

## Mentor's Introduction to Nicole Johnson

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I am delighted to introduce the dissertation research of Dr. Nicole Johnson. Nicole's study focuses on how new art teacher educators navigate the various and sometimes uncertain and conflicting roles and responsibilities that characterize the professional lives of full-time art education faculty in higher education.

Accepting a full-time faculty position at a college or university is often a pivotal and deservedly celebratory point in an art education doctoral student's career trajectory. But after an extended period of intense personal and intellectual growth while completing the degree, the early years of becoming a teacher of art teachers as a new faculty member in higher education can be fraught with unforeseen challenges. Cultural and educational theories and art-based and social-political stances that fueled graduate seminars may not so easily spark the interests and passions of younger generations of preservice art and classroom teachers. In these cases, new faculty may need to make on-the-spot diagnoses of their teaching or seek advice from experienced colleagues in adjusting their content and approaches to respond to the diverse and specific needs of their students. More broadly, new college faculty members in art education, like their early career colleagues in other disciplines, often arrive in

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their positions without much understanding of college and department/program expectations for the other crucial markers of continuing employment (and promotion and tenure). These other markers typically encompass—beyond excellence in teaching and student advising—impactful service and leadership roles within the institution and externally in the academic field and the community, and consistent production of scholarship or creative output that is highly regarded and well recognized in the field.

Nicole takes this transitional, transformative space of faculty roles and responsibilities within the higher education landscape—here, specifically, teaching and preparing art teachers for art classrooms or classroom teachers for incorporating visual art experiences in their teaching—as a fertile grounding for her case study of early career art teacher educators. Her conceptual focus merges theories of relational dialectics, creative tensions, and constructivist processes of becoming through experience. The dissertation is a richly detailed description of new art teacher educators’ backgrounds and preparation, their evolving teaching practices and understandings of themselves as emerging teachers of future art teachers and artists, their roles as citizens within their departments and their wider college communities, and their identities as developing scholars who create and disseminate new knowledge in the fields of art, cultural studies, education, and related disciplines.

Nicole’s findings about early career art education faculty members’ teaching practices highlight the creative tensions of new art teacher educator identity-building as weaving together a constellation of related, critical dimensions—including credibility and legitimacy as an authority or expert (as teacher of art students, as teacher of art teachers, as widely and deeply knowledgeable expert in the field of art education). Her study shows how new art teacher educators develop strategies to both transform and reinforce their practices in response to their particular professional/career tensions. In illuminating how these challenges and tensions can, in fact, be *creative* and *productive* and lead to significant professional growth, Nicole’s work contributes a great deal to the still under-studied area of art teacher educator development and provides new, critical directions for continuing research.