The Teaching Artist Experience: An Art-Based Study Exploring Teaching Artists' Perspectives on the Efficacy of Employment-Based Training and Support

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The Teaching Artist Experience: An Art-Based Study Exploring Teaching Artists’ Perspectives on the Efficacy of Employment-Based Training and Support

A Dissertation Presented

by

Tessa Bry Taylor

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Abstract

This art-based research study seeks to examine teaching artists’ current perspectives on the models of training and support provided to them by their employers. The study was conducted with a group of teaching artists exploring two key research questions: What models of training and support do teaching artists receive? What are teaching artists perspectives on the efficacy of those models? Responses were explored collaboratively through a cyclical process of artmaking, reflection, and discussion designed and facilitated by the artist-researcher. The study yielded the following outcomes: teaching artists believe training and support received from employers is inefficient and inconsistent; teaching artists are seeking more support and feel instable and isolated in their practice; and teaching artists believe effective models of training and support include the presence of a supervisor, adequate resources, and collaboration with other teaching artists. Significantly, results support research addressing the benefits of utilizing art-based methods for educator led action research and professional development. Teaching artists believe participation in the research was beneficial and demonstrates teaching artists’ capacity to serve a more direct role in the growth of their profession. The study suggests teaching artists be provided more opportunity to design and lead their own employment-based training to raise their standing as professionals and promote a stronger inclusion of their voice in the field of art education.

Keywords: teaching artist, training, support, professional development, art-based research
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This art-based research study was conducted with a group of teaching artists exploring two key research questions: 1) What models of training and support do teaching artists receive? 2) What are teaching artists’ perspectives on the efficacy of those models? Responses to these questions were explored collaboratively through a cyclical process of artmaking, reflection, and discussion designed and facilitated by the artist-researcher. The purpose of the study was to gain teaching artists’ current perspectives on the models of training and support provided to them by their employers to better understand the benefits and deficits of those models and contribute to research addressing the ongoing challenges teaching artists face. Art-based research was determined to be appropriate to this study as it closely aligns with collaborative art making familiar to teaching artists and promotes the idea that teaching artists possess the skills and capacities to have a stronger voice in the dialogue concerning their profession. Results of this study present a layered view of the models of training and support teaching artists receive and the many contexts – emotional, logistical, professional, and personal – within which these models are experienced and understood. The results are an interplay of the participants creative process and mine, self and group reflection, and open dialogue with one another.

The study yielded the following outcomes: teaching artists believe training and support received from employers is inefficient and inconsistent; teaching artists are seeking more support and feel instable and isolated in their practice; and teaching artists believe effective models of training and support include the presence of a supervisor, adequate resources, and collaboration with other teaching artists. Significantly, teaching artists believe exploration of these research questions evinced the lack of opportunity provided to reflect purposefully on their practice and
the role they play in the field of art education. Teaching artists believe participation in the research was beneficial and demonstrates: teaching artists are equipped to serve a more direct role in the growth of their profession; art-based teaching methods are an effective form of professional development; and teaching artists are eager to learn more about their profession and have a stronger voice in the field. Although this study is focused on teaching artists experiences of training and support, it also speaks to the broader challenges and opportunities of the teaching artist profession. It is rooted in research concerning the professionalization of the teaching artist and the development of a training and support infrastructure to support that profession. It also speaks to current interest in use of art-based methods for educator-led professional development and research. Responses in this study were expressed in movement, visual imagery, written and oral form and centered on participants knowledge and perspectives on teaching artist identity and purpose, their practice and pedagogies, the structures and contexts of their employment, and the benefits and deficits of models of training and support they have received.

Personal investment in this study and the experience it generated is rooted in my own attempt to both better my practice as an educator and understand more thoroughly how my circumstances in the field of art education compare to others. Like many who work as a teaching artist, I stumbled my way into the identity unintentionally, and grew into it over a period of years because of a specific set of experiences. I went from scattered teaching artist work to full-time freelancing in a span of under two years. I felt an inherent connection to the work from the start, but also found despite increased employment, I knew little about being a teaching artist beyond my own experiences. I knew the art-bases teaching I was leading benefited my students, but I was unable to articulate why. This prompted me to attend graduate school for art education as I yearned to understand my work and my identity as a teaching artist more thoroughly. When a
temporary associate position in a performing arts center’s education department became a full-
time administrative position, which included the hiring and oversight of a cohort of teaching
artists, my interest in teaching artists shifted to one of great concern over my own performance
with these new responsibilities. As a result, my academic coursework and research focus
narrowed into a specific curiosity with the training and support I was providing my teaching
artist staff. I wanted to know how I was doing and what I could be doing better through research
in the field and learn from the teaching artists themselves.

The decision to conduct an art-based research study was grounded in my belief that the
method of artistic inquiry was valued by teaching artists and familiar to them. All of the
exercises and reflection activities used in the study I learned as a teaching artist. I have both used
them and observed them being used by others in the field over the past decade. I believed
participants would respond well to the framework of a collaborative workshop, also familiar to
the field. I myself was comfortable facilitating the process having done so regularly for many
years. Most importantly however, I believed grounding the study in artistic inquiry would allow
both the participants and me to bring our most authentic selves to the experience, and lead from
the vantage point of our artistic identity. Although the presentation of art in film is not a familiar
practice to me or one I identify with as an artist, it suited the study and was not a far stretch from
assembling for presentation collaboratively devised performance material, an artistic process
with which I am deeply familiar.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, literature concerning teaching artists appears to have grown considerably. A search of the internet, including key terms teaching artist, training, support, or professional development, reveals a great number of resulting webpages. Review of academic literature also demonstrates interest in the role and practice of the teaching artist continues to grow. This is promising to witness as it demonstrates increased recognition of the teaching artist as a profession. It also suggests forward momentum in the continual development of infrastructure to support teaching artists, which has been called for repeatedly over the past twenty years (Booth, 2010a; Campbell, 2017; Erickson, 2003a; Hoekstra, 2015; Norman, 2004; Reeder, 2009; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Saraniero, 2009; Shepherd, 2007; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Snyder & Fisk, 2016; Stanley, 2013; Waldorf, 2003). Overall, this evident growth in interest is uplifting and encouraging. At the same time however, it is also vexing as review of the current landscape reveals a growth in focus and attention paid to the development of teaching artist training and support but ongoing continuity in the challenges teaching artists face.

A Brief Overall Scope

The growth of the teaching artist as an identifiable professional role has been a point of clear interest in field of art education. Questioning teaching artists’ purpose and defining their specific identity have been core to the literature concerning teaching artists (Booth, 2003, Campbell, 2017; Jordan, 2015; Pratt, 2016; Schlemmer, 2014; Waldorf, 2003; Jaffe, 2015). So too has interest in teaching artist practice, the theories and pedagogies that drive it, and the broader benefit of teaching artists working within arts education (Booth, 2017; Campbell, 2017; Hunt et al., 2004; Rabkin, 2012; Saraniero, 2009). Examining similarities and differences in
teaching artist approaches to teaching and learning and articulating the benefits of these approaches in various settings has been prevalent, as has interest in the ways teaching artist practice might positively impact other educators in both K-12 and higher education (Graham, 2009; Graham & Zwirn, 2010; Huddy & Stevens, 2010).

Search notifications enabled through academic databases as well as internet search engines reveal an increase in readily available online information concerning teaching artists over the past five years. Whereas publicly available information, searchable online, felt stagnant just a few years ago, current online information and discourse concerning teaching artists feel not just present but abundant. In both academic literature as well as public discourse there is a clear and evident desire to share and develop knowledge about teaching artists in order to improve their practice and strengthen their professional identity. Most significantly, there is a growth in attention being paid to the infrastructure of training and support required to sustain the continual professionalization of the teaching artist role.

This professionalization is important as the role of the teaching artist has grown rapidly over the past few decades, but the infrastructure to support teaching artists has struggled to keep pace (Booth, 2015, 2017; Campbell, 2017; Jaffe, 2015; Reeder, 2009; Flynn, 2004; Snyder & Fisk, 2016; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Stanley, 2013). As a result, there has been a steadily growing body of teaching artists undertaking work for which they have received little to no prior training or ongoing support. The challenge this presents is multifold and impacts not just teaching artists but the field of art education at large. Examining teaching artists perspectives on the training and support they receive is the overall purpose of this study. Literature therefore concerning the professionalization of the teaching artist, the challenges they face, and the development of training and support systems to address those challenges is the focus of this review.
Professionalization of the Teaching Artist

The Contemporary Teaching Artist

The contemporary teaching artist community is worldwide and comprised of practicing artists of all disciplines who work in myriad spaces with a range of learners to achieve an array of goals. A commonly used definition of teaching artist, developed after years of discourse by leading teaching artist scholar Eric Booth, is “a practicing artist who develops the skills, curiosities, and habits of mind of an educator in order to achieve a wide variety of learning goals in, through, and about the arts, with a wide variety of learners (2015, p. 152).” Defining and more concretely identifying the teaching artist as a specific role in art education has been prominent in scholarship for decades, particularly in relation to understanding more thoroughly who teaching artists are, where they work, and how their work varies from that of certified K-12 educators (Rabkin et al., 2011; Risner & Anderson, 2015). Large national studies, such as the Teaching Artist Research Project, administered to over 3500 self-identified teaching artists and their program managers, as well as numerous smaller studies throughout the past two decades revealed great variety in teaching artist practice (Rabkin, 2011). That variety continues today, as teaching artists can be found working with learners of all ages in more traditional art education settings such as schools, community centers, museums, and arts organizations and increasingly in places such as prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes (Levy, 2019; Rabkin, 2012; Reeder, 2009; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Saraniero, 2009; Snyder & Fisk, 2016). There are teaching artists working within all media and styles of art, and the manner by which they teach “in, through, or about the arts” (Booth, 2015, p. 152) varies widely. They might, for example, teach their art form, use their art form to examine another subject, demonstrate their art form, exhibit their art form, or use their art form to promote activism or any other number of socially oriented
goals (Booth, 2017; Levy, 2019; Rabkin et al., 2011; Remer, 2003; Snyder & Fisk, 2016; Tannenbaum, 2011). From a monetary perspective, teaching artists are more likely to be considered a free-lance artist and frequently have more than one teaching artist job at any given time (Rabkin et al., 2011; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Saraniero, 2009; Snyder & Fisk, 2016). As such, most teaching artists work independently, which provides little security, benefits, or retirement plan other than social security (Rabkin et al., 2011; Snyder & Fisk, 2016).

Results from surveys conducted between 2003 and 2016 indicate a majority of teaching artists are Caucasian females, median age forty-five, with an average of twelve years of experience. A majority of teaching artists hold at least one degree in their art form, and a considerably smaller group hold a degree in education (Rabkin, 2012; Reeder, 2009; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Saraniero, 2009; Snyder & Fisk, 2016). While in the United States the majority of artists are men (Rabkin et al., 2011) the high number of female teaching artists reflects the high number of females working in education overall. Just as there is concern in both education and the arts about the lack of representation of people, there is critical concern over the lack of racial diversity represented in the teaching artist profession, particularly as teaching artists often work in urban schools where student populations predominantly of color (Rabkin et al., 2011; Denmead & Winkler, 2016; Nguyen, 2020). While there have been some recent surveys assessing teaching artist demographics in specific cities such as Boston (personal communication), there is no publicly available recent survey data assessing how the demographics of the field at large might have changed since 2016.

**History of a Rapid Rise**

The term *teaching artist* was first coined by June Dunbar in the early 1970’s to describe a professional artist employed to teach at the Lincoln Center Institute in New York City (Booth,
While the term was not contextually defined at the time beyond giving a name to a role taken by a group of artists, it was specific in that described *artists engaged in the act of teaching as a new or secondary role*. This differed from the term art teacher (or dance teacher, music teacher, theater teacher etc.) which typically referred to an individual (also an artist) working deliberately within an educational setting as a primary role. While artists have been teaching long before the 1970’s, the birth of the term signified a shift towards identifying these artists - and the intention and roots of their practice - independently within the broader art education field.

Historically, teaching artist practice in the United States descends from that of community artists working in locations such as settlement houses in the 1800’s (Levy, 2019; Nguyen, 2020; Rabkin, 2013; Remer, 2003; Tannenbaum, 2011). These community artists integrated their artistry with civic engagement and service and worked within a context of educational and social reform fueled by increased immigration to the country. The trend of community artist practice did not end with the decline of settlement houses but continued throughout the 20th century with the work of community artists in government, nonprofit, and after-school programs designed to strengthen society and encourage civic engagement (Tannenbaum, 2011). The democratic purpose of this work, inspired greatly by the educational reformer John Dewey, carried through into the 1970’s and 1980’s, when budgetary constraints and the school reform movement put a tight squeeze on arts education. This squeeze, which prompted program cuts and elimination of art teacher positions, began a wave of artists from community centers and artistic venues working more directly and frequently in public schools; giving birth to a strong arts education partner movement and a burgeoning identity of the
professional teaching artist as separate from that of the K-12 art teacher (Rabkin et al., 2011; Reeder, 2009; Remer, 2003; Tannenbaum, 2011).

As partner program models, and other “stop-gap” ways of increasing underfunded arts education grew in the 90’s, the use of teaching artists in public schools became more common, and in small ways, more standardized. As this growth came in tandem with the accountability movement, the expectations and responsibilities of teaching artists began to both increase and widen (Booth, 2010a; Levy, 2019; Reeder, 2009; Tannenbaum, 2011). Furthermore, curricular enhancing models like arts integration – an approach to teaching in which students engage in the creative process to construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form (Kennedy, 2010) - were expanding. Arts integration programs were implemented by classroom teachers and art teachers, but also through partnerships with arts institutions, thus positioning teaching artists as implementers as they were (and remain) commonly hired to facilitate the programs on behalf of the institutions (Remer, 2003; Levy, 2019; Snyder & Fisk, 2016; Tannenbaum, 2011).

The deepening inclusion of teaching artists in public schools also solidified an approach to the work rooted in the “learning through experience” philosophy of John Dewey and student-centered and creative methods of Maria Montessori and Reggio Emilia (Booth, 2010a; Campbell, 2017; Waldorf, 2003). Because teaching artists’ work in schools grew as a result of decades of cuts to urban school arts programs in particular, teaching artists commonly provided access to artistic opportunities to underserved students for the purpose of generating educational equity. Moreover, the denial of artistic opportunities occurring most frequently in communities of color prompted a growing adherence to social justice models of practice, mimicking for example the Freirian inspired El Sistema movement of Venezuela and Theatre of the Oppressed of Brazil’s Augusto Boal (Booth, 2015; Campbell, 2017; Rabkin, 2013; Waldorf, 2003).
From the late 90’s to the 2010’s, the term teaching artist continued to gain ground within the field of arts education, and the teaching artist role began to solidify as a specific profession. Training programs continued to develop; national networks and websites were born, such as the Association of Teaching Artists (1998), and Teaching Artists Guild, (2004); the Teaching Artists Journal released its first publication (2003); and Rabkin et al. (2011) completed the Teaching Artist Research Project. The first International Teaching Artist Conference was held (Booth, 2012), and the first book to specifically use the term in the title appeared – *A Teaching Artist at Work: Theatre with Young People in Educational Settings* by Barbara McKean (2006) although arguably the concept was discussed within scholarship long before that, particularly in the educational theatre work of Bolton and Heathcote (1995) and O’Neil (1982).

**Growth in Recent Years**

During the past decade employment and professional development opportunities have been growing in demand. There is even greater focus on practice and training, evinced by steady scholarly work: more papers, articles, and books, new websites and projects, YouTube videos, and even a podcast produced by Courtney Boddie of The New Victory Theater in New York. The field has also expanded once again, moving visibly into institutions associated with healing and rehabilitation such as prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes (Booth, 2017; Campbell, 2017), as well as returning with prominence to community settings such as senior centers, immigration support centers, and summer and after-school youth programs. The rise of Creative Youth Development, a theory of practice that focuses on the power of youth to creative, connect and catalyze has also influenced teaching artists who serve as key facilitators in many CYD oriented programs (Mass Cultural Council, 2021). Because of this, many teaching artists have found their work grounded in social justice and purposefully aim to create artistic experiences in which
participants develop a stronger sense of voice, belonging and citizenship (Brown, 2016; Campbell, 2017; Hoekstra, 2015; Levy, 2019; Nguyen, 2019; Pratt, 2016; Rabkin et al., 2011; Waldorf, 2003).

The public dialogue surrounding training teaching artists and supporting them in their practice has also grown. There are increasing numbers of organizations and networks solely dedicated to the teaching artist field, including those that are public, private, and government operated. There’s the new Teaching Artist Guild (now merged with the previous Association of Teaching Artists (2021), the Teaching Artist Project (2021), Teaching Artist Institute (2021), and the newly formed International Teaching Artist Collaborative, described as the “first world-wide network of artists who work in community and education settings” (International Teaching Artist Collaborative, 2021). There continue to be programs for teaching artist training in prominent and historic programs, such as those offered by the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, the National Dance Institute and Wolf Trap, as well as many training sessions, short programs, and professional development workshops offered by numerous smaller institutions and organizations throughout the United States. There are also professional development credit-bearing programs, certification programs, and Masters programs for teaching artists at numerous colleges and universities including but not limited to University of the Arts, Teachers College at Columbia University, New York University, Arizona State University, California State University, University of Wisconsin, and Yale University. Berklee College now also includes “teaching artist” as a viable professional role in their” career communities” webpage (Berklee College, 2021).

An exhaustive list of resources, programs, or support networks on the internet would be too cumbersome to include here and would require a study of its own. But for every
organization, school, or government program offering teaching artist resources, training or services, there appear to be others, including off-shoots of larger programs facilitated by local cultural councils. For example, there is the Marquis Studios Teaching Artist Institute in Brooklyn, training and professional development sessions hosted by the San Francisco Arts Council, the Orpheum Theater Group in Memphis, Opera Ignite out of Baltimore, the State of Washington, the New Jersey Arts Education Collective, wide-spread national programs hosted by Young Audiences for Learning, and Artful Teaching in Juneau, Alaska. There are teaching artist specific groups or training programs hosted by the states of Connecticut, Maryland and California to name a few, and there are scores of programs now offered by regional arts education partnerships across the United States.

