



LEARNing Landscapes

*Artful Inquiry: Transforming
Understanding Through
Creative Engagement*

Spring 2016 Vol. 9 No. 2

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Statement of Purpose



LEARNing Landscapes™ is an open access, peer-reviewed, online education journal supported by LEARN (Leading English Education and Resource Network). Published in the spring and autumn of each year, it attempts to make links between theory and practice and is built upon the principles of partnership, collaboration, inclusion, and attention to multiple perspectives and voices. The material in each publication attempts to share and showcase leading educational ideas, research, and practices in Quebec, and beyond, by welcoming articles, interviews, visual representations, arts-informed work, and multimedia texts to inspire teachers, administrators, and other educators to reflect upon and develop innovative possibilities within their own practices.

Review Board (Vol. 9 No. 2)

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Editorial

Inquiry ... requires more than simply answering questions or getting a right answer. It espouses investigation, exploration, search, quest, research, pursuit, and study. It is enhanced by involvement with a community of learners, each learning from the other in social interaction. (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2007, p. 2)

Artful inquiry infuses passionate exploration with the arts. As such, it honours that,

There are multiple ways in which the world can be known ... The forms through which humans represent their conception of the world have a major influence on what they are able to say ... (and) ... inquiry will be more complete and informative as we increase the range of ways we describe, interpret, and evaluate the ... world. (Eisner, 1991, pp. 7–8)

his issue of LEARNing Landscapes is the largest to date since the inception of the journal in 2007. We were delighted with the response to the call for this issue and excited by the variety and depth of the contributions. It is heartwarming to witness the high interest in artful inquiry that transcends the globe (Australia, Canada, Greece, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, and the United States), and the growing realization that artful ways of seeing, doing, and portraying offer excellent potential for teaching, learning, and transforming our educational systems and society. The arts in their various modalities build relationship and community, encourage risk taking, foster innovation and multiple ways of understanding, and enhance engagement and reflection. The commentaries and articles provide evidence for these claims.

Invited Commentaries

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, the Emily Hargroves Fisher Professor of Education at the Harvard School of Education (HGSE), is a renowned sociologist, teacher, and researcher. She has taught Sociology of Education for over four decades to enraptured and appreciative graduate students who line up to take her classes. As well, she has contributed greatly to the evolving nature of qualitative research through her methodology known as “portraiture,” which made its debut in 1983 in her pivotal book entitled, “The Good High School.” She was able to show in this work, and subsequently, how art and inquiry are combined to produce a textual portrait that is rich, authentic, aesthetic, relational, and rigorous, one that has resonance for others, and is conducted according to the highest ethical standards. In her engaging interview, she describes the roots and characteristics of portraiture and some of the

challenges she faced as her methodology broke research barriers in those early years and helped to spawn the subsequent art-based research movement which continues to flourish today. She discusses her teaching of portraiture at HGSE and offers some critical recommendations to researchers who are keen to pursue portraiture as a methodology for their work. We are privileged and honoured to have interviewed her in person, and to be able to include her in this issue. **Patricia Leavy**, author and independent researcher, writes about the unique capabilities of fiction in teaching and learning. She argues that fiction is a genre of artful inquiry that can transform understanding and deepen learning inside and outside of classrooms. Fiction offers wide-ranging accessibility so that it can be enjoyed by many. Furthermore, she provides neurological evidence that suggests that the brain reacts to fiction more effectively than with any other genre. Her work supports the notion that narrative is a very particular way of knowing and understanding that clearly resonates with humankind (Bruner, 2002). **Melissa Proietti** is a youth worker and the street-art coordinator at James Lyng High School in Montreal. Our interview took place just outside the new exhibition space in which she and her students curated their first show in March. She discusses how her work got started when she introduced an urban arts after-school program at the school. She discovered how connected and engaged the students became when immersed in urban art, and began imagining how this kind of artful inquiry might be integrated into the school day. With support of the principal of the school, James Lyng became the first high school in Montreal to bring urban art into the school curriculum. Central to what she calls “urban pedagogy” has been the involvement of members of the urban art community in the program and the flexible and collaborative atmosphere in which she works with her students. Her important work has shown how responding to the environment through this form of self-expression has energized and motivated students who otherwise had been marginalized. These three commentaries link effectively with the artful inquiry submissions from both researchers and practitioners that follow. As usual, the articles are presented in the alphabetical order of the authors, but presented thematically in this editorial.

