Impossibilities and Missing Pieces:
An Auto-Ethnographical Approach to Exploring Teacher Identity Formation
in Art Education from a Lacanian Perspective

Thesis

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Abstract

Using Lacanian theory as the interpretive framework, this autoethnography explores teacher identity formation through the researcher’s experiences as a student teacher in the field of art education. The catalyst for this study arose from the lack of literature that uses Lacanian theory to explore teacher identity formation from a student teacher’s perspective. In this autoethnography, the key concepts are Lacanian theory, subjectivity, and teacher identity formation. The auto-ethnographer used her student teaching journal as the data source for this study. The researcher interpreted entries about her affective and corporeal responses to student teaching in her journal, the data source for this study. She interpreted the entries in the journal to uncover fragments of unconscious fantasies of being an art teacher. This inquiry identified three significant themes that apply to all student teachers in art education: Subjectivity, conflict, and the big Other.
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Major Field: Art Education
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In an interview with Mary Katherine Coffey (2001), Ann Hamilton said, “‘if something can be contained within the discursive structure of words, [we] trust it will have more legitimacy than other kinds of information or ways of knowing. I think that I’m just trying to take this axis and tilt it, so that the felt-quality of the words is equal to, but not dominant over, other kinds of sensory perceptions’” (p. 15).

Although I was unaware of it when I read this interview for the first time, Hamilton’s words built an incipient framework that would serve as the foundation for my thesis. The ‘felt-quality’ of words about which Hamilton spoke so eloquently resonated with me, as well as her reference to the privileging of language over other ways of knowing. She problematized language when she talked about the conundrum of naming:

“‘On the one hand the ability to name – how we name – can open up how we think about something, just as in multiple ways, I could name this building for myself and open up the process for [Myein, Hamilton’s 1999 Venice Biennale installation]. On the other hand, how we use the process of our everyday language can close down and objectify something in a way that removes it from the process. That is my resistance’” (Coffey, 2001, p. 15).
As I read her words, I thought, “that is my resistance, too.” Language always fails to grasp the complexity and totality of my experience, and it leaves me feeling dissatisfied with the tools I have to communicate and to process my experience. At the same time, I love language – I love reading what people write and listening to what people say, and I like the feeling of finding the words that come as close as possible to articulating what I mean. All of these words that circulate through conversations and discourses hint at our passions, at what we care most about. The words we choose and the way they collaborate together reveal something about us, but that something is only a fragment of us, and sometimes as the words travel from one person to another, they get distorted along the way. And so, like Hamilton, I find myself “occupying a contradiction” in the act of naming – standing between both the possibilities and the limitations inherent to language (Coffey, 2001, p. 14).

Besides the problem of language, Hamilton spoke about “the physicality of entering” her installations (Coffey, 2001, p. 14). She talked about how she wanted “the absence, the thing not stated, to actually be a presence [in *Myein*]” (Coffey, 2001, p. 14). She conveyed the ephemerality of this absence, the very pith of this installation: “when it was filled with people, especially at the opening, the piece was totally erased. It was gone. And then it was there. It would come back again” (Coffey, 2001, p. 14). Within the meaning of her words and the content of her work, I saw myself reflected back to me – or rather, I saw and felt the ineffable parts of me that escape my thinking, my speaking, and my writing, but are there at the core of my existence nevertheless. The ephemerality of the ‘absence’, or of the ‘unsaid’ in my life, surprises and captivates me. The ‘physicality’
and ‘absences’ that she talked about account for so much of my experience and my understanding of the world. This ‘unsaid’ of my existence, somehow articulated by Hamilton’s words in this interview, felt more like ‘me’ than did any ‘me’ I could construct with language.

What I could express with words about the multitudinous dimensions of my identity – my race, my class, my gender, my sexual identity, my level of ability, my age, even my personal history – felt insignificant, almost artificial in comparison to this unspoken ‘thing’ that Hamilton had articulated in this interview and with her work. I felt electrified by what I read because it spoke to me about the texture and the physicality of my experience, and the ephemeral, slippery quality of the unspoken ‘something’ that is me, and that is other people, too.

The same mutable, unspoken texture that Ann Hamilton spoke about seemed to take form collectively in the atmosphere of classes I was enrolled in at the time. This ineffable quality would surface suddenly as a response to the topic of a discussion, and then disappear completely, or it would transform as the conversation shifted. This unsaid seemed to be as important to the learning and teaching in my classes as the spoken or written content. It seemed capable of silencing some students, and motivating others to speak.

I was fascinated by this collective, unspoken ‘something’ almost as much as I was by my personal, individual experience with it. At this time, however, I was not thinking about potential topics for my thesis project. Additionally, Ann Hamilton’s description of her work resonated with me in a very personal way, and I had no sense of how I could
possibly transform this particular personal resonance into an academic inquiry – my interest in the ‘unsaid’ seemed utterly impossible as a thesis topic mainly because it felt too personal, but also because it was unclear how I could make the ‘unspoken’ relevant to my experience with art education, and, besides, I had no words to describe it, at least not yet.

The following quarter, I started to think about what I wanted to consider as my thesis topic, and during one of my classes, the ‘unspoken’ surfaced again, but this time, it was accompanied by the promise of its relevancy to art teachers and by an entire theory, namely, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, that would help me explore the unsaid. Our class discussed Carpenter and Tavin’s (2010) article about past and present theories that have influenced art education, and what these theories could mean for the future of art education. This article mentioned Lacanian theory as an approach that could bring “attention to issues beyond representation and discursivity” (Carpenter and Tavin, 2010, p. 347).

During our discussion, students in my class wondered out loud about how Lacanian theory could be used in the classroom. Our class came to the conclusion that Lacanian theory could help us understand the unconscious life of the classroom, and why we feel we can’t reach certain students, and why other students might resist learning. For me, this unconscious life of the classroom seemed to be synonymous with the collective, unspoken ‘something’ that I experienced in previous classes, and it also sounded similar to the ‘absences’ and ‘physicality’ that Ann Hamilton spoke about, and that I felt so connected to.
And so I thought, for my thesis, I could explore the unconscious life of the classroom with Lacanian theory even though I knew close to nothing about Jacques Lacan or his ideas. It was the possibility of exploring the unsaid – of its ephemerality, its mysteriousness, and its profound effects on me – that propelled me to want to study and learn more about Lacanian theory. I thought this theory might give me the tools to understand how the ‘unsaid’ that Ann Hamilton spoke about would affect the teaching and learning in my classroom. I signed up for an independent study about Lacanian theory for the following quarter.

I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Slavoj Zizek (2006), a Lacanian scholar, refers to Lacanian theory as an edifice, and it certainly is that. It is a massive, complex, dense structure, and depending on whose writing I was reading, Lacan’s theory seemed esoteric and at times beyond what I could comprehend. Sometimes, as I was reading during this independent study, I would be making such an effort to understand this theory that I would lose my focus – I would forget my fascination and interest with the unsaid, and the research would become arduous and lifeless.

Fortunately, these moments didn’t last – I would read a few more pages, or start another article, and ‘it’ would suddenly reappear – my interest would be reignited: something would make sense to me, and connect me back to where I saw myself in this theory: “the absences, gaps, silences, and invisibilities that shape human experience” (Walker, Daiello, Hathaway, & Rhoades, 2006, p. 311) and my disappointment at the constraints and limitations of language and conscious knowledge (Jagodzinski, 2004b; Tavin, 2010b).
In these moments, I would return to Ann Hamilton’s words about the on-going emergence and disappearance of the ‘absence’ that was the subject matter of *Myein*. The ephemeral quality of this ‘thing’ and the ‘thing’ itself that I was beginning to find words for through Lacanian theory became a part of my research process. The unsaid, this unconscious knowledge would appear as I read, and then dissolve, only to return again unexpectedly. The fascination and captivation that I felt as I read were worth the effort that it took to wade through the parts of Lacanian theory that were very difficult to understand.

In addition to the unconscious knowledge that wove its way through my research, I felt excited to use my nascent understanding of Lacanian theory to investigate the unconscious life of the classroom during my student teaching, that is, until I realized that this topic might be too large and very likely impossible to research as my thesis topic. How could I possibly observe the unconscious life of the classroom as a student art teacher? At the time I thought to myself that I would probably be so wrapped up in my own unconscious life, in the act of teaching, and in responding to students, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors that I wouldn’t have room in my mind or my body to register the entire class’s unconscious life – at least not extensively enough for this thesis inquiry.

Instead, I decided to consider my own unconscious life as a student teacher. I chose to investigate how student teaching affirmed and denied my fantasies of being an art teacher. In Lacanian theory, the word fantasy takes on a very different meaning than it
does in the English language: To Lacan, “fantasy” does not mean a pleasant daydream, or a simple way to escape the harshness of reality.

In Lacanian theory, there is no objective reality. Fantasy is a term in the Lacanian lexicon that is defined as the ‘reality’ that each one of us constructs unconsciously to maintain an illusion that we are whole (Hetrick, 2010). Unconsciously we use our fantasies to protect ourselves from the fact that we do lack, and that we are not whole (Evans, 1996). What we understand as ‘reality’ is framed by our unconscious fantasies, and these fantasies are actually fabrications, or illusions. The fantasies that are how we see the world are largely unconscious, and we rely on our unconscious knowledge to reveal fragments of them to us. I will describe fantasy in greater detail in the literature review.

Thus far, I have avoided describing my own conscious fantasies of becoming an art teacher because I have not wanted the limits of language to confine my fantasies to something that they are not: a lifeless symbolic representation that demands the unsaid of my fantasies to conform to someone else’s idea of what they are or how they should be understood. I initially experienced this resistance upon reading the findings of Laura Hetrick’s (2010) research that clearly define student art teacher fantasies (described in greater detail in the “fantasy” section of the literature review). I do not want my research to be restricted to those definitions or to any other “teacher fantasies” that have been presented to me. My intention with this inquiry is that my interpretation of the themes in the data will construct my understanding not only of the fragments of my fantasies of being an art teacher, but also of the process of becoming an art teacher.
Despite my resistance to defining my fantasies, I will attempt to describe what I think I know about my conscious fantasies of being an art teacher, not because I believe that I can adequately understand or represent them, but because my limited understanding of them might prove useful or interesting when I interpret my data. The experiences I have had teaching art in community-based settings and as an artist-in-the-school motivated me to want to become an art teacher. When I prepare to teach art to children, I do a lot of research about the ideas the students and I will investigate, and I love the research and the ideas.

The ideas I like to research and to use when I teach often connect with the students’ lives, with meaning-making, with contemporary art, and/or with social justice issues. When I am working with students, I like the group and individual discussions we have, I enjoy supporting them as they develop their own ideas, I like seeing them invested in their ideas and engaged by their art-making process, and I like seeing them feel good about the work they do and about themselves. I also like knowing them as people and I enjoy experiencing the fascinating group dynamic that is unique to each class of students.

What I have just described is as close as I can come to my conscious fantasies of being an art teacher. I am not going to include an in-depth analysis of my fantasies based on the paragraph above, but I will say that these fantasies have something to do with my own interest in research, the role of art and meaning-making in our lives, and social justice. Some of my fantasies, based on this paragraph above, also relate to how
satisfying it is for me to see myself in the role of a facilitator and supporter of students' personal, emotional, and academic growth as well as their intellectual curiosity.

As I mentioned above, this conscious description of my fantasies is quite limited – not just by language, but also by the lack of unconscious knowledge I have used to inform the description. With the inquiry for this thesis, I recorded the unsaid of my experience, and I explored how my unconscious knowledge reveals aspects of my fantasies of being an art teacher. The questions I investigated with this thesis are: What are my fantasies of becoming an art teacher? How will student teaching affirm and/or deny my fantasies of becoming an art teacher? How will I react and come to terms with my experience when my fantasies of being an art teacher are affirmed and/or denied? How will student teaching change my understanding of what it means to be an art teacher?

1.01 Significance of the Study

This research topic – What are my fantasies of being an art teacher? – involved attending to and interpreting affective and bodily responses and significant nonverbal moments in order to recognize slippages that reveal gaps between my unconscious fantasy and my experiences as a student teacher. The self-inquiry for this thesis is different from self-reflection in that self-reflection emphasizes contemplation about our actions, our words, and our conscious knowledge (jagodzinski, 2004b). “Such teacher reflectivity [could potentially] harbor within it a more uncomfortable, often defensive and self-deceptive aspect of ourselves” (jagodzinski, 2004b, p. 23). These aspects of ourselves resist accepting any experience that challenges or negates how we want to see
ourselves, who we think we are, and what we believe motivates us. As Jan Jagodzinski (1997) writes, “no amount of rational self-reflection will lead to a critical art education unless our own desire itself undergoes change” (p. 237).

Transforming our desire, and changing our teaching and ourselves, is impossible without acknowledging and interpreting our resistances, affective responses and silences that reveal fragments of our desire to us (Jagodzinski, 2004b). I am committed to this inquiry in part because any effort to affect positive change in the schools, in the perceptions and misperceptions of the field of art education, and in the world must start with self-awareness and from changes I make within myself. Without attending to these slippages and affective responses that can lend themselves to transformative personal changes, we run the risk of repeating and perpetuating destructive interpersonal and intrapersonal patterns (Markham, 2002).

By exploring the unconscious knowledge that will uncover bits of my fantasies, I am less likely to “repress [my] own harmful impulses and behaviors” that contribute to “the root causes of social problems. [If I allow this repression to continue unchecked, it could result in my] need to project [my] own harmful qualities onto others” (Bracher, 2006, p. 120) thus perpetuating cycles of violence, hatred, and fear. Additionally, attending to my unconscious fantasies of becoming an art teacher could potentially position me to be a better teacher. My inquiry revealed parts of myself that I would rather not see, and by acknowledging and accepting these aspects of myself, I will be more likely accept my students as they are, rather than as I would like them to be (Bracher, 2006).
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In this section, I will explain how the literature I read about Lacanian psychoanalytic theory informs my thesis topic: What are my art teacher fantasies? I will also be investigating the following sub-questions: How will student teaching affirm and/or deny my art teacher fantasies? How will I react and come to terms with my experience when my fantasies of being an art teacher are affirmed and/or denied? How will student teaching change my understanding of what it means to be an art teacher?

I explored research and writing about Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and cultural studies (Zizek 2001, 2006), pedagogy (Alcorn, 2002; Bracher, 2006; Felman, 1997; Finke, 1997; jagodzinski, 2004b; Robertson, 1997; Todd, 1997), composition and literature (Bracher, 2006; Samuels, 2002; Schlender, 2002), social studies (Couture, 2002), women’s studies (McWilliam, 1997), visual culture and art education (Atkinson, 2002; Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006; Daiello, 2011; Hetrick, 2010; jagodzinski, 2002a, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Tavin, 2008, 2010a, 2010b; Walker, Daiello, Hathaway, & Rhoades, 2006; Walker, 2009). My purpose in confining and expanding my research to these disciplines was firstly to build an understanding of the edifice of psychoanalytic theory; secondly, to determine the scope and practice of the application of psychoanalytic theory across pedagogical disciplines; and thirdly, to understand how psychoanalytic theory has been applied within my field: The field of art education. I will begin the
literature review by giving a brief background for Lacanian theory, and I will then identify key Lacanian concepts that I will later expand upon.

### 2.01 Background for Lacanian Psychoanalytic Theory

Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), a “French philosopher and clinician of psychoanalysis” was a student of Sigmund Freud (Hetrick, 2010, pp. 49 – 50). Freud believed that psychoanalysis could cure people from mental illness by helping them to eradicate misperceptions that they had of themselves (Brown, Atkinson & England, 2006). Freud, as the analyst, was a student of the analysand: he listened to his analysand, not for what the analysand consciously understood as his/her text – as what s/he was speaking about – but rather for what the analysand did not know or recognize as her/his text (Felman, 1997). In other words, Freud understood that the way to grasp the analysand’s unconscious knowledge was to listen for the meaning of the analysand’s words, his/her slips of the tongue, the pauses in speech, and the ignorance that emerges around the analysand’s conscious knowledge (Felman, 1997). Shoshona Felman (1997) explains how Lacan learned from and built upon Freud’s theory:

“It is to the extent that Lacan precisely teaches us to read in Freud’s text (in its textual excess) the signifiers [or words] of Freud’s ignored – his ignorance of his own knowledge – that Lacan can be considered Freud’s best reader, as well as the most compelling teacher of the Freudian pedagogical imperative to learn from and through the insight which does not know its own meaning, from and through the knowledge which is not entirely in mastery – in possession – of itself” (p. 40).
This unconscious knowledge is a cornerstone of Freudian and Lacanian theory. Additionally, for Freud, the human mind was divided into three parts, the ego, the id, and the superego (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006). Within this Freudian framework, the ego functioned as “a relational entity produced through the subject’s identification with other people and the world around” (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006, p. 45); the id propelled the ego with demands for pleasure, and the superego served, in some measure, as the conscience.

“Lacan does away with the reified Freudian topography of ego, id, and superego and returns to Freud’s earlier division between conscious and unconscious, attempting to describe a dynamic process by which the ‘self’ comes into being – enters semiosis through its interactions with the world” (Finke, 1997, p. 125). In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, our psyche does not consist of the ego, id, and superego, but rather it is defined by three registers: The Real, the realm of the unconscious; the imaginary, the realm of images; and the symbolic, the realm of language (jagodzinski, 2004a). I will describe these registers, as well as several other important Lacanian concepts – jouissance, sinthomes, objet a, fantasy, and transference – in greater detail below.