In Massachusetts, there is the newly formed Boston Area Teaching Artists Network, as well as the Creative Youth Development Teaching Artist Fellow Program, launched in 2019 by the Mass Cultural Council and EdVestors to address a “significant and systematic gap in the youth arts ecosystem” (Holmgren, 2019). In June of 2021, an emailed survey specifically seeking teaching artist input on the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic was issued from the City of Boston (personal communication). A recently published book focused on the role, A Teaching Artist’s Companion: How to define and develop your practice was released in 2019 by Daniel Levy. The book is only one of a handful (McKean, 2006; Jaffe et al., 2013; and Dawson and Kelin, 2014) addressing the teaching artist as a primary focal point, but its release signifies a continual interest in the work and a firm recognition of the professional role.

There is also noticeable advancement in organizations and groups aiming to diversify the field and represent all teaching artists. The Black Teaching Artist Lab, for example, aims to “equip every Black teaching artist with an Afrocentric Social-Emotional learning framework to
teach Black youth about themselves, their cultures, and their communities through art” (2021). A recent article by Nguyen (2020) addresses the lack of representation amongst teaching artists and provides an overview of the the recruitment of teaching artists of color by arts organizations as a starting point to further dialogue on the issue. In addition to this advancement, there is interest in helping teaching artists become better prepared to serve the many diverse learners they teach. Young Audiences for example, recently received a large grant to support teaching artist training in “trauma-informed practice” (2021).

The large number of offerings found online, the rapid pace with which they appear to be growing, and the wide breath of content they cover is dizzying, but also resembles the historical growth of the role. Teaching artists descended from the socially oriented roots of community artists, then rose quickly alongside school reform, the accountability movement, the arts integration movement, and the social justice in arts education movement. As a result, teaching artists have been riding the changing tides of each of these movements and falling under the umbrella of scholarship and public discourse surrounding them. As a result, the inclusion of teaching artists as facilitators of art education rose quickly, was influenced by education reform, and outpaced the development of a solid infrastructure to support it.

Review of Ongoing Challenges

Despite the evident development in the infrastructure supporting teaching artists, there are consistent challenges teaching artists face. Most for example, work in numerous locations and settings simultaneously and thus have multiple bosses as well as communities of learners (Erickson, 2003a, 2003b; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Snyder & Fisk, 2016; Stanley, 2013). Most entered the field by happenstance, have little preparation or training for their various positions, have high levels of expectations at each setting (which also vary from setting to setting), and face
TEACHING ARTIST EXPERIENCE

some ambiguity of purpose and practice in that their work is different in each place (Erickson, 2003a, 2003b; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Stanley, 2013). Most teaching artists work independently and move from job to job often and quickly, resulting in feelings of isolation and lack of community (Makol, 2011; Stanley, 2013; Rabkin et al., 2011). Critically, most teaching artists have little to no time and space to reflect upon and develop their practice because they have little support, little training, numerous jobs and inconsistent pay, all which result in little accessibility to opportunities for professional development, despite the array of offerings (Larson, 2004; Makol, 2011; Snyder & Fisk, 2016).

Although many have documented these challenges as familiar to teaching artists across the past few decades, a poignant article referring to teaching artist practice to as education’s “extreme sport” (Stanley, 2013, p. 161), ties everything together well. Like athletes in extreme sports, which often lie on the outskirts of more popular or highly regarded professional sports, teaching artists face regular uncontrollable variables, are regularly coming into the professional alone (without the guidance of a mentor), are existing in a part of the field still considered new, or counter, to the traditional forms, and as such deal with issues concerning identity, authenticity, being valued. Moreover, they are challenged to develop themselves, their practice, and their role within an infrastructure of training programs and support networks that is evolving, fluid, and still formulating (Stanley, 2013). While this publication is now eight years old, it uses a real comparable example from another field to demonstrates how isolated and difficult teaching artist practice can be.

A very recent publication put forth by the Teaching Artist Guild and National Guild for Community Arts, entitled My Dearest Arts Organization, are you listening (2021), compounds these challenges and speaks to the “toxic” relationship teaching artists feel they have with their
primary employers, arts organizations. Within this publication, which is vividly presented not just as a written letter but also a recorded video, teaching artists speak of feeling undervalued, underpaid, and left out of critical organizational dialogue, despite serving as primary facilitators of programming. They speak of feeling used for their skin color, exploited for their creativity and intellectual property, and left to fend for themselves when the going gets tough, as it did for so many during the coronavirus pandemic which fueled the publication. This letter and the timing of its release through a broad-reaching national newsletter feels significant. It not only confirms the ongoing nature of difficulties teaching artists face but takes a shift away from the historical literature it that it does not just present challenges but prominently addresses the lack of voice teaching artists have had in the field; something that has been discussed certainly by others (Jaffe, 2015; Saraniero, 2004), but never so publicly.

**Recognizing Roots of Challenges**

While it is clear challenges faced by the teaching artist are as present as ever, despite the evident growth in interest in the role, the history of teaching artist professionalization provides insight into the issues. As it stands, the term teaching artist broadly defines a wide array of professional artists working within educational settings for a number of purposes. These teaching artists are more likely to have a background in art, little training for their teaching artist work, and little support structure as their work is often free-lance and independent (Rabkin et al.; 2011; Rabkin, 2013; Snyder & Fisk, 2016). The rise of teaching artist professionalization in relation to school reform plunged many artists quickly into education: a culture both unfamiliar and full of rapidly changing jargon, requirements, and specificity. This led teaching artists to refine, with haste, how their practices best aligned with those most prominent in education at the time of their practice. This trend seems to continue as teaching artists continue to work in different settings
simultaneously, leading to expectations that are both variable and demanding. As such, teaching artists are rapidly expected to utilize their art form as an instructional strategy, align their artmaking with educational expectations presented to them, and succeed at the task with little background training or support. As the presence of teaching artists has only expanded over the past three decades, it is no wonder this trend continues – teaching artists are quickly dropped into educational settings where they are expected to achieve many goals but there remains little structure to support them.

History also reveals an underlying approach to the work rooted in educational philosophies which embrace democratic practice, creative learning, and the whole child. While many teaching artists might inherently align their artistic work with these philosophies, or eventually come to recognize their influence, it is not a given to the work; many struggle to articulate understanding of their practice, its theoretical influence, background, or larger purpose (Hoekstra, 2015; Rabkin et al., 2011; Rabkin, 2012). However, without any training or specific place, space, or time to review foundations, how is any teaching artist expected to articulate where the philosophy of their practice comes from unless of course it was embedded in their training as an artist.

Finally, the rise of teaching artist professionalization occurring alongside school-community partnerships for example, in which programs are for set periods and often are funded through grants with specific budgetary parameters, set teaching artists on a trajectory of being employed often as either independent contractors or as part-time, temporary employers (Erickson, 2003a; Rabkin et al., 2011; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Snyder & Fisk, 2016) This is turn implies teaching artists are excluded from benefits such as insurance coverage, paid-time-off and vacation. Moreover, as the work of teaching artists often is considered supplemental, either
by the employing organization, or the teaching artists themselves (to their professional artistry), it leads to scenarios in which teaching artists move quickly from job to job, lending to feelings of insecurity involving pay as well as future employment. While this is a similar situation facing many professional artists, it is exacerbated by the work of teaching artists occurring regularly in community centers, schools, or non-profit organizations who often rely on external funding to pay for the teaching artists they hire. As such, the boundaries of their funding and the amounts received may not be enough to provide teaching artists with the training and support they need to be successful beyond that specific job.

**Development of Teaching Artist Training and Support**

Understanding the growth in the role and identity of teaching artists and the challenges they face has been a core focus in the literature. So too has been addressing the challenges through the improvement of training, professional development, and support systems for teaching artists (Booth, 2010b; Larson, 2004; Rabkin et al., 2011; Reeder, 2009; Rhodes, 2003; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Saraniero, 2009; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Snyder & Fisk, 2016). In the early 2000’s there was a surge in the number of surveys to teaching artists for the purpose of better assessing the state of training and support in the field. These surveys, and the subsequent reviews of them, provided the field a view of the rapid rise of the teaching artist and the inadequate nature of the infrastructure to support it. As a result, there was a noticeable push in the early part of this decade to describe how prepared teaching artists are for their work, what they need to improve their practice, and recommendations for how the field might strengthen the infrastructure for teaching artists.
Beneficial Models and Recommendations

Review of surveys administered during the early 2000’s generally provides a view of a field in progress and steeped in variation. For example, surveys demonstrated that the average teaching artist was not always prepared for their work, had years of experience or training in their art form, but little to some to none in education (Rabkin et al., 2011; Reeder, 2009; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Saraniero, 2009; Snyder & Fisk, 2016). Surveys also revealed the winding path many artists took towards teaching artist work and varying perspectives on their levels self-efficacy and confidence as educators (Rabkin et al., 2011; Reeder, 2009; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Snyder & Fisk, 2016). The surveys asked teaching artists to share what they felt they needed to better their practice. From responses, it was recognized that what teaching artists needed and wanted to help improve their practice varied based on the teaching artists background, years of experience, training opportunities, support networks, and approach to the work. Despite these wide variations, surveys administered in the early 2000’s confirmed that teaching artists were working more and more frequently in art education, and they very much needed and deserved a more developed infrastructure to support them (Rabkin et al., 2011; Reeder, 2009; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Saraniero, 2009; Snyder & Fisk, 2016).

Suggestions for developing this infrastructure, like the teaching artist role itself, varied in approach and purpose. There were consistencies however, in the recommendations based on what teaching artists felt they needed and what they believed were effective or beneficial models. Primarily, there was general agreement that effective models of training and support for teaching artists were grounded in reflection, peer exchange, mentorship, and credential programs (Powell, 2004; McCaslin & Cohen, 2004; Rabkin et al., 2011; Saraniero, 2009; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Watts, 2003). There was agreement that supervisors, when present, played a beneficial role in
positive teaching artist development, as did opportunities to reflect, receive consistent feedback, and work alongside more experienced teaching artists (Rabkin et al., 2011; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Snyder & Fisk, 2016; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Watts, 2003). These two points are noted as critical by several studies, as teaching artists reported high frequency of employment experiences in which they received no supervision or feedback, which was concerning for the field at large and prompted critique of uncertified educators working alone with students in schools (Synder & Fisk, 2016; Stanley, 2013). As teaching artists in large numbers expressed needing support in educational aspects of their work, such as classroom management, curriculum design, and instructional strategies, recommendations for training and development that was focused on providing more of these basic educational tools was essential (Powell, 2004; Watts, 2003).

However, in contradiction were many recommendations that explicitly looked towards the artistic training and background of teaching artists as the leading point for further development of infrastructure. Jaffe (2012) in particular has spoken to the benefits of approaching teaching artist professional development from the vantage point of artistry rather than education as this is both familiar to teaching artists and also the key underpinning theme to all of their work. As early as 2004, McCaslin and Cohen completed a review of the landscape of teaching artist professional development and training programs and recommended that effective development “respects the artist as a professional” first and foremost (p. 6). While approaching the development of infrastructure from a place of artistry first is logical considering all teaching artists are indeed artists, there exists some challenge to this approach as teaching artists frequently express needing concrete training in the elements of their work that apply to education (Snyder & Fisk, 2016).
Taken as a whole, literature concerning teaching artist training, preparedness, and efficacy demonstrates that teaching artists are seeking more opportunities to reflect and increase their understanding and growth in areas such as identity development, artistic practice, social practice, classroom practice and business (Simpson-Steele, 2018). Available reviews of training programs and professional development models over the past few decades reveal variation in approaches, including some that guide from teaching and some from artistry. Reviews also however highlight consistency in models that more thoroughly address the basic foundational tools and resources teaching artists need to sustain and develop themselves as independent professionals in the field (Flynn, 2004; McCaslin & Cohen, 2004; Simson-Steele, 2018).

Suggestions and recommendations for models found in the literature include those at the university level that focus on credentials and providing well-rounded training for teaching artists in coursework and content, aims and goals of the profession, real-time learning experiences in classrooms as assistant or student teaching artists, and resources and pathways for continual learning, networking, and professional development (Larson, 2004; Myklebust, 2017; Risner &Anderson, 2015).

Similarly, there are suggestions for models that follow more closely those designed for pre-service and early career teachers in education, in which teachers are granted opportunities to develop practical skills and strategies, but also an awareness of broader implications of their role and field (Rabkin et al., 2011). A specific critique of training programs, embedded in results of the 2011 Teaching Artist Research Project, was the prevalence of teaching artists being trained only in specific logistics of their employment with no opportunity to strengthen their understanding of and their contribution to “the big ideas and concepts” (Risner et al., 2011, p. 22) that might push teaching artist work to be more coherent and thus, more effective.
Although the mid-2000’s brought a concentrated focus on teaching artist training and support in the literature, there is no available overview of the current landscape of offerings, which as noted earlier, appear to be growing every day. This is understandable considering the enormous number of programs and opportunities that seem to exist. As review of models over the past twenty years have revealed variation but also a honing of recommendations, it is plausible the programs and opportunities currently available vary in content but follow earlier recommendations. Scanning the array of available options online demonstrates this, as options are coming from numerous places with numerous purposes and approaches, but all focus as a bottom line on improving the teaching artist experiences. Whether or not teaching artists are utilizing the resources to their full advantage remains to be seen, but the sheer number of options suggests that there is a large enough body of teaching artists making use of the options to support all of their existence, for now.

Teaching Artist Perspectives on Accessibility

In addition to investigating what teaching artists believed were effective models of training and support, scholars over the past two decades have researched how to deliver models and make them accessible to teaching artists. For example, Risner and Anderson (2015), who were both former teaching artists who moved into administration, prominently focused on “the credential question” (p. 28) and how teaching artists felt further development and training might be best administered. While teaching artists responses in numerous surveys over the decades illuminated a need and desire for more training and support, many teaching artists expressed not wanting or importantly, not being able to afford any training offered at cost, even for example, moderately priced professional development sessions (Anderson & Risner, 2012; Rabkin, 2012). Moreover, many teaching artists expressed high levels of self-efficacy in their work and a belief
that their artistry was training enough to succeed at their practice (Anderson & Risner, 2012; Snyder & Fisk, 2016). Teaching artists also expressed apprehension at being boxed in by set curriculum or training programs that would require them to adhere to specific pedagogies, thus preventing them from exercising the creative freedom they felt dominated their work and made it effective (Anderson & Risner, 2012; Jaffe, 2012; Rabin et al., 2011).

These two points – teaching artists appreciate their creative freedom and cannot afford to pay for training – have been noted in the literature as issues that need to be addressed through ongoing development of infrastructure (Rabkin, 2012; Jaffe, 2015). Current online resources suggest there is a push towards offering training to teaching artists for free or at low-cost via fellowships, residencies, and similarly funded models. Much of what appears available however, requires some form of payment for tuition or, just as significant, some availability of free time in which teaching artists can step away from their income-generating work to focus solely on improving their practice. Teaching artists are not, for example, granted the same type of built-in professional development hours and allotments that a full-time position in education might allow. Attending conferences, training sessions, or enrolling in degree or credential programs are all demonstrated to be available and effective pathways for teaching artist to improve their practice (McCaslin & Cohen, 2004; Flynn, 2004; Saraniero, 2009; Simpson-Steele, 2018); but they also suggest teaching artists have the time, space, and income stability to participate in these types of offerings. To assume that teaching artists at large, who generally still experience many challenges related to space, time, consistency, and stability in their practice, have the option to attend the array of training offerings available seems an oversight. It also does little to address issues of diverse cultural representation in the field and is in direct contradiction to the theories of equity and accessibility driving much teaching artist practice.
Benefits of Bottom-Up Models of Training and Support

Addressing how teaching artists might be provided accessibility to affordable (in both time and money) training and support might be better considered in relation to studies exploring professional development models for certified K-12 art educators. Specific attention has been paid as of late to the improvement of art educator professional development and the influence art teachers themselves can have on the professional development policies that are put into place (Allison, 2013; Huddy & Stevens, 2010; Johnson et al., 2019; Schmid, 2019). Recent publications stress the importance of creating models of professional development for music and dance educators that are “teacher-generated” (Johnson et al., 2019, p. 208) and built from the bottom-up (Schmid, 2019). These studies suggest that music and dance teachers can have a stronger voice in their own training and can provide insight into what they most need based on their own expertise as everyday practitioners in the field. They also suggest increased use of mentoring in art educator preparatory programs for pre-service teachers, a professional development practice noted as being highly beneficial in general education (Hanwalt & Hofsess, 2020; Haston & Russell, 2012). Additional studies also focus on following the pedagogy of the teaching artists as a framework for improving training for preservice teachers in general education as well as art education (Huddy & Stevens, 2010; Schlemmer, 2017).

As these studies are being conducted to address issues in educator professional development, they can also provide insight into strengthening models for teaching artists. As it stands, focus on the development of art educator training that is built from the bottom-up is based on current literature confirming that art educators want a stronger voice in their field, want more influence in the training models designed to support them, and want further opportunity to be involved in the bigger picture ideas of their field (Hanwalt & Hofsess, 2020; Haston &
Russell, 2012; Johnson et al., 2019;). Teaching artists express a need to be more involved in their field, want further insight into the concepts and theories behind the work they are doing, and want a stronger voice in the field. Considering artists working in both professions, which are different but very much related, are calling for nearly the same things, it seems logical a review of the models serving art educators might provide insight into promising trends for teaching artists. That said, it would require designers of those models to be keenly aware of the differences between the two professions as lumping and defining as one scores of individuals with wide variations in backgrounds, experiences, and approaches to the work is an underlying root of the challenges teaching artists face.

In a similar vein, there is a history of studies investigating the use of teaching artists as facilitators of educator professional development, namely for K-12 classroom teachers interested in arts integration (Duma & Silverstein, 2008; Engalmann et al., 2018; Flynn, 2009; Hackett & Osnes, 2016; Mardirosian et al., 2007). In these studies, scholars parse out their recommendations for improving teaching artists ability to provide other educators professional development; simultaneously however, they reveal that beneficials models of professional development for educators are also beneficial for teaching artists and are rooted in the same desires and needs – to help educators of all backgrounds improve their practice. As there is no current professional development policy in place for teaching artists, existing as they do outside the frame of licensed educators, leaning into more collaborative research exploring how professional development models address the continuity of challenges for all art educators, certified or not, may be beneficial as long as the specific differences between the roles remain a point of consideration in the program model and design.
Teaching Artist Voice and Insight

A review of current issues facing teaching artists and the history of those challenges, the rise of the professionalization of the role, and the continual interest in improving training and support for teaching artists all reveal that teaching artists are eager to engage in their development and have much to contribute to the field. Their voice and insight are critical to the development of a stronger infrastructure and they themselves are capable of helping one another grow. This point seems well-respected in the literature and is observable in online resources, but it is also clear that teaching artists are still feeling left out of the conversations. How is this so?