Recognizing That Relationship Is at the Heart of Artful Inquiry

Caine, Sommerfeldt, Berendonk, and Compton explored questions of personal and professional identity alongside nursing students using artful inquiry involving poetry to inquire into their own experiences. It was in these inquiry spaces that silenced stories and voices percolated to the surface. These authors suggest that the core dimensions of artful inquiry include playfulness, imagination, and literal or metaphorical “world traveling.” They suggest that in order to develop these dimensions, a strong sense of relationship among the participants is needed. This encourages

risk taking, which in turn embraces vulnerability and generates multiple ways of seeing and doing. **Clarke/Keefe** and **Gilway** describe an artful inquiry process that Clarke/Keefe developed called “somatography.” Drawing from the expressive arts and a/r/tography, a coming together of art and graphy, or image and word” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005), somatographic inquiry cultivates embodied research practices that explore sociocultural lives through artmaking, while actively integrating body and mind. Integral to these processes is working relationally. **Pithouse-Morgan, Coia, Taylor,** and **Samaras**, who are from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and different countries, describe their self-study in which they integrated artful research into practices that resulted in pictures, audio products, and a dance video. This “polyvocal research jamming” required reciprocal vulnerability, shared improvisations, and joyful exploration, all of which occurred because of the trusting relationship that developed among them. Indigenous ways of thinking and doing have always been relational and artful (Wilson, 2001), and as such, there are many parallels between indigenous methodologies and artful ones. **Buchanan, Donmoyer,** and **Makokis** share a research journey in which challenges and frustrations arose as a result of the different cultural expectations of indigenous participants and a non-indigenous researcher. During the process of inquiry they learned sensitively and profoundly from each other, and concluded the utmost importance of honouring and cultivating relational and collaborative interactions when attempting to do research in an indigenous cultural space.

Seizing Transformational Opportunities in Artful Inquiry

Adler and **Ippolito** discuss with excellent and poignant videotaped evidence, the tremendous transformative possibilities for using music to help change society, particularly in situations of extreme tension and consequence. With selected examples from the United States, Estonia, South Africa, the Middle East, former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland, they share multicultural initiatives that have helped to bring adversaries together, to heal, to combat poverty, to rehabilitate prison inmates, to protest, to build peace, and to foster reconciliation. **Lee** and **Gouzouasis** revisit autoethnographically the tragic story of a pre-service teacher, who as a result of a scandal, committed suicide. The narrative describes the powerful role that music can play in making sense of an experience, in providing the impetus to “get the story out,” and in portraying this process. **Timothy** calls it “discovering my left hand” when he describes movingly how he moved from a staunchly quantitative research stance to a qualitative one through artful inquiry. This transformation occurred when he and others were working with a visiting Fulbright Scholar in his homeland Nigeria. He draws parallels among the taboo of left-handedness, the predominance of quantitative

research, and a rigid English language curriculum in his country. He contrasts these with the transformative potential he now recognizes exists in artful research and inquiry-oriented curricula. **Wiebe** posits that the grand narrative which portrays the teacher as “superhero” maligns teacher voice, arrests agency, and hinders efforts to promote difference, ambiguity, and doubt. His antidote for this is a deep engagement with the arts, which he argues can disrupt these strongly engrained notions about education and create spaces for transforming schooling and imagining the world differently.