2.02 Introduction to The Lacanian Concepts of the Three Registers: The Real, The Imaginary, and The Symbolic

In this section, I will give a brief introduction to Lacan’s three registers that constitute our psyches – the Real, the imaginary, and the symbolic – and I will illustrate their relationship to desire. I will go into greater detail with each of the three registers in the subsequent sections. “Each of [the three] registers is defined by a limit: What is
feelable [the limit of the Real], seeable [the limit of imaginary], and sayable (hearable) [the limit of the symbolic]” (jagodzinski, 2008, p. 156). “None of the psychic registers function without the others,” and between each pair of registers lies a bar that can slip open, revealing “tensions, gaps, and blind spots” (Tavin, 2010a, p. 51). When this slippage occurs, the reality we have constructed shows itself for what it is: A fabrication, or in Lacanian terms, a fantasy. These fantasies remain unconscious, until slippages between two of the three registers occur. It is these slippages, and the affective and bodily responses that accompany them, that I took note of during my student teaching in order to catch glimpses of my fantasies.

Of the three registers, it is the Real about which it is most difficult to write or to speak. “[The Real] lies beyond symbolization, [and], by implication, refers to that which is lacking in the symbolic order, a foreclosed element which can never be grasped” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 132). This is the only register that frames our “pre-symbolic and pre-linguistic” experience as newborn babies (jagodzinski, 2002a, p. xlvi). As an infant in this stage, we experience “an undifferentiated state where fullness, unity, and bliss prevail” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 313). In other words, we perceive what we feel, hear, touch, smell, see, want, and need as belonging to one unified whole.

We transition out of this unity and fullness during the mirror stage which “refers to a particularly (early) period in the infant’s psychic development” (Stavrakakis, 2008, p. 1043). During this stage, a child sees their reflection in the mirror for the first time, and mistakes this reflection as him/herself, as a “whole, unified, and separate being” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 313). This recognition as a whole self is in fact a misrecognition – we are,
in fact, incomplete beings (Walker et al., 2006). The mirror stage ushers the *imaginary* register into being: “The *imaginary* is the realm of image and the imagination, of deception as misrecognition of ourselves, and a lure as to how we want to be. The principal illusions of the *Imaginary* include a sense of whole, autonomous, and familiar” (jagodzinski, 2004a, p. 140), and this illusion structures a fundamental and powerful desire “for a return to unity and fullness [that] is critical to the structure of our unconscious” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 314). As individuals, we lack unity, and it is our strong desire to be whole and unified that propels us to act, dress, speak, and behave in ways that we unconsciously believe will make us whole.

The *symbolic* register, sometimes referred to as the big Other (jagodzinski, 2004b) is the order of language and signs that provide us with a means to communicate with and connect with other people. The gifts of language come at a price:

“having made the point that we can only know the other person through the order of the *symbolic*, that is to stay within practices of language, it is important to stress that for Lacan the *symbolic* order, the Other, is always lacking. When we enter the *symbolic*, we lose something of our being, something of our pre-*symbolic* experience” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 117).

This ‘something of our pre-*symbolic* experience’ is a part of the *Real*, and is representative of our passion, our drives, and our desires – the life force or vitality that eludes words. Slavoj Zizek (2006) explains language’s effects on our psyches more emphatically:
“the symbolic order ‘stands for death’ in the precise sense of ‘mortifying’ the Real of the body, of subordinating it to a foreign automatism, of perturbing its ‘natural’ instinctual rhythm, thereby producing the surplus of desire, that is, desire as a surplus: The very symbolic machine that mortifies the living body produces by the same token its opposite, the immortal desire, the Real of ‘pure life’ that eludes symbolization” (p. 159).

This antagonism between the symbolic and the Real to which Zizek refers articulates our common existential dilemma. “The Real is a site of trauma which must constantly be traversed (and sublimated) by the subject in order to exist in the world through the Symbolic order” (Tavin, 2010a, p. 55). We are social creatures – we need each other, and for that reason, we need the symbolic register to provide structure and to define meaning and order in our lives so that we can relate to and connect with one another. At the same time, the meaningful aspects of our existence – our joy, our pain, our hopes, as well as our desires (defined below) – are a part of the Real, and they are beyond definition; beyond words. The Real of our experience exists within each of us as a messy, chaotic senselessness that defies order (Briton, 1997). In short, in our efforts to define meaning, to establish order in our lives and our relationships, we will always fail because the language, laws, and order that constitute the symbolic register cannot hold or even grasp at that which makes our lives meaningful – that which exists in the Real. This failure of the symbolic order is referred to as the lack in the Other (Stavrakakis, 2008).

And, yet, we invest ourselves in the symbolic (and in the imaginary – described in
greater detail below) nonetheless. We desire to connect with other people, to be understood and to be recognized through speech and images (Bracher, 2006). The Lacanian concept of desire is as fundamental to Lacanian Theory as are the three registers. By Lacanian definition, desire means more than the vernacular understanding of this word. Laura Hetrick (2010) succinctly defines desire here:

“Desire is a concept that can be considered from a multitude of ways, including the more colloquial sense as sexual appetite or urge, the connection between lovers, an unsatisfied longing or craving based on lack, and/or lust; but also in a more productive sense, such as motivating educational forces, including the proclivity to help others, the passion to learn, and/or the inclination to teach and form connections with students” (pp. 83-84).

Our desire is unconscious, and as such is unknown to us, except when revealed to us through our unconscious knowledge. I will quote Jan Jagodzinski (2004a) at length to further elucidate the concept of desire:

“[Desire] is always a blind spot. Neither image nor speech can ever grasp the whole of desire; there is always a leftover, a surplus that exceeds it. Desire is the complex left over between need (instinct) and demand for love. This is why Lacan presented desire as a form of metonymy, a part that functions as an unobtainable whole. It is never fully satisfied. Because we are humans who always ‘lack,’ under ‘normal’ circumstances we are never able to feel completely whole. Desire is therefore not a relationship
to an object but a lack. It is always ‘desire of the Other,’ meaning that one may want to be the object of another’s desire or be recognized by another. It is very much a de-centering idea that desire is not one’s own” (p. 143).

Desire weaves through each of Lacan’s three registers. In the next three sections, I will explore each of these registers, the symbolic, the imaginary, and the Real in greater detail and their relationships to desire. I will use examples from the literature I read to illustrate how Lacanian theory has been applied within the field of education and within the field of art education.

2.03 The Lacanian Concept of the Symbolic

The symbolic register is “often referred to as the big Other because it refers to the network of discourses that operate on the body” (Jagodzinski, 2004a, p. 140). What we experience in and through our body belongs to the register of the Real. As a result of our experience with the big Other – or laws, language, rules, and regulations that structure our culture or academic discipline – we are forced, consciously or unconsciously, to disavow the impulses, desires, and drives within the Real (Tavin, 2010a). In the art education classrooms, children are forced to “relinquish [their] own early desires” in an effort to satisfy what they interpret as the desires or demands of the big Other, who for them, is embodied by their art teachers (Tavin, 2010a, p. 52).

For student teachers, their university supervisors, and their cooperating teachers, the big Other encompasses “the socially constructed customs, rules, regulations, and

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1 It is important to note here that the hegemony of the symbolic order and the sacrifice it requires can often be coupled with a conscious or unconscious pleasure in the power that the symbolic order has to offer (Jagodzinski, 2004b; Zizek, 2006).
morals by which we are governed as arts educators” (Hetrick, 2010, p. 65). Student art teachers find themselves in the position of needing to adopt and adhere to the constraints and customs demanded by the big Other, and in so doing, they need to unconsciously sublimate, sacrifice, or re-align their drives and desires in order to recognize themselves, and to be recognized by the big Other, as effective art teachers (Brown, England, & Atkinson, 2006). “[The *symbolic*] is the realm of culture,” and in order for student art teachers to be acknowledged within the culture of art education, they need to accept the demands of the big Other to some extent (Evans, 1996, p. 202). As part of my thesis, I investigate how I experienced this sublimation, and I documented my affective and bodily responses in order to explore how and where the *Real* within me disrupted my adoption of the big Other’s rules and regulations.

In his analysis of Brent Wilson’s theory that children are coerced during art class into making art that fulfills adults’ notions of what child art should look like, Kevin Tavin (2010a) defines this coercive practice as violent. This violence permeates the hegemony of the *Symbolic* order in that the big Other demands that the subject conform and/or sacrifice something of her/his self – and that which s/he sacrifices is a kernel of the *Real*. “The *symbolic* order, the Other, is always lacking; it cannot contain the subject-in-herself” (Atkinson, 2004, p. 388). Dennis Atkinson (2004) further elaborates, “it is important to consider what are the normalizing conventions that police teacher identifications, what are the dominant ideological frameworks whose gaze maintains particular psychosocial identifications of teaching” (p. 388).
Identifying and questioning these dominant ideological frameworks – indeed, identifying and questioning the symbolic order itself – can be nearly impossible for people operating within the frameworks because “there is no view that is not framed by a historically determined horizon of ‘pre-understanding’” (Zizek, 2001, p. 15). In other words, if we are using only the tools that the symbolic has provided for us – language, discourse, laws, and rules – we will fail to recognize the extent of the limits and constraints of the big Other within the field of art education. For example, student art teachers would not be able to recognize how the big Other interpellates their identities and sublimes their unconscious desires if they only use conscious knowledge – such as reflective writing practices (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006). We can only attempt to understand our unconscious desires by looking instead to our unconscious knowledge because “human knowledge is, by definition, that which is untotizable, that which rules out any possibility of totalizing what it knows or of eradicating its own ignorance” (Felman, 1997, p. 24).

In psychoanalytic theory, unconscious knowledge, including our ignorance, serves as our teacher. As such, in this thesis project, I used affective and bodily responses to explore how student teaching affirmed or denied my fantasies of being an art teacher. Additionally, I took note of what I resisted changing about how I look – “practicing and rehearsing various [teacher looks, stances, and postures]” (Bracher, 2002, p.94). These changes reflected aspects of how I think I need to appear as an art teacher. And these ideal images that I have of myself belong to the imaginary register that I describe in greater detail in below.
2.04 The Lacanian Concept of the Imaginary

The *imaginary* is the register of the images – it is in the *imaginary* that we first mistake our reflection as our true selves, and it is this misrecognition, or *méconnaissance*, that is

“[the] *imaginary’s* great strength, for there are multiple perhaps endless possibilities for its representation, none of which would definitively give us [a piece of the *Real*]. Rather, each representation is a mask, a screen, a site/sight/cite that enables [that which we attempt to signify] to exist as an object of desire. Each representation captures ‘something’ that escapes the object, something of its *Real* which it ‘screens’” (jagodzinski, 2002a, p. xxii).

It is this ‘something’ that escapes the object that sets us on our path of endlessly pursuing this object that we have misrecognized. The object to which jagodzinski refers is *objet a*, and I will explore it in greater detail in a subsequent section. This misrecognition might lead student art teachers to any number of inflated misperceptions about their ‘pre-destined’ future as art teachers. This phenomenon is what Lacan refers to as ‘a letter always reaching its destination’:

“when I recognize myself as the addressee of the call of the ideological big Other (Nation, Democracy, Party, God, [the field of art education], and so forth), when this call ‘arrives at its destination’ in me, I automatically misrecognize that it is this very act of recognition which makes me what I have recognized as myself” (Zizek, 2001, p. 12).
In other words, ‘the call of the ideological big Other’ leads us to méconnaissances in the imaginary that constitutes our images of who we think we should be. A student art teacher might cast herself in the role of a savior/champion of social justice who not only chooses content for curriculum that will elevate social consciousness, but perceives herself as the only one who provides students with the guidance and care that they need to succeed (Hetrick, 2010). Or, a student art teacher might see herself as the missing piece for the entire field of art education – that she is what the big Other of the field of art education desires, and that her presence as an art educator will forever fill the lack in the big Other (Bracher, 2006). For example, she might think that she is the one who will once and for all successfully and eloquently connect theory and practice within the field of art education. Clearly, these méconnaissances are narcissistic, “a characteristic of the imaginary order, [and] narcissism is always accompanied by a certain aggressivity” (Evans, 1996, p. 82). This aggressivity will likely surface if these images that student art teachers have of themselves are threatened (Bracher, 2006).

These examples also illustrate how the imaginary “propels us into the world of images and fantasy where we search for how we think we look and who we think we are, and how we think we can be whole” (Tavin 2010a, p. 53). In the imaginary, our desire to be whole manifests itself in our pursuit of recognizing ourselves as our ideal ego, wherein we see in ourselves “the illusion of unity on which the ego is built” (Evans, 1996, p. 52). Laura Hetrick (2010) defines the ideal ego as a “collection of images or conglomerate of traits of others [such as parents, teachers, heroes, etc.] that we may wish to emulate in our adult lives” (p. 60). The ideal ego is this bundle of traits and
appearances that we endlessly pursue in an effort to maintain the illusion that we are complete whole beings, worthy of recognition by the Other.

The ideal ego has a relationship with the “ego ideal, the place from which the subject is recognized as subject, which is established within a specific symbolic framework (discourse) which, in turn, precipitates imaginary identifications (ideal egos)” (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006, pp. 124-125). The identification of the ego ideal as “an internalized plan of the law” (Evans, 1996, p. 52), “like all identification partakes of the imaginary; it is only called symbolic because it represents the completion of the subject’s passage into the symbolic order” (Evans, 1996, p. 81). In other words, the ego ideal is an intersection of the imaginary and the symbolic registers in that the big Other, through discourse, law, and language, constructs a perfect and unattainable image in the imaginary of how we think we should look in order to gain recognition.

In the field of art education, Brown, Atkinson, & England (2006) critique the traditional forms of assessment of students’ drawings. These forms of assessments measure how realistic the drawings are: Students who draw realistically are given higher marks than students who do not draw realistically. In Brown, Atkinson, & England’s (2006) analysis, this assessment serves as the ego ideal in that it “produces a restricted form of identification of [the students’ learning]” by determining through the gaze of the big Other which students are ‘good’ artists and which students are ‘bad’ artists (pp. 124-125). The big Other’s narrow and limited definitions of student art work feed into students ideal egos.
Hetrick (2010) writes extensively about the *ideal ego*, and what it might mean to student art teachers and their fantasies of becoming art teachers. In her study of three student art teachers, Hetrick (2010) identifies some of the student art teachers’ fantasies in part by mining their ideas of what they think an art teacher should look like, and by exploring their reactions to personal experiences as student art teachers, as well as their responses to representations of art teachers in visual culture. She identified and analyzed fragments of the student teachers’ fantasies by paying close attention to the student art teachers’ reactions to representations of art teachers, and by asking questions about what the student art teachers believe art teachers should look like.

For my inquiry, I primarily focused on my corporeal and emotional reactions to my quotidian experiences as a student art teacher. These responses not only gave me partial glimpses of my *ideal ego*, but they also provided me with fragments of my unconscious fantasies about being an art teacher. These unconscious fantasies are situated in the realm of the *Real*. I will discuss the *Real* in greater detail in the next section.

### 2.05 The Lacanian Concept of The *Real*

“[The *Real*] is not a question of the un-thought, but of what cannot be thought. The *Real* may best be simply characterized here as that part of the core self which responds affectively to the Other. It is the psychic register of human sentience and the sensuous aesthetic” (jagodzinski, 2002b, p. 87). Not only is the *Real* impossible to be thought, but it “is the rock upon which every attempt at symbolization stumbles, the hard core which remains the same in all possible worlds” (Felman, 1997, p. 55). And, yet the *Real* is also the register where we find our vitality, our joie de vivre, our drives, and our
desires. “The [Real is] the disembodied rational machine which follows its path irrespectively of the demands of the subject’s life-world. It stands for the rational subject insofar as it is originally out of joint, in discord with its contextualized situation” (Zizek, 2006, p. 272).

We recognize the presence of the Real in our lives through the unsaid – in moments of speechlessness, corporeal sensations, emotional responses, and slips of the tongues. It is in these moments that “we encounter a radical otherness within ourselves. We recognize the knowledge we have gained and the stories we tell ourselves about our own cognitive mastery, are fundamentally lies” (Tavin, 2010b, p. 64). These moments provide us with invaluable opportunities to confront these fabrications that are part of the fantasy we have constructed for ourselves: To simultaneously recognize the limits of the symbolic order and conscious knowledge and to acknowledge, rather than repress, the unconscious knowledge in the Real that points to our desires (Tavin, 2010b).

Shoshona Felman (1997) argues that this unconscious knowledge is “a kind of unmeant knowledge which escapes intentionality and meaning, a knowledge which is spoken by the language of the subject (spoken, for instance by his ‘slips’ or by his ‘dream’), but which the subject cannot recognize, assume as his; and thus appropriates a speaking knowledge which is nonetheless denied to the speaker’s knowledge” (p. 24). In reference to Felman’s argument, Laurie Finke (1997) elaborates: “to agree with this statement is not to privilege the unconscious as some realm of freedom from authority. On the contrary, it is to engage with that authority precisely where it is the most effective because the least calculated” (Finke, 1997, p. 126). Lacanian psychoanalytic theory
mines the ‘authority’ of unconscious knowledge for information about, for example, why we repeat the same struggles, and why we resist accepting certain knowledge about ourselves (Felman, 1997).

Jacques Lacan (1996) describes this least calculated authority as follows “I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think. Words that render sensible to an ear properly attuned with what elusive ambiguity the ring of meaning flees from our grasp along the verbal thread. What one ought to say is: I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think” (p. 131). What Lacan is saying is that we can only find the truth of our experience within our corporeal reactions, feelings, resistances, and silences that are located in the Real rather than what we recognize as our thoughts which are located in the symbolic.