The abundance of focus on improving teaching artist training and support comes in direct contradiction to the challenges teaching artists still face, which taken at large suggests a disconnect or gap in communication remains. A noticeable limitation to much of the research concerning teaching artists seems to be sample of respondents, as many studies note that the teaching artists voices being included in the research do not necessarily reflect the whole of the community but rather those who have been working in it long enough (or are highly active within it) to have received a survey in the first place. Hearing from only experienced voices suggests pathways to induction still remain unclear and thus new teaching artists are the ones needing the most support. On the other hand, some studies suggest there is too much focus on supporting new teaching artists (Rabkin et al, 2011) and it is the more experienced ones who need more ongoing professional development opportunities. Picking apart these arguments does not feel necessary as it is clear that overall, teaching artists are still in need of more than they are being given and their voices are still not the most prominent in the discourse surrounding their work. This is perplexing as there is much documented research confirming the benefits teaching artists bring to art education, to students and communities, and to other educators. If we as a field
promote to no end the value of teaching artists and their art-based practices, why would we not choose to include them more purposefully in the research concerning their role? This inclusion can go far beyond survey responses to actual inclusion of teaching artists – representing all backgrounds and years of experience – as artist-researchers in the field.

**Teaching Artists as Artist-Researchers**

Review of the literature suggests teaching artists remain in need of further training and support, but also excel as educators using art-based methods of teaching and learning. Because those methods are often grounded in arts integration and social and educational reform, teaching artists are also familiar with examining issues of interest or concern to communities through artmaking and are adept at presenting findings in artistic form. Throughout review of the literature surrounding teaching artists, I have been struck by the lack of artistic representation of information, particularly that coming from teaching artists. The recent letter and video from Teaching Artist Guild (2021) is in fact one of the only publications ever encountered that uses art as a platform for teaching artists to communicate and address the issues they face. Considering a focal point of teaching artist practice is the facilitation of art-based learning experiences, it only seems intuitive the very processes heralded as effective within teaching artist practice would be effective when examining teaching artist practice as well. Moreover, as teaching artists are both actively seeking a more prominent voice and much teaching artist practice is grounded in granting others voice and empowerment to use it (Booth, 2015; Campbell, 2017; Levy, 2019; Rabkin, 2013; Waldorf, 2003) it stands to reason that teaching artists themselves are capable of facilitating experiences in which teaching artist voices are elevated and empowered.

Teaching artists are already facilitating professional development for other educators and demonstrating the benefits of their practice to support further learning. Within K-12 art
education, there is already research demonstrating the benefits of placing art educators more directly at the center of their own professional development (Allison, 2013; Johnson et al., 2019; West, 2011), and growing interest in the benefits of using art-based methods for participatory action research, as well as for educator professional development at large (Education Commission of the States, 2021; Kunt, 2020; West, 2011). This study utilizes participatory art-based research as it directly draws on the abilities of the participating teaching artists, including the artist-researcher and author, to constructively contribute to and lead their own processes of knowledge building and sharing with one another.

Art-based research, the use of art as inquiry and evidence, is heralded for its audience accessibility, nuanced exploration of multi-sensory understanding, holistic approach, and inclusive, participatory nature as research is done collaboratively with participants rather than on participants (Ackroyd & O’Toole, 2010; Barone & Eisner, 2006, 2012; Heron & Reason, 1997; Leavy, 2015; Lett, 2011; Saldana, 2005). In art-based methods, the creative process is used by an artist-researcher to explore and understand a question or issue. Inclusion of artmaking as a means of inquiry allows the artist-researcher and the participants to witness their response and reflections in myriad ways. Because the knowledge produced through or as an artistic experience can be layered, multifarious, open-ended, and subjective (Eaves, 2014; Forinash, 2016; Gallas, 1994, 2011; Hillcoat, 2011; Leavy, 2015; Lett, 2011; McNiff, 1998, 2011, 2014, 2017), it promotes individualism and empowers a sense of pride and value in one’s voice and experience.

The art-based research process highlights the voice of the participant prominently, which encourages understandings of identity and open dialogue, leading to conversations holding the capacity to ignite change (Eaves, 2014; Forinash, 2016; Leavy, 2015). As research methods also aim to evoke meanings rather than dictate them (Leavy, 2015), there is opportunity for a stronger
emphasis on implicit meaning-making by the observer. In this way, art-based research can also empower the observer as it promotes an ideology that *everyone* can inquire, everyone can produce knowledge, everyone can have a voice – art-based research is equalitarian and available to all (McNiff, 2017).

Art-based research, and the experience of it, often cannot be undertaken by the researcher alone as the observer of the art is part of the meaning-making experience. This desire for or bend towards organic response and dialogue grants the researcher a stronger possibility of evoking problem-solving in a communicative, collaborative manner. Participatory art-based research, and its inclusive, active, and creative foundation, is in direct alignment with both art integration and social justice art education, both of which influence teaching artist practice. Teaching artists are accustomed to the process of active, enacted inquiry embraced in art-based research, and as such, participated in this study as artist-researchers so as to encourage and allow for inclusion of their voice in a direct way with the field.

**Conclusion**

In summary, review of the literature concerning the teaching artist experience articulates the trajectory of growth and professionalization of the role over the past forty years. Attention has been given to understanding more thoroughly the teaching artist experience, and the infrastructure of training and support behind it. Growth in both areas is evident. Literature also suggests a historical continuity in the challenges teaching artist face. Recent publications speak to the lack of teaching artist voice in the dialogue concerning their role, despite wide responsibilities of teaching artists in art education, and illuminate feelings of inadequate support and poor treatment from employers. Scholarship addressing the benefits of utilizing educators as creators and providers of their own professional development supports use of familiar art-based
methods as a means for teaching artists to be more directly involved in the research and dialogue surrounding their profession.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Art-based research was determined to be appropriate to this study for several reasons. Primarily, it closely aligned with the process of facilitated, collaborative art making used by teaching artists in their line of work. As such, it was an appropriate method to capture the experiences of those working as teaching artists in that it is both familiar and relevant. Moreover, approaching the issue of teaching artist training and support from an art-based methodology promoted the idea that teaching artists themselves possess the tools necessary to adequately contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of their role. Finally, dissemination of the study through created works of art, edited video, and an overall presentation of artistic evidence makes the information accessible to a wide audience. The art-based research workshop was participatory, collaborative, and experiential. It was grounded in a systematic exploration of the research questions: 1) What models of training and support do teaching artists receive from art organizations? 2) What are teaching artists’ perceptions on the efficacy of those models?

During the recruitment process, it was determined that due to the special circumstance of the covid-19 pandemic, the workshop could be completed over one long day, as opposed to two shorter days, which was the original intention. This decision was made collaboratively with participants and was based primarily on participant availability (no one was available for two days), the total number of participants, and participant familiarity with the workshop process. The workshop took place outdoors in a private yard in Cambridge, MA. This location was deemed more appropriate than an indoor space due to the ongoing covid-19 pandemic and recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control to hold gatherings outdoors whenever
possible. The workshop itself was a total of seven hours, including two short breaks and a forty-five-minute lunch break (see Appendix C). Lunch was provided.

The entire duration of the workshop was audio recorded by me, apart from breaks and lunch. Portions of the workshop were also captured on video by a participant (also a videographer) and me. All photos of the workshop were taken by me with additional photos taken on an instant polaroid camera brought by a participant. Following the workshop, all digital files (including video and photo) were uploaded into a secure Google Drive, accessible only by the participants and me. All hard copy versions of created materials, including poetry, scripts, visual art, or photography prints, were collected at the close of the workshop and moved to a lockbox in my home. They will be kept in the lockbox for five years following the research process, after which they will be destroyed. Participants elected not to receive copies of their artwork at the close of the workshop but will have the option to receive their original work back in the future if they so choose. Throughout the workshop, I served as a facilitator and openly participated in all conversations and discussions. I observed all activities and exercises, and recorded my thoughts, reflections, and observations throughout the workshop in a journal.

Individual follow up meetings, which occurred via video conference platform Zoom, took place with all participants within three weeks of the workshop. During the meetings, participants engaged in personal exchanges with me, reflecting upon the workshop experience. Participants also engaged in a review of their poetry and audio or video clips taken during the workshop. Each meeting lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes, and all were recorded using embedded Zoom recording options (including audio and video). Those recordings were uploaded and moved to a secure hard drive in my home immediately following the meetings.
Participants

All participating teaching artists were made aware of the study through receipt of an invitation to participate sent to Boston area arts organizations offering youth art programming. Ten total participants inquired about participation, and five were able to commit to the study. All participants reported being between the ages of twenty-three and thirty-seven, and all identified as professional artists and practitioners in either theater, music, or visual arts. Of the five, four identified as a teaching artist for five years or less; the fifth identified as a teaching artist and an administrator in arts education for ten years. Four of five participants identified as white females, one identified as Latina female, and one identified as a white male. One participant reported her work as taking place primarily outside of Boston, on the South Shore and Cape Cod; the remaining four participants all reported their work as taking place primarily in Boston, Cambridge, and the immediate surrounding communities. All five participants held an undergraduate degree in fine or performing arts and one held a dual degree in theater and secondary education, as well as a master’s degree in community arts. All identified as teaching artists working primarily with youth.

The Workshop

The layout of the workshop, including all exercises, was designed and facilitated by me as the artist-researcher. I selected the exercises in advance and ordered the exercises so they might build off of one another and towards a final culmination. The selected exercises were all familiar to me and were based on my personal understanding of the exercises, meaning I did not follow any set rules or methods for each exercise as deemed by a primary source, but rather followed my own instincts as an artist-researcher to determine what types of exercises might best serve the purpose of the study. The exercises were primarily based in movement and drama,
character creation, spoken word and poetry, and visual art creation. I chose to include an array of mediums and approaches to artmaking so as to grant all participants, regardless of their artistic focus or background, an opportunity to engage with the research questions in media both familiar and new. As the artist-researcher, I felt it was necessary to allow participants to feel comfortable in their artmaking, but also believed a deeper exploration of the experience may result if some of media were unfamiliar. If challenged to explore the questions in methods unfamiliar, I felt participants might be granted more distance from preconceived notions about their own creative process. The same was true for me as the artist-researcher, while I was familiar with most of the exercises, those in visual artmaking were primarily unfamiliar to me. As such, they challenged me to move beyond my own biases as an artist-researcher to discover how numerous media of artmaking might allow for a more nuanced understanding of the research questions and the study as a whole.

The workshop began with introductions, a discussion of research protocols and the process of being a co-artist researcher, and the completion of remaining paperwork (collection of signed informed consent forms). We then discussed the purpose of the research project - to artistically explore together the concept of training and support offered to teaching artists by art organizations. I provided a brief review of the agenda for the whole workshop, ensuring we all understood the process of the day, what we were undertaking as a group, and what rights we all held as participants. I reiterated the use of recording devices and ensured all participants were comfortable with being recorded and understood their ability to retract anything shared from the recordings if so desired. I closed this portion of the morning by sharing my own intention for the experience which was to have us determine collectively - via discussion, art making, and reflection - what methods and models we have experienced as teaching artists and how effective
we felt those models to be. I then opened the conversation by asking participants to share any goals or intentions they had for the day. This conversation lasted nearly fifteen minutes with each participant sharing a goal or reason why they had chosen to attend the workshop.

From there, we moved into our first exercise, a free movement activity, in which participants were welcomed to physically explore the space in whatever form they preferred - for example stretching, dancing, yoga, or walking – to begin tuning in to the research process. After a few minutes of free movement, I welcomed participants to physically respond to three key terms: teaching artist, training, and support. While participants moved freely about the space, I called out a key term and when they were ready, they physically embodied their response to the term, in essence creating a still image with their body. After each key term, I welcomed participants to move freely about once again for roughly fifteen seconds before calling out an additional key term. Following the completion of the first exercise, we moved into a brief period of reflection and discussion.

We then repeated the same exercise three additional times, with a period of reflection and discussion between each round. During the second round of the exercise, I invited participants to step out of their response to view the group as a whole and share anything they noticed or observed. During the third and final round of this activity, I also welcomed participants to add any spoken responses, whether recognizable words or phrases, or merely audible sounds. Nearly all participants chose to do so.

Following the completion of the exercise, we moved into a period of independent reflection, in which I welcomed participants to consider their reactions to the exercise and the experience as a whole in the form of freewriting. After a period of freewriting, I welcomed participants to review their own writing and to distill it into a shareable artwork, such as a work
of poetry, spoken word, or a monologue if they chose. Once participants felt ready, we took turns sharing aloud the works, discussing our reactions to the works as well as the whole of the experience thus far. This conversation shifted towards an examination of each participant’s artistic background and interests, experience in higher education, and trajectory into the field of teaching artist work. This discussion closed the first half of the day. From there, we broke for lunch.

Upon return from lunch, we moved immediately into a repeat of the morning movement exercise but used the key research questions as prompts for response. Participants were invited to add spoken response to this exercise, including full sentences, phrases, words, and non-verbal sounds. Throughout this exercise, participants continued to step out of the movement to observe the rest of the group. They shared their observations and thoughts, noting what they felt they witnessed in their co-participants movements, expressions, and gestures.

Following two rounds of this exercise, we moved into a reflection and discussion period which lasted for thirty minutes. I suggested we pause our conversation to gather up a variety of visual art materials, including writing paper, large sketch pads, oil pastels, oil paint sticks, graphite, ink, and acrylic paint. I offered the option to move into a quiet independent reflection period, in which participants used visual expression to examine their experience. Participants opted however, to remain together and explore the visual art materials while also continuing their conversation, reflecting simultaneously with both spoken and visual expressions.

After an hour of combined creation and reflection, participants shared their visual works with the group noting their process, what they created, and why. This naturally led to a reflection period, in which we collaboratively discussed our reactions to the visual creation exercise and what it brought forward individually and for the group. After a short break, we began a drama
and movement exercise, very similar to that conducted before lunch. Participants once again responded physically through movement to the key research questions, however, unlike in the morning, participants did not respond individually. Rather, they worked collaboratively to build upon one another’s responses, effectively creating a collective response sometimes referred to in drama and dance education as a tableau. We repeated this exercise two times with no conversation in between, but rather maintained quiet independent reflection. Participants also gave spoken responses during both rounds of this exercise in the form of full sentences, phrases, words, and improvised sounds. We followed this exercise with a reflection and discussion period, noting how the exercise had gone, what was experienced and what we collectively gleaned from our responses. The reflection and discussion period lasted a considerable amount of time, which brought us close to the end of our day.

As we approached our final hours together, we shifted towards the process of distilling our day into a cumulative representation of our collected experience. We started with a review of the works created throughout the day. We viewed video recordings of our movement and drama exercises and laid out all visual pieces, available photos, poetry and spoken word pieces in the grass in order to view them again more carefully. This allowed us to reflect upon the whole of the day’s experiences and begin to discuss what we felt had been illuminating, surprising, or affirming. Considering together all the artwork, we then discussed what materials and works we felt best represented our thoughts, emotions, and responses to the research questions.

Originally, I planned to spend a period of time at the close of the day weaving together materials with the group. The purpose being to arrive at a cumulative piece we felt represented the workshop experience. The trajectory of the day however, brought us to a different ending point that was distilled through conversation. We spent the final hour of the workshop reflecting
upon the whole of the experience: considering how our thoughts and ideas had shifted since the morning; discussing the relationship between our expressed emotions and the research questions; and examining the ways in which our activities, exercises, and artmaking wove the pieces together towards something of a whole. The entirety of the discussion was audio recorded. In closing, I thanked all for their participation, asked for their input on the use and holding of their creations, and ensured all could access the Google drive in which all created art would be located. Our final discussion concerned the scheduling of individual follow-up meetings.

**Post-Workshop Individual Meetings**

Within three weeks of the workshop, I was able to complete individual follow up meetings with each participant. The meetings ranged from forty-five to ninety minutes and took place via video conferencing platform Zoom; all meetings were audio and video recorded in entirety. While each meeting naturally took its own direction, each followed a framework in which I began by asking participants to share any new questions or reflections that may have surfaced for them since the workshop. Three additional questions I asked were:

- Had time away from the workshop illuminated or produced any shifts in their response to the research questions?
- Had participant’s experience in the workshop produced any noticeable effect or impact on their work or practice?

Participants were also invited to review video recordings, audio recordings, or their own poetry from the workshop and reflect again on what the artwork revealed from them about the research questions. Three of five participants selected to review video recordings of movement and drama exercises and we discussed their responses, movement and what they recalled feeling in the moment. Two of five participants selected to review their poetry or spoken word, reflecting upon
their work and what it brought forth now that some time had passed. One participant was unable to view the video recordings in the follow up meeting due to inadequate internet capacity. As an alternative, we listed to audio recordings together and viewed still images taken throughout the study.

**Collaborative Reflection and Synthesis**

Comprehensive review and analysis of this research occurred naturally throughout the project, as within the workshop, participants – through the very process of responding, reflecting, and creating – undertook their own independent as well as collective interpretation of the experience. Through our reflection and discussion periods, we noted patterns, features, emotions, consistencies, and deviations we felt had been discovered within the work. It is important to emphasize that the identification of these elements (or discoveries) happened collaboratively and that this was facilitated by the nature of the creative process.