Promoting Aesthetic Literacies

The arts offer multimodal approaches for thinking and doing which mediate understanding in important and various ways. They are what might be called aesthetic literacies which engage students, stretch learning, and frequently help students having difficulties. **Bogard** worked with students whom he came to call the “drama kids” in a summer youth program. He describes how through reading response to drama that these students became engaged and critical consumers, and ultimately, producers, of theatre texts while making complex design decisions that shaped embodiment and performance. Their work contributed to higher order thinking skills and problem solving. It cultivated an aesthetic literacy which he argues is extremely important and so often disregarded in an era of core standards and accountability. **Christopoulou** shares with examples how she used graffiti, digital photography, and digital video production to encourage students to express and deal with their concerns about their transition from elementary into secondary school. The students’ work not only gave them confidence about entering high school, but also helped them to work through potential challenges which made them more competent and resilient. **Baska** and **VanTassel-Baska** describe how they used artful inquiry with “gifted” children with special needs. Their approaches increased motivation among the students and enhanced performance and, at the same time, permitted them through this kind of teaching and learning to identify needs that they argue might have been missed otherwise. They conclude with guidelines for their inquiry approach. **Gray** and **Thomson** discuss the artful approaches that were incorporated into “Touched by the Earth,” an Australian, year-long experiential, place-based program for “gifted” students in year seven and eight which involves cross-curricular studies in geography, history, and science. They show how the program develops pro-environmental learners supported by an ethically responsible pedagogy, or “ecopedagogy,” which incorporates the arts in an outdoor classroom and builds deep connections with the Earth. **Grushka** and **Bellette** describe their experience with a participatory inquiry project using photo-media and e-journals to develop interactive and reflective learning opportunities. They show examples of the e-journals created by the students and how artful inquiry accommodated critical and reflective actions

that resulted in new and creative outcomes. **Neddeau** describes how he integrated movement in the form of “human sculptures” along with close reading to engage fourth-grade students in vocabulary building. He demonstrates that because the students were co-creators in this non-threatening and multimodal process, they were engaged more deeply and successfully in the English language arts curriculum. Finally, **Lim** and **Sanford** share poignantly how they struggled with the assessment of visual arts-based work in terms of time, district requirements, and student-based constraints, while at the same time they remained very committed to the value of art and artful practices in the curriculum. They advocate strongly for ongoing, formative assessment that is supportive, encouraging, and informative, and for involving students in the assessment process. They elaborate with some suggestions on how to use prompts to stimulate discussion, how to integrate ongoing reflection, how to use portfolios meaningfully, and they propose some guidelines for assessment. In addition, they advocate for using video for ongoing documentation of students’ processes and for providing a space for a public sharing of the work. Last, but not least, **Ish** juxtaposes her past school experiences, where she sought art outside of school because of its dearth in classrooms, with those of her son’s most recent school experiences in which he disengaged and felt psychologically unsafe. She argues for the need to imagine alternative, creative, and safe spaces, and offers suggestions for how this could be done to cultivate “wide-awakeness” (Greene, 1978) and creativity among students.

Integrating Artful Inquiry Into Adult Learning Spaces

Interest in artful inquiry and the vast and growing digital technologies have helped to increase the use of artful approaches in adult education. However, there is still resistance by both teachers and students. Teachers who avoid it, suggest that it is “soft,” lacks rigour, and is difficult to assess. Students’ resistance comes from feelings that they are just “not artists” or that it is too risky. **Stock**, **Sameshima**, and **Slingerland** describe how they encouraged pre-service education students to create individual artefacts to represent their teaching philosophy. Their article shares with visual examples the creation of 90 material cloaks that formed the basis for metaphoric or symbolic representations of their teaching styles and experiences. They found a prevalence of “pre-packaged teaching narratives” representing the students’ visions of their future careers. They suggest strongly the need to encourage pre-service teachers to interrogate metanarratives that drive their identities and philosophies in order to develop sound pedagogical practice. **Lewis** offered co-authors **Wright-Harvey** and **Moisey**, as well as other pre-service teachers in a Global Education and Social Justice course, the choice to complete an arts-based or a traditional reading response assignment. She hoped to expose them to arts-informed approaches they