For my thesis, I took note of the sensations I felt in and through my body, I listened for the stories I repeated, for the emotional responses I had in order to catch glimpses of my unconscious fantasies about being an art teacher. Additionally, I took note of anxiety I felt during the ten weeks I was student teaching because of its importance to psychoanalytic theory. Lacan described anxiety as “the point where the subject is suspended between a moment where he no longer knows where he is and a future where he will never again be able to find himself” and that “anxiety is never deceptive” (Evans, 1996, p. 11). “Lacan stresses the relationship of anxiety to desire; anxiety is a way of sustaining desire when the object [of desire, or objet a, described in the next section] is missing and, conversely, desire is a remedy for anxiety, something easier to bear than anxiety itself” (Evans, 1996, p. 11).
Brown, Atkinson, & England (2006) explain the role that anxiety and desire plays in student art teachers’ psychic lives:

“through experiencing the Real-of-teaching that precipitate feelings of anxiety and desire student teachers may gradually become able to rework their psychic identities as teachers. Experiencing the Real-of-teaching might be said to bring about a reworking of imaginary (fantasy scenarios) so as to change the symbolic order. In other words, here the dynamic relation between the Real and the imaginary, fuelled by anxiety and desire, precipitates a modified symbolic position and a modified psychic identification” (p. 102).

My student art teacher experience was similar to the student art teachers’ experiences mentioned above in that the student art teachers’ experiences in the field challenge their fantasies of who they thought they were, and what they thought it meant to be an art teacher. It is only through anxiety and desire that they were able to adapt their conscious and unconscious expectations.

In her study of student art teachers, Hetrick (2010) noted that “two of the main affects/effects that [she] noted when talking with the student teachers in both their individual and group interviews were frustration and anxiety” (p. 225). Their anxiety always arose as the result of a fear of losing their objet a (Evans, 1996), or the unconscious object of desire that I will describe in greater detail after I explore the Lacanian concepts of Jouissance and Sinthomes.
2.06 Lacanian Concepts of *Jouissance* and *Sinthomes*

*Jouissance* is a French word that does not translate well into English (jagodzinski, 2004c). It can be thought of as a “pre-symbolic, *Real* enjoyment” (Stavrakakis, 2008, p. 1044) that “does not want to recognize limits” (Bernstein, 2006, p. 719), but enjoyment does not fully capture the meaning of *jouissance*, in part because *jouissance* has a sexual connotation. Enjoyment is constrained by the pleasure principle, which functions as the extent to which we can experience our enjoyment as pleasure (Evans, 1996). When we indulge in enjoyment beyond this limit, we experience it as a painful pleasure because “there is only a certain amount of pleasure that the subject can bear,” and this painful pleasure is *jouissance* (Evans, 1996, p. 92). Each individual’s relationship with her/his *jouissance* is mediated by the *symbolic* order (jagodzinski, 2002a). As an unconscious satisfaction in painful pleasure, *jouissance* “is related to the demands, injunctions, desires, and values that the Other makes on the subject; and hence *jouissance* is always intersubjective, relational, and social with regard to the way the subject submits to, defies, loves, and hates the Other” (jagodzinski, 2004c, p. 7).

“The term *jouissance* thus nicely expresses the paradoxical satisfaction that the subject derives from his/her symptom” or in Lacanian terms, his/her *sinthome* (Evans, 1996, p. 92). *Sinthomes* are persistent patterns of behavior, or “passionate attachments,” that provide us with the painful pleasure of *jouissance* (jagodzinski, 2004b, p. 26). Because they are situated within the *Real*, *sinthomes* are “resistant to alteration through discourse” (Alcorn, 2002, p. 73). An individual might know that their *sinthome* is causing them pain, but s/he repeats this passionate attachment because the *sinthome* itself is
driven by his/her jouissance. Lacan stressed that we need our sinthomes because they “[sustain] and [knot] together [our] fundamental being” (jagodzinski, 2006, p. 62).

Sinthomes are fundamental to the practice of teaching art: “[A sinhome] is indeed the very thing that keeps us going, the painful pleasure that drives us and helps concepts stick together as part of our identities as teachers, artists, activists, and so on” (Tavin, 2010b, p. 63). jagodzinski (2002a) gives this excellent example of art teachers’ sinthomes:

Our symptoms uniquely define each of us as teachers. Some of us stay after class too long talking with our students, seemingly never coming home; others leave as quickly as they can, never paying attention to the voices they hear. Some of us continually worry that we are not “reaching” all our students, not meeting their needs and igniting their desires. We blame ourselves and suffer burnout (p. xx).

Hetrick (2010) recognizes jouissance as the driving force behind the art teachers’ sinthomes that jagodzinski wrote about. “It seems as though Lacan’s concept of jouissance, the pleasure in displeasure, is one plausible explanation for [these sinthomes] (of selfless love and countless hours devoted by some teachers)” (Hetrick, 2010, p. 94).

Whereas our sinthomes are our repeated patterns that sustain our identities and give an outlet for our jouissance, our objet a is that which we believe can make us whole – it is our objet a that captures our attention and embodies a kernel of the Real. I will describe objet a in greater detail in the next section.

2.07 Lacanian Concept of Objet a
“[The] unconscious desire is an excessive intangible unary trait that stands out in the unconscious and structures the scene of fantasy. This is Lacan's famous objet a, an object cause of desire, which is not a substantive object at all, but a relationship that is sustained between a subject and what it lacks” (Jagodzinski, 2006, p. 62, original emphasis). Objet a is ‘excessive’ because it is “left behind by the introduction of the symbolic in the Real” (Evans, 1996, p. 125), and it is through the symbolic register’s introduction into the Real that we become split subjects, that is, that we become subjects who lack, who are neither whole nor complete (Atkinson, 2002; Jagodzinski, 2006).

Sydney Walker et al. (2006) further explain objet a:

Additionally, in being split from the unity of the Real, a person’s identity will always be contingent and driven by desire – an unflagging desire to fill the lack (or absence of the Real) at the center of one’s being. In Lacanian terms, this desire is the objet a. Further, this desire for completion is an impossible quest because the unbearable sense of loss and the demand for the Real originate at the unconscious level, ensuring that no object or action in the conscious world will ever satisfy one’s unconscious desires (p. 314).

It is objet a, the ineffable kernel of the Real that draws our attention, that fascinates and confounds us – it is a

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2 Objet a, is a shortened version of the Lacanian term objet petit a which stands for ‘objet petit autre’ which translates into English as little object other. “The ‘a’ in objet a is always lower case and italicized to show that it denotes the little other, in opposition to the capital ‘A’ of the big Other” (Evans, 1996, p. 125). I will use the abbreviated version ‘objet a’ rather than ‘objet petit a’ because in the written form, it is clear that the ‘a’ is lower case.
non-spectacular element that gives body to a felt lack. ‘Gives body’ here refers to its constitutive function of closing the system, of enabling a fantasmatic frame to emerge around it, of establishing a spurious vanishing point so that the viewer/listener is spell-bound, captivated, fascinated by what s/he sees or hears. It enables the scene of fantasy to materialize within the moment (Jagodzinski, 2004a, p. 143).

In the field of art education, objet a might manifest as ‘the fantasmatic frame’ around concepts such as aesthetics (Tavin, 2008), or ‘child art’ (Tavin, 2010a) or subject positions, such as ‘art teacher’ or ‘student’ (Tavin, 2008). Tavin (2008) elaborates that whereas “[objet a] does not pre-exist in the objects (art, for example) or in the person (art educator, for example), it does enable a fantasy that gives cause for desire between the object and person” (p. 269).

Thus, objet a is what we see or feel in an object – a magical allure, a certain je ne sais quoi – it is that which is beyond words. Unconsciously, we project that fascinating, ineffable quality on an object, and by doing so, we transform that object into our objet a, “the formless remainder of the Real which, precisely, resists subjectification: Objet a is not merely the objectal correlative to the subject, it is the subject itself in its ‘impossible’ objectal existence” (Zizek, 2006, p. 196). Objet a becomes what we perceive as our missing piece, that which will make us whole, but it is also, in a sense, part of us, insofar as it is a representation of our desire, of the Real within us. It is part of who we are: “[Objet a, or] ‘that’ which is most intimate inside us is, at the very same time, the most
secretive; ‘that’ which is most hidden is also ‘that’ which is most strange” (Jagodzinski, 2002a, p.xxxv). Slavoj Zizek (2006) explains:

“[objet a] is irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ: Simplified, indestructible life. It is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction. And it is of this that all the forms of objet a that can be enumerated are the representatives, the equivalents. The objets a’s are merely representatives, its figures” (p. 161).

Our relationship to objet a is characterized by being just beyond our reach: “the paradoxical surplus which slips away, which reveals itself as ‘impossible’ in this missed encounter of the ‘opportune moment’, is of course objet a” (Zizek, 2006, p. 34). “The slippery and paradoxical nature of the objet a is also complicated by its traversal of all three registers” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 314). “In the imaginary register, the objet a is the absence or gap within what is pictured. In the symbolic, the objet a also includes that which is perpetually absent from or in excess of what we can represent. In the register of the Real, the objet a invokes trauma and heightened affective response” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 321).

In pedagogical situations, this heightened affective response can take the form of love, hate, shock, and/or anxiety (Hetrick, 2010; Jagodzinski, 2002a; Jagodzinski, 2002b). For many teachers, students embody the objet a. “As teachers, we love and hate our students for precisely what ‘shows’ itself, what ‘stands out,’ what ‘vibrates’ in them” (Jagodzinski, 2002a, p. xxv). In other words, we have strong emotional reactions to our
students precisely because they embody our objet a. One of our fundamental desires is recognition (Bracher, 2006), and as teachers, we might look to our students to recognize us as the “subject-supposed-to-know, the authority, the desirable body in front of the class, the stern yet understanding, modest yet authoritarian, leader in the classroom” (Hetrick, 2010, p. 86). In these instances, we believe that students can supply the recognition that will make us whole – and so we recognize our students as having something-in-them that is more than themselves – a spell-like quality that is beyond words, the very definition of objet a. Objet a is closely connected to fantasy which I will describe in greater detail below.

2.08 Lacanian Concept of Fantasy

“The objet a supports the fantasy which in turn supports desire. Reality (RL-Real life) and fantasy are therefore intimately related. There is no separation between them”’ (jagodzinski, 2004, p. 40 quoted in Hetrick, 2010, p. 197). Objet a is that which fascinates us – that which we simultaneously perceive as being what we lack and what can make us whole – it is that which mobilizes our desire, and we construct our fantasies around objet a (jagodzinski, 2004a). Colloquially, we understand fantasy as a means of escaping reality, but fantasy is defined differently in Lacanian theory (Robertson, 1997).

In Lacanian theory, there is no objective reality. We construct ‘reality’ to protect ourselves from the impossible unknowability, the senseless chaos in the Real and from the lack in the Other, or the utter failure of the symbolic to grasp meaning or vitality (Evans, 1996; jagodzinski, 2004a). This ‘constructed reality’ is our fantasy, and it creates the illusion that we are autonomous, that we can understand and order our lives through
rational thought. This illusion created by our fantasy reveals and “enables [us] to sustain [our] desire” to be whole, to be omnipotent, and to be in control (Evans, 1996, p. 60). Although fantasy “stages the scene of desire in the imaginary” (Jagodzinski, 2004a, p. 143) in that our fantasy is composed of images, fantasy is structured by the symbolic (Evans, 1996) because the fantasy frame is defined by signifiers. We operate from our own idiosyncratic fantasies in which we play the starring role, and we cast the people we know or know about in supporting roles. Zizek (2001) elaborates on this concept here:

“In the network of intersubjective relations, every one of us is identified with, [or] pinned down to, a certain fantasy place in the other’s symbolic structure. Psychoanalysis sustains here the exact opposite of the usual, commonsense opinion according to which fantasy figures are nothing but distorted, combined, or otherwise concocted figures of their “real” models, people of flesh and blood who we’ve met in our experience. We can relate to these ‘people of flesh and blood’ only insofar as we are able to identify them with a certain place in our symbolic fantasy space, or to put it in another more pathetic way, only insofar as they fill out a place pre-established in our dream” (p. 2).

Fantasies as defined by Zizek function in the same way in pedagogical situations: students and teachers cast each other in ‘pre-established’ roles. When our fantasies create the illusion that we are the subject-supposed-to-know, that we know and understand our students completely – that we know how to reach them, what to teach them, and how to guide them, we are fooling ourselves – and we are misleading our students. “There is no
god's eye view of ourselves and our destinies, and it is folly to think that we know there exists something or someone who does know – yet as teachers we act as though we are subjects who are ‘supposed to know’” (Jagodznski, 2004b, p. 25, original emphasis).

By assuming the position of the subject-supposed-to-know, as teachers, we are setting ourselves up for an impossible task – to be ‘the one who knows.’ Additionally, we are constructing unrealistic expectations for our students and for ourselves: That conscious knowledge is all there is to know, and that we, as subjects-supposed-to-know are in possession of this knowledge that we unconsciously believe our students need in order to be whole (Robertson, 1997). When students think of a teacher as a subject-supposed-to-know, they see this teacher as an authority of his/her discipline (Samuels, 2002), and possibly even as someone who knows them better than they know themselves (Lenzi, 2002). They believe that this subject-supposed-to-know can guide them, and tell them the ‘right’ way to do things.

Of course there are always people who can support us, but the danger of the subject-supposed-to-know for students is that students might displace their own idiosyncratic desires in the subject-supposed-to-know – considering the teacher who is their subject-supposed-to-know an authority, or wanting to be just like him/her, admiring him/her, or feeling attracted to him/her (Todd, 1997). For teachers, the risk of assuming the subject-supposed-to-know position is that “we seek validation of our identities (e.g. as ‘smart’ or ‘brilliant’)” from our students (Bracher, 2006, p. 84). When they look to us as the subject-supposed-to-know, they reinforce the fantasies we have constructed for ourselves, and we objectify them – looking to them to reflect qualities that we want to see
in ourselves, that will make us feel complete (Bracher, 2006; Robertson, 1997). This process is called *transference*, and I will describe it in greater detail in a subsequent section.

In her study of student art teachers, Hetrick (2010) identified three fantasies common among all of her subjects, and one of the fantasies was the *subject-supposed-to-know*. “Pedagogical fantasies are those fantasies that involve pedagogical encounters/exchanges between two or more people inside or outside of an educational setting such as a classroom” (Hetrick, 2010, p. 18). Through her inquiry, Hetrick (2010) was able to determine that the fantasies revealed the student teachers’ desires for “power/recognition, love/connections, and salvation/social justice” (p. iii).

Hetrick (2010) identified two *subject-supposed-to-know* fantasies: The *subject-supposed-to-know as pedagogue*, and the *subject-supposed-to-know as reformer/philanthropist*. The characteristics of the *subject-supposed-to-know as pedagogue* fantasy are “being a knowledgeable leader in the classroom, as well as a guide or mentor; being an expert, the respected purveyor of arts knowledge” (p. 131). The attributes of second *subject-supposed-to-know* fantasy of teacher as reformer/philanthropist are “knowing [and acting on] the best ways to save students from oppressive societal norms” (p. 148, original emphasis). Within the reformer/philanthropist fantasy is a distinct fantasy of wanting to be a “savior,” “the one implementing social justice on behalf of the students” (p. 209).

The danger with the teacher as reformer/philanthropist fantasies (in addition to the risks associated with *subject-supposed-to-know* listed above) lies in the fact that these
fantasies “function as enabling metaphors that ignore or distort the latent relations of white, hetero-sexualized power and privilege inscribed in student-teacher and teacher-community relations” (Robertson, 1997, p. 88). In other words, these fantasies could perpetuate the myth that heterosexual, white teachers are in a position to ‘save’ or improve the lives of children, girls, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and gay students (Robertson, 1997). This myth could include the idea that these populations need to be changed or civilized, and that teachers can and should ‘save’ them (Robertson, 1997).

Hetrick (2010) uncovered and named two other pedagogical fantasies among her student teachers: Student enchantment and ego-identification fantasy. Student enchantment is “the spell-like, magical quality of the relationship(s) that can exist between teachers and students and which often elicits feelings of love, attraction, captivation, and fascination” (Hetrick, 2010, p. 171). This fantasy “sometimes [has] unconscious expectations of reciprocity and sometimes [does not have] any conscious expectation of immediate personal satisfaction” (Hetrick, 2010, p. 138). Judith Robertson (1997) points out potential problems with the student enchantment fantasy can lead a teacher to work long hours without demand for recognition in the form of praise or increased pay and benefits. As such, she deprives herself of “what is rightfully hers: dignity, compensation, and recognition” (Robertson, 1997, p. 84).

Laura Hetrick’s (2010) ego-identification fantasy includes trying to dress, act, speak, and adopt the mannerisms and postures of role models. This fantasy might also include seeing oneself in others, and trying to avoid actions and behaviors that student art
teachers have noticed in despised teachers (Hetrick, 2010). The dangers of the student enchantment fantasy seem to be similar to risks of the *subject-supposed-to-know* fantasies: Idolization of teachers to the point of emulation both objectifies and places role models in the position of *subject-supposed-to-know* (Hetrick, 2010; Robertson, 1997). Additionally, disowning characteristics of disliked teachers might be a kind of repression that will return in the *Real* in some form or another (Zizek, 2006).

Bracher (2006) cites another pedagogical fantasy: That of being the object desired by the big Other. In this fantasy, the subject casts themselves in the role of the ‘only one’ who can fill the lack in the big Other – in other words, as the missing piece that will make the big Other whole. For a teacher in the field of art education, this might mean serving as the link between theory and practice, or it could mean advocating for the field of art education so that the discipline receives the recognition it deserves. The danger of this fantasy is that it places the subject at risk for arrogance and unchecked narcissism. Additionally, the subject might repress their own desire and *jouissance* in order to adopt the perceived desire and *jouissance* of the big Other (Bracher, 2006; Zizek, 2006).