We carried out a natural and sustained process of examining experience and emotion and putting forth insights in aesthetic form, which in turn was reviewed again. This process was done both via immediate response - participants reflected back on actions and ideas just expressed- and by observing their own artmaking through the viewing of their movements, sounds, and words captured in video, visual works, poetry and spoken words. Similarly, within the follow up meetings, each participant and I reflected back on the experience and the artworks created; revisited our emotions, reactions, and expressions; and further distilled these into a more refined understanding of our response the research questions. As facilitator of the workshop, I too undertook this process alongside my co-artist researchers. I however, simultaneously experienced my own broader understanding and synthesis of the workshop, observing not just our interactions with the research questions but our reactions to the research project at large.
Final Synthesis

Following the completion of the workshop and individual meetings, I moved into my own independent phase of review, reflection, and artmaking. As the artist-researcher I began the process of articulating discoveries and outcomes through video editing and review and selection of artistic illustrations, poems, and photos. I spent time with all the artwork created during the workshop as well as the audio and video recordings, repeatedly viewing and reviewing the shared experience of the workshop. Within my review, I compared what I heard in the recordings with the described outcomes participants shared during the experience and extracted as material the moments, statements, movements, actions, and artworks that felt relevant, clear, and explanatory. I considered the ways in which the various media, now accumulating in the form of quotes, clips, and artworks, both supported and reflected our collectively expressed outcomes as well as contradicted them. As the artist-researcher, I used this repeating cycle of viewing, reflecting upon, and extracting media as a form of synthesis, building towards a final presentation that encapsulated the participants collective understanding of the experience as well as my own. A short video serves as both the core of this presentation and a summarization of the dissertation.

Phase One

I began my process of independent synthesis by first compiling all my handwritten notes from the workshop and the follow up meetings into a single document. I reviewed all video recordings in full, as well as photos (including photos of visual art pieces and poetry and spoken word compositions), making no notes or observations but rather aiming to view them all collectively with an open and relaxed mind. I then moved all video and photography collectively into video editing software iMovie. This allowed me to create a new workspace for reflection
that was not based in written word, but rather in a melding of images and sounds. Similarly, I moved all audio recordings, including the full audio of the workshop as well as individual follow-up meetings (collectively a total of eight and a half hours) into audio editing software Garage Band. I exported these recordings as a series of tracks (the workshop as a whole and each follow up meeting) and uploaded the tracks into a fee-based transcription service, Otter.ai.

Otter.ai produced transcriptions of all audio recordings written out in a form similar to a script, with speakers and timestamps denoted throughout. Otter.ai allows the owner of the files to review the transcriptions with the audio playing in tandem, which in turn allowed me to carefully review the transcriptions, editing any errors and adding any missed language or sounds. Throughout the process of listening and confirming the accuracy of the transcriptions, I began simply highlighting things that stood out to me. About half-way through this review, I began composing a running list of emerging repetitions of ideas, topics, and patterns. I drew from my own memory of the workshop and the individual meetings and added to the list of ideas, phrases, moments, actions, and expressions that I concretely recalled. In particular, I noted what participants had considered as outcomes of the research experience, and where I began seeing those ideas reflected in the media and transcription text. My intention throughout the first phase was to simply reflect upon all the collected materials, including words, movements, sounds, and images, and begin to understand them as a collective whole.

**Phase Two**

Moving into a second phase of synthesis, I reread through the transcription of the workshop, adding simple sorting elements such as changing the font color of my explanatory comments, highlighting new material that now stood out (which I had not highlighted in the first round), and adding comments of my personal thoughts and observations. I also divided the
original transcription into sections that aligned with our activities, adding images of the activities to the document as they occurred in real time. I underlined key questions or additional questions I had pitched to see them outlined more clearly, changed my own text to a different color to more clearly parse out participant response and started removing dialogue that felt irrelevant to the overall scope, for example, commentary about moving the microphone, running in to use the bathroom, and many moments regarding the covid-19 pandemic. The intention was to continue distilling down all the information into a cohesive picture of the research process, the actions and conversations of the day, and our collective understanding of the experience and its outcomes.

During this phase, I started spending more time with the non-written material from the workshop. I went more carefully through photographs, essentially categorizing them by moment or action and then culling out those that were better images in both the technical sense (they were clearer, had a less obstructed view) and in the sense of what type of emotion, idea, or story I felt they reflected or evinced about our shared experience. I considered the ways in which the photos played off of one another and whether they reaffirmed or went in opposition to the emotions, expressions, and outcomes of the workshop as expressed throughout the participants. Similarly, I returned to my compiled written notes from the workshop and follow up meetings and after freewriting about my initial reactions, began reflecting on the notes’ relationship to one another. I marked repetitions, trends, and themes that I found amongst the text as a whole and compared these to the themes and trends noted by participants in the workshop and follow-up meetings. This same process had been occurring simultaneously with each of the documents, media, and artwork I had been consistently reviewing. In both written and audio/visual form, I followed a process of deducing, combining, and blending together the experiences in such a way that I felt best distilled the outcomes of the research as expressed and understood by collective group.
I returned to the video recordings and began another round of sorting, which involved splitting up clips into smaller sections that detailed the exercises and actions of the day. I detached the audio from the video so it could be moved freely in the workspace, which allowed me to explore the ways in which the relationships between moments, movements, and words were revealed. I likewise returned to the audio recordings, splitting up sections that revolved around particular ideas, emotions, topics, or themes. I labeled these new split regions with brief summarizations of the discussion, a process which honed portions of the conversation down into single phrases. I compared these phrases to the written transcription and began dividing up the dialogue in a similar fashion, noting this time where the written word revealed something different or new than the audio recording alone and vice versa.

I also began labeling the sections with different headers, related both to what purpose the overall conversation served (for example, post-exercise reflection discussion) and to what we might have been doing while we conversed (for example, sitting around the table or creating visual artwork). This provided a more nuanced view of how actions such as exercises and art making related to the flow of the dialogue and what the participants brought to the space. It also illuminated the ways in which our collective conversation led us down one train of thought or another and highlighted the trajectories that brought us to expressed outcomes about the research overall. This allowed me to cross-reference our expressed outcomes more readily with the overall collection of media at hand to determine how they affirmed or contradicted one another.

**Phase Three**

In a cyclical manner, the processes above were repeated with all media, transcriptions, and artwork numerous times. I reviewed everything within each phase and continued to synthesize it into a summary of the outcomes as they were understood by the group. As the cycle
continued, the video and audio recordings continued to be pared down to a more select collection of clips and tracks and the transcriptions to a selection of quotes or passages of dialogue. I maintained all visual art works, poems and spoken word pieces in their complete form, but began to embed within my own writing images of those pieces that I felt best represented participants responses to the research questions and perceptions on the outcomes of the study. Throughout the process of distilling the media, I also began to assemble the first draft of the short video serving as a core representation of the results. Finally, I began my own formal writing process of the results, utilizing a draft of preliminary results I had written, outcomes explicitly expressed by the group during the workshop, and my own perception of the outcomes I observed within the media.

**Film Creation**

As my process continued, I carried on with my review and followed my own artistic instincts, weaving together a written accord of results that synthesized the outcomes of the study. I also continued the editing of the media, paring down video and audio clips even further to shorter segments that summarized or articulated participant responses. I maintained video clips in their original form with minimal editing outside of basic sound quality and but also edited together selections of media to present a more nuanced, multi-sensory presentation of the outcomes. For example, guided by my stance as the artist-researcher, I extracted clips of the exercises and extracted comments directly from reflection and discussion periods and reconfigured them to run as a single clip in a larger video file. Sometimes the extracted comments seemed to me to be the best summarization of the process but sometimes they were comments made by participants while observing the video recordings of the exercise, either during the final phase of the workshop or during follow up meetings. In this sense, the film is
both an artistic interpretations by me and the participants. During this final editing and creation phase, I also reached out to participants, sharing some of the edited clips and asking for their insight. I offered them the opportunity to perform again (and thus re-record) readings of their poems and spoken word pieces if they preferred, the purpose being to allow participants ownership over their personal artistic piece and the way in which it was represented in the presentation of the study.

As art-based methods were used to explore the research questions, the outcomes were systematically discussed, reflected upon, and distilled throughout the (research) process by the participants. My role in this final synthesis was to further review and refine our collection of transcriptions and media as well as share that process with the group. The outcomes, therefore, are not the product of independent analysis but of collaborative synthesis. They are not intended to be understood as absolutes of the teaching artist experience, but rather represent the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of five teaching artists (working in the greater Boston area). It is the expressed hope of the participants that the outcomes serve a larger purpose and help provide insight into the challenges and opportunities teaching artists experience in the pursuit of training and support.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Summary of Outcomes

Art-based inquiry exploring the key research questions yielded the following results:

What models of training and support do teaching artists receive? 1) teaching artists do not receive consistent training or support; 2) teaching artists struggle to identify models of training received; and 3) teaching artists are seeking more support. What are teaching artists’ perspectives on the efficacy of those models? 1) teaching artists believe the training and support received is inefficient; 2) teaching artists feel instable and isolated in their practice as a result; and 3) teaching artists believe effective models include the presence of a supervisor, adequate resources, and collaboration with other teaching artists.

Most significantly, teaching artists believe exploration of these research questions evinced the lack of opportunity provided to reflect purposefully on their practice and the role they play in the field of art education. Participation in the research was meaningful to teaching artists and demonstrated that: 1) teaching artists are equipped to play a larger and more direct role in their own training and support; 2) art-based teaching methods, familiar to teaching artists, are an effective form of professional development; and 3) teaching artists are eager to learn more about their profession and have a stronger voice in the field.

Presentation of Results

As the method suggests, the outcomes of this study were arrived at through a cyclical process of art exercises, artmaking, reflection, and discussion. As such, the results are presented in the same format. Exercises are depicted in detail first, so as to provide the reader insight into our shared creative process. Following this description, the broader concepts and issues that the
process evoked, distilled from the reflection and discussion periods in which we examined our own creative process and what these implied about our response to the research questions, are presented. Finally, the short film, which can be found via a link in Appendix D, is my own artistic representation of the research process. It is an interplay between the visual and audio documentation of the exercises and artmaking, participants creative responses, and the audio recordings of the reflection and discussion periods as well as individual follow up meetings. It captures the ways in which the many pieces of the study are best witnessed as layers of a larger process.

**Exercises and Artmaking**

**Exercise One - Free Movement / Embodied Physical Response / Observing Responses**

The first activity included free movement by all participants around the space, and embodiment of a physical response or reaction to hearing one of three key terms called out, teaching artist, training, or support. The group moved into this activity easily, and it was noted later this was because most of them were familiar with the movement exercise; that said, one who was not familiar participated right away after expressing how she had not done this type of exercise before. This is mentioned as the ease with which participants engaged with the art-based research was a point of reflection throughout the study.

We moved around the space freely, and after a short stretch I called out each of the three key terms. After hearing each term, participants responded with a physical embodiment.

![Figure 1](Embodied Responses to Term Teaching Artist)
of the term which they held or “froze” for roughly ten to twenty seconds before moving on to the hearing the next term. After we completed this exercise one time with no speaking, we started again, this time with participants stepping “out” of their response at will to share what they observed in their participants physicality. In responses to the term teaching artist, participants observed in one another’s bodies:

- Standing, looking active, participating in the work
- Not being on even footing, not being in a confident, sturdy pose
- Being low to the ground
- Trying to make eye contact

Exercise Two - Adding Verbal Response

In the next two rounds of this exercise, in which the terms training and support were stated and responded to, participants both observed each other’s responses and added their own verbalized responses, which sometimes came in the form of phrases or statements and sometimes single words or sounds:

Table 1

Participant verbal responses added to physical responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“oooooohhhh goodness”</td>
<td>“how are you doing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Linklater voice training”</td>
<td>“come with me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Alright let’s just jump in”</td>
<td>“you can do it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Work”</td>
<td>“connection or connecting”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the final round of this exercise, we once again returned to the term teaching artist, and participants observed in one another’s embodied responses:

- “I see people like being ready to go…comfortable in the space that they are. I see everyone standing, everyone’s upright”
- “I definitely feel like there’s an energy pointed outward like towards people and again everyone’s standing, everyone’s active, everyone’s engaged”

**Figure 2**

*Embodied Responses to Term Support*

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**Exercise Three - Freewriting / Poetry and Spoken Word**

Following the movement and embodied response exercises, we began a period of individual reflection on the research experience, thus far, in the form of the writing. Participants wrote on their own until they felt finished or at a place that was somewhat complete. Participants then shared out these responses orally and reflected upon them via discussion. Some of the writing was shared in the form of performed poetry or spoken word, and some was paraphrased or shared as more of a summary of the written reflection than a performance. Each piece, however, regardless of method of delivery, was heard by the full group and then was collectively reflected upon and discussed afterwards. Participants’ writing varied considerably in its format,
but all addressed their identity as teaching artists and most were reflective not just of the exercises and discussions of the morning, but the overall process of the research experience.

Two participants, who shared their pieces orally in a performance form similar to a poetry reading or monologue presentation, captured much of what was discussed throughout the day. When reviewed much further on during the study by me, I noted that one piece in particular touched upon nearly all points made throughout the research experience and summarized the whole of the experience quite well. This poem, which begins “accidents, coincidences, happenstances – actors training for academia” was used therefore in the final culminating video and was re-recorded by the participant who composed it, so she could more clearly present her work in a performance that felt more refined to her than that which was recorded in live-time on the day of the workshop.

The other three participants opted to summarize their freewriting orally and present it to the group. While they differed in approach, each reflected upon not just the responses generated throughout the study thus far but also the process of the research at large. In these writings, participants spoke to:

- Feeling new to the field, seeking identity
- Recognizing their own lack of support through the art exercises
- The inherent connection they felt to one another and the process of the study
• Remembering the act of training and support in multiple ways including physically and emotionally
• Recognizing the ease with which they engaged in the research
• Noting differences in the embodied response between the three key terms
• Feeling a sense of which topics or points of reflection were more unanimous across the group versus those that felt more personal to each individual
• Seeing a sense of responsibility for the work in each other’s responses
• The research process feeling and looking natural to the group

Use of freewriting after the morning’s exercises was helpful in allowing the group to process the whole of the experience at once. It illustrated numerous touch points that were returned to throughout the study as recurring themes or topics and gave participants an opportunity to synthesize their experiences of the study to that point. From the discussion generated by the sharing of their writing, participants embarked on a lengthy conversation regarding their identity of being a teaching artist, the newness of that identity, and how they each individually had found themselves in their current role. Overwhelmingly, the group recognized in one another a shared experience of having fallen into the work accidentally and the impact this newness had on their relationship to the work and their understanding of the training and support they received. Full documentation of each participant’s written response can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 4
Example of Poetry Written during Exercise
Exercise Four – Embodied Response to Questions / Observing Responses

Participants took a break at mid-day for lunch, and upon return we moved immediately into a second iteration of the mornings’ free movement exercise, this time responding to the two research questions in full, as opposed to just singular terms stated individually. When participants stepped out of the exercise to witness one another’s responses, the differences in their observations from the morning were striking.

- “Um, physically they’re different levels compared to everyone. I feel like there’s…thinking happening, like questioning, maybe…just like I don’t know…listening or nothing? I don’t know”
- “Um, yeah I noticed the focus being a lot less direct than some of the other answers [to other exercises], so it seems that most people um where they’re eyes are looking is not at a person”

In contrast to the responses to the term teaching artist for example, in which participants observed comfort, confidence, energy and engagement, when asked the full research questions, there was a certain ambiguity that surfaced. There was a hesitancy in the gestures and movements of the group, but also the in observations of each participant. When this exercise was repeated, participants added their own verbalized response to their physical movements. These responses included:

Question one: What models of training and support do teaching artists receive?

- This is how we usually do it
- Past present
- I can’t wait to see what you come up with
- It might not work but let’s try it anyway
Question two: What are teaching artists perspectives on the efficacy of those models?

- It depends
- Stuck
- But what if you encounter…insert any problem
- You’ll be fine just give it a shot

Following this exercise, we moved into a period of reflection and discussion in which it felt
evident that responding to the research questions in full opened up new observations about the
*actual* models of training everyone had received, or more aptly not received.

**Exercise Five – Visual Art Creation**

Each participant then selected a collection of visual art materials, including markers, acrylic paint or ink and we repositioned ourselves on the ground with drawing boards, Bristol paper and our other chosen materials. Moving into this exercise, participants remarked numerous
times on their varying levels of comfort with the process of visual art. Only one identified as a
visual artist. After a brief discussion, it was decided a more comfortable and impactful approach
would be conversing while they created, so the two processes were allowed to play off one
another. This group also expressed being eager to
communicate with one another after a year of pandemic-related quarantine and opted to stay
together rather than spread out in isolated areas
throughout the broader space.

When participants reached a point in which they felt ready to share their creations with one
another, there was a noticeable shift in the comfort

![Figure 5](image)
of presenting in an art form that majority of participants expressed feeling less comfortable using. There was trepidation in sharing the work and defense of the work before it was shared, hoping others wouldn’t judge it “too harshly” as this was not their medium of choice. This type of defense did not take place as evidently in other reflection periods throughout the day. That said, they each shared their work with the group, speaking to the piece, the process of creating visually, and what it represented to them.

**Participant A:** This is my sunrise on, I don't know, I was just getting…as we were talking, um I just kept getting the image of a sunrise because I, being with a group of people group of artists that are like talking about what we need to do…for art, it's…I'm rising up out of the deep blue, you know what I mean? and hoping that some of this sunshine is gonna hit everybody. If that doesn't tell you anything about me, I don't know what will.

**Participant B:** Um, I literally just went and grabbed the colors that I thought were pretty, and just put them together and just went with the shape because it was easy to do. And in my very linear thinking it had structure.
Participant C: So, um, I've been thinking the phrase a whole lot today of being thrown to the wolves and kind of the methodology of learning how to be a teaching artists. And there was just not an appropriate time to work that into any of the conversation. So I thought, well, that's the keeps coming back to me. And while it feels more negative than maybe I want it to mean I like it and it's an identifying feature in my training. Mm hmm. And then also I drew coral reef, because while every single little thing is different, they all work together in order to survive. And it's mutually symbiotic. And sometimes things eat other things and sometimes the human beings acidify the ocean and kill the Great Barrier Reef, but it is getting better. It's growing. It might heal I'm so outside influence. And then it just at the end, I added a little anatomical heart, because cute and we all love the work that we do.

Participant D: So I drew a rug. Yeah, I don't know, the first thing, I walked into thinking about classrooms, and then I just started to color. And then I made this funky looking like octopus Picasso. Can't even call it that. I don't know. I just found honestly that the coloring made me a more of an active listener. It made me think less because I was… I can't multitask. It's just not what my brain does. So it made, it made me think less of what I thought about what other people were saying and more about what
the person was saying. If that makes any sense. So it was just a useful tool for really listening.
That was nice.