could use in their future classrooms, and encourage different learning styles while she engaged them in raising their consciousness about inequality. Her article highlights the work of two students and the reasons why one student chose an artful approach to her assignment and the other a more traditional route. She discusses the challenges she faced when grading arts-based work, and suggests strongly the need for more artful inquiry in the pre-service education curriculum. **Lima** shows with examples how he engages college-level students by integrating art into chemistry in his Art and Science Project. By using art to express their conceptual understanding, the students are able to see things in ways that differ from the usual formal representations. In addition, he posits that the arts teach students to see that the concept of absolute truth is neither scientifically nor epistemologically justified. **Fels** describes her work in performative inquiry with students in the university setting. She indicates how performative inquiry became a process of collaborative learning for both her and her students, in spite of some learned expectations that limited student willingness to experiment. As well, her encouragement of “stop moments” for reflection throughout the course, along with the creation of reflective electronic postcards, became vital sources for understanding her own practice. **Faulkner, Kaunert, Kluch, Koc, and Trotter** used journals, reflexivity models, collaborative poetry, and collage exercises to teach the concept of reflexivity to university students in a qualitative research methods course in media and communications. Excerpts from the students’ work show how they grappled and came to grips with the concept that reflexivity is fluid and ever evolving. **Molnar** and **Baergen** used artful inquiry with graduate students who were exploring what it means to be scholarly professionals. Students were invited to use papers, posters, portfolios, presentations, performances, and play as vehicles for their assignments. Examples are included to illustrate some outcomes of these endeavours. These authors share the challenges they faced when enticing students to pursue artful ways, but counter that these creative opportunities encouraged ownership of the work and resulted in deeper engagement and learning. **Schwind** and **Lindsay** used Arts-Informed Narrative Inquiry (AINI) in an exploration of person-centred care with nursing education students. These nurses engaged in the creation of a lifeline, metaphoric reflection, collage making, and the co-creation of art with music. The authors discuss each of the artful forms used and how they were able to overcome reluctance among some of the students through ongoing reassurance and careful guidance. They offer a resource website on how to use creative activities to enhance interactions with patients and some suggestions for future work. **CohenMiller** involved a group of academic women in examining the dynamics of academic writing while caring for their young babies through textual and visual postings on Facebook. She used narrative and poetic inquiry and word clouds to uncover common themes in their experiences. These revealed a complex array of conflicting feelings in trying to balance the

scholarly demands of academia and those of motherhood. Her work is corroborated with findings in the literature that suggest maternity leave, onsite childcare, and a climate that encourages women to take advantage of policies are important ways of alleviating these tensions.

Emphasizing the Collective in Artful Inquiry

Hancheruk, McBride, and Witzak share their artful inquiry project using self-portraiture accompanied by poetry that is featured in an audio file in the article. Their work was a process of reflection and a reaction to their teaching and learning over time—a space for engaging in matters of educational significance and mutual interest where they addressed learning touchstones as well as the difficulties that they have encountered in their teaching careers. They emphasize the significance of working together collaboratively, which resulted in a “group portrait” or *métissage* built on a willingness to take risks and be vulnerable. This provided a nuanced portrayal of their reflective journeys and gave them a deeper understanding of teachers, teaching, and learning. **Fraser** shares how two community-engaged art projects on ritual and memory merged and helped to inform her about her work with seniors. One was a project to memorialize the dead at a public event at a local cemetery. The other was the creation of digital stories by seniors, which proved to be challenging and immobilizing because the group members were striving to have their work live up to the very finished products portrayed in mass media. The solution was a media installation made up of individual postcards in memory of a loved one that together became a shrine in the cemetery, which included her own memorial to her father. Her work shows the power of the collective in producing a sense of community while celebrating each individual contribution.

Portraying Artful Inquiry

This cluster of articles is linked because they all contribute, in unique and varying ways, the important dimensions of engaging in and portraying artful inquiry. **Leggo** looks back and reflects on the importance and value of poetry in his life. He shows beautifully, by weaving together poems and text, the experiences which have inspired his poetic journey throughout his career. He claims convincingly that poetry can teach, heal, honour difficulty, show the way, and foster trust (or distrust) because language is such a powerful change agent and at the “heart of everything we do.” **Kim**, a novice teacher educator, looks forward by describing how she has used artful inquiry to develop and deepen her pedagogical knowledge and practice in science education. Uncomfortable and anxious about exploring artful ways in the

company of a teaching team, she embarked on a personal journey with an artist-in-residence to produce art pieces which, upon analysis and reflection, suggested to her the need to “let go” in order to explore and embrace the “pedagogical unknown,” and the need to recognize the multiplicity of identities and understandings that come together when working in a team of colleagues, all of whom are in various stages of “becoming pedagogical.” In conclusion, **Savin-Baden** and **Tombs** suggest the need to explore carefully and make transparent the elements of artful inquiry that are cast aside and left unsaid in the final “product.” They urge artful inquirers to address the gaps that can exist between the interpretation of the inquiry and how the process is carried out. They emphasize that all inquiry is a process and offer the concepts of “mustering,” folding, “cartography,” and “portrayal” as ways for thinking about how to address gaps and build in reflexivity to enhance the work and open up other possibilities of exploration.