It is important to recognize that all of these fantasies have valuable components: There is certainly nothing wrong with wanting to be an agent for change within the schools and within society, caring deeply about students, wishing to inspire students in the same way favorite teachers have inspired us, or wanting to make meaningful contributions to our discipline (Hetrick, 2010). Nor is there anything wrong with the
desires that underlie these fantasies: The desire for “power/recognition, love/connection, and salvation/social justice” (Hetrick, 2010, p. iii).

These pedagogical fantasies are problematic for the same reasons that every fantasmatic frame is problematic. Fantasies objectify people by assigning them to pre-determined roles (Zizek, 2006). Fantasmatic frames reduce people “to the symbolic order’s reliance on a logic of binary difference” and thus conceal the radical Otherness within us that resides in the Real (Samuels, 2002, p. 54). Unless we pay close attention to and analyze our affective and bodily responses and our slippages, we might never recognize the dangers and risks of our own fantasies. Furthermore, without investigation, these fantasies will maintain the illusion that we are whole, complete beings. Fortunately, it is possible, to traverse our largely unconscious fantasies – to make fundamental changes to them (Evans, 1996), but it is only through the disruption of the Real – through our unconscious knowledge – that we can modify our fantasies (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006).

The Lacanian concept of subject-supposed-to-know plays an important role in the pedagogical fantasies mentioned above. This concept is strongly connected to the Lacanian concept of transference. I will transference describe in greater detail below.

2.09 Lacanian Concept of Transference

“In the Lacanian psychoanalytic transference the student’s love for the teacher is initiated when s/he perceives in the teacher something that s/he doesn’t have: Namely, the objet a, the inexplicable ‘something’ in the Real.” (jagodzinski, 2002a, p. xxi). For this student, the teacher becomes the subject-supposed-to-know, and any time there is a
subject-supposed-to-know, there is transference (Bracher, 2006). “[Transference begins when the student] begins to attribute to the [teacher] some special or secret knowledge about him/herself of which she [the student] is ignorant of and desires to know” (Lenzi, 2002, pp. 170-171). The student looks at the teacher, the subject-supposed-to-know, and sees the ego-ideal, s/he sees everything s/he would like to be (Finke, 1997). “When the ideal is shattered, the avatar of aggressiveness arises and shows itself in the projected blame, disenchantment, intimations of fragmentations and so forth,” (Finke, 1997, p. 135).

“The prestige and the affective charge of [the] mirage [of the subject-supposed-to-know] to be constitutively irreducible, to be indeed most crucial to, determinant of, the emotional dynamic of all discursive human interactions” (Felman, 1997, p. 30) which is why the subject-supposed-to-know is such a powerful pedagogical fantasy for all teachers (Bracher, 2006) including student art teachers, as Hetrick (2010) illustrated in her doctoral study. Transference is common in educational settings, as it provides teachers, through counter-transference, with a perceived fulfillment of fundamental desires: Recognition and love (Bracher, 2006; Hetrick, 2010). Hence, their students become their objet a, and they are subject to vacillations among strong affective responses like love, hate, or blame (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006; Felman, 1997; Finke, 1997; jagodzinski, 2002a). It is for this reason that when a teacher experiences this transference, s/he must guide students to displace the love and fascination they feel for her, and instead help them to “[channel it] toward the student’s own desire: The objet a” (jagodzinski, 2002a, p. xxi).
2.10 Literature of Lacanian Psychoanalytic Theory and *Objet a*

A number of academics have written extensively about the benefits of using psychoanalytic theory to complement contemporary pedagogical practices such as critical or transformative pedagogy (Bracher, 2006; Daiello, 2011; Felman, 1997; Finke, 1997; Guerra, 2002; jagodzinski, 2002a, McWilliam, 1997; Tavin, 2010b; Todd, 1997, Walker et al., 2006). Critical pedagogy includes students’ and teachers’ voices in the learning process to make “the teachers’ and students’ *location* – the place that a person occupies within a set of social relationships, often determined by such categories as gender, class, race, etc., experiences, and perceptions in their private and public lives – the point of departure for dialogue and text for debate” (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996, p. 5).

Ultimately, critical pedagogy uses popular culture and our experiences to confront and “transform systems of oppression” (Tavin, 2003, p. 198).

Vicki Daiello (2011) develops a “psychoanalytically informed perspective on reflexive readings of and responses to students criticism writings” of television (p. ii.). Gustavo Guerra (2002) posits that Lacanian psychoanalytic theory “places subjectivity within an ethical framework of responsibility and caring alien to the mechanical and univocally oriented education process” (p. 6). Erica McWilliam (1997) emphasizes the necessity for teachers to acknowledge the pleasure, desire, and humanness of their bodies in teaching – to both acknowledge and nurture their pedagogical desire; she warns that disconnecting teachers from their pedagogical desire drains them of their *jouissance* and they end up “join[ing] the swelling rungs of burned-out educational radicals” (p. 228). jan jagodzinski (2004b) writes about how teachers can use encounters with the *Real* to get at
the “a more uncomfortable, often defensive and self-deceptive aspect of ourselves” that greatly influences how we teach and treat our students, but eludes the common pedagogical practice of reflectivity (p. 23).

In addition to Jan Jagodzinski, a number of art educators have employed Lacanian psychoanalytic theory within the field of art education. Dennis Atkinson (2002) used psychoanalytic theory to explore how “[traditional assessment of school-aged] students’ art practices impacts upon the construction of both students’ and teachers’ pedagogized identities” (p. 122). Kevin Tavin (2008) explores aesthetics as art education’s objet a. Kevin Tavin (2010a) also re-evaluates “Brent Wilson’s three primary sites of visual culture experiences for children and their art teachers… through psychoanalytic theories to more fully comprehend and critique contemporary concepts of child art in education” (p. 49).

Kevin Tavin (2010b) used Lacanian theory to “critique and respond to art education discourse around cognition” in order to encourage art educators to acknowledge unconscious knowledge that will help them grow as art educators (p. 55). Sydney Walker et al. (2006) “[demonstrate] how unconscious desire, affective responses, and multiple, shifting, and contradictory beliefs are central to Lacanian psychoanalytic pedagogy and subjectivity in classroom practice,” and can provide a means for “complicating visual culture” (p. 308). Sydney Walker (2009) “[draws] upon Lacanian psychoanalytic theory [to investigate] artmaking as a consequence of both conscious and unconscious thought processes” (p. 78).
While all of these studies deepened my understanding of Lacanian theory and its applications within art education, I found very few researchers who used Lacanian theory to interpret identity formation among student art teachers. Laura Hetrick’s (2010) study, that I will describe in greater detail in the next section, and Brown, Atkinson, & England’s (2006) research were the only two studies to employ Lacanian theory to investigate the process of becoming an art teacher. After describing Brown, Atkinson, & England’s (2006) contribution, I will also write briefly about Jan Jagodzinski’s (2002a) explication of Lacanian theory as it applies to art educators.

Brown, Atkinson, & England (2006) conducted “a small research project in which student teachers discuss[ed] particular experiences of learning to teach that are highly significant for them but which remain largely unrecognized in more official training discourses” (p. 84). The researchers interviewed ten secondary student art teachers, and used psychoanalytic theory to analyze both what the students said and their affective responses to questions. Their study found that student art teachers initially aim to please the big Other of art education, but find themselves anxious and frustrated due to confusion as to what the big Other wants from them. They receive conflicting feedback, suggestions, and information from university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and university faculty as to how to be a “good” art teacher. Ultimately, their study determined that

“This crucial discourse and practices relating to students’ relations with their tutors are frequently lost beneath the hegemony of more official training discourses from the government or their professional tutors. For
student teachers, however, such intersubjective relations constitute a highly significant and sometimes overwhelming aspect of their training which concerns having to develop (often inchoately) strategic skills to manage the (sometimes conflicting) demands of their tutors” (Brown, Atkinson, and England, 2006, p. 84).

This study was important for my research because it illuminated how the demands of the big Other of art education embodied by university supervisors, cooperating teachers, and university faculty might affirm and deny my own pedagogical fantasies. Brown, Atkinson, and England (2006) were particularly interested (as am I in my own inquiry) in how their students resolved the conflicting and sometimes unwanted or disliked advice that their advisors gave them. They took note of how the demands of the big Other – primarily, to effectively manage the classroom – limited and changed the student teachers’ understanding of what being an art teacher means.

This study led them to the following concerns:

“there is little if any reflexive interrogation through art or mathematics practices of their make-up or underpinning values, whereas such interrogation forms the lifeblood of such practices beyond the school domain. Does this mean that such school practices generally (though there are exceptions) produce pedagogized subject through the power of traditional norms of practice which in turn precipitate a strong desire for such norms and thus for a particular kind of subjection?” (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006, p. 56).
I kept this question in my mind as I recorded and interpreted my responses to my student teaching experience, even though it was not directly connected to my inquiry.

jagodzinski (2002a; 2004b) did not conduct a study, but rather applied psychoanalytic theory to pedagogy and to teaching art in the schools. His writing in regards to *transference*, *objet a* and their role in the classroom were of particular significance to my research. He describes how students and teachers often become *objet a* for each other through the process of *transference*. He investigates teachers’ ethical responsibilities to their students in regards to *objet a* and *transference*. jagodzinski (2002a) explains that

“the only possible happiness [for teachers and students] that can be offered is through sublimation, a satisfaction without repression (Freud). Sublimation is creative, a realization of one’s desire, yet paradoxically, knowing that one’s desire will never be fully realized. One faces the lack of being that one is. Shouldn’t that be the moral goal of education informed by psychoanalysis? To put the student in relation to his/her desire, of confronting the lack of being – the split within ourselves which is always bound up with a relation to death as human finitude – a pedagogy, as it were, between laughing and crying” (p. lii).

2.11 Literature of Lacanian Concept of Fantasy

Very few researchers have used Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to analyze and explore the pedagogical fantasies of student teachers (Robertson, 1997) and student art teachers (Hetrick, 2010). Brown, Atkinson, and England’s (2006) study referred to above
briefly touched on student art teachers’ fantasies, but their study did not focus on identifying students’ pedagogical fantasies. For this section of the literature review, I will write about Laura Hetrick’s (2010) doctoral study about the pedagogical fantasies of student art teachers, Judith Robertson’s (1997) inquiry into pre-service primary school teachers’ fantasies, and Mark Bracher’s (2006) description of a pedagogical fantasy as well as his proposed method intended for teachers to use to understand their “identity-supporting strategies” (p. 13f8), or in other words, their pedagogical fantasies.

In her doctoral study, Laura Hetrick (2010) used Lacanian psychoanalytic theory (and Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy) to investigate “the affective investments student art teachers might develop/employ in their teacher identities as well as how they may (re)negotiate those identities” (p. iii). “Using a content analysis approach,” she interviewed three women who had just completed their student teaching in an effort to identify their fantasies (p. ii). After analyzing the interviews, she and her subjects gathered to view and discuss clips from TV and movies that included characters that were art teachers. In her analysis, she considered both the spoken content of and the students’ affective responses to the interviews, the popular culture clips, and the discussion about clips.

Based on her analysis, she identified three pedagogical fantasies among her student teachers: “1) subject-supposed-to-know, 2) student enchantment, and 3) ego-identification” and she also found that these pedagogical fantasies supported “the student teachers’ desires for power/recognition, love/connections, and salvation/social justice” (p. iii). Hetrick’s (2010) study was exceptionally useful for my research because her inquiry
was so similar to mine: Her dissertation dealt with the pedagogical fantasies of student art teachers, and my study investigates my own pedagogical fantasies. I uncovered similar fantasies while I was student teaching. Like Hetrick, I explored my data – my affective and corporeal responses and slippages to student teaching that I recorded in a journal – to uncover themes, patterns, and poignant moments that revealed fragments of my pedagogical fantasies.

Judith Robertson (1997) studied the way “fantasy life affects the process of learning to teach” (p. 75). For her inquiry, she watched the movie *Stand and Deliver* with twelve pre-service primary school teachers and asked them to write about one or more scenes in the movie that drew a strong feeling from them, and then to relate that scene and feeling to “an event” in their lives or “a desire or pleasure aroused” by the film (Robertson, 1997, p. 77). Additionally, she asked her students to keep journals that related their desires to become teachers.

Her analysis uncovered how the devotional fantasy – similar to two of the pedagogical fantasies Laura Hetrick (2010) identified: The *subject-supposed-to-know* reformer/philanthropist, and the student enchantment fantasy – revealed the ways in which these student teacher fantasies contribute both to oppression and lack of respect for women and for primary school teachers (described in more detail in the fantasy section above). Additionally, she uncovered how these fantasies objectify and oppress students (explained in greater detail in the fantasy section above). Robertson’s study was extremely helpful in my research in understanding how student teachers’ fantasies can limit their agency, perpetuate oppression, and objectify students.
Bracher’s (2006) writing was important to my research because he delineated the fantasy of filling the lack in the big Other within an academic discipline (this fantasy is described in greater detail in the fantasy section). His investigation of this fantasy specifically related to the fantasy that some historicists have of wanting fill the lack in the big Other. He did not do a study of this subject, but rather used Lacanian theory to analyze and expound upon this phenomenon in historicism. His description was important to me because I likely have a variation of this fantasy: Seeing myself as the ‘missing piece’ for the field of art education: ‘The one’ who will connect theory and practice.

His writing was also important to my research because of the method he devised for teachers to “recognize at least some of their own individual identity-supporting strategies in these analyses” (Bracher, 2006, p. 138). ‘Identity-supporting strategies’ can also be understood as attempts to affirm our pedagogical fantasies. Among his many suggestions, Bracher (2006) included having teachers “examine each pedagogical behavior or situation for the presence of one or more types of recognition, asking: Recognition from whom? Recognition in what form?” (p. 138). Bracher (2006) also suggests that

“we should be alert of different forms of (conscious and unconscious) recognition, including: explicit (from students, peers, supervisors) – praise, flattery, deference, admiration, positive evaluations; implicit (from students) – attendance, attention, interest, responsiveness, cooperation; structural – money, position, rank, title, space (work, recreational, living),
time (quantity and quality allotted by the institutions to one’s activities)” (pp. 139 – 140).

Bracher suggests that teachers sit down and respond to each of these questions in order to “recognize identity-supporting strategies” (Bracher, 2006, p. 138). This particular method is not as effective for uncovering fragments of our fantasies as is the method I have chosen: Writing an autoethnography. Bracher’s proposed method, although useful as an investigative tool for teachers, would be too narrow for my inquiry: It limits the teachers’ inquiry to their responses to the questions.

Instead of using pre-determined questions to analyze what my fantasies of student teaching are, I used my unconscious knowledge to teach me about my pedagogical fantasies. Rather than responding to questions one by one, I instead recorded my affective and corporeal responses to student teaching, as well as moments when I forgot, and things that I resisted learning. I chose autoethnography as my method because I wanted to let fragments of my fantasies emerge with as little constraints from the symbolic order as possible.

2.12 Conclusion of Literature Review

As stated above, this thesis is one of only three studies that use Lacanian theory to explore identity formation of student teachers within the field of art education. My inquiry is the first in the field of education and art education in which a student teacher uses Lacanian theory to investigate his/her own pedagogical fantasies. Autoethnography, the method I used to investigate my topic, is a form of inquiry in which researchers use their own experiences within a culture to provide a better understanding of that culture
(Ellis & Bochner, 2000). To collect my data, I made frequent entries in my journal over the entire ten weeks I was student teaching. This lengthy and thorough data source will contribute an in-depth perspective on both pedagogical fantasies and student teaching, and how a student teacher negotiates her experience as student teaching affirms and denies her pedagogical fantasies within the field of art education.

Several art educators (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006; Hetrick, 2010; Jagodzinski, 2002a; Jagodzinski, 2004b; and Tavin, 2010b) have emphasized the benefits of employing Lacanian theory to analyze our experiences as art teachers. In their studies, Brown, Atkinson, and England (2006) and Laura Hetrick (2010) have acknowledged, explored, and expounded upon the usefulness of investigating student art teachers’ pedagogical fantasies. Kevin Tavin (2010b) has underscored the importance of learning from unconscious knowledge, and Jan Jagodzinski (2002a, 2004b) has stressed the necessity of confronting our objet a.

The benefits of allowing our unconscious knowledge to teach us about our pedagogical fantasies and our objet a have the potential to dispel our illusions that we are whole, autonomous, beings (Jagodzinski, 2002a, 2004b; Tavin, 2010b). Instead, our unconscious knowledge informs us that we lack – that the reality we understand to be true is in fact a constructed fantasy that each of us has created to hide our lack from ourselves (Hetrick, 2010; Jagodzinski, 2002a). While this new awareness may not be comforting, it does position us to experience our lives with a fuller awareness of our existence – of both our lack and the desires that drive us (Jagodzinski, 2002a). If as teachers, we “[accept] the radical finitude of [our] knowledge, recognizing its limit and
its failure” (Campbell, 2002, p. 86), if we acknowledge “the presence of the radical Other within our own psyches, [then we will be more likely] to accept the radical difference of all external Others” (Samuels, 2002, p. 55). As art teachers, accepting the radical Other within ourselves is essential in order to support students as they align themselves with their own desires, and confront their own lacks (jagodzinski, 2002a).
Chapter 3 – Methodology

To investigate my question – what are my fantasies of being an art teacher – I used two qualitative research methodologies: Action research and autoethnography. Action research, sometimes referred to as “reflective teaching, teacher-as-researcher, teaching as inquiry, and critical praxis” is defined as “the study and enhancement of one’s own practice” (May, 1997, p. 224). Ethnography is a common methodology used within action research (May, 1997), and for my inquiry, I have written an autoethnography, a kind of ethnography that emphasizes the researcher’s experience as part of her inquiry. In an autoethnography, the researcher explores and writes about her experiences in order to investigate her research topic.