**Figure 10**

*Participant E Visual Art*

**Participant E**: So I did two this one was the first one that I did. So the first one, I feel like I was thinking kind of like about almost like that we're sifting through this conversation. And there's different like, points of like, color, and brightness and like, kind of sometimes like, anger comes up, which is kind of like what this felt like to me. And then sometimes it was like joy or confusion. But it's all kind of like wrapped up together. So then I was like, kind of thinking about that concept, and just listening to everybody and like, observing and just that we're kind of all like, trying to define this mysterious space. And that it's like part of us. And then also that we're part of it. I don't know.

**Exercise Six - Tableaus with Verbal Responses**

The tableaus were created in response to the two research questions and the exercise was repeated twice, the first time with no verbalizations and the second with verbalization. When the tableau was created, we split the space into a stage and an audience, and all sat in the audience space to start. After roughly ten seconds, I asked aloud the first research questions. The response to this question began slowly as it took some time for a first participant to rise and step into an
embodied response on the stage. Once the first participant was in place however, the remaining joined in quickly, adding their own responses not just to the research questions, but also to what they witnessed in the overall image now created by their fellow participants. See below an example of the first two participants moving into the tableau.

**Figure 11**

*Participants Begin to Create a Group Tableau*

After the first tableau was held for a period of time, it was broken and all participants returned to their space in the audience. After roughly ten seconds of quiet, I called out the second question, and the process was repeated, this time with different responses. Again it was held, then broken and all returned to their seats. I did not ask participants to step out and witness the tableaus, as this was something we would do as a full group via the video documentation of the exercise after an upcoming break.

We repeated the structure of the exercise an additional two times, once per research question, and this time added verbal responses, some of which were independent and some of which played off of another’s words. Within the tableau created for the first research question, what models of training and support do teaching artists receive, participants said:
• Eeeeeuuuuuhhh
• Give it a shot
• You can do it no pressure
• I’m just getting a little buried under this
• It’s working, it’s working

In the tableau responding to the second question, what are teaching artists perspectives on the efficacy of those models, participants said:

• This doesn’t make any sense but I guess we’re just doing it?
• I’m going to cut youuuu…like your funds and stuff
• Balance or imbalance
• Trying to include everyone
• We’re going to figure it out, we’re going to figure it out
• Aaaaaaaagggghhhhh
• This sucks but at least I have my friends
• I just need to figure it out for the kids

**Review and Culmination**

Following the creation of tableaus we took a brief twenty-minute break, the purpose of which is multifold. It gave us a chance to step away from the moment, rest our brains and bodies and refuel with tea and snacks, but it also gave me an opportunity to upload all video documentation of the final few exercises onto my laptop. I also asked participants to use the break to gather their own written words, visual creations, and anything else they wanted to add – such as journal responses they may have written down or photos they had taken – so we may begin to lay them out in “galleries” around the larger space. At this point, one of the participants
who had been taking photos on her polaroid camera throughout the day, assembled her images together and laid them out as part of the gallery as well (See Appendix A). Some participants also chose to re-write their poetry to make it more legible for the group.

After our break, I gathered us together and explained that we had reached the point in our process in which we together would review everything we had created throughout the day and then move into our final reflection and discussion period. During this period we would also attempt to bring together the whole day’s experiences and what it revealed to us about our response to the research questions.

We spent roughly eight to ten minutes reviewing the written pieces, photos and visual works. We then sat down together to watch the video recordings of our movement exercises and tableaus. During the review of the videos, participants noted the following:

- “I think a lot of the verbalization there was kind of this strained positivity. Like a common theme throughout the whole thing.”
- “Like a dystopian positivity of like, it's fine. We got it, we can push through.”
- “And also that it's fun, we're not fighting to be positive, because we partially because we have to, but we want to, even when it sucks.”
- “It felt like there were a lot of like, do it on the spot kind of comments, but a lot of them sound like they're coming from supervisors or from my coworker, like, Okay, get in

Figure 12
Participants Review their Collective Pieces
there, you just got to go for it. Yes, a lot of just like, you kind of gotta just jump into it and see what happens comments.”

• “A lot of confused posture.”

• “A lot of people like stuck between other people.”

• “Or even like the step between one foot and the other, like, when we were before the tableau is when we're doing the walk around. There was a lot of like, in between movement, there was a lot of like, reaching for and stopping, there was a lot of extension, but not a lot of reach, if that makes sense.”

After review of the materials, video and photo documentation, the participants and I began discussing our take-aways from the day. I presented our final task, which was a review of the whole of the experience and consideration of how we might present our understanding of the research questions to an audience. This discussion went on for some time and resulted in the many outcomes detailed in the next section. At the day’s end, I repeated the research questions one final time and asked participants to respond with the first word that came to mind. Responses were as follows:

Table 2

One-word responses to research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What models of training and support do teaching artists receive?</th>
<th>What are teaching artists’ perspectives on the efficacy of those models?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaboration</td>
<td>Earnest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care</td>
<td>Honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentor</td>
<td>Confusing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daunting</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survival (in so many ways)</td>
<td>Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exhaustion</td>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thrown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the end of our discussion, I asked the participants to give one final thought on their participation in the workshop and how they felt as a result. Phrases such as “massive shift” were used, as were the terms “pieces,” “revived,” “continuation,” “enriching,” and “inspired.”

**Post-Workshop Individual Meetings**

Post-workshop meetings served as a chance for participants to meet with me individually to reflect back on the whole of the workshop. I asked only two questions during the meetings: “How was the experience of the workshop for you?” and “What did it illuminate for you about the research questions and your responses to those questions?” During the meetings, participants reviewed video footage of the exercises, listened to audio recordings, or viewed still images from the workshop and reflected on what their responses in the exercises and their artwork revealed about their experiences. Reflections and comments made during follow-up meetings were not treated separately, but rather are integrated throughout the results as they inform the research as a whole. The follow-up meetings were a time in which participants spoke to the benefit gained from participation in the study and the value in examining their own understanding of their experiences as teaching artists and the training and support they received.

**Outcomes**

The research questions in this study are grounded in the experience of practice and employment. Through the process of artmaking, reflection, and discussion used in the study, participants considered their responses in their broader understanding of the teaching artist
experience. The outcomes below were distilled from the study as a whole and present a multi-sensory view of the models of training and support teaching artists receive, and the many contexts – emotional, logistical, professional, and personal – within which those models are understood.

Outcomes center around the Deficits and Benefits teaching artists have experienced in the models of training and support provided to them. In short, what they received or did not receive as models of training and support, how they felt about those models, and what they believed was missing from that provided to them by their employers. It was agreed upon by participants that all their experiences were directly impacted by the Structure and Context of Employment. Particularly, who hired them to serve in the teaching artist role and in what setting the work was carried out. Woven throughout the whole of the study were emotions and perceptions impacted by notions of Identity and Purpose of the professional role of the teaching artist. Although focus on the experiences of teaching artists identifying as new to the role was a never a direct intention of the study, a majority of participants (four of five) reported working or identifying as a teaching artist for five years or less. Thus, issues concerning Induction and Retention of new teaching artists into the field became a recurring theme of the research experience.

Question One: What models of training and support do teaching artists receive?

1. Teaching artists do not receive consistent training or support.
2. Teaching artists struggle to identify the models of training they received.
3. Teaching artists are seeking more support.
Deficiencies in Training and Support

The primary purpose of this research study was to explore teaching artists’ perspectives on their experiences of training and support. As one participant noted early on however, asking teaching artists to articulate their perspectives assumes training and support are being provided. As the course of this study progressed, participants repeatedly expressed difficulty articulating their experiences of training and support since little was provided to them that they could define as such. Moreover, that which they identified was described as more inefficient than beneficial to their work. When asked at the end of the workshop to consider the culmination of the research experience and what it revealed about teaching artist training and support, it was said, and subsequently agreed upon by all participants, “it’s not efficient, the way that we've been trained, and there's room for improvement.”

While experiences in the field described as positive and beneficial were shared throughout, participants unanimously agreed exploring their perceptions on training and support brought forth feelings of exhaustion and that this exhaustion was easily observable in one another’s responses through the research experience. Specifically, exhaustion with the ways in which teaching artist work impacted their individual lives and their personal and collective ideas of what constituted a fulfilling and sustainable career path. Despite this exhaustion, participants frequently reiterated a belief that their work as teaching artist work was fun, joyful, worthwhile, and meaningful. In the culminating discussion of the workshop, a participant reiterated that from the responses she could see the “negative aspects [of the work] are not debilitating.” There were expressions of hope and fulfillment, interest, and passion, and witnessing of “a clear, visible enthusiasm” for the role within participants’ responses. Throughout the research experience, participants repeatedly observed and expressed feelings of commitment to the work and a deep
passion for what they believed the work provided to others. This presence of contrasting feelings, described by one participant during review of video documentation, as “strained positivity,” was noted as a through line of the research experience. It also was noted as being reflective of the contrasting feelings of teaching artists continuing to seek employment, despite believing the work to be an exhausting and solitary means by which to keep themselves financially and artistically afloat (See Identity and Purpose).

**Fast, Furious and Unprepared**

The most repetitive example of a challenge expressed by participants was a belief that often, they felt plunged into their role with little to no preparatory training or ongoing support from their employer. Participants recalled experiences in which they received “zero training” other than an interview and expressed a belief that they would need to “seek out training” if they wanted it. When asked to consider and state explicitly the models of training and support they received, participants struggled to describe specific models but quickly articulated the frequency with which they felt unprepared for their work, using phrases such as feeling “you have to be good at [this job] with no training,” and labeling models with names like “crash and burn,” “trial and error,” and “the model equals just do it.” During Exercise Five, visual art creation, one participant drew a wolf as the phrase “thrown to the wolves” kept coming back to her throughout the day and was an “identifying feature in my training.” This sense of feeling unprepared or unconfident in the role was witnessed and expressed by participants in their artmaking. During Exercises One and Two, in which participants embodied their response to the term teaching artist, participants witnessed others’
holding positions or completing gestures or movements that were perceived to be “uneven” or not representative of feeling “sturdy” or “confident” in the role. Participants’ inclusion of verbal responses such as “just give it a try” or “let’s just see how it goes” were reflected upon as being familiar approaches to training provided to them by their employers.

It was agreed upon by all that often, there was “no clear training” but rather they were given as a form of preparation for their work tangible items intended to be helpful. Examples included set curriculums to follow, lists of games to play, or other isolated resources like handbooks for programs or websites for schools within which they were going to work. Despite appreciating items of this nature, participants agreed the provision of supporting materials was varied, inconsistent, and often lacking in context to help understand their purpose or relevancy, prompting one participant to say, “google advice is not helpful” as a means of training a teaching artist for their work. Participants expressed and witnessed this provision of materials in Exercise Four, in which participants demonstrated actions representative of being “weighed down” with resources being “thrown at them” without contextual guidance to help the teaching artists understand the purpose the resources played in their work.

The pace with which participants were moved from hiring to actual practice and the impact it made on preparedness also frequently surfaced. All participants noted multiple examples of “quick turnaround between hiring and work” including numerous instances of being hired and beginning work within just one or two days, “…and you got that job 24 hours ago, the lack of prep time beforehand is astonishing.” In addition to frequent examples of little preparatory time, participants reported a lack of supervision and support structures in place to help them develop their practice.
The Need for Support

Within reflection, discussion, and armtaking, participants expressed and witnessed a need and want for more support and a desire for space to receive feedback. In Exercise Three, one participant reflected in her writing on her own embodied response to the term support and what it implied. During the sharing of her free write, the participant observed that she both needs more support but also deserves as a teaching artist. Notably, participants expressed their most challenging experiences as teaching artists were those in which “the supervisor was not in the room” and thus, no one was available to bear witness to their practice which led them to feel as though their work was occurring in isolation.

My first experience was totally solo with an age group I had never dealt with. It was the situation where I got asked on Friday afternoon if I could teach this class on Saturday morning. And I, you know, I was just given the keys and told good luck. So, I guess that was my first experience, which is maybe why I look at team partnering as such an important aspect, because I felt like I always came in by myself.

During Exercises One and Two, in which participants embodied their response to the term support, it was observed that the poses, gestures, and actions of the group suggested that teaching artists both needed and wanted more support, that they felt uncertain about where to find it, and that when they went looking for it, there was “no one there” to make eye contact with.

Figure 15

Participant Response about Support
Question Two: What are teaching artists perspectives on the efficacy of those models?

1. Teaching artists believe the training and support received is inefficient.

2. Teaching artists feel instable and isolated in their practice as a result.

3. Teaching artists believe effective models include the presence of a supervisor, adequate resources, and collaboration with other teaching artists.

Beneficial Models of Training and Support

Despite sharing experiences of challenge in their work, participants expressed frequently in artmaking, reflection, and our culminating discussion that the provision of training and support as they experienced it was not entirely negative. Participants reiterated the joy, fun, and passion they had witnessed within the responses, and shared experiences in which they felt both supported by their employer and secure and confident in their role. In particular, participants reported feeling very supported by a few select employers they had worked for a number of years and noted that returning to the same employer (for various programs) greatly increased their feelings of being supported and part of a community or team. During our culminating discussion, it was reiterated that the experience was not entirely negative and that terms such as “care,” “concern” and “community” were used as descriptors for the models of training and support teaching artists receive.

Supervisors, Mentors, and Partners

Pointedly expressed numerous times was appreciation for the presence of a supervisor or mentor to support the teaching artist by observing their work and providing feedback. The necessity for and benefits of feedback, particularly for those participants who were in their first few years of teaching artist work, was unanimously agreed to be one of the most beneficial and effective forms of training and support they could receive. Additionally, participants frequently
spoke to the value of having a person available to both provide them directions and tools specific to the work and to advise them in the creation and assessment of goals and outcomes. Having a supervisor who was deeply familiar with the context of their work, who could “intervene” when necessary and who was able to “advocate for the teaching artists” was agreed by all as being one of the most valuable things their employer could provide.

I found that one of the ways that I've really grown the most was talking to a supervisor before the class starts. It's like, okay, here are the class goals. Here are my goals as a teaching artist...here's the three things I'm going to work on while I'm in the classroom. And I guess I could just take that skill and use those goals like set those goals for myself without my supervisor doing it, but it's nice to have someone who's watching you teach who...not only cares about the kids but cares about you getting better as an artist, as a teaching artist.

That said, participants reported the experience of having a readily available and engaged supervisor to be less common than they hoped. The impact in fact, of what was perceived to be unsupportive or inefficient leadership - or even complete lack of leadership - was agreed to be a common experience and one that resulted in a sense of being isolated in their practice (See Structure & Context). Nonetheless, when someone – be they a supervisor or mentor - was available to support the teaching artist, it was agreed to be highly beneficial to the specific work experience and to the development of their practice overall.

Participants also spoke regularly of the value in working with another teaching artist, particularly as it allowed them to learn from another individual in real time. “I feel like a lot of my training is watching your partner walk around and see what works, especially [when we are] teaching the same group of kids.” Frequently, participants reported training and support as
coming primarily or solely from a co-teaching artist and spoke to the value of “finding a network,” which they felt most often came from working with other teaching artists and subsequently becoming acquaintances or friends. Participants reported little awareness of organizations or programs currently in existence that might provide them the networking they sought, and explicitly noted in both the culmination of the workshop and follow up meetings a desire to be informed of more opportunities to strengthen their network. (See Induction & Retention).

**Tools and Resources**

In addition to the presence of a supervisor or co-teaching artist, most of that which participants described as being helpful in preparing them and supporting them in their work was categorized as “basic necessities” for positive employment: a “clear job description,” directions throughout the process, background information about the job, tools to assist with the job, appropriate amounts of time to complete the job, and a basic understanding of the overall context of the undertaking. Participants noted how valuable (but rare) it was to “receive all the information” and spoke specifically about the benefits gained when the provision of basic “tools” such as rosters, contact information for applicable parties, and supplies for the program they were facilitating was granted to them. They agreed however, that those basic tools were often not provided and thus participants expressed feeling “on their own” to pull these tools together without support.

When training did take place, participants agreed it was often “specific to the program” rather than to the work of a teaching artist at large. It was reported to take place most often in the “downtime between hire and work,” and was sometimes difficult for participants to pinpoint “because it's never formally called training.” That said, participants recalled beneficial and
positive experiences such as “orientations” or “pre-program workshops” in which “we modeled what students do as our [our] training.” Specially, participants noted how important and helpful it was “to be given new tools within your training and also to [have someone] ask what your tools are like, what do you [already] have?” An example of a beneficial tool provided by a supervisor was the basics of creating a lesson plan:

The first time I was taught how to create a lesson plan within the program I was working for changed the whole way that I looked at being a teaching artist because it was in a concept that I understood…and that someone took the time to explain that, knowing that that would help me [was beneficial]. And we only did that the once together in that specific case, but I was then able to do it by myself, and I still utilize that constantly, even in roles that do not ask me to.

Participants who felt as though they did receive a lot of training and support accredited it to a developed relationship with one employer, often coming as a result of being hired by that employer numerous times for programs that repeated throughout the year. They also spoke to the value of training experiences in which they themselves were given resources to not just better their practice for that particular job, but their work as a teaching artist at large. Participants expressed deep admiration and appreciation for organizations that helped them develop their self-confidence as teaching artists by granting them not just “program specific training” but space and time to consider their work in the larger context of the field of art education. (response to 2 above). They also expressed appreciation for employers who took time to provide them professional development that was related specifically to their work as teaching artists with youth. In short, the experiences deemed most beneficial were those in which the teaching artists were provided pre-work training, all the necessary information for their work, a support structure
along the way in the form of supervision and feedback from a supervisor or co-teaching artist, and the resources and tools to help them better improve and develop their practice beyond the specific job.

**Structures and Context of Employment**

*Numerous Employers and Locations*

All participants reported having worked as a teaching artist at numerous locations, for stretches ranging from two days to nine months. They all had experienced teaching artist employment in which they worked for an employer only once and they reported having been hired by the same employer numerous times, either to work in a program that repeated (for example, annually or semi-annually) or to work within different programs offered by a single employer. Participants also reported working as teaching artists in various settings, including performing arts venues, visual art museums, community and cultural centers, and public and private K-12 schools. The impact of having numerous employers at once was brought up often as was the significance of the leadership and care demonstrated by their supervisor or boss.

