. But I think at the time I was searching for a How To.... a step by step instruction. A bit in fantasyland imagining that. The human mind and behavior is not always predictable and people do not always respond the same way in the same circumstances. I hope in time and experience I become stronger in approaching these situations, and I also hope I never become bitter or too weary to work with students (personal communication 2012).

Similarly, TC Venus of Willendorf’s narrative addresses the stereotype of the temptress-teacher, poking fun at herself as a
fertility goddess in, figure 5. Venus of Dickies. The TC explains that her MT suggested she not wear low-cut maternity shirts to class because, she warned, “little boys will want to look down your shirt.” Instead, the teacher asked her to wear church shirts in the classroom. The art teacher candidate explained that after her recent pregnancy, all she could fit into were her maternity clothes. The cooperating teacher then suggested that she wear a dickie under her maternity tops.

Female teachers and students’ clothing are often politicized and controlled through school dress codes. Understanding that the field of teaching is a political one, which restricts our choices and constrains our actions and expressions as teachers and students, we must remember that not all actions and rules are produced by the classroom teacher. Usually it is the administration that decides the particulars about dress codes in schools (Raby, 2005). The MTs and USs therefore, must act as advisors, which mean sometimes they censor the new teachers’ dress and actions because they feel they are protecting the student teacher from disciplinary actions by administration (Raby, 2005).

During fieldwork, TCs can feel particularly isolated from other peers and outside mentors. While traveling (in)between the spaces of becoming to being art teachers (Hetrick & Sutters, 2014) TCs can share stories, strategies, and artwork about fluctuations in identity. Such spaces enable us to visualize the social conditions of teaching and the fluctuating roles and responsibilities of MTs and TCs.
The image in figure 6, illustrates the uncertainty and struggle involved in teacher identity for some preservice art educators. There is no additional narrative accompanying this image by Dr. Seuss, but the illustrated collage of drawings containing text tells the story of the emotional conflict that is present within student-teaching fieldwork. The vocabulary of becoming an educator is expressed and illustrated in the words on the chalkboard. Words such as “stress,” “fear,” and “anxiety” are clearly marked. Next to them appear other words that mark the contradiction of emotions and feelings concerning teacher fieldwork: “motivation,” “passion,” and “inspire.” This simple drawing illustrates many of the emotional dualities and complexities of learning to teach.

Depicting the uncertainty and nomadic feelings of not belonging in the university or in this particular classroom, next to the image of a red megaphone a question is asked that many preservice teachers wonder, “What is my place?” As the teacher candidate wonders if she is a student or teacher in the classroom. The struggle for voice and identity are present in this narrative, as the student teacher realizes that she is a guest in this classroom. Student teaching, no matter how successful one might feel in the practicum, is an uncomfortable space to inhabit.

As I consider the multiple voices of the participants, I realize that the stories they shared were mediated and refashioned to fit their experiences. Garoian (1999) states that fieldwork is “autobiographical in nature” (p. 44). Being open to multiple interpretations of being teachers and effective ways of teaching makes possible the letting go of predetermined ideas of mentoring and teaching. Such a process activates the power of negotiation to foster a critical voice. The cultural norms and the social conditions of teaching can be debated, deconstructed, and reimagined in new contexts beyond institutional spaces.

Visual and narrative inquiries encourage art TCs to explore tacit knowledge about the social conditions of teaching. As TCs reflect upon their practicum in supportive communities of peers who are experiencing a similar journey, they may learn other avenues and ways of being art educators from their peers and mentors. This scaffolds TCs’ fieldwork as a continuous journey, one that does not end at the semester’s conclusion but that can continue into the first years of teaching.

As I share the TCs’ stories and images with my current preservice educators, the TCs’ storylines and artwork serve as examples of how conflicts were resolved in beneficial ways that promote professionalism in reflective learning communities. Visual narratives are necessary in understanding how complex teaching situations manifest and how they can be resolved through negotiation using multiple strategies.

**Conclusion**
Maxine Greene (1988) wrote about the “crisis of silence,” in teaching, where no one dares to question knowledge, fearing retribution. Interference with one another becomes a necessity in order to challenge our own internal discourses (Britzman, 2003; Garoian, 1999). Therefore, there is an urgent need for greater representation of TC’s perspectives and voices that will advance their interests during the practicum. An (in)between space that is public and yet private, which at time excludes “a delineation of otherness and a closure vis-à-vis public space” (Dehaene & De Cauter, 2008, p. 6) can represent multiple voices. A private but communal space can be a place of rehearsal for TCs as they practice the skills of negotiation, share visual strategies, and discuss fluctuating roles and responsibilities.

As we enter into engaging and mentoring student teachers in these (in)between spaces that examine the public in private and the private in public, we need to be conscientious of the fact that student teachers and educators occupy a vulnerable position. Therefore, we need to carefully consider how these reflective spaces are created, and by whom, asking who should provide additional mentorship to TCs.

Negotiating undercurrents within my own teaching practices, I question how we, as art educators, can carve out non-hegemonic spaces that welcome uncertainty, conflict, and difference, spaces that move between the public and private, the liminal and the reflective. We should craft spaces where meaning is negotiated to encourage teacher candidates to ask, what is my place? It is our responsibility to provide a reflective space for TCs to envision themselves being art educators as they experience becoming teachers within the liminal spaces of the practicum.

References


According to Foucault (1986), there are six principles of heterotopias; they exist in all cultures but in diverse forms, they change and have multiple functions through different points in history, they juxtapose in a single space several other incompatible spaces, they encapsulate slices of time, culture, and history through accumulation, they have specific openings and closings that are related to rituals, and they function as a space of compensation or illusion.

Heterotopias of crisis refer to the spaces that individuals are placed when they are in a state of crisis. These spaces are described as “privileged or sacred or forbidden” (Foucault, 1986, p. 4). For the most part, Foucault believed heterotopias of crisis were disappearing in society as heterotopias of deviation replaced them. Heterotopias of deviation in relation are spaces “for individuals who behavior is deviant in the required mean or norm are placed” (p. 5).