3.01 Action Research

With action research, teachers define “the topic and purpose” of their inquiry (May, 1997, p. 228), and they choose a question that “may or may not aim to solve specific problems or ‘improve’ practice” (May, 1997, p. 226). Rather, “the primary interest of action researchers is to gain a better understanding of their beliefs/practice and how these came to be” (May, 1997, p. 229). The purpose of my research question – what are my fantasies of being an art teacher – was not to solve a problem. Rather, the goal of my inquiry was to better understand what “art teacher” means to me both consciously and
unconsciously, how student teaching will change that understanding, and why I am motivated to become an art teacher.

Action research is always implemented in practice, and as a result, action researchers often use autoethnographies (May, 1997). These autoethnographies take various forms including journals, poetry, correspondence, and interviews (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; May, 1997; Philaretou & Allen, 2006). For my autoethnography, I wrote in my journal on a daily basis to document my experiences while student teaching from January through March 2011 at two elementary schools: One in Grove City, Ohio, and the other just outside of Grove City.

3.02 Autoethnography

In their research and writing (graphy), autoethnographers focus on the self (auto) or culture (ethnos), or some combination of the two (Reed-Danahay, 1997). “The researcher’s personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740). For my inquiry, the “culture under study” was that of student art teachers, and the goal of the autoethnography that I wrote during my student teaching was to document both my affective and bodily responses to conversations and incidents, and “the absences, gaps, silences, and invisibilities” that inform our human experience (Walker et al., 2006, p. 312). These reactions revealed slippages (Tavin, 2010b) between my experiences as a student art teacher and my unconscious fantasies of being an art teacher, and, with interpretation, revealed small fragments of my unconscious desire.
I chose to write an autoethnography because this research methodology, unlike mainstream research methodologies, “[uses and interprets] multiple layers of consciousness” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). By multiple layers of consciousness, Ellis & Bochner (2000) mean corporeal reactions, emotional landscapes, and the full range of human experiences that we use to make sense of our worlds. Affective and bodily responses, as well as significant, nonverbal moments constituted the majority of the data that I recorded in my journal in order to investigate how my experiences as a student teacher affirm or deny my unconscious fantasies of being an art teacher.

According to psychoanalytic theory, our unconscious knowledge is inaccessible to us accept through slippages and reactions we feel and sense in our bodies (Tavin, 2010b). As such, autoethnography is the appropriate research methodology for my inquiry because it acknowledges and utilizes forms of human processing and understanding that traditional research methods often ignore.

Some mainstream quantitative and qualitative researchers argue that because autoethnographies focus on one individual’s experience, this research methodology does not do enough to affect social change, generate awareness of important issues, or change human behavior (Philaretou & Allen, 2006). Contrary to these assertions, a researcher’s individual experience within their inquiry is worth investigating (Spry, 2001). “As feminists often note, the personal is political, and as sociologists point out, if one person feels and experiences an entity, then that entity may be felt and experienced by others and may therefore constitute a social phenomenon even if one of limited generalizability” (Philaretou & Allen, 2006, p. 74).
Autoethnography does not come without standards. Poorly-executed autoethnographies are thought to be overly self-indulgent “without being sufficiently self-aware or self-critical and without taking into account cultural constraints and possibilities” (Ellis, 2004, p. 34). These autoethnographies do not benefit anyone, including the person writing them (Ellis, 2004). However, “when done well, autoethnography, as a qualitative method of research, explores in depth the idiosyncratic complexity of human experience that cannot be categorized or measured by traditional research methods” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Both my research question – what are my fantasies of being an art teacher – and psychoanalytic theory, the theory I used to interpret my data, called for autoethnography as the research methodology because both the theory and the methodology value and investigate the complex, individualized experience of the researcher/subject.

Autoethnography is an excellent methodology for researching stories that people usually choose to hide (Ellis & Bochner, 1992). “This is because the researcher as subject can delve into such topics with relative ease thus providing invaluable insider knowledge not accessible from mainstream research methods whereby subjects may be unwilling or afraid to disclose sensitive personal information” (Philaretou & Allen, 2006, pp. 65-66). To investigate my research question, I recorded and interpreted private information about myself – thoughts, my affective, and bodily responses – that I would be unlikely to share with an outside researcher. As such, I chose autoethnography as my research methodology so that I could explore the breadth and depth of my inquiry as honestly and completely as possible.
3.03 Methods

I framed my research with Lacanian theory, and the data I collected consisted of my unconscious knowledge. Both the data I collected and my interpretive framework denied the rationality and certainty typically associated with traditional research methods. As Vicki Daiello (2011) eloquently stated about her own use of Lacanian theory in her dissertation, using unconscious knowledge as data and employing Lacanian theory as an interpretive tool “unravels method and vice versa, for those aspects of data that appear as ‘evidence’ or ‘intelligibility’ are merely repetitive movements and scribblings around the edges of what cannot be named” (p. 132).

When I collected data, I looked beyond what is typically thought of as evidence and intelligibility. Instead, I recorded unconscious knowledge: The gaps, silences, resistances, and affective responses of my experience. In my data collection and interpretation, I maintained an awareness of the impossibility of entirely capturing in language the *Real* of my experience as a student art teacher. “This certainty of uncertainty and conflict… is the most realistic and pragmatic perspective on the paradox of wording the world for one another” (Daiello, 2011, p. 140). This ambiguity and uncertainty found their way into my data collection as, at times, I attempted to put into words that which cannot be worded.

The data I recorded consists of stories I repeated, moments when I forgot, emotional responses, bodily and sensory reactions, resistances (what I did not want to talk about), and silences (what I never address in conversation, and what I avoided recording in my journal). With this data, I included the context that elicited these
responses, and I recorded both the responses and the context that elicited them in my journal on a daily basis. I recorded my responses to written and oral feedback from supervisors, and I reviewed the data I collected on a weekly basis in an effort to identify the gaps and silences within my records. Over the weekends, I asked myself: What am I resisting? What have I left out? What mundane experiences have I noted or left out? I recorded my response to these questions as well.

In addition to writing freely about disruptions from the *Real* in my journal, I considered every day what was joyful, surprising, pleasurable, mundane, difficult, painful, challenging, and confusing. Prior to interpreting the data I collected, I read through my journal several times to identify themes of significant resistances, avoidances, reactions, moments, and thought and behavior patterns that emerged (Philaretou & Allen, 2006). Identifying and interpreting repeated and important ideas and themes is important to the autoethnographic process (Philaretou & Allen, 2006). After I identified themes, I created a second document in which I copied and pasted entries under the theme where they belonged.

As mentioned above, I used the themes that emerged from my data to construct my interpretation of it. Having said that, I will list questions related to Lacanian theory that I asked myself as I read through my journal several times. I considered the following questions as I approached my data: How can I disrupt what I am thinking about my student teaching? What did the big Other want from me? What did my unconscious knowledge tell me about what I thought the big Other expected from me? What did I perceive that the students want from art class? From me as a student art teacher? What
did my university supervisor or my cooperating teacher, as personifications of the big Other, want from me? How did I respond to them? What did parents, the school administration, and/or the community want me to do as an art teacher? How did my unconscious knowledge inform my understanding of these questions? What did it mean when I felt validated by the gaze of the big Other? How did “what I am supposed to do” cast a gaze on me? What did student artwork want from me? What did the gaze I cast on myself say about the process of student teaching? What did I think I should look like or how did I think I should act?

As I read through my 38-page single-spaced and typed journal, these questions likely helped me to interrogate how I had cast myself and others in roles of authority. Student teachers often struggle with embodying authority in the classroom (Phillips & Carr, 2010), and I was no different. I considered how I accepted, enjoyed, struggled with, and resisted assuming the role of authority in the classroom. Additionally, I considered how I positioned myself in relation to the authority of my supervisors.

Once I had completed my student teaching, I employed these same questions as I sifted through the data, uncovered themes, and layered my interpretations. My hope was that my final written interpretation would convey something of the process of student teaching. I hoped that this interpretation would illuminate some of the sites of struggle of my own desire and resistance when confronted by the big Other of student teaching and teacher training.
Chapter 4 – Parameters

In this section, I will explain the boundaries of my research, and the limitations of my research methodology: Autoethnography. I investigated what my fantasies of being an art teacher are, and I used psychoanalytic theory to interpret the data I gathered. I collected my data over the ten weeks that I was student teaching at two public elementary schools: One in Grove City, Ohio, and the other just outside of Grove City. I recorded the slippages I experienced as well as my affective and corporeal responses to student teaching including teaching itself; the interactions I have with students, my university supervisor, and my cooperating teacher; writing and researching lesson plans; and the experience of being in/and working at a public school.

The boundaries of this thesis inquiry were set by the time I spent gathering my data, the location where I did my student teaching, and the theory I used to interpret my data. I gathered data for the entire ten weeks that I was student teaching at an elementary school in Grove City, Ohio. Ten weeks of data collection, although lengthy, is not quite as extensive as perhaps a years’ worth of data. All the same, gathering data for this length of time gave me a thorough record to interpret.

As this ten-week period was my first quarter of student teaching, I was quite busy. I had enough time and energy to record my data on a daily basis, but I certainly did not have of leisure time every night in which I could make extensive notes in my research
journal. I typically spent 30 minutes to an hour per night typing into my journal, and thirty minutes to an hour every weekend recording data.

I taught at two elementary schools for kindergarteners through fourth graders in Grove City, Ohio. Therefore, the data I recorded was limited to what I experienced at two elementary schools with this particular age group. Because I was just researching at two schools with one age group, I have no way of knowing if my fantasies as an art teacher would be different with an older student population of a different socio-economic background at an urban or suburban school that might have a different culture than the school cultures I encountered. Therefore, this study only provides information about the identity formation of one student art teacher teaching from January through March 2011 at two rural/suburban elementary schools in and near Grove City, Ohio.

I used Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to interpret my data. This theory limited my collection of data to slippages in conversations, moments when I forgot something that I had always known (Tavin, 2010b), stories that I repeated to myself and others, and emotional and bodily reactions as well as the circumstances and conversations that elicited these responses. My interpretation of the data was limited to the framework that Lacanian theory provided.

As such, the data I collected was restricted to what I noticed and defined as being relevant. It is possible that I repressed or disavowed a feeling or a bodily response so quickly that I was not able to take note of it. Additionally, there is a chance that I did not deem a relevant affective response as being important to my thesis. However, since I recorded notes in my journal every day over the entire ten week period that I was student
teaching, many experiences and reactions were either so poignant that they stood out, or they repeated themselves, and I had no choice but to notice them.

I chose to write an autoethnography as my research methodology. This methodology allowed me to explore what my fantasies of an art teacher were, and how I responded to this affirmation and denial of these fantasies. Although autoethnographies are an in-depth research methodology that allows for disclosure of highly personal information (Philaretou & Allen, 2006), they are limited to the experiences of one person rather than the experiences of many people. My autoethnography was limited to my experiences as a white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual woman in her early thirties. A student teacher of a different race, class, ability level, sexual identity, gender, and/or age might have a very different experience. However, according to Philaretou and Allen (2006), if one person has a certain set of experiences within a given culture it is likely that other people are having that experience as well.
Chapter 5 – Story Introduction

My journal entries provided a glimpse into the textured layers of my student teaching experience; some layers harmonized with each other while others were dissonant; certain layers faded into the background while others stood out; a number of them remained fixed, and others resisted being named or categorized. While working on the story of this thesis, I attempted to organize into themes the journal entries that contained the unruly layers of my experience. Some of the entries fit neatly into a theme, and others sprawled out among three or four.

The themes that surfaced as I read and re-read my journal were: 1) Locating my subjectivities – the organic nature of the human experience in student teaching; 2) The gaze of the big Other: Classroom management; 3) Transference/counter-transference: The importance of being liked; 4) The gaze of the big Other on the content of art education for elementary-aged students; 5) Assessment; and 6) The impossibility of teaching. In the next section, I will write about the number of entries I recorded for each theme, I will explain if I anticipated these themes, if I was surprised by them, and I will explore how Lacanian theory influenced these themes as I wrote them.

Section 5.01: Exploring the Six Themes in My Journal

In this section, I will explain more about my experience with my journal entries, and with the themes that surfaced from them. I will list the number of entries I put in each
category, and I will talk about my reaction to the themes, and to the entries I made. I will also discuss how Lacanian theory influenced both the entries I wrote and the themes I developed. I will begin by exploring the first theme: Locating my subjectivities: The organic nature of human experience in student teaching.

I categorized only ten entries under the first theme – locating my subjectivities: The organic nature of human experience in student teaching. Even though there were so few entries for this first theme, I remember thinking and feeling throughout student teaching that locating and tending to my subjectivities were hugely important to me. Prior to student teaching, I had a sense that subjectivity would be important to my inquiry about teacher identity formation. As I interpreted my entries, I found the entries related to this first theme to be among the most compelling and vivid because of their significance to me as a student teacher. I had very clear images and strong feelings around this theme as a student teacher, and I remember concentrating for long periods as I paused to find the right words for what I was feeling as I wrote these entries in my journal.

It was so important to me to articulate my feelings about locating my subjectivities: At the time, I remember that these journal entries felt more important than the other entries in part because the other entries were easier to write. The entries that I later categorized under the theme of “locating my subjectivities” resisted language, and with the written entries about this theme, I attempted to capture what was emotional, visual, and even somewhat kinesthetic. As a student teacher, I felt compelled to write about these experiences, though, because the stuff in these entries was what drew me to Lacanian theory and to this inquiry in the first place: These entries that were about
locating my subjectivities got at the ineffable parts of my experience as a student and a student teacher.

Prior to student teaching, I anticipated that subjectivity would be an important part of my inquiry, but I was not certain how my subjectivities would weave their way through my student teaching experience. I had studied Lacanian theory prior to student teaching, and as such, Lacanian theory did influence how much I recorded about my subjectivities. Because Lacanian theory acknowledges the contradictory, layered subjectivities that make up so much of our human experience, I knew as I wrote in my journal about my subjectivities that these entries could be an important part of my inquiry.

I did not anticipate that I would write about the next three categories: The gaze of the big other: Classroom management; transference/counter-transference: The importance of being liked; and assessment. I had sixteen entries related to the theme the gaze of the big Other: Classroom management. As I wrote entries in my journal about classroom management, I sometimes used the Lacanian phrase “the gaze of the big Other,” so Lacanian language did influence me as I wrote about this theme, but I was surprised that classroom management was such a significant theme in my student teaching experience.

This theme is a common concern for student teachers. Classroom management is almost always a site of struggle for student teachers because of the power dynamic that is unique to the student teaching experience. All student teachers are constantly being evaluated and instructed by their Cooperating Teacher and their University Supervisors who are in positions of power in relation to the student teachers.
It is very likely that all student teachers are also concerned about the third theme, transference/counter-transference: The importance of being liked. I made thirty-five entries about this theme, and this large number is significant. Of course, it seems obvious and insignificant to admit that I wanted to be liked, because we all want to be liked. What makes this theme important to this inquiry is that I made so many entries about it, and the regular repetition of this theme underscores its significance. This theme surprised me, and it was influenced by Lacanian theory because I had made a commitment to record all affective responses to my student teaching experiences. Had I been unfamiliar with Lacanian theory when I was a student teacher, it is unlikely that I would have recorded the joyful emotions that I had around students’ responses to me.

I was not at all surprised by the fourth theme: The gaze of the big Other on the content of art education, and I did anticipate that this theme would somehow be significant to my thesis because the content of what I teach is extremely important to me. I made twenty-two entries about the gaze of the big Other on the content of art education. I did include Lacanian language in some of the entries about this theme, but I feel strongly that the entries I wrote about this theme were not heavily influenced by Lacanian theory because I had invested a lot of time, energy, and thought on the content of what I taught, and I cared a lot about it.

I was surprised by and I did not anticipate the fifth theme: Assessment, and I probably would not have taken note of it at all if I had not been familiar with Lacanian theory prior to student teaching. Because of my familiarity with Lacanian theory, I made a commitment to record the silences and gaps in my student teaching experiences. I
would not have made an effort to record these silences if I hadn’t read anything about Lacanian theory.

I made only five entries for the theme of assessment. I chose to include this theme even though there were so few entries because I resisted writing about it in my student teaching journal. I prefaced almost every entry that I made about assessment with a statement like, “I have been avoiding writing about assessment.” My strong resistance to writing about assessment made this theme important to include.

I anticipated the sixth and final theme: “The impossibility of teaching” about which I wrote twenty-one entries, and I was not surprised that this theme surfaced as I interpreted the themes in my journal. Prior to student teaching, I thought of teaching, and student teaching in particular, as demanding and extremely difficult, and I was unsure that I would be able to do it, and I was even less sure that I would be able to do it well. Teaching, with its myriad responsibilities seemed impossible to me. I used Lacanian language in some of the journal entries related to this theme: I talked about the lack, and the gaze of the big Other, but I feel strongly that I would have written similar entries with different language if I had not studied Lacanian theory before student teaching.

In summary, Lacanian theory did have some influence on the content of my journal entries. If I had not made an effort to record the joyful moments, or the silences and gaps in my student teaching experience I likely would not have uncovered two themes: Transference/counter-transference and assessment. It is also possible that I would not have spent so much time exploring the first theme that I will describe in greater detail.
below, the theme “Locating My Subjectivities – the Organic Nature of Human Experience.”