Participants reported having numerous bosses simultaneously and spoke of working for many bosses within the span of a year. They also reported what they perceived to be wide variation in approaches to both general employment and specifically, to teaching artist work, “how great would it feel if I could work for six places at once but not feel like I was working for six places at once.” Participants spoke at length about what they felt were dichotomies between approaches that were either “too loose” or “too restrictive” in relation to creative freedom and expressed conflict in being hired for their creative freedom but unable to use it because of preconceived curriculums or ideas of what art education “should” look like. Specifically, participants spoke of employers who provided them with resources they felt were overly
prescriptive, “these are the [theater] games and this is how you play them” and employers who had “too wide a range” and provided them no sense of direction.

When I talk to the person that I think is my boss, but I'm not sure is my boss, because that's a fun dynamic, I'm like, what do you want from this? Like, what's the goal…and he goes, whatever you want, it's whatever you want. And I'm like, no, what are the parameters? Please give me parameters and he’s like, it’s just whatever you want.

Conflicts between feeling both a lack of creative freedom and too much creative freedom were echoed throughout the research experience and were perceived by participants to be a natural result of working simultaneously for numerous employers taking different approaches to artmaking. One participant for example, spoke of the personal and professional challenge of working numerous jobs and thus “flip-flopping” (within the same day) between employers, one of whom valued and promoted ensemble-based theater practice and one of whom who had a more individualistic approach. Balancing these various approaches was expressed as being a primary cause of exhaustion with the work, as often participants felt they had to edit, alter, or revise their own approach to their role with each different employer or workplace setting they encountered.

Although participants expressed admiration and appreciation for select employers that they felt supported by and enjoyed working with, they also spoke of experiences with employers whom they felt demonstrated little care of understanding of their work. Specifically, participants expressed feeling unsupported by those employers who were unable or unwilling to help them when they encountered challenges or needed assistance.

My boss he's like, well like I said before, you know, we can't do it. And I'm like, Yeah, but you're not answering the question. You're just going around it, I need, I need I need. I
need you to, like, help train me on how to handle this. And he’s like, Oh, well, you know, it's not really my job. I don't really understand how to handle that part of it. And I'm like, Well, then, what can I do?

Although it was reported by participants that experiences with what they perceived to be apathetic leadership occurred in various settings, it was specifically reiterated by three participants that their “negative boss” experience had occurred with one singular employer who happened to have hired three of them at different points over the course of the past few years. Moreover, it was noted and agreed upon that the location of the work played a significant role in the training and support provided to teaching artists and greatly impacted what participants perceived to be the quality of the leadership and the value placed on their work.

**Working in Schools**

At the top of the workshop, I made a comment about the study being concerned primarily with experiences in which participants were employed as teaching artists by an art organization, rather than those in which they were hired or employed directly by schools, be they K-12 public, private or charter schools, universities, or colleges. The purpose of this distinction was primarily for the sake of focusing the study, but it became a prominent discussion point throughout, as participants frequently reflected upon work completed in schools but spoke little of experiences completed at any other type of location. This was pointed out during a reflection following Exercise Five, when one participant commented on another’s drawing depicting a “classroom rug” as being indicative of schools being a first thing that came to
mind. In response, the participant who drew the rug expressed (and the others agreed) that simply put, work in schools dominated their teaching artist experience and therefore, their perspectives. Four of five agreed with a shared statement during this moment that “70%” of their work took place in public and private K-12 schools, most often in the form of short-term art residencies lasting between one week to one academic year. When asked to confirm that the school-based work being reported was indeed coming as a result of employment with an outside organization, four of five participants noted having only worked in schools via employment at an outside organization. The fifth participant reported experiencing their “first teaching artist job” at a private school which hired them directly to work as a “visiting artist” for a specific drama project. Aside from that experience however participants reported no other work in which they were employed directly by a school.

Participants expressed that their work in schools stood out most prominently not only because of frequency, but also because they were the employment experiences in which they received the least amount of training and support and yet encountered the most impactful challenges. Schools were reported as being the settings in which the least amount of information was typically available, the least number of tools and resources were provided, the least amount of preparatory time and training was allotted to them, and the least amount of support was felt. It was pointed out however, that often this seemed to be the result of a lack of information being provided to their employer by the school, which in turn impacted them as the teaching artists directly facilitating school-based programs.
Participants reported experiences at schools in which they felt “wholly unprepared” for what they were expected to accomplish, and spoke of feeling scared, nervous, and isolated during their school-based experiences. After Exercise Six, in which one participant used the verbal response “I’m gonna cut you….like your funds and stuff” it was revealed that the first part of the response, “I’m going to cut you” and the large and overbearing manner of the simultaneous embodied response was in fact a memory of an experience in a school in which the participant was physically assaulted by a student and no one was present to assist him. It admitted however, that the memory felt too specific and negative, and thus adding “like your funds and stuff” was the way in which the participant – in the moment – reflected upon his own response and shifted it to be more representative of his understanding of the broader context of the work.

Nonetheless, participants spoke at length about the high level of stress in school-based work, of being provided with little to no background information about the students they were to work with and recalled experiences in which they didn’t have any information about the context of the work other than the name of a school or classroom teacher. They shared stories of being left alone with unknown students for long periods of time, stories of being assigned work with students experiencing significant mental or behavioral health challenges (but no support to
address the process of working with said students) and stories of unpleasant, confusing, or apathetic encounters with school staff.

**Feeling Outsourced**

In a point of reflection however, it was noted and unanimously agreed upon by all participants that much of the challenge they encountered in schools had less to do directly with the school or employer as it did with the “outsourcing” context of the relationship between the two.

I feel like that the outsourcing issue is like, when, when people are outsourcing, it's because they have that lack. And like that, that empty space if they don't have literally like, the materials or the knowledge or the time. And so there's nothing to give when you when you hire somebody, and so like, the person comes in, and they're both looking at each other, like, Oh, I thought you had these things.

The term “outsource” surfaced numerous times throughout the study. It was used as an identifier to describe the experience of being a teaching artist, was applied to the context of the work at large, and was used to describe what employers (or schools via those employers) were doing whenever they hired a teaching artist. Participants expressed feelings of being “outsourced,” “freelance,” self-employed and perpetually the “new kid in town.”

During Exercise Four, one participant interpreted her own response as being indicative of the constant movement of their role from location to location and the feeling of having a lack of formal “space” where they “work.” This reflected a larger theme...
of the research experience concerning participants identities as employees and understanding of their teaching artist work as not just a “gig” they could find to get by or “stay connected to their art,” but a viable professional role (See Identity and Purpose).

When outsourcing surfaced in conversation and reflection, it was associated with feelings of being unprepared for the work but also of being “dropped” into the culture of their workplace. Participants spoke of the sensations and challenges that surface when one feels foreign or like “a visitor” in their workplace and reiterated numerous times the significance of being prepared to “understand the culture” of the location or group they were going to work with. As one participant stated, her biggest critique of the training she had received as a teaching artist was the lack of information provided to her about the varying spaces and youth she was working with. She reported feeling often as through “there’s a culture there I’m not privy to” – a feeling acknowledged by the remaining participants. The term culture was used in numerous ways throughout the research experience in reference to the culture of the students, the school itself, the culture of the institution they worked for, and of the neighborhoods in which they worked. When this was brought forward for reflection in a latter part of the day, it was agreed upon by the group that this awareness of cultures was a key element of their teaching artist work, and it revealed itself in different ways. They spoke to the frustration they had with organizations who held “assumptions of similarity amongst programs, place, student body” despite what participants perceived was wide variation in the cultures of the schools and organizations within which they had worked.

The issue of outsourcing was also discussed from an organizational and administrator perspective. Participants reflected frequently on their perceptions of the value placed on their role and on art from “the top down” and accredited some of the lack of training and support they
felt as being more evident of a lack of value in their work and in art than a lack of structure. One participant, who also held administrative responsibilities at an organization that employed teaching artists, spoke of a “outsourcing cycle” that she believed was occurring in the work. Noting the connection between available funding and hiring of teaching artists, she questioned whether the larger field of art education could break the cycle, as it was perceived by her and other participants that a lack of continual guaranteed funding for organizations in turn caused a lack of sustainability for teaching artist work.

Moreover, participants associated their feelings of being outsourced with a sense of having to adhere (as one participant wrote and performed in Exercise Three) to “numerous expectations” simultaneously, most of which were “out of our control.” Participants expressed feeling unable to meet varying expectations or being unaware of expectations until they “weren’t met,” and spoke of being overwhelmed by both the demanding nature and sheer number of expectations being put upon them at any given time. Specifically, participants spoke of expectations they felt were hard to meet, such as confidently facilitating a large group of unfamiliar young people, when there were little to no training or support being provided to help them along the way. This however was noted by the group as being just as much a consequence of being outsourced as it was a consequence of finding themselves in the role of the teaching artist unintentionally, which in turn meant they had undertaken little to no prior training or preparation for the role to begin with.
Responsibility

Throughout the research experience, participants frequently noted that the models of training and support received from employers were largely oriented towards the context of the specific program rather than the role of the teaching artist at large. Reflecting upon this point prompted a larger conversation regarding the concept of training and support as provided by an employer versus that provided through an independent institution, such as a university or institution offering degrees, certification, or professional development specifically for teaching artists. A question that surfaced numerous times was whose responsibility is it to train and support teaching artists? And amongst the participants there were varied perspectives. Some felt it was their personal obligation to train themselves, some felt it was on higher education to provide more affordable and accessible resources, some felt it was the field of art education who bore the responsibility, and some felt it was up to the institutions who hired teaching artists to prepare them for their work.

If I'm in a role where people have hired me to do a specific thing, then I believe that they have hired me because they think that I am, I am taking the steps to be in the best position to do that role. And not that they shouldn't always be trying to better their own teachers, because that's good for their own purposes, to make sure that they have well rounded teachers, but I think that they probably assume that if I'm taking on this role, then that is something that I'm taking responsibility for. And maybe I haven't felt, um, I haven't gotten to the point where, because I'm not doing it every day, it's not like my main source of income. So I don't feel the pressure of like, Oh, God, I need to, yeah, get better at this really quickly. Um, I do, I do have that feeling, it's just not like an overwhelming feeling for me to take like, steps to totally sign up for webinars and all that stuff. But if I did feel
that, like overwhelming feeling, I do think that that would probably the onus would be like on me. But also, that's just my personality, I guess, like, wanting to take responsibility.

Questioning who held responsibility for teaching artists training and support sparked a broader period of reflection upon the wide variations in structure and context participants experience in their work and the impact it has on them both professionally and personally. Participants noted for example, that amongst the group, “we all kind of seem to voice that, because there wasn't a lot of outside training for us, we all were trained at our jobs” and because of this, understanding of the work – and what constituted training and support for the work - was grounded in the specific approaches being encountered at any given time at any given place of employment.

Reflecting on Role and Practice

Participants made clear throughout the research experience that exploration of these research questions evinced the lack of opportunity provided to reflect purposefully on their practice and the role they play in the field of art education. Participation in the research was deemed beneficial and meaningful to teaching artists and demonstrated that:

1. Teaching artists are equipped to serve a larger and more direct role in their own training and support.
2. Art-based teaching methods, familiar to teaching artists, are an effective form of professional development.
3. Teaching artists are eager to learn more about their profession and have a stronger voice in the field.
**Identity and Purpose**

Within the first twenty minutes of the workshop, “I sort of became a teaching artist by mistake” was stated by a participant and promptly followed by laughter, nods and a comment by another participant that this experience was “common.” As the research experience progressed, participants reported time and again that they somehow ended up in the role by “accident,” or without direct intention. Questions were posed such as “how did I end up here?” and “what am I doing in this position?” Participants wondered aloud why they were drawn to the field, and each shared their own trajectory that brought them eventually to the work. All five had completed an undergraduate degree in art or performance but only one had intentionally returned to school to obtain a master’s degree in community art education. She reported doing so only after she was offered a teaching artist role unexpectedly during an arts administration internship and discovered she loved the work. Prior to that moment, she recalled not having heard of the teaching artist as a role or opportunity.

**A New Identity**

This sentiment was shared by the full group and each participant reported having only learned of the term teaching artist after observing it in a job description or having it applied to a position they took on. “I started identifying with the term teaching artist because of being hired as one three years ago, that was my job description. And it was the first time I think that I had ever heard that term, honestly.” Participants noted having become a teaching artist only to “stay close to the art that I care about” or because they had been a nanny or caregiver as a side job while performing and the two paths “collided” into one. They reported being unable to support themselves on their artistic income alone, so had either sought out or “accepted” alternative routes to both generate income and stay somehow within their field, discovering along the way a
passion and interest in the work. When asked explicitly how long they had identified as a teaching artist, only one felt it had been longer than five years, and two believed it had been for less than three years, or since they “began making most of their income” from teaching artist employment.

Because the experience of being a teaching artist was reported as being relatively new for most participants, it became a through line to the research experience. Participants noted their newness and the impact it had on their perceptions on training and support, and what they needed from their employers to be successful as teaching artists. They reported having received no prior training preparing them to be a teaching artist, other than that which was received “on the job.” They were collectively curious about the ways in which more experienced teaching artists prepared for the work and questioned how their supervisors navigated the range of experience amongst the teaching artists they employed. They also reflected upon the conflicting experience of being “highly skilled” in their artform but “freshly new” to teaching and expressed feeling as though they were either “between” roles or wearing “multiple hats” simultaneously.

This sensation of being “between” roles or identities surfaced repeatedly throughout the research experience in both witnessing of responses as well as reflection and discussion periods. On several occasions participants referred to their work in binary terms as uneven and split between art and education. Right away at the top of Exercise One, it was observed that participants were not “on even footing.” This was reflected upon later as participants feeling unconfident in their role as teaching artists, but also of feeling pulled between two different ways to think about their work. When a reflection discussion turned to perceptions on the role of teaching artists in the context of education, participants expressed feeling as though their work was often framed in “fancy education words” as opposed to the “language of the arts” familiar to
them. Participants recalled being asked what they were going to teach young people, only to feel wholly unprepared to answer the question in the vocabulary they felt was being expected of them. Note this passage of dialogue from the workshop which details this experience as well as a binary perspective of the work:

Participant A: This group was specifically looking for teaching artists. But then was looking for specific models in which the teaching, like they were looking for somebody [who] has an education background but has still a strong passion and can teach the art…but I felt so confused because I was like, you're not even, you're not even telling me what exactly you're looking for. You're just saying, what can you teach? So I felt like I was trying to sell something that I didn't know I needed to sell yet.

Participant B: Like, in the teaching artist spectrum. You're coming more from like, the artist side?

Participant A: Yes.

Participant B: Not so much closer to the teaching side.

Participant A: Yes.

Expressions of being unconfident, unprepared, new to the role, or unsure of things was noted to be a continual theme of the research experience. There was discussion of what identifying as a teaching artist implied for the participants personal and professional lives. Because none of the participants had intentionally sought a career in teaching their art, there were expressions of confusion and uncertainty about what their new role meant for their personal and professional lives.

There was however, a prominent through-line of participants expressing a passion, love, or interest in the work. They expressed and observed a desire to learn more about the role, to
understand the work more thoroughly, and referred to the role of the teaching artist as being one of comfort to them. Within all the Exercises, participants observed and reflected upon the sense of identity the group demonstrated with the term teaching artist. During Exercise Two, words such as “confident” and “active” and “energy” were used to describe what participants observed in others gestures or poses. One participant witnessed that everyone was “very comfortable that we’re the teaching artists and I saw that we understand the responsibilities that it carries.” During the sharing portion of Exercise Three, another participant reflected upon her identity as a teaching artist being intuitive.

Then a whole bit about identifying as a teaching artist, and I don't understand why or what exactly resonates because it's so intuitive. It is the same way these exercises are, it's just in the core of my being. And if I stopped thinking about it for 30 seconds, it just exists. And all the words are intertwined. Quite out, being open and ready are qualities we all seem to want to cultivate and embody.

Participants described the work of the teaching artist as (being) intuitive, inherent, or natural throughout the research experience, but most often during times of artmaking and reflection.

When sharing her visual art in Exercise Five, a participant reflected upon her observation of the group “listening and observing” and trying collectively to “define this mysterious space” that was “a part of them, and they were a part of it.”

Value, Skills, and Experience

Reconciling conflicting emotions, perceptions, and understandings of the role of the teaching artist within their personal and professional lives was a theme of the research.
experience that surfaced organically as participants reflected upon their artistic responses and discussed how models of training and support impacted their work. Participants spoke freely of the ways in which taking on the role of teaching artist altered their own understanding of their artistic practice, as well as the way in which their practice might be perceived by others. There was much discussion surrounding the practicality of the role, and what they perceived to be its instability. Participants wondered aloud about the financial context of teaching artist work and frequently expressed feeling unaware of what they should be making but believed they were underpaid in the work. For example, participants reported receiving no compensation for prep time, planning, or travel to and from their various employments. Participants expressed feeling a lack of sustainability in their work, of needing additional income and benefits, and spoke about the work being perceived by others as “not a real job.”

These reflections were situated in conversations regarding the larger challenges of being an artist in contemporary society, but there was also a long period of discussion in which the value of the work of the teaching artist, and subsequently of art education, was a focal point. Notions surrounding identity as a teaching artist and each participants ability to be successful as a teaching artist surfaced during this discussion and turned organically towards questioning whether artists should, could, or would seek further training to develop their skills as teaching artists. Overwhelmingly, participants believed they were skilled enough in the art forms to continue their work but would value additional training to develop their skills as educators. However, they were frustrated by the idea of needing to obtain additional training for work they already did and believed paying for training would not be feasible as they did not make enough income as teaching artists to afford additional costs.
When the question was asked “would you return to school for [teaching artist training],” it was quickly stated by one participant “I have so many feelings about this” and others quickly echoed they too had “much to say” on the topic of returning to school. Reflecting back to questioning who bore responsibility for teaching artist training, participants varied in their responses but agreed that asking or requiring artists to “prove” they could be teaching artists by completing programs or obtaining certifications felt “unfair” and inequitable as it would prevent many artists from pursuing the work. Participants reported being in the role “because they have no money” and expressed deep frustration with the idea of having to “pay for something I already do” if for example, they needed to return to school or pay for other forms of training or professional development. Participants also expressed feeling as though any need to formally train for the role would “push out” those artists who were already marginalized or underrepresented and would continue “the systematic cycle” of keeping “teaching artists who don’t look like their students” at the forefront of the field.