LBK

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Lynn Butler-Kisber (B. Ed., M. Ed., McGill University; Ed. D., Harvard University), a former elementary school teacher, is Professor in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education in the Faculty of Education at McGill, where she is Director of the Graduate Certificate in Educational Leadership Programs I & II. She has served as Director of Undergraduate Education Programs, Director of Graduate Studies and Research in Educational Studies, Associate Dean in Education, and Associate Dean and Dean of Students, as well as on numerous committees within the University and in the educational milieu. In 2007 she was appointed to the Board of Directors of St. George's Schools. She teaches courses on language arts, qualitative research, and teacher education. She has a particular interest in feminist/equity and social justice issues, and the role of arts-based analysis and representation in qualitative research. Her current research and development activities include the McGill/Champlain College Mentoring Project, the Quebec/ Vermont International Professional Learning Community Project, and other work with teachers and school leaders in Dominican Republic, France, and Bhutan. The focus of this work includes leadership, literacy, student engagement, professional development, and qualitative methodologies. She has published and presented extensively in these areas. She is currently working on the second edition of *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives*, published by Sage.



Commentary

Portraiture Methodology: Blending Art and Science

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot

ABSTRACT

In this interview, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot describes the genesis of the portraiture methodology and how it has developed over the past three decades. Portraiture seeks to blend art and science, bridging empiricism and aestheticism. It draws from a wide variety of phenomenological and narrative traditions. One of the ways in which it is distinct from other research methodologies is in its focus on “goodness”; documenting what is strong, resilient, and worthy in a given situation, resisting the more typical social science preoccupation with weakness and pathology. Dr Lawrence-Lightfoot also explains the work she does with her students at Harvard and gives examples of their research projects. She finishes by giving words of advice to those researchers interested in using the portraiture methodology.



You have been interested for a long time in research methodologies and more specifically in a form of artful inquiry that you developed called “portraiture.” Can you define portraiture and how this methodology evolved?

Portraiture is within the realm of qualitative inquiry. It’s a phenomenological methodology, but it is distinctive in that it is the first social scientific methodology that is explicit in blending art and science, bridging empiricism and aestheticism. It cares deeply about rigorous empirical description, but it also cares a lot about the artfulness of the doing of it and the displaying of it... the ways in which portraiture is written, composed, developed, and presented to an audience. The other way in which it’s distinctive is that it is very much written for multiple and diverse audiences. It is intentionally inclusive. That is, it is not just written

for members of the Academy, for my colleagues and my students, but for broader, eclectic audiences. The idea is to get people interested in thinking about important questions in complicated, grounded, thoughtful ways. And so, it is intentionally provocative. It hopes to invite a response from the reader. As an interpretive narrative, portraits aspire to being beautifully and evocatively written, deep and compelling stories.

Another way in which portraiture is distinct from other qualitative inquiries is in its explicit focus on “goodness.” And by that I don’t mean that it tries to idealize or romanticize human experience or social reality, but rather, that it is a counterpoint to so much of social science inquiry that has traditionally been preoccupied with pathology, with searching out what is wrong and trying to remedy the wrongs. I certainly understand that impulse in social scientists. That is, “if we look at the problem deeply, find a way to document and measure it, maybe we will be able to actually do something about solving it.” But, this kind of inquiry often bleeds into a preoccupation with pathology, and often devolves into blaming the victim. Portraiture very purposefully says we’re going to try to understand what’s worthy and strong; always recognizing of course that goodness is inevitably laced imperfection. After all, every human endeavour possesses imperfection and weakness. In another sense, we want to document what’s strong and worthy, in great detail so that we might figure out ways of transporting those “goods,” that goodness, to other settings and transforming them as well. That begins to describe some of the central tenets of portraiture.