5.02 Locating My Subjectivities – the Organic Nature of Human Experience

The ineffable, the intangible, why I do what I do, what inspires me, what permeates my richest, most poignant experiences – the successes and the failures – the sweet, wordless moments and the painful ones, too… I don’t feel like I want the big Other to have access to this, and I don’t feel like the big Other allows room for these significant, ineffable experiences either. I resist sharing this thing with the big Other, maybe because I have experienced the big Other deny this organic aspect of being human, but maybe also because I care too much about this intangibility. It feels vulnerable, exposed, and unsafe under the big Other’s gaze. This ineffability – the ephemeral fluttering of excitement; the effervescence of satisfaction; the soft, subtle stillness of clarity, or the gentle warmth of human connection – is too profoundly important to me to leave unprotected under the Big Other’s gaze.

Upon re-reading my journal a full year after student teaching, I was struck by the voluntary and involuntary sacrifices I made in an effort to satisfy the demands of the big Other of art education. In particular, I was interested in where I located, lost, or defended the ineffability of my experience when I faced the big Other. The big Other’s demands to plan, act, respond, reflect, document, and teach reduced the time and space I had to dwell in the intangibilities of my experience – the intangibility that matters the most to me.

I found myself wishing to have the time and space to dwell privately in the ineffable, or to keep it with me secretly throughout my day. In my journal, I wrote “I feel
like I don’t have the time to settle into what I’m doing or to let the experience settle into me so that I know what it is” (February 13, 2011). In a separate journal entry, I wrote that this experience repeated itself throughout student teaching, but I had been avoiding admitting to it or journaling about it. I felt like there was something more, something important that was beyond my reach because of the extensive day-to-day responsibilities of student teaching. The demands of the Big Other to be organized, responsive, and prepared crowded my life so completely that there was no room to distill this “something more” from my student teaching experience.

This “something more,” the ineffable of my student teaching experience, materialized in one of our weekly seminars for student teachers. I found myself annoyed with the Director of Student Teaching, an embodiment for me of the big Other, when he neglected to acknowledge and attend to the tumultuous emotional landscape surrounding a student teacher’s question, and instead responded to the symbolic, to the words in her question. In my journal, I wrote about this student teacher who could not possibly do the assessment she had planned because she didn’t know the students’ names, and she had been swarmed with students throughout this class period. Her non-verbal communication clearly indicated that she still felt overwhelmed and at a loss of what to do.

I wanted the Director of Student Teaching to say of course you feel overwhelmed and at a loss, you are a brand new student teacher. I wanted him to use his words to validate this emotional experience as a reality of student teaching, but he didn’t. Instead, he did not respond to the feeling that infused the question, and he gave her a logical solution to the problem she presented with her words: A solution that may or may not
have been viable. I felt irritated by his response because he, as the embodiment of the Big Other, denied the *Real* of this experience: The confusion and failure that is part of life, and part of student teaching.

During a small group meeting of five student teachers with the Director of Student Teaching later that quarter, he did acknowledge to us that we were not going to know everything as student teachers, and that we should just do the best we could. I felt relieved to hear him recognize and accept our limitations. Even though I felt relieved, I wondered why he did not voice this important acknowledgement to the whole class.

Later in student teaching, I found myself denying the big Other any access to the *Real* of my experience. Twice a quarter, Richard, my University Supervisor, Amanda, my Cooperating Teacher, and I had a Three-Way-Conference. Each of us filled out a form prior to the meeting that became official documentation of my progress as a student teacher. I wrote in my journal that prior to this meeting, I struggled to fill out my form. I did not feel comfortable writing about what I considered to be my true strengths or my biggest struggles. My strengths and my weaknesses captured a kernel of the *Real*. To write about these characteristics would have given the Big Other the opportunity to deny their significance, and dismiss the *Real* of my experience.

Surprisingly, Amanda and Richard each wrote about my true strengths, about what does inspire and satisfy me: “My calm and gentle presence in the classroom and how good this is for the kids, developing consistently meaningful art-making projects/discussions that I connect well to students’ lives, addressing important social issues and using contemporary artists, my flexibility at adapting lessons one day to the
next and even mid-lesson sometimes, and Richard even said that my lessons and my implementation of them are ‘magical’” (author’s personal journal, February 4, 2011).

In my journal, I wrote about how gratifying it was that they acknowledged these strengths. I was especially excited that Richard used the word magical, because I had secretly enjoyed what I thought of as the magic that occasionally graced the art room as I was teaching. It was as if the Big Other, embodied by my Cooperating Teacher and my University Supervisor, acknowledged and appreciated some of what was truly meaningful to me: My inspiration, my motivation, and perhaps my objet a. At this meeting, however, I remained silent about my genuine struggles as a student teacher: Maintaining time and space for the ineffable; questioning the content I had selected to teach; and navigating the demands of the big Other in regards to classroom management. I will write more about classroom management below.

5.03 The Gaze of the Big Other: Classroom Management

Early in student teaching, I observed Anna, a Kindergarten teacher, while she was teaching. Anna was calm and gentle with her students, she clearly enjoyed what she was doing, and her teaching approach was open and responsive. I got the sense that she did what she could as a teacher, and was comfortable allowing the kids to do what they could do, too. In other words, she allowed the organic nature of being human to guide her teaching style. Rather than disavowing the resistance and failure that is an integral part of education, she accepted it. Instead of embodying an authoritarian drill sergeant who demands the full attention of all of her students, she allowed room for a little distraction.
I was refreshed and inspired by her approach because she did not sacrifice her human-ness while she was teaching. After observing her teach, I noted in my journal that I repeated to as many people as would listen why Anna was such an incredible teacher. According to psychoanalytic theory, stories that are repeated many times hint at a kernel of unconscious knowledge. This story that I repeated about Anna was important because her way of being as a teacher became a part of my ideal ego, a Lacanian term that means everything I would like to be (Finke, 1997). Throughout the ten weeks that I student taught, I sacrificed my ideal ego to satisfy the Big Other’s demands for a well-managed classroom.

In several journal entries, I noted that I simply adopted my Cooperating Teacher’s classroom management style, a style that was at odds with Anna’s approach. Amanda’s classroom management style was more authoritarian. She required every child’s attention when she spoke, and students quickly received warnings or consequences when they did not stay on-task. I was uncomfortable with how quickly I accepted her approach. I found myself rationalizing that I just did not have time to develop my own classroom management system, and I had no other choice. I disavowed my uneasiness in part because I thought that if my enthusiasm and the content of my lessons were strong enough, I wouldn’t need to invest a lot of energy in classroom management.

I was not able to disavow my uneasiness when Amanda began suggesting that I make a mean face and fold my arms over my chest to elicit the behavior that I wanted from the children, or that I develop a drill sergeant voice. I was disturbed by both suggestions. When she made these suggestions, I avoided responding completely to them.
I would make a joke to avoid letting her know how I really felt about her suggestion: I felt that it would be completely insincere and somewhat childish for me to make a mean face and fold my arms over my chest. I felt like I would be “performing for some else’s benefit” (author’s journal, weekend of January 21, 2011). When she suggested several times that I develop a drill sergeant voice, I again would make jokes so that I could hide how I really felt about this classroom management technique. I wrote in my journal about it:

If this need to develop a drill sergeant voice is written in [official student teaching progress documentation], does that mean I have to do it? If Amanda says I have to develop a drill sergeant voice, does that mean I must? Isn’t there a better way? I feel caught between Amanda’s authority as my cooperating teacher… and what I think [teaching] can be or could be. Do I have to submit to Amanda’s and other people’s fantasies of teachers being like drill sergeants who always have complete command of the students’ attention? Am I making some terrible faux pas as a student teacher if I don’t develop a drill sergeant voice? Would I be losing control of the class? Of the students’ respect? Would I be letting them be disrespectful by not being harsh and dictatorial when they chatter a little when I am talking? Can’t I solve this by just telling them I will wait for them? Or by reminding them that only one person talks at a time? Is that too ineffective? Why can’t I use my strengths to develop my classroom management strategies instead of trying to adopt someone else’s? As a
student teacher, I have to take and use the suggestions of my cooperating
teacher and my university supervisor, and I feel like I need to please them.
But what if I disagree with them? Am I in a position to disagree with
them? (author’s journal, January 31, 2011).

This classroom management quandary persisted throughout the entire quarter. As
a student teacher, I felt uncomfortable telling Amanda that I would not develop a drill
sergeant voice. Amanda embodied the Big Other of art education for me, and I did not
know what the consequences would be if I refused to do what she asked of me. A refusal
on my part did not seem worth the risk of losing her cooperation and her respect. This
internal conflict I had is common to student teachers because of the power dynamic that
is unique to student teaching.

Student teachers are inclined and/or trained to manage a classroom in a certain
way that will likely be at odds somehow with their Cooperating Teachers’ approach.
Because the Cooperating Teachers observe and evaluate student teachers’ teaching,
Cooperating Teachers are in a position of power, and all student teachers will experience
some internal and/or external conflict related to classroom management. Student teachers
are also likely to be concerned about being liked by their Cooperating Teacher and their
students. I will discuss the importance of being liked in the next section.

5.04 Transference and Counter-Transference: The Importance of Being Liked

Transference is the Lacanian concept by which, in the case of education, a student
believes her teacher has special knowledge that they would like to possess, and this belief
can result in the student having emotions such as love toward the teacher (Evans, 1996).
Counter-transference is what teachers feel as love or recognition towards their students (Bracher, 2006; Hetrick, 2010). When teachers perceive this love from their students, they feel love in return. When teachers feel an absence of recognition, they may respond with anger, irritation, or confusion.

As a student teacher, I wrote many journal entries both about students’ affective responses to me, and about my affective responses to them. When students were bored, lacked affect or enthusiasm during discussion and art-making, or did not seem interested in me or the art-making, I felt confused, disappointed, or like I must be doing something wrong. One student was defiant to me, and I “immediately felt angry, and I was definitely surprised [by her defiance and by my immediate, strong reaction to her]” (author’s journal, February 10, 2011). I also noted my irritation at a second grade class because the week before, I had perceived these students as being less interested in my lessons. I noted that the reason for my irritation was unfounded, because most of the students in this class were, in fact, engaged in the discussion and the art-making.

My irritation at the second grade class and my anger at the student who was defiant to me are both consistent with psychoanalytic theory’s concept of counter-transference. When teachers experience the love and recognition that they erroneously believe will make them whole, they respond to their students with love and recognition. If they do not receive the love and recognition, they could easily respond with what Shoshona Felman (1997) referred to as “mirror-game of love and hate” (p. 32). Thus, when my student was defiant to me, she disrupted my sense of wholeness in that she did not recognize me as a subject-supposed-to-know, and I mirrored her defiance with an
emotional response of anger. Similarly, when I perceived my second grade class as being less interested in the content of the lesson I taught to them, I responded with irritation because this perceived lack of love disturbed my sense of wholeness.

By contrast, when my students seemed to be interested and excited about me or what we were doing, I responded with love. I loved when they hugged me, wanted to show me their art work, asked inquisitive questions, displayed enthusiasm about the discussion or the art-making, or just wanted to talk to me. I always responded by feeling like I must be doing something right. The experience of gauging one’s success by students’ responses is common for all student teachers. It is also common for student teachers to feel good when it seems like their students like them, and to feel bad if the student teachers’ believe that their students do not like them.

I noted in my journal a time when I felt utterly satisfied and even elated by the love and recognition I received from my students. On this occasion, my 4th graders, in my mind, seemed absolutely fascinated by me and by what I was teaching them. When the students were warm, enthusiastic, and interested in me, I attributed it either to my strengths that appear as I am teaching: Warmth, gentleness, genuine interest in my students, enthusiasm; or I attributed it to the content of what I was teaching. The content of my teaching was enormously important to me, and I will write more about it in the next section.
5.05 Gaze of the Big Other on The Content of Art Education for Elementary-Aged Students

Early in student teaching, I began questioning the content of the units that I had written. Many of my student teaching units focused on social justice, meaning-making, and contemporary art. Once I started teaching, many people – Amanda, my students, teachers in the both schools where I taught, my fellow student teachers, and Richard, my University Supervisor – had varied reactions to these units that elicited questioning and strong affective responses from me.

During a discussion about racism, and how we could overcome it at our school and on the playground, a second grader asked me what this discussion had to do with art, and he wanted to know when we would be making art. I wrote in my journal that his question left me feeling groundless. After class, I asked Amanda if she ever engaged in discussions like these with students, and she told me that she did not because she did not believe that it added anything to their art-making, and besides, many of these children did not have the opportunity to make art at home. In response to the second grader and Amanda’s answer to my question, I wrote the following journal entry:

After she said this to me I felt conflicted because I doubted what I was doing, and I wondered what should be happening in the art room. Should children just be ‘making art’ in a traditional way? Am I robbing them of what they want to do by not focusing [exclusively] on technique or by not letting them do enough of what they think they should do in art class? How can I know what the students want to do? Should what they want to
do direct what we do in the art room? And why are these two questions…


As I taught this same lesson and other lessons that focused on meaning-making or issues-based art education and my teaching improved, my student’s enthusiasm and engagement typically increased. When my students responded with enthusiasm and engagement, or when Amanda, Richard, or other teachers complimented the content of my units, I felt proud, satisfied, and content. These positive responses gave me confidence in the content I was teaching; that is, until I would have a class that lacked what I perceived to be enthusiasm, or engagement. At that point, I would feel disappointed and confused, and I would either question my approach or the content itself.

I was especially disturbed by some of my fellow student teachers’ reactions to a couple of my units when I presented them in our weekly seminar. After I presented my units, one of my cohorts asked me incredulously if I had really taught this unit to 2nd graders, and another student teacher said to me afterwards that he felt all units in elementary school should be fun. I interpreted his comment and his tone as disapproving of my units because he did not believe that they were fun enough, or maybe he thought they weren’t fun at all. In my journal, I noted that I repeated the story to my family and friends many times of my cohorts’ reactions to my units. Every time I told the story, I would defend my units as being fun (some of the time), age-appropriate, and meaningful.
In my journal, however, I noted frequently that I felt ambivalent, confused, or disappointed about the issue-based units because of concerns I had about the content or the structure of the lessons. I was concerned that the unit about overcoming racism was not enough, or that the product was trite, and I thought other teachers might judge the children’s collaborative work of art as being of poor quality. A couple of 4th grade classes lost a little momentum when I explained that they needed to do a little writing as part of the process. Amanda told me that the district pushed writing a lot, and the students did not like all of the writing they had to do. According to Amanda, the students came to art class expecting not to write, as if art class was a needed break from writing. I felt disappointed and conflicted because writing is part of the artistic process, and it was a quintessential part of this unit, but it was so important to me that the students enjoy art class. I wondered if it had been a mistake to include writing.

The content of my units was often in my mind. I wrapped this content with my hopes, my fears, my pride, my ambivalence, and my confusion. Throughout student teaching, I had strong affective responses and questions about the content of my units, and about people’s reactions to them. When student art teachers use new theories, it is not uncommon for them to experience resistance from or conflict with their Cooperating Teachers (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006). In addition to questioning content, I also found myself in a quandary about assessment. I will write more about assessment in the next section.
5.06 Assessment

In my journal, I wrote a number of entries about assessment. I felt confident and clear about formative assessment and I used it to determine what I would say next or how I would plan the next lesson as evident in this journal entry: “I have done really well assessing the whole class’s understanding through questioning strategies and observation,” (author’s journal, weekend of February 13, 2011). I struggled, however, with summative assessment, and had a lot of doubts about assessing elementary students’ art. I was concerned that I did not know all of the students’ names since I had 700 students. I felt like I could give an honest assessment to students’ who actively participated in class discussions, but I did not feel comfortable assessing students who were quiet during discussion, especially if I did not know their names! I worried that students’ feelings would be hurt if they did not receive a positive assessment. I wondered, too, about what to assess:

It seems like there should be some objectivity to grading, and I am comfortable assessing and grading participation, even understanding, and skill, but does that really get at what is happening when a person makes art? It seems like that thing that is happening, the process, should matter the most, but I don’t see how you can grade it. If you don’t grade it though, does it devalue the process? Do students stop valuing that process if you don’t grade it? (author’s journal, weekend of January 17, 2011).

When all of my responsibilities seemed overwhelming, good summative assessment was one of the teaching responsibilities that I sacrificed. I wrote that I felt like
I was “sneaking around hiding from the big Other of art education” by not doing more in-depth assessment (author’s journal, weekend of February 13, 2012). Because of all of the demands placed on me as a student teacher, I was not able to meet the standard I had set for myself, and being the teacher I wanted to be felt impossible at times. I will write more about what felt like the impossibility of teaching below.

5.07 The Impossibility of Teaching

In many of my journal entries, I wrote about how there was always more that I wanted to do as a teacher than I actually could do. I wrote that I felt like something was always missing or that my units or my assessment or my preparation was never enough. Even in the act of teaching, I often felt like there was something that was not enough:

Today, I felt like there was always something I was missing. Either I wasn’t getting formative assessment of participation noted at all for my 3rd graders, or I wasn’t adequately managing behavior in the excitable 2nd grade class, or I wasn’t prepared well enough for 4th grade because I spent too much time prepping for 3rd grade, and then I just feel behind with planning even though I’m not [behind]. I just don’t feel like I am enough or have enough to do all of these things all at once, unless I plan way in advance, and even then I still don’t feel like I can do all of this well all at once” (author’s journal, January 25, 2011).

I tried to close the gap between the reality of my student teaching experience and my expectations of what I should be by spending more hours outside of school preparing. I wrote in my journal that I was so tired from prepping and worrying that I had lost my
enthusiasm and the energy I needed to teach. This strategy of sacrificing sleep and rest exhausted me so completely that I ended up with bronchitis. After having bronchitis, I decided that I would not sacrifice my health, and I had no choice but to sacrifice some of what I thought I could or should be as a teacher.