Significantly, participants also expressed frustration with feeling as though they weren’t skilled or “good enough” teaching artists despite the fact they were all trained and “highly skilled” in their art forms. They spoke of the value of experience versus that of academic attainment in the arts and questioned aloud why stating they were teaching their art wasn’t a “good enough” response for those questioning their practice or process as a teaching artist. While some openly acknowledged having more to learn, needing to improve their skills, or wanting to gain knowledge in their teaching, others felt they had “the tools they needed already” because of their artistic training and practice and believed they could be successful teaching artists simply by “teaching from the heart” because they “have the answers in us already.” Participants reported feeling discouraged by pressure to formalize their work as teaching artists by obtaining further
training and expressed enjoying and appreciating the ability to be a teaching artist while also having the freedom to “select jobs” that allowed them to still practice their art. While all participants reported interest in continuing the work, the full group also reported no desire or interest to teach “full-time” or as a certified teacher in an elementary or secondary school.

Figure 21

“I can’t wait to see what you come up with”

Participants also spoke often of the value of their work and expressed feeling as though the work of the teaching artist was not valued or respected as much as they believed it should be. They reported “defending” their newfound role and witnessing their identity as artists become “less important” to others once they began teaching. They also spoke of their work as being a way for schools, organizations, and the public to “check off a box” of supplying art opportunities to youth, in particular to underserved youth in urban environments. Participants also reported what they perceived to be a lack of respect or interest in their work when it took place in schools. One verbal response during Exercise Four, “I can’t wait to see what you come up with” and the tone with which it was delivered, was witnessed by others as being suggestive of the ingenuine interest they sometimes felt from others about their work. They reported teachers and staff at schools referring to their work with students as “break time” or “free time” from “real learning” and expressed feeling as though often they were they simply to allow “someone to say they offered art” even though they “didn’t care at all about the process.” Moreover, participants spoke of feeling immense pressure of school-based programs being “on their back” to be successful, which prompted them to perceive their work as being undervalued
as they were being expected to be successful enough to “validate” the programs they facilitated but were “not important enough” to receive adequate training or support along the way.

Throughout the whole of the research experience however, participants also acknowledged a recognition of the impact their newness to the work had on their experiences of training and support. And while they expressed and witnessed a need for additional training and support from their employers, they also shared an understanding that employers “cannot train you for everything.” Statements such as “my employer should not have to train me for my job” were made in the context of discussing whether it was a personal responsibility to seek out more training if this was a job an individual deliberately continued to pursue. Regardless of varying opinions on the question of responsibility, it was agreed upon numerous times that the deficits they felt and the challenges they experienced as teaching artists were a result of “not enough training in the educational” aspects of their work. They reported feeling the least confident in areas such as classroom management, student engagement, and helping all learners succeed regardless of skill or ability and spoke of these being areas in which further training would be beneficial.

Understanding of Purpose

Participants spoke often throughout the research experience of the educational aspects of their work as being the most unfamiliar. They spoke of the work being framed in a language that they did not know, and when a conversation arose regarding the task of composing one’s philosophy of teaching, it was said and agreed upon by three participants that they “would not know” how to do such a thing. “I never thought of this I guess when you are teaching artists, you need your philosophy of teaching.” Despite reporting they were unable to state their philosophy of teaching, participants also simultaneously expressed an awareness of their own approach to
their work as a teaching artist, as well as their understanding of what they believed the “purpose” of the work was. There was a long period of dialogue in which participants discussed what they considered to be the goals and intentions of the work, much of which referred to utilizing the process of artmaking to help youth develop broader skillsets. There was a debate in the middle of the workshop regarding use of the phrase “arts integration” and whether or not it was applicable to everyone in the group’s work. Some felt the work of the teaching artist was specifically purposed to provide arts integration programs, while others admitted they were unfamiliar with the phrase.

Similarly, there was debate regarding the application of social justice or activism themes to the work of the teaching artist. Participants spoke of granting youth a voice, of helping empower young people, of helping youth gain self-confidence and openly critiqued programs they felt were promoting oppression or underrepresentation. Yet, they also reported feeling as though framing their work as being directly oriented towards social justice bracketed them “into a box” and they expressed feeling wary of needing to always keep their work framed in a lens of social justice. They spoke at length about the relationship between their teaching artist experiences and work that promoted social justice and reported that a large amount of their work occurred with employers for whom the promotion of social justice through artmaking was a direct goal. That said, despite observing and expressing an awareness of their own interests, intentions, and sense of purpose in their role as teaching artists, participants frequently reported feeling unable to articulate their purpose. Feeling new to the role, unconfident in the educational aspects of the work, and unaware of the opportunities available to help them develop their practice and the ability to speak about it with others as were stated as reasons why participants felt unconfident in their ability to articulate the purpose of their practice.
Induction and Retention

Often within the discussion, participants referred to the newness of their role as a teaching artist, in particular its relationship to their understanding of the role in the broader context of art education. They expressed being unaware of how to learn more about their work and expressed a desire to find “a place” within a field. They spoke of the “career path” being a teaching artist provided, and how they had stumbled upon it accidentally but prior to those moments felt the career opportunity being a teaching artist provided was unclear. “It's not known as an option. Like as you can go and be this person [a teaching artist]. And this could be your profession and you still do your work [as an artist]. Participants expressed excitement and joy with their “discovery” that you can be an artist and a teaching artist at the same time and wondered aloud how they might find ways to strengthen and develop their practice. A desire to improve, strengthen or learn more about the work was expressed numerous times.

Despite the evident interest, participants reported a lack of contextual understanding of the broader field within which their work was situated and expressed feeling as though the field “exists but it doesn’t exist.” They expressed and witnessed a sense of being disconnected from others who may understand their work, isolated in their practice, and as though there was no form of advocacy for their work other than that they provided for themselves. The concept of advocacy, particularly the “self-advocacy” necessary to be a teaching artist surfaced often as did the concept of needing a broader network of support.

Reference to “seeking a network” in order to “find support” was made numerous times throughout the research experience. Participants spoke of their only networks and support systems being both “self-created” and “peer-led.” They expressed feeling as though they were relying solely on one another for resources, training and support and believed that one of the
strengths of the work was a natural comradery that developed between teaching artists who worked together in shared experiences. At one point, a participant stated, “I've also found that a lot of my only resources and getting better as a teaching artist from other teaching artists,” to which another participant replied “absolutely.” The rest of the group acknowledged an agreement to this statement as well.

*The Need for Reflection*

Overwhelmingly, conversations stemming from response to the key research questions revealed more dissatisfaction and critique of training and support received as teaching artists than accolade. Participants more readily spoke of challenges than opportunities and frequently expressed and observed how unprepared they felt as teaching artists, stating their training was often lacking or nonexistent and that support was less common than they might have hoped outside of their self-created peer networks. In a follow up meeting however, one participant reflected that while her personal difficulty in articulating training models was in part due to lack of instances of training to draw from, it was also because she had never really thought about it before, stating “how odd it is I didn’t think of training before the workshop.” This reflects a larger theme of the research experience – *growth in awareness of the limited space or opportunity provided to teaching artists to examine and reflect upon their role and their practice*, particularly as it is situated in the larger field of art education. Additionally, this reflects a shared experience amongst participants of having arrived at or “fallen into” the role of the teaching artist “accidently,” and therefore moving into the role quickly and unexpectedly with little to no preparatory training outside of what they may have gained from other related experiences.
Conversations pertaining to the impact participant’s training as artists had on their teaching were limited; participants expressed an ability to observe the ways in which they brought their artistry to their teaching, but they did not express a broader understanding of how their artistic training supported or improved their role as a teaching artist. They did not speak of any ways in which their training as artists was evident in their own practice beyond noting memories of their own education in their artform that felt useless or antiquated. Participants noted however, this disconnect came from a lack of opportunity to consider or reflect purposefully on the impact their role as professional artists had on their role as teaching artists.

An overarching outcome of this research was a shared realization by nearly all participants that rarely, or never before, had they deliberately taken or been offered the time and space to reflect upon the training and support the received as a teaching artist. From the earliest minutes of the workshop, in which participants were invited to share their goals and intentions for participation, it was expressed that a primary incentive for joining the research experience was the opportunity it presented for participants to think critically about their work.

It is still a new thing and that's one of the reasons that I really wanted to come here is to kind of talk about it out loud and talk to other people about it, and kind of continue to discover what that role even means.

As the research experience progressed, participants noted repeatedly how grateful they were for their participation and how “rejuvenated” and “refreshed” they felt about the work after having the opportunity to reflect upon it purposefully. Noting this, participants unanimously agreed to a shared statement that one critical thing they lacked in their newfound role was a space or opportunity to discuss their work with others, reflect upon it and develop their practice with a network of support.
Culminating Discussion

As the workshop neared its completion, participants gathered to reflect upon their creations throughout the day, including all written work, visual works, and recorded videos of movement and drama pieces. They considered what they observed within their artmaking and how those observations related to their reflections and discussions. After review of all artwork and videos of artmaking were complete, participants began to consider what they felt the process of the research demonstrated about the models of training and support they received as teaching artists. During this discussion period, after a moment of silence, the first statement made was “do I want them [the public] to know how unprepared I feel? No, no I do not.” This response was met with laughter, but also prompted participants to note how feelings of being unprepared or unconfident permeated the day and their overall experiences as teaching artists. They agreed to a statement noting that their training as teaching artists “was not efficient” and that there was “room for improvement.” They also expressed believing that improvement could come from other sources such as “higher ed,” but also acknowledged a shared belief that even something such as the research experience at hand was a step forward as “until” support and training were offered more explicitly, “we can start here.” As such, participants recognized within the workshop the benefits of participation in the research and how it might apply to the development of a stronger training and support infrastructure moving forward.

Overwhelmingly however, participants reported believing that the lack of confidence and preparation they felt as teaching artists was an issue related to a lack of ongoing support more so than a lack of training. They unanimously agreed to one participant’s observation that a noticeable theme of the research experience was a shared feeling of “wanting more support than received.”
I would hope that [the public] would pick up on the support aspect that I felt like was kind of a trail through, both having and not having; the need of it would be something I'd want to want people to take away.

One participant also reported a newfound awareness after the research experience that support for teaching artists “doesn't have to be this complicated thing” but rather it was about “making like, an effort, we're realizing that you should make an effort” to provide teaching artists with more support. Participants also reported a culminating awareness of the lack of a network of support that was either provided to them explicitly or that they could discover on their own. One participant noted her most prominent question after the experience had to do “with networking, and how would I per se, as a white female, be in touch with other people from other demographics who also do this work?” Participants reported believing they were working within a field in which training and support was primarily peer-based and that this was “fine,” but they also wondered aloud whether programs such as certifications would help increase their network.

Despite these observations and feelings of a lack of support and inefficient training, participants unanimously agreed to a shared observation of a “clear, visible enthusiasm” for the role witnessed in participants responses. Participants reflected upon the care they each had for their work, and the evidence of that care that they believed was present in their commitment to the work and willingness to push through difficulties to continue in the role. They reaffirmed their appreciation for one another as resources and expressed newfound appreciation for employers they felt were providing teaching artists constructive models of training and support. They spoke of the benefits of coming together with peers to discuss their role and the challenges and opportunities they witnessed within it, and despite expressing and witnessing feeling “tired,” “burned out” and “exhausted,” they enjoyed the work and gained a sense of satisfaction and
fulfillment from it. They reiterated their desire to continue learning about their practice in a larger context, to continue developing and improving their own practice, and reported a hope that the role of the teaching artist would continue to become a more viable, visible, and promising career.

Film Creation

A significant element of this study is my own process as an artist-researcher. My position as an artist played a key role in the study as I was hyper-aware of the ways in which my artistic self was the leader of my actions and intentions. I chose the exercises we used in our study, facilitated each of them as well as the reflection and discussion periods, and served as the artistic leader of a collaborative process. My position as a researcher however, and the melding of the roles as the artist-researcher, was also primary. As I underwent the process therefore, of reviewing repeatedly the materials and documentation of the study, I fully recognized my process of synthesis was a hybrid model. I followed a logistical, categorical process related to “coding” but also considered how the materials and documentation came together cohesively to tell the most accurate story of the study. In short, I was aware of the ways in which our collective process (of responding, reflecting, and discussing) as well as my independent process (of assembling experiences and information) could be expressed and presented in artistic form.

When we gathered for our final culminating discussion, I specifically asked the group what moments, materials, or documentation from the study they would choose to include in a video encapsulating the experience. It was suggested immediately to maintain the tableaus from Exercise Six, because they “kind of told the whole story.” It was also suggested the need and “having and not having” of support be a maintained element, depicted in numerous fashions in responses and reflections. It was noted by the group it would take longer than one hour to put
together a final presentation they believed captured the day, but that the materials as collected would be a vivid presentation of their understanding of the research questions.

When it came time to create the video, my artist-researcher position became even more evident. Like a storyteller, I felt responsible for bringing the participants' experiences and understanding of the study, as well as my own, into a singular form. Although video is admittedly not an art-form I strongly identify with, it felt most appropriate to use for the final presentation of the study as it would allow a view into the experience that words on paper alone could not depict. It also allowed for a multi-sensory understanding of the research process itself and makes evident the results of the process are not linear but layered. To that end, as the artist-researcher, I specifically edited documentation to align for the purpose of presentation; but I also experienced moments in which the natural and organic interplay of the material and documentation were beautifully revealed with little editing on my behalf or none at all.

As example, in the earlier section of the film, I extracted clips of the exercises and extracted comments directly from reflection and discussion periods and embedded them together. Sometimes the extracted comments were deemed by me to the best summarization of the process, but sometimes they were comments made by participants while witnessing the video recordings of the exercises, either in the workshop or during follow-up meetings. In this sense, the film is both an artistic interpretations on my behalf as well as that of participants.

There were also several moments in which I was surprised by the natural interplay of the results. The most poignant example of this is the end of the film, in which the poetry that begins “accidents, coincidences, happenstance” is embedded within the video footage of Exercise Six, tableaus. This piece of poetry stuck out to me considerably, as it seemed to contain nearly every major point brought forth throughout the study. Noting that the tableaus were also suggested by
participants to “tell the whole story” I decided one day to align the footage of the first tableau created with the poem, and to my artistic amazement, the two pieces (the audio recording of the poem and the video footage of the tableau creation) aligned nearly perfectly.

By this, I do not mean they aligned perfectly in a technical sense, but rather in a sense of presentation and reflection – the words of the poem gave meaning to the movement of the tableaus, and vice versa. Moreover, the inclusion of my own hand briefly in the far-right edge of frame, (a moment I first scowled at as an amateur recording error) became no longer an “error” to be a cut but a moment of artistic presentation as my hand landed simultaneously with the word “expectations.” Being that we as a collective whole had discussed the prevalence of the expectations put on teaching artists coming from numerous individuals, seen and unseen, at any given time, the poignancy of an unidentifiable hand controlling the groups movement from afar was impactful.

A similar alignment occurred with the recording of the second tableau and the final reflection comments embedded at the end of the film. While these comments were made during our culminating discussion after watching the video footage of the tableaus, they were never aligned together in the moment by the group. Rather, I witnessed within the tableaus, movements, gestures, and actions of the group that depicted the story of the comments clearly. Integrating them together allowed the words to give meaning to the movements, and vice versa, but it also again demonstrated a natural alignment of the process that I did not dictate. As an example, the participants falling to the ground at the end of the film was observed by the speaking participant as being as indicative of teaching artists being exhausted, but this comment was not stated in real time with the video as presented. Rather I set those elements side by side, and together they reinforce their own connectivity.
Moments such as these, in which one element of the study interplayed with another element to provide a more nuanced and accurate representation, occurred throughout the whole of the research process. My position as an artist-researcher, responsible for both the systematic review of information as well as its presentation, reiterated for me the value found in synthesizing information from not just one, but multiple senses, and confirmed my initial belief that use of art-based research methods grants participants, artist-researchers, and the public viewer a multi-sensory understanding of inquiry that can be experienced, felt, and seen. The excerpts of video and audio footage I chose to include, or not include, speak to my own understanding of what the process evinced for participants as well as me. Finally, the need to create a film that was viewable in a short-time period gave me an opportunity to distill important points from my longer written account of the study, and include only those pivotal responses, reflections, and discussion points that together present the research study as a whole.

**Summary of Outcomes**

Art-based inquiry that explored the key research questions yielded the following results:

**What models of training and support do teaching artists receive?**

1) teaching artists do not receive consistent training or support; 2) teaching artists struggle to identify models of training
received; and 3) teaching artists are seeking more support. **What are teaching artists perspectives on the efficacy of those models?** 1) teaching artists believe the training and support received is inefficient; 2) teaching artists feel unstable and isolated in their practice as a result; and 3) teaching artists believe effective models include the presence of a supervisor, adequate resources, and collaboration with other teaching artists.

Most significantly, teaching artists believe exploration of these research questions evinced the lack of opportunity provided to reflect purposefully on their practice and the role they play in the field of art education. Participation in the research was beneficial and meaningful to teaching artists and demonstrated that: 1) teaching artists are equipped to serve a larger and more direct role in their own training and support; 2) art-based teaching methods, familiar to teaching artists, are an effective form of professional development; and 3) teaching artists are eager to learn more about their profession and have a stronger voice in the field.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore teaching artists’ perspectives on the efficacy of the training and support they receive. Results of the study reiterate a paradox in the literature between the forward momentum of the professionalization of the teaching artist role and the challenges teaching artists continue to face. Evident growth in accessible resources and services to support the growing profession contradicts the continual experience of teaching artists feeling isolated and unsupported in their work and reflects ongoing challenges of the profession. Significantly, results support literature addressing the benefits of utilizing art-based methods for educator led action research and professional development. Participants believed their experience in the study was beneficial and applicable to their own growth and development as teaching artists. They reflected positively upon the collaborative aspects of the study and the benefit of using familiar processes of artistic inquiry to garner further insight into their practice. Results of this study suggest participatory art-based research is an effective method for granting teaching artists a more active role and stronger voice in the dialogue surrounding their profession.