I felt like I needed to be aware of everything that was happening in the classroom, and I just could not do that. I wrote about how when I was working one-on-one with a student, I just could not see what all of the other students were doing. Amanda even commented in our final three-way conference that she wanted me to work toward keeping my eyes on the entire classroom when I was working with one student. I wrote in my journal that I knew I was supposed to be able to be completely aware of all of the students, but that kind of awareness seemed impossible to me, and rather than tell her how I felt, I just nodded.

Sometimes the piece that seemed to be missing or that was not measuring up was assessment, which I wrote about above. I avoided calling attention to this deficiency, except to Amanda who firmly believed that it was ridiculous to assess student artwork at the elementary level because of the large number of students we saw every week. Other times, the area that I felt was lacking was in me: My organization, my enthusiasm, my critical thinking, or my sense of clarity and unity: I found myself feeling ungrounded and scattered. I felt like the whole experience was slipping away from me, a little beyond my grasp. I was still connecting with kids, and ‘teaching’ but I didn’t feel like I was completely there. I felt like there was so much for me to be thinking of at
once, and to be doing at once that I couldn’t pull it all together (author’s journal, February 22, 2011).

I had a sense that if I could re-locate myself within this experience properly, I would feel clear and unified, everything would be within my grasp, but I didn’t know how to navigate to that spot of knowing and understanding. This particular entry sums up an experience that repeated itself throughout student teaching. It was the feeling of being overwhelmed, the experience of knowing that I needed to be doing more, to know more, or to be more, but that I just couldn’t.

The feeling of being overwhelmed is common to all student teachers. As Brown, Atkinson, and England (2006) uncovered in their study of student art teachers, much of the conflict that arises during student teaching is due to the fact that university supervisors and cooperating teachers are asking student teachers to be something that they are not: Proficient, accomplished teachers. Regardless of a person’s natural abilities and perseverance, teaching is overwhelming until a teacher has some experience and mastery with it. Teaching will feel impossible to all student teachers to some degree. It is with this theme of the impossibility of teaching that I conclude the Story Chapter of my thesis.

5.08 Story Conclusion

This final theme of the impossibility of teaching, of feeling that something is missing intersects with the other themes in my journal. The other five themes are: 1) Locating the organic nature of human experience in student teaching; 2) The gaze of the big Other: Classroom management; 3) *Transference/counter-transference*: The
importance of being liked; 4) The gaze of the big Other on the content of art education for elementary-aged students; and 5) Assessment. I will discuss these themes and their significance to my fantasies of being an art teacher in the next chapter of my thesis.
Chapter 6 – Discussion

In this chapter, I will interpret my responses to my research questions: What are my art teacher fantasies? How will student teaching affirm and/or deny my art teacher fantasies? How will I react and come to terms with my experience when my fantasies of being an art teacher are affirmed and/or denied? How will student teaching change my understanding of what it means to be an art teacher? First, I will explore the three fantasies I uncovered: The fantasy of the clear, compassionate student art teacher; the fantasy of teaching meaningful content successfully; and the fantasy of the omnipotent, complete teacher. Second, I will explore how student teaching changed my understanding of what it means to be an art teacher, and third, I will explain why this study and these findings are meaningful and transformative for me, and for the field of art education.

6.01 The Fantasy of the Clear, Compassionate Teacher

I mined from my affective responses a fragment of my fantasies of being an art teacher. My emotional reactions to my student teaching experiences reflected back to me qualities that I wanted to have as an art teacher: Patience, gentleness, warmth, and responsiveness to students’ needs. I wanted to possess compassion and clarity about the limits and failures that are intrinsic to humanity, especially when people engage in teaching and learning. With this knowledge, I wanted to enjoy teaching and to appreciate and acknowledge the magic and warmth that results from people working together. I
wanted to maintain this warmth, compassion, clarity, and appreciation throughout student teaching.

This fantasy extended and intersected with a second fantasy of being an art teacher: An art teacher who has developed strong content and possesses excellent delivery of instruction will not need to work hard to manage the classroom. The classroom management will be effortless because student will be so engaged in their learning that they will not need reminders or consequences.

When these fantasies were affirmed, either by my supervisor’s verbal feedback, by responses from students, or by seeing myself successfully occupying this fantasy, I felt content, joyful, and proud. When these fantasies were denied, I felt confused, disappointed, and uncomfortable. My experiences with and around classroom management drew myriad affective responses from me. Classroom Management is often a site of struggle and conflict for student teachers, and I was no different. I felt uneasy that I seemed to sacrifice this compassionate and clear art teacher fantasy by adopting Amanda’s classroom management style, a style that does not overtly recognize the limits and failures of humanity, nor does it espouse a teaching philosophy that values warmth and human connection. I disavowed my anxiety because I believed that if the content of my lessons and my delivery of instruction were strong enough, classroom management would be effortless.

I had a more extreme reaction to the denial of this fantasy when Amanda suggested that I use a drill sergeant voice, and that I make a mean face and fold my arms over my chest. This behavior was completely at odds with the fantasy I wrote about
above, and I reacted to her suggestion by avoiding it with jokes. I felt duplicitous that I
did not express my resistances to Amanda, but I did not feel comfortable confronting her
because she was as an embodiment of the big Other. This internal conflict that I
experienced is common among student teachers because of the power dynamic that is
unique to student teaching. Student teachers will always have to answer to cooperating
teachers and university supervisors who are responsible to evaluate and advise student
teachers.

When Amanda, my cooperating teacher, advised me to use a drill sergeant voice,
I was silently indignant, self-righteous, and defensive, and perhaps some of my resistance
to her suggestions stemmed from my desire for my students to like me. Using a drill
sergeant voice or making mean faces at children would not have made my students feel
good, and it was enormously important to me that my students feel good and that they
like me. When my students made it clear that they liked me with their enthusiasm and
openness, they confirmed my unconscious fantasy as the clear and compassionate
subject-supposed-to-know.

When Lacanian theory is applied to education, the subject-supposed-to-know is a
fantasy that teachers unconsciously construct for themselves (Bracher, 2006). To fulfill
this fantasy, a teacher needs students to recognize her as having qualities that make her
feel whole (Robertson, 1997). My compassionate and clear subject-supposed-to-know
fantasy made itself evident throughout student teaching. Many of the affective responses
I recorded in my journal were in reaction to my students’ love and/or recognition, or lack
thereof. Student teachers often experience gauge their success as a student teacher based
on their students’ reactions to them: They seek recognition and love from their students. In her study of three student art teachers, Laura Hetrick (2010) discovered that student art teachers wished for love and recognition from their students.

As a student art teacher, I was no different. When students wanted to share their art with me, wanted my opinion about their art, hugged me, or wanted to participate in classroom discussions, I felt content, and their love and recognition was an affirmation of my fantasy as a clear and compassionate teacher: I felt that I must be doing something right. When students lacked affect, or enthusiasm, I felt confused or disappointed. When a student was defiant to me, I was immediately angry with her.

This sudden flash of anger correlated with the indignation I felt when Amanda suggested that I use a drill sergeant voice. As Lacanian scholar, Mark Bracher (2006) explained, my strong, negative responses to the student who was defiant and to Amanda’s suggestion were emotional manifestations of a hidden aggressiveness that was activated when my fantasies were threatened. The student’s defiance and my imagined vision of myself as a drill sergeant threatened my fantasy of myself as a clear, compassionate student art teacher. My repeated, strong affective responses uncovered another pedagogical fantasy of mine: The fantasy of teaching meaningful content successfully.

6.02 The Fantasy of Teaching Meaningful Content Successfully

Throughout student teaching, students, supervisors, teachers, fellow student teachers, and an administrator’s reactions to the content of my units elicited strong affective responses from me. When students were enthusiastic and engaged and when supervisors, teachers, fellow student teachers, and an administrator praised the content of
my units, I felt proud, content, enthusiastic and confident. Their praise was the recognition that affirmed my fantasy of being an art teacher who successfully taught meaningful and relevant content that focused on social justice issues and contemporary art.

This particular fantasy was also denied. When fellow student teachers questioned the age-appropriateness of the artists or the topics my units addressed, I was defensive. With their questions, they were challenging my unconscious fantasy. When a student questioned what our discussion about overcoming racism had to do with art, and asked when we would be making art, I felt groundless, and I found myself questioning myself and questioning how I should decide on the content I taught. Additionally, when a fourth grade class lost momentum, or lacked enthusiasm, I felt disappointed, and I would immediately feel that I must be doing something wrong. My fantasy was further threatened when I imagined the gaze of the big Other of art education on the final product of a second grade unit, or when I wondered if it was ‘enough’ just to teach about overcoming racism. In response, I felt ambivalent and confused.

I noted in my journal that the ambivalence and confusion might be an inextricable part of teaching issues-based and meaningful content. I thought that this kind of teaching, even teaching in general, was not always going to feel good, for me, or for the students. I knew that it would not always feel good, but I disavowed this conscious knowledge throughout student teaching, and I believed and felt instead that positive feelings among students and myself must have meant that I was doing something right, and that a lack of positive feelings must have meant that I was doing something wrong. This belief exposes
a third fantasy, a fantasy that permeates the first two: The Fantasy of the Omnipotent, Complete Teacher.

6.03 The Fantasy of the Omnipotent, Complete Teacher

A teacher’s enthusiasm, her passion for her discipline, her rapport with her students, her warmth, her strong classroom management, and her well-planned lessons can have an enormous effect on students. Students tend to respond positively when a teacher is charismatic, experienced, and organized enough to have all of these things in place. It is folly, though, to assume that even the best, most organized, and most charismatic teacher can always elicit enthusiasm, engagement, and love from her students all of the time. Many student teachers approach teaching with the belief that they can be this teacher.

Such a belief presumes that students have no life outside of the classroom, or it assumes that the teacher is so powerful that she can always captivate all of her students’ completely. This belief assumes that by herself, a teacher can suffuse the room with such a magical feeling that students will not be affected by anything they might be experiencing that is out of the teacher’s control: Lack of sleep, a family member dying, a parent deployed to a war-zone, feeling sick, being hungry, etc.

This belief that if a teacher always does everything right, her students will always shower her with love and recognition is problematic. As Laura Hetrick (2010) and Judith Robertson (1997) explained in their research about student teachers, this idea objectifies and oppresses students, and is dangerous. This fantasy discourages us as teachers from ever seeing students as complex human beings. The focus becomes entirely self-centered:
I would think to myself “I must have done something right if my students feel this way,” or “I must have done something wrong if my students feel that way.” Not only does this idea that we are omnipotent discourage us from recognizing the humanity in our students, but if we refuse to recognize this fantasy and its limitations, we will either be forced to live in a constant state of denial, or we will be endlessly disappointed.

I struggled with this fantasy of the omnipotent, complete teacher. On a few occasions in the classroom, I felt complete as a teacher: I was clear, warm, charismatic, and confident; my lesson was well-planned, my delivery of instruction was strong, and my classroom management was effortless. My students were fascinated by me and what I was teaching them; at least, that is what I believed at the time. In these moments, I felt absolutely satisfied, and my unconscious fantasy of being an omnipotent, complete teacher was affirmed.

Much more often, my unconscious fantasy was denied. I noted throughout my journal that I felt like something was missing while I was teaching. Sometimes the missing piece was something I could name: in-depth assessment, perfect classroom management, absolute focus from students, strong closure, enthusiasm, or organization. Other times, I couldn’t name the missing piece: I would write around the “something missing” as a general feeling of being ungrounded, scattered, overwhelmed, or unclear.

I felt like something was out of place, but I didn’t know what it was, or where it belonged. I just knew that without it, I was incomplete. This feeling was my reaction to the denial of my fantasy of being a complete, omnipotent teacher: The teacher who has everything in place, whose students are always enthusiastic and engaged. The denial of
this fantasy led to the feeling of something missing, and this feeling was fascinating to me because it shimmered in its wordlessness, in my inability to name it: this feeling was a kernel of the Real of my experience. I knew that I was missing something, and I wanted time dwell in this ineffability to make sense of it. I recognized that I was failing to meet my fantasy, and I wanted time and space to feel out the empty space where the missing piece belonged, but I also wanted more. I will write more about what I wanted in the next section.

6.04 Missing Pieces: New Understandings of What it Means to Be an Art Teacher

When my fantasy of being a complete, omnipotent teacher was denied, I wanted the big Other to acknowledge the limits, short-comings, and challenges innate to our experiences as student teachers, and as humans. I wanted the big Other to recognize that student teachers can only do so much. This desire that I had as a student teacher led me to a new understanding of what it means to be an art teacher.

I learned that as an art teacher, I will need to accept my limitations and my failures, or in Lacanian terms, my lack. The big Other will very likely never acknowledge the limitations of being human; instead, the big Other of art education will continue to demand the impossible: The fantasy of the omnipotent, complete teacher; the fantasy of teaching meaningful content successfully; the fantasy of the clear, compassionate teacher; and more fantasies that I didn’t discover in this inquiry. The recognition that I will always fail to occupy my fantasy completely, the acceptance that I will always have missing pieces, and the avowal of my lack: these acknowledgements need to come from me.
When I observed Anna, the kindergarten teacher who became part of my ideal ego, I lauded what I perceived as her acceptance of the failure and limitations inherent in education, but I often disavowed my own failures and limitations during student teaching. Throughout student teaching, I tried to adjust or improve my teaching so that my fantasies would be affirmed. I didn’t want to accept that I had limitations or failures; I didn’t want to see that I would always have missing pieces.

My disavowal led me to my second new understanding about what it means to be an art teacher. As the limitations and the failures persist, so will my resistance to them. I learned that I need to accept my lack, but that one-time acceptance is not enough because even with this knowledge of my lack, I will always make sacrifices in an effort to conform to my fantasies. As an art teacher, I will need to remind myself of my limitations over and over again. I will need to accept that I have missing pieces, and that fantasies of being an art teacher, like the three fantasies I listed above, will always frame my understanding of what I should be.

Finally, I learned that as an art teacher, I need to take note of my affective responses generally as I teach, but particularly when they are in response to my students’ emotional reactions to me. As I learned from my interpretation, my emotional reactions can reveal ways in which I am unconsciously occupying the role of the subject-supposed-to-know. As I stated above, this role is dangerous for teachers and students because when a teacher unconsciously occupies this role, she objectifies and dehumanizes her students (Hetrick, 2010; Robertson, 1997).
In the sections above, I named the three fantasies that surfaced from my journal: The fantasy of the clear, compassionate student art teacher; the fantasy of teaching meaningful content successfully; and the fantasy of the omnipotent, complete teacher. In each section, I answered my first three research questions: What are my art teacher fantasies? How will student teaching affirm and/or deny my art teacher fantasies? How will I react and come to terms with my experience when my fantasies of being an art teacher are affirmed and/or denied? And in this section, I answered the following research question: How will student teaching change my understanding of what it means to be an art teacher? In the next section, I will explain how this study was meaningful.

**6.05 Significance of This Study**

This study is significant within the field of art education, and the field of education because it is one of only a handful of studies that have used Lacanian theory to understand the identity formation of student teachers (Robertson, 1997), or of student art teachers (Brown, Atkinson, & England, 2006; Hetrick, 2010). This study is the first in which a student teacher uses Lacanian theory to explore how student teaching affirms or denies her pedagogical fantasies. This self-study provides an intimate perspective on one student teacher’s fantasies of being an art teacher, as well as how a student teacher navigates her experience as her pedagogical fantasies are confirmed or denied. As such, this rich, in-depth study is an important addition to the existing research about identity formation of student art teachers within the field of art education.

Although this thesis only explores one person’s experience, many of these experiences are common among student teachers, such as the power dynamic unique to
student teaching, the conflict that results from this dynamic, the conflict that often surrounds classroom management in student teaching, and the feeling of being overwhelmed. Because this thesis interprets my own process with these themes, this inquiry can have broader applications for student art teachers, and for people who work with student art teachers.

Additionally, because I used unconscious knowledge, or affective and corporeal responses as my data, I was able to uncover aspects of myself that might have otherwise hidden themselves from me. This thesis is unique because my use of Lacanian theory allowed me to delve into this unconscious knowledge and to explore my subjectivities as data for my inquiry. Jan Jagodzinski (2004b) explains that teacher reflectivity that uses our conscious knowledge can and does often hide parts of ourselves that we would rather not see; to see truths about ourselves that we would rather not avow.

As Jacques Lacan (1996) suggests, “one is never happy making way for a new truth, for it always means making our way into it: The truth is always disturbing” (p. 133). Only through investigating our resistances and our unconscious knowledge, through confronting these sometimes disturbing truths about ourselves, can we change our teaching and ourselves, and transform the field of art education (Jagodzinski, 2004b). My data interpretation underscored several transformative messages.

Firstly, that I need to acknowledge my limitations so that I do not project blame for the impossible demands of the big Other and lack of acknowledgement onto people and institutions that I perceive to be outside of myself. These demands and lack of recognition come from my own unconscious fantasies. To recognize my failures is
somewhat empowering in that it can free me, even if only for a moment or a day, from doomed attempts to fill my lack. Secondly, my recognition that I need to repeat this first lesson often is critical. My fantasies will persist, and as such, I need to remind myself that I am not whole, that I in fact have missing pieces. Thirdly, I need to take care to notice my affective responses to students so that I do see them as complex human beings.

I re-read my journal and interpreted it more than a year after I completed my student teaching experience. During the year in between, I completed my first year as a full-time art teacher, and upon re-reading and interpreting my journal, I see themes, fantasies, and resistances that followed me into my first year of teaching. This recognition underscores the importance of maintaining an awareness of my affective responses, my fantasies of being whole, and of the missing pieces that I search for in my students, in my work, and in recognition from others.