Implications, Questions and Future Research

Continuity of Challenges Despite Development of Field

Results of this study directly reflect much of the literature documenting the experiences of teaching artists and the many challenges they face. Participants reported having numerous employers and working locations simultaneously, therefore encountering wide variations in approaches to teaching artist practice, supervision, training and support across the field. The majority of participants reported working or identifying as a teaching artist for five years or less and spoke of finding themselves in the profession indirectly or unintentionally, a common
trajectory into the profession as noted in the literature (Erickson, 2003; Rabkin et al., 2011; Reeder, 2009; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Snyder & Fisk, 2016; Stanley, 2013). Participants collective experiences reflect the employment instability and unclear induction pathways challenging teaching artists for decades. With such evident advancement of the field, it is worth questioning further why these challenges remain intact so firmly.

Woven throughout the study were expressions of emotions and perceptions impacted by notions of identity and purpose of the professional role of the teaching artist. Participants expressed feelings of isolation in their work and reported a lack of awareness of the professional nature of their role and its historical context within education. They also expressed being unaware of the resources and opportunities for development that already exist to support them. Participants expressed exhaustion with what they perceived to be an instable career path, but also expressed great satisfaction and fulfillment with the work and deep interest in learning more about their role and improving their practice as teaching artists. Expressions such as these are consistent with literature documenting teaching artists perspectives on their purpose and identity, their experiences in the field, and their interest in developing a firmer understanding of their growing profession and its positioning within the field (Booth, 2015; Campbell, 2017; Levy, 2019; Makol, 2011; Stanley, 2013; Rabkin et al., 2011). Significantly, participants in this study acknowledged a lack of voice and power they felt in the field, which reflects teaching artists’ feeling undervalued in their profession and reiterates recent examples of toxic relationships between teaching artists and their employers (Jaffe, 2015; Saraniero, 2004; TAG, 2021).

**Training and Support Accessibility**

Participants unanimously agreed their most beneficial experiences of training and support occurred when employers had the infrastructure in place to provide them both robust pre-
employment training and ongoing regular support of a supervisor, mentor, or co-teaching artist. Participants also felt the location of their work, the leadership style of their employer, and the duration of their employment all played a role in the training and support they received. The benefits of these models and the impact of employers and leadership are well noted in literature addressing teaching artist professional development and training (Powell, 2004; McCaslin & Cohen, 2004; Rabkin et al., 2011; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Saraniero, 2009; Snyder & Fisk, 2016; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Watts, 2003). Participants struggled however, to articulate what models of training were provided to them and spoke more often of deficits in the provision of training and support than positive impact. They expressed feeling often underprepared for their work and did not report any participation in external resources to supplement training and support offered to them by their employers.

Although teaching artists expressing feeling unprepared for their work is not unique to this study (Erickson, 2003a, 2003b; Rabkin et al., 2011; Reeder, 2009; Risner & Anderson, 2015; Saraniero, 2009; Snyder & Fisk, 2016; Stanley, 2013), we are able to observe a contradiction between the abundance of currently available resources for teaching artists to participate in professional development and their awareness of these resources. Participants in this study questioned needing to obtain additional credentials for work they were already undertaking and notably felt that paying for additional training was out of the question. All of which is similar to findings in the literature concerning teaching artists perspectives on seeking additional training for their work (Anderson & Risner, 2012; Jaffe; 2012; Rabkin, 2012; Saraniero, 2009; Snyder & Fisk, 2016).
Teaching Artists as Artist-Researchers

Teaching artists are participating fully in art education yet remain on the periphery of the policy driven professional development that supports educators improving their practice through the schools that employ them. Results of this study demonstrate that teaching artists can use artistic inquiry to collaboratively discover further knowledge about their role, practice, and purpose in the field. This directly supports literature addressing the benefits and growing interest in K-12 professional development models that are both teacher-created and teacher led (Allison, 2013; Huddy & Stevens, 2010; Johnson et al., 2019; Schmid, 2019). Use of artistic inquiry by the participants and me supports literature demonstrating the benefits of utilizing participatory research methods as a form of professional development (ECS, 2021; Kunt, 2020; West, 2011. The process of participating in this study was expressed as being beneficial as it illuminated for participants the lack of space and opportunity provided to them to reflect purposefully on their role. Literature concerning teaching artist training suggests that purposeful reflection is an effective tool for development (Powell, 2004; McCaslin & Cohen, 2004; Rabkin et al., 2011; Saraniero, 2009; Simpson-Steele, 2018; Watts, 2003), yet participants feel as though opportunity to be reflective is lacking in their practice. Increased inclusion of artistic inquiry in collaborative spaces as a form of training grants teaching artists the same space and opportunities for reflection they provide to their communities of learners.

Future Research and Guiding Questions

Historical context of the professionalization of the role provides evidence of the many reasons why offering teaching artists training and support does not automatically result in teaching artists making use of it, unless it is provided in such a manner that is affordable and accessible in relation to the fluid employment context of the teaching artist profession. Results of
this study suggest that further attention be paid to the training provided by employers of teaching artists. Additionally, further research is suggested examining how the field of art education is supporting those employers in their role as the providers of professional development for the teaching artists they hire. If teaching artists are to improve their practice, and the responsibility lies with them as free-lance employees, then providing ample opportunities for professional development through the many available programs, workshops, and sessions is a positive step forward. If however, teaching artists – especially those new to the field – are struggling to get by financially, are balancing numerous positions and employers simultaneously, and are already feeling undervalued and unsupported, expecting them to improve their practice on their own time and at their own cost feels like an oversight at best.

Moreover, it directly contradicts the philosophy of using the arts as a means towards equity and empowerment and disregards teaching artists capacity to ignite that empowerment. It also neglects their need as professionals to be supported in the development of their practice by the organizations that employ them. It is clear teaching artists need and desire improved models of training and support in order to sustain themselves and their profession and a beneficial place to receive that training is at their income-generating work. Results of this study suggest future research concerning the development of teaching artist training that is art-based, self-created and led, and on-the-job is a promising next step in the continual development of the infrastructure supporting the teaching artist profession. Additional research exploring how prepared employers of teaching artists are to provide professional development is also suggested, as those organizations bear some responsibility for training the teaching artists they employ. Since many supervisors of teaching artists also practice in the field, it stands to reason they possess the tools necessary to support teaching artists in the creation and implementation of their own artistic
inquiry and professional development. Do we however, have the time and economic resources necessary at our places of employment to undertake this successfully? Questions such as this, as well as those outlined below, are recommended as guideposts towards future research examining opportunities for strengthening work-based training and support for teaching artists.

Questions

- How can the field of art education better address the lack of training and inadequate support teaching artists feel they receive from their employers? How can teaching artists voice and capacities be more thoroughly represented and respected in their training and support?
- How can the field of art education develop stronger work-based training models that extend beyond the scope of the specific position to the broader contexts of teaching artist practice?
- How might development of paid on-the-job training impact the funding cycles of the organizations who employ teaching artists as well as the economic and professional stability of teaching artists themselves?
- How can the field of art education better promote its own philosophies by increasing its use of art-based methods in development of teaching artist created and led professional development?

Limitations

Homogeneous Participants

The sample of participants in the study was homogeneous in several ways. All self-reported being between 25 - 35 years of age and all but one identified primarily as a theater or performance artist. One identified as Hispanic and the remaining four identified as Caucasian.
All participants but one reported having worked as a teaching artist for five years or less. The intention of the study was to have participants representing a range of disciplines, areas of interest, years of experience, and backgrounds. Despite recruitment efforts, the roster of participants did not represent the community as broadly as intended. However, this might also be related to issues with representation and diversity in the teaching artist community.

**Coronavirus Pandemic**

It would be neglectful to overlook the impact the coronavirus pandemic had on the experience of this workshop. There were pre-liminary impacts, such as delays to the workshop date and adjustment of methods to accommodate for social distancing and mask requirements. An outdoor private location became necessary after both first and second choices (in performing arts centers) remained closed. Most significantly however, the pandemic challenged the recruitment process since a large number of art organizations – the main source of my recruitment efforts – were closed, or their staff were furloughed, and thus I either received auto-reply messages of jobs no longer held, or nothing at all. I also felt it was harder to recruit those with whom I had no prior relationship, as choosing to work in close proximity with a group of strangers required a trust newly influenced by public health. Finally, it was noted by participants that because they had been out of work for nearly six months at the time of the workshop and follow up meetings, their reflection on the process and responses to the research questions might have been different had they been actively practicing when the study took place. While this is not necessarily a limitation, the pandemic impacted participants’ current teaching artist experiences as well as their participation in the study.
Conclusion

This art-based research study examined training and support provided to teaching artists through exploration of the following questions: 1) What models of training and support do teaching artists receive? 2) What are teaching artists’ perspectives on the efficacy of those models? Results of the study reinforce a paradox between the forward momentum of the professional role of the teaching artist and the challenges teaching artists continue to face. While there is growth in accessible resources and services to support the growing profession, teaching artists continue to feel isolated and unsupported in their work, which reflects ongoing instability in the profession. Significantly, results support additional research addressing the benefits of utilizing art-based methods for educator led action research and professional development. Participants believed their experience in the study was beneficial to their own growth and development as teaching artists. They reflected positively upon the collaborative aspects of the study and the benefit of using familiar processes of artistic inquiry to garner further insight into their practice. Results of this study suggest participatory art-based research is an effective method for granting teaching artists a more active role and stronger voice in the dialogue surrounding their profession.

As one participant noted, teaching artists use art-based practice in the communities they work with to collaboratively address challenges and discover community-led solutions. It is the recommendation of this author that the field of art education draw from its own assets and use art-based methods in collaboration with teaching artists to address the challenges teaching artists face more holistically. Teaching artists are critical to our current arts education workforce and should be treated as such. Results of this study demonstrate the capacity and drive teaching artists already possess to effectively make recommendations for the development of their
profession. As the teaching artist community and the responsibilities it holds in art education continue to grow, it would do well for the field of art education to look more carefully at ways in which teaching artists can be treated more respectfully as deserving professionals.

Strengthening the infrastructure to support teaching artists implies all obstacles and challenges to that profession must be addressed. Providing teaching artists more trust, compensation, and opportunity to use their assets of creative problem-solving and artistic inquiry raises the standing of teaching artists as professionals and promotes the stronger inclusion of their voice in the field. It is recommended therefore, that the field of art education undertake further research examining the economic viability of strengthening employment-based training and support for teaching artists that is designed and facilitated in collaboration with teaching artists and grounded in artistic inquiry. Development of training and support models that follow this recommendation recognizes teaching artists as vital to the future of art education and respects their growing profession.
Appendix A

Lesley University IRB Approval

DATE: 08/06/2020

To: Tessa Bry Taylor

From: Robyn Cruz and Ulas Kaplan, Co-Chairs, Lesley IRB

RE: IRB Number: 19/20-043

The application for the research project, “The Teaching Artist Experience: Strengthening Employment-Based Training for Teaching Artists Working in Youth Art Programs” provides a detailed description of the recruitment of participants, the method of the proposed research, the protection of participants’ identities and the confidentiality of the data collected. The consent form is sufficient to ensure voluntary participation in the study and contains the appropriate contact information for the researcher and the IRB.

This application is approved for one calendar year from the date of approval.

You may conduct this project.

Date of approval of application: 08/05/2020

Investigators shall immediately suspend an inquiry if they observe an adverse change in the health or behavior of a subject that may be attributable to the research. They shall promptly report the circumstances to the IRB. They shall not resume the use of human subjects without the approval of the IRB.
Appendix B

Invitation to Participate and Informed Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research project titled *The Teaching Artist Experience: Strengthening Employment-Based Training for Teaching Artists Working in Youth Art Programs*. The purpose of the research study is to examine how teaching artist training and support is effectively developed and applied within organizations that hire teaching artists.

**Participation:** The researcher is seeking four (4) to eight (8) teaching artists of any artistic background and discipline, currently or formally employed by an art organization offering youth programming, to volunteer as artist researchers in this collaborative art research workshop. The workshop will take place in Boston over a two-day period in June 2020, from 10am to 5pm each day. Each day will include several small breaks of at least ten minutes, as well as a one-hour lunch break. You will also be asked to complete a sixty to ninety-minute individual follow up meeting via online platform Zoom within eight weeks of the workshop. This follow up meeting will be scheduled based on your availability. You are being asked to commit to the full entirety of the workshop and follow up meeting, but participation in this research project is voluntary and you have the right to exit the study at any point and may abstain from any portion of the workshop or follow up meeting if so desired.

As a participant in this project, you will be considered a partner directly involved in the research process as it unfolds over the two-day workshop period and individual follow up meetings. As a partner, your own understanding and reflection upon the entirety of the process will be considered valuable, relevant, and applicable to the outcome of the study.

**Procedures:** Within this research project, you will be asked to collaboratively explore the issue of teaching artist training and support and create original works of art in response to the exploration. The workshop will consist of group discussions, group and individual reflections, and group and individual art making prompts and activities including free movement exploration, poetry and free-writing composition, visual art creation, drama exercises including non-verbal and verbal acting, role play and interpretation, dramatic scene creation, and individual art creation in whatever art form you prefer. You will have a wide variety of visual art materials available to you and are welcome to bring to the workshop any art materials or instruments you may prefer to use. The entirety of the workshop and follow up meetings will be both audio and video recorded (by a professional videographer) as well as photographed by the student researcher.

**Benefits and Risks:** The benefit of your participation is an opportunity to contribute to the growing literature on teaching artist training, to network with other teaching artists, to gain a stronger awareness of your own practice, desired trajectory, and the current landscape of teaching artist employment, and to create original art. The central focal point of the study will concern your perspectives on the training and support you have received from art organization employers; the nature of the artmaking process will however plausibly present other challenges and opportunities associated with your work. You will receive a copy of the dissertation when complete. There are no known risks associated with participating in the study. Any current state
and local guidance and protocols pertaining to the covid-19 virus, including but not limited to use of masks, social distancing, and limitations on indoor gatherings, will be taken into consideration during the course of this study.

**Confidentiality, Privacy and Anonymity:** The entirety of the workshop and follow up meetings will be both audio and video recorded (by a professional videographer) as well as photographed by the student researcher. Only participants and the videographer will have access to audio and video recordings, which will be held in a secure shared drive throughout the workshop and follow up meetings. Following the research process, all recordings and materials will be moved to a secure hard drive kept within the researcher’s home for five (5) years-time, after which it will be destroyed. Video recordings, audio recordings, photographs, and art created throughout this research project are subject to public review in the results of this study and any future use of materials from this study will require your consent. Any art you create will be returned to you after the research process. You will not be asked to identify your employer and names of all art organizations will remain anonymous in the results of this study.

Individual follow up meeting responses as well as audio and visual recordings will be kept confidential and will be secured via an encrypted digital file held by the student researcher. You may request that any portion of your individual follow up meeting be redacted either during the meeting or afterwards.

As a participant, you have the right to be identified and have your art identified. You may also authorize the use of only specific material that would identify you as a participant in the research. You also have the right to remain anonymous. If you elect to remain anonymous, your identification, records and art will be kept private and confidential to the extent allowed by law. A pseudonym rather than your name will be used on study records and other facts that might identify you will not appear when presenting this study or publishing its results.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher, Tessa Bry Taylor, (tbry@lesley.edu), or her faculty supervisor, Shaun McNiff (smcniff@lesley.edu).

*There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu.*

**Signatures**

*I am 21 years of age or older. The nature and purpose of this research have been satisfactorily explained to me and I agree to become a participant in the study as described above. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time if I so choose, and that the investigator will gladly answer any questions that arise during the course of the research.*

Participant Signature ___________________________ Print Name _____________ Date _______

Investigator Signature ___________________________ Print Name _____________ Date _______
Appendix C

Participant Poetry, Spoken Word, and Freewriting

Figure 23

Participant A Freewrite Response

I always try to preplan my response to these exercises. I know what I’ll pick in advance, and I always tell people not to when I lead them. Remembering the act of training and supporting is so lovely, and emotionally all comes back even when it is imaginary. I identify as a teaching artist but have never understood why or what resonates. But the words do & the actions follow naturally and immediately so logically there are answers. I also just to be and exist and walk around the space and see other people. Also existing and being it’s the physical version of the conversation from the morning.
Figure 24

Participant B Freewrite Response

Plotting in the shadows
we discuss the importance of our livelihood.
The ups, the downs
Our smiles our frowns
The miserable times, we remember as good.
Stepping to the light
we stir up our passion
Embodying the moment, right
even with the newly added fashion.
Healing now it’s on us to share our
Figure 25

Participant C Freewrite Response

Translating physical experience.

By putting a physical reaction to a word or complicated concept, I felt more able to understand my own associations and underlying feelings about the topics we discussed. For example in the way I embodied “support” (by getting on my knees and raising my arms above me) I was able to realize that supporting someone else can often feel as though it puts you in a lower position (taking to knees) not in demeaning way, per say, but in a way that takes energy and mobility away from the one doing the supporting. As a teaching artist it is important to feel as though you are also receiving resources that support you as you support your students.
Figure 26

Participant D Freewrite Response

Accidents, coincidences, happenings.
Actors’ Training for Academia
Support is a dream, a possible one.
It’s a solo game.

The training, like our paths to it through this career, is solely individual.

What we bring to the table is a synthesis of all our training as artists and working with teachers.

It feels like a solo game. We’re each our own island as we do what we can to influence each other.

We’re hired for our work as individuals, then expected to translate that knowledge to our students while adhering to numerous expectations both in and out of our control while

scouring our tools we need to accomplish that translation.
Figure 27

Participant E Freewrite Response

It already feels like we're not together
Just limited instruction because we all know
what we're doing.
You just gotta tell us & we move.
The word teaching artist carries a responsibility
I saw in our bodies.
It was like I knew what each pose was; why.
Training was harder, because it felt personal.
It is not a one school of thought.
Sometimes it's not even a school.
Support was the same. It can come from
Who knows where, if it comes.
But then we go back to "teaching artist."
We're all ready, comfortable, standing up.
We're open, we're looking, we're listening,
We're doing what we're asking students
to do. I feel like it's a teaching artist.
Personally, I want to get it right in the first try.
But here I am reminded that there is
No right answer... if just is & that's correct.
Appendix D

Link to Short Film

Short film created by the artist-researcher
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