Attending to my unconscious knowledge will continue to give me the opportunity to be more self-aware, and to make changes within myself. These changes, even if they are subtle, will make a difference in my life, in my students’ lives, and within the field of art education. As Mick Markham (2002) suggested, without accepting and exploring our emotional reactions that can lead to personal changes, we could easily repeat and create destructive patterns within ourselves and among our students and colleagues. This self-inquiry was meaningful to me, and to the field of art education. In the next chapter, I will explore themes that surfaced in this self-inquiry.
Chapter 7 – Conclusions

In this chapter, I will investigate three over-arching and intertwined themes that I uncovered in my interpretation of my journal entries from student teaching. Those closely related themes are: Subjectivity, conflict, and the big Other. In addition, I will explore how I interpreted my data, and my experience with this interpretation. This exploration will include an inquiry into how the language of Lacanian theory influenced my interpretation of my data. I will talk about why this inquiry is important to the field of art education. Finally, I will discuss implications for future research and practice. I will begin by exploring the three over-arching themes: Subjectivity, conflict, and the big Other.

7.01 The Relationship of Subjectivity, Conflict, and The Big Other

Throughout my journals and my interpretation of them, these themes – the role of subjectivity, conflict, and the big Other – were always in relation to each other. Vicki Daiello (2011) refers to the sometimes conflicted and always interdependent relationship between the big Other and subjectivities in her research. Daiello (2011) defines subjectivity as “the human person who acts and is acted upon in the world, and who generates phenomenological experiences within particular socio-historical contexts” (p.5). According to Lacanian Theory, we experience our actions under the gaze of the big Other, and we feel the world acting upon us through the big Other. Our subjectivities are
our thoughts, and our affective and corporeal responses to the big Other. Daiello (2011) explains further that this “subjectivity underpins the individual and social connectedness of human experience” (p. 68).

As I interpreted my journals entries, I noticed that my subjectivity, that which underpinned my human experience, surfaced again and again in reaction to the big Other. I was often deeply troubled by the lack of time I had to attend to my subjectivities. This lack of time was the result of what I perceived as the big Other’s demands upon student teachers.

My feelings and thoughts were enormously important to me, and without them, I felt like my experience, indeed my life, was being swept away in a frenzied rush to complete the endless lessons, reflections, documentation, and prep work of a student teacher in art education. Like most student art teachers, I felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities of student teaching. I felt as though my identity as a student teacher was being defined for me through these tasks and responsibilities assigned to me rather than through how I felt, or what I valued about my experience as a student teacher. I did not have time to explore questions that were important to me, like: What does this experience mean to me? What about this student teaching experience is important to me? Why is it important to me?

As I noted in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, I discovered how I responded to the conflict between the big Other’s demands of student teachers and my own subjectivities. I felt angry when the Director of Student Teaching, an embodiment of the big Other, did not acknowledge that one of my fellow student teachers was utterly overwhelmed by her
responsibilities. This lack of recognition gave me the clear message that subjectivity was not acceptable, or at the very least, it was not a welcome part of the discussion about student teaching. My response to this message was to conceal my true feelings and thoughts from the big Other: I did not share what I felt were my greatest strengths or my biggest challenges in formal meetings with my supervisors. I did not trust them, as embodiments of the big Other, with what I felt was too personal, or too important. As a result, I was surprised and delighted when my University Supervisor named in official documentation some of what I secretly valued.

The conflicts I experienced as a student teacher extended beyond conversations about my strengths and challenges. I had an on-going series of conflicts surrounding the content I taught. I sought positive reinforcement from my supervisors and my fellow student teachers, and when I received it, I was delighted and proud, and I felt good about what I was teaching. I was fraught with doubt and defensiveness when my peers or cooperating teacher were critical or unsupportive of what I was teaching. Conflict is part of every student teaching experience. The approval student teachers seek from their Cooperating Teachers reflects a unique power dynamic.

This power dynamic that is specific to student teaching caused a conflict for me about classroom management. Amanda, my Cooperating Teacher, wanted me to be like a drill sergeant, and I was completely unwilling to assume this stern approach to classroom management. Because Amanda was in a position of power and authority as my Cooperating Teacher, I did not feel comfortable refusing her advice, but I also did not feel comfortable doing what she asked me to do. To complicate matters, it was important
to me that Amanda liked me, and that she thought that I was doing a good job because she was my supervisor. The power dynamic within my student teaching experience is a part of every student teaching experience because there are always Cooperating Teachers and University Supervisors.

This power dynamic left me feeling conflicted about how to respond, and how to manage the classroom. The inequality in power between the student teacher and the Cooperating Teacher/University Supervisor is of course detrimental because it prevents student teachers from doing what they want to do as teachers. As such, student teaching will always, to a certain extent, remain a site of struggle and resistance. In the next section, I will explain how I used Lacanian Theory to interpret my own student teaching experience as a site of struggle and resistance.

7.02 Lacanian Theory and The Interpretive Experience

In this section, I will explain more about my experience with my interpretive process. I will talk about how I looked for silences when I was recording data; I will discuss how I interpreted and uncovered significant themes; I will explain how Lacanian theory influenced, and I will explain that this theory also limited my interpretation. I will explore how my pre-conceptions about and emotional experience around student teaching affected this study. I will begin by discussing my interpretation of my journal.

Throughout this thesis, I have made a conscious choice not to use the words analyze and analysis. The choice is due to constraints of the methodology I chose to use: Auto-ethnographers understand that research is never objective, and they value the subjective aspect of qualitative research. To reflect this value, they use the word interpret
which implies a subjective approach to research, rather than analyze, which indicates an objective approach to research.

Autoethnography, as a methodology, accepts that researchers make meaning of their data through interpretation rather than through analysis. For auto-ethnographers, the term analysis is reserved for other forms of qualitative and quantitative research. As such, when I discuss how I made sense of the data, I will use the word interpret.

As I mentioned in my methodology section, I made daily entries about my affective and bodily responses in my journal every day that I was student teaching. I spent half an hour to an hour every night writing journal entries about these reactions and the contexts surrounding them. Every weekend of student teaching, I looked for my resistances and silences. On Saturdays or Sundays, I re-read my journals from the previous week, and I would think of what I had left out: Moments that were poignant or significant in terms of my emotional reactions to them, but that I had failed to write about. Typically, I had three to five entries during the weekend that were often stories that I resisted writing about during the week because they were moments that I did not want to think about.

I waited to interpret my data a full year after I had completed student teaching because I was hired as a full-time art teacher a month after completing student teaching. This first year of teaching was so time-consuming that I was not able to spend any time with my thesis until the following summer. At the time, I felt concerned about not being able to interpret my journals right after student teaching. I was afraid that if too much time passed, the experiences I had recorded would no longer be meaningful to me. I was nervous that if I waited too long, I would not be able to make sense of my journal entries.
A full year later, I decided the best way to begin interpreting my journals was to spend time with what I had already written. Before I started reading through my student teaching journal, I re-read the part of my thesis that I had finished before student teaching: The introduction, the literature review, the methodology section and the parameters. I thought that this re-reading would help me to re-acquaint myself with my inquiry. I also read portions of Vicki Daiello’s dissertation to better understand how to use Lacanian theory as an interpretive tool. In all honesty, I was also reading my thesis and Vicki Daiello’s dissertation to procrastinate. I was uncertain about how I would interpret the data, and I was afraid that I would not be able to uncover any significant themes.

Fortunately, I finally found the courage to begin reading my journal. I followed autoethnographers’ advice that I had read for my methodology section: I read through the journal twice before taking any notes or looking for any themes. Some entries were very difficult to read because as I read them, I remembered exactly what it felt like to be in the moments that the entries described: Embarrassed or joyful; irritated or powerless. On the third read, I began to write down themes that emerged. I was particularly struck by the theme: “Locating my subjectivities – the organic nature of human experience” because this theme still resonated with me.

Although the experience of being a first year teacher is quite different than that of a student teacher, there are similarities. During my first year of teaching, I felt overwhelmed by my responsibilities, and I felt like I was making sacrifices in order to meet the demands of teaching. Namely, I felt like I did not have time to attend to my
subjectivities because of all of the tasks that I needed to complete. I took note of this similarity in a separate document as I continued my interpretation.

On the fourth read, I started a third document in which I typed the themes as I discovered them. I began copying and pasting the entries under the appropriate themes. Some entries, of course, seemed to belong to several themes all at once, and I struggled to determine exactly where to put them. The content of some entries seemed mundane and perfectly normal on the first read. They appeared to be un-noteworthy and uninteresting, but when I read them a second, third, and fourth time, especially once they were grouped together, these entries began to stand out as unusual and significant because there were patterns among them. As I read through my journal over and over, I uncovered more of these patterns.

Once I had categorized all of my journal entries, I began writing Chapter Five and Six, the story and interpretation sections of my journal. The interpretation came somewhat easily to me because I had steeped myself in Lacanian theory by reading articles, books, and dissertations about the applications of Lacanian theory within art education. Prior to student teaching, I read many articles about Lacanian theory, and I also wrote the introduction, literature review, and methodology chapters of my thesis. Because I was so familiar with Lacanian theory, I would often think of Lacanian concepts as issues, feelings, and thoughts arose throughout student teaching. Similarly, as I wrote Chapter Five, and even as I organized the journal entries under specific themes, I would think of connections to Lacanian concepts such as the Big Other, the gaze of the Big Other, and the lack or missing pieces.
When we use Lacanian theory within academic disciplines other than psychology, it is always important that we note the danger of psychoanalyzing ourselves. As art educators, we are not trained or qualified to psychoanalyze anyone, regardless of our familiarity with the theory. Throughout the process of student teaching, recording data, and writing my thesis, I did not feel that I was psychoanalyzing myself. I did not attempt to diagnose myself, or to apply the theory to aspects of my life outside of student teaching. Instead, I used the theory to make sense of my experience as a student teacher. Lacanian theory was the interpretive framework for my inquiry into my evolving art teacher identity. In the next section, I will talk about how Lacanian theory and my pre-conceived ideas about being an art teacher affected this study.

7.03 Influences, Effects, and Limitations of Lacanian Theory and Pre-Conceived Ideas

As I wrote above, Lacanian theory framed my understanding of student teaching and my ever-changing identity as a new teacher even before I began student teaching. I was so familiar with Lacan’s language that I even used it periodically throughout my journals: Particularly the Lacanian terms big Other, the big Other’s gaze, and objet a. As such, Lacan’s theory, and specifically his language, very likely limited and expanded my understanding of student teaching differently than if I had only studied the theory after student teaching.

I cannot name the limits that Lacanian theory created for this research project. Because Lacanian theory framed my approach to recording data, I don’t know how Lacanian theory limited this inquiry, but I am certain that did create blind spots
somehow. As a student teacher and a researcher, I never interpreted my student teaching experience without looking through the lens of Lacanian theory, so I am not able to step back from the theory to see what this inquiry’s limits are.

In addition to its limitations, Lacanian theory influenced the language I used in my journals. As I wrote journal entries about moments when I thought there was a magical feeling in the art room during discussions or art-making, I immediately thought of Lacan’s concept of objet a, or the something outside of ourselves that we believe will make us whole. It is unlikely that I would have recorded anything about these particular experiences had I not already read about Lacanian theory.

Had I been completely unfamiliar with Lacanian theory prior to and during student teaching, it is likely that I would not have been so diligent about recording my affective and corporeal responses to student teaching in my journal. Likewise, I might have exclusively focused on my frustration around the conflict of student teaching. I also probably would not have recorded moments of joyfulness, pleasure, and contentment in my journal because I typically use journals to process uncomfortable emotions or experiences rather than affirming or positive experiences. Had I been unfamiliar with Lacanian theory, I definitely would not have made an effort to record feelings and thoughts that I wanted to ignore or avoid.

In addition to the Lacanian concepts and language that shaped my student teaching experience, I also came to student teaching with a set of clear expectations about being an art teacher that certainly affected this study. I believed that being an art teacher would be a fulfilling, meaningful, and rich experience for me, and that given my personal strengths,
I was very well-suited to teach art to children. I thought that this profession, perhaps more than any other, would provide me with experiences that I wanted and with the kind of life that I wanted to live. Additionally, I believed that teaching art in the schools would be very difficult: I expected that it would be extremely time-consuming and very stressful.

My enthusiasm, idealism, and trepidation about teaching art undoubtedly affected this study. Had I believed that teaching art in the schools would be boring and easy, I certainly would not have been so emotionally invested in the content of my units, or so nervous about teaching in general. As such, my preconceived ideas about teaching art and student teaching greatly affected this study. Student teaching will be different for each individual, but there are some themes that weave their way through all student teachers’ experiences. In the next section of this thesis, I will explore how the themes that I uncovered in this study are experienced by all student teachers, and I will explain why this inquiry was important.

7.04 The Importance of This Inquiry and Implications for Future Research and Practice

In this final section, I will describe how the themes particular to my study are common among all student teachers, and I will make suggestions for future research and practice for teacher training programs in art education. I uncovered three overarching themes in my study: The role of subjectivity, conflict, and the big Other. All student teachers experience conflict with their Cooperating Teachers and/or their University Supervisors (Brown, Atkinson, and England, 2006; Hetrick, 2010). This conflict is
partially a result of the power dynamic unique to student teaching in which the Cooperating Teacher and the University Supervisor are responsible for guiding and evaluating the student teacher. Conflict is unavoidable in the student teaching experience, and when we experience conflict, we have strong feelings and thoughts that constitute our subjectivities.

By applying Lacanian theory to student teaching, we understand Cooperating Teachers, University Supervisors, our peers, and our students to be in the role of the big Other. Even without Lacanian theory, student teachers still see these people in the same way. Student teachers see supervisors as the authorities who evaluate them; in certain contexts, student teachers see their peers as people who judge their performance; and student teachers assess their teaching based on their students’ reactions to them.

Therefore, this inquiry about teacher identity formation illuminates the experience of all student teachers as they navigate through conflict, their subjectivities, and the power dynamics between their supervisors and themselves. This study is significant because the over-arching themes – conflict, subjectivity, and the big Other – that surfaced throughout my inquiry are sites of struggle and resistance for every student teacher. Additionally, this study is unique among studies about student teachers because it is the only research project in art education written from a student teacher’s perspective, and it is the only inquiry written from a student teacher’s perspective that uses Lacanian theory as the interpretive framework.

Lacanian theory makes this inquiry unique because it allows for the complexity of our human experience and teacher identity formation. “Even recognition of multiple and
overlapping subject positions [as found in socio-cultural theory] is often inadequate to explain the contradictory beliefs that characterize one’s subjectivity” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 312). Lacanian theory, in contrast, is not “restrained by discrete essentializing categories, a psychoanalytically informed view of identity can acknowledge the shifting, contextual and historical qualities of subjectivity and desire” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 312).

Lacanian theory provided this study with the freedom and structure to tend to and to explore the messy, shifting, layered affects that are a powerful force in teacher identity formation. In this study, Lacanian theory gave credibility to the powerful force of subjectivity within student teaching (personal communication with Dr. Sydney Walker, November 26, 2012). As I discussed above, subjectivity is not acknowledged during student teaching training, yet it is enormously important to how student teachers think, feel, and understand their experience of teaching art.

Based on the findings of this inquiry in relation to the powerful force of subjectivity within student teaching, I recommend that research be done about how directors of student teaching programs might develop language to acknowledge and discuss the vague [and sometimes acute] affects that are so much a part of student teachers experience within the classroom and in the student teaching seminars (S. Walker, personal communication, November 26, 2012). The teacher training program I went through was carefully developed and well-tended, and I was more than adequately prepared for finding a job as an art teacher, and for my first year of teaching. However, there was, and still is, part of me that felt and feels disconnected from the hegemonic
world of education. The big Other of art education does not acknowledge the power or influence of subjectivities within a teaching environment.

This study opens space for this acknowledgement; and this opening suggests that more research needs to be done about how to develop a language and an approach to support student teachers as they “negotiate subjectivities” during student teaching (J. Richardson, personal communication, November 26, 2012). To start, I recommend that as instructors facilitate their student teaching seminars, they acknowledge to the entire class the powerful role of affective responses within student teaching. Certainly, instructors need to be responsive inside and outside of class when student teachers express feelings of dissatisfaction, confusion, etc. either verbally or nonverbally. It is important that instructors of teacher training programs validate these feelings, and acknowledge that these responses are very much a result of their interactions with their peers, their supervisors, and their students. Directors of student teaching programs could consider opening a discussion for how these feelings and interactions are informing student teachers’ understanding of teaching art in the schools.

In addition to exploring how to develop language to address subjectivity, future research could also explore how the subjectivities that result from interactions between student teachers and their students can and should inform and direct the content of the lessons student teachers are teaching. As mentioned above, I was enormously affected by students’ responses to me: Their like and/or dislike of me and the content of my units was a powerful force in the classroom. This experience is of course common among all
student teachers, and should play a role in what student teachers choose to teach, and how they teach it.

Research that explores the powerful force of inter-subjectivities within student teaching would encourage student teachers to be open to the idea that the foundation of education is relationship. Student teaching is more about relationships than it is a subject entering a space (J. Richardson, personal communication, November 26, 2012). Certainly, teacher training programs stress "knowing your students” and selecting content that is right for your students, but the emphasis within these standards is on selecting content that is appropriate for students based on their socio-economic and even personal circumstances.

What I am suggesting here is developing language and an approach that affirms the importance of what happens between student teachers and the students. More specifically, I am suggesting that further research investigates how the inter-subjectivities between the students and the student teacher influence the content of the lessons. In no way do any of these limited suggestions offer a final or complete solution to the problem of addressing subjectivities in teacher training programs. Instead, I intend for these suggestions to be possible starting points for future research that will explore how to acknowledge and work with subjectivity in teacher training programs.
References