Can you talk about the key theorists who have helped you to nurture the idea of portraiture?

I think all of the scholars and theorists who speak from a phenomenological perspective, trying to understand people’s experiences and meaning-making, seeking to document the processes of human encounter in context. But I’ve also been drawn to the beautiful work of novelists and poets. Even those people whose work is positivistic or structuralist have offered me an important counterpoint, a way in which my work can be in contradistinction and discussion with other people’s work. So, who do I think of? I think about Jerome Bruner’s body of work. I think about Oliver Sacks’ work, a neurologist and storyteller whose work documents human experience from a phenomenological perspective. I think about Howard Gardner, even Piaget, in terms of trying to understand in great detail how people see and perceive things, particularly children. And, of course, Dewey and his work. My favourite book of all time is “Art as Experience.” It is a very dense big book, but everything in it has meaningful

connections to the roots of portraiture. Then there is Elliot Eisner and Clifford Geertz, both of them important influences on my work. All of these theorists and researchers have been working this fertile terrain, searching for ways to bring art, science, and humanism together.



When did you first start practising portraiture and what did you learn from this?

My first efforts at portraiture were related to research for my book, “The Good High School,” published in 1983. I spent about three years examining the character and culture of high schools across the country. I had been well trained as a sociologist in both quantitative and qualitative methods; my dissertation had used mixed methods. In fact, I loved the kind of discreteness and clarity of quantitative research. But, I found that the things that I wanted to study, the questions I wanted to ask, the problems I wanted to pursue, could not be answered through quantitative measurement. I had also been well trained in ethnography, but when I went into these high schools, I realized that these places were amazingly theatrical environments and that I needed to find a way to describe and decode what I was seeing. And I thought: I need to really figure out a deeper and more nuanced way to draw these environments, to portray their character, to capture their culture. My initial foray into the field was part of a project that originated with *Dædalus*, the Journal of the Academy of Arts and Sciences, where a seminar of scholars from different disciplines were focused on trying to understand the character of high schools and the nature of adolescence, the ways in which these institutions served or disserved the developmental needs of adolescents. I was sent out into the field by this group, along with Robert Coles and Philip Jackson, to try to capture the high school scene, and I was the one who said, “Why don’t we call them portraits?” Since this was very exploratory, I wanted to release us from the protocols and constraints of traditional research strategies. When *Dædalus* was published and there was a huge response to these pieces, I decided to continue the work, which ultimately resulted in “The Good High School.” As I collected data, I tried in a very self-conscious way (in the best sense of the word) to really understand what I was doing and how I was working. I was working on two planes. I was trying to portray these schools in great depth and write portraits, but I was also trying to really describe to myself the methodology that I was in fact pioneering. And so, “The Good High School” was my initial effort at doing portraiture and the introduction to that book was my first attempt to describe the methodology.



Can you describe generally the process you use to implement portraiture?

I always tell my students that they should begin framing their research by identifying their burning question. What is it that you are really curious about? What do you want to know and pursue? What truly interests you? Identifying the burning question should come before asking, “How am I going to study this? What are the methodologies I’m going to use? What’s the literature I’m going to cite?” It’s good to start with the thing that really grabs you, troubles you, puzzles you. And then you move from that to designing a researchable question. As we make the move from the burning question to the researchable question, inquiry always narrows. In some ways, it may feel impoverished because there are a lot of important questions and problems that cannot be answered through empirical research. Usually, when I get to the point in the process where I have identified a research question, I begin to search out the relevant literature and ask myself, “What is the broader discourse saying? Where might my work fit into the larger scholarly and public conversations?” I’m always interested in asking the question that hasn’t been asked before or asking the question that remains unanswered.

In lots of ways portraiture resembles most kinds of good, deep, layered qualitative inquiry. You’re using in-depth interviews over time, observations and participant observation; you’re using document analysis and mapping the context. And you are, of course, creating relationships with the people who you are interviewing and whose lives you’re trying to capture, that are trusting and communicative and respectful; you are working on creating and sustaining authentic encounters. The relational dimensions and dynamics of this work are very important. I often say to my students that this is not a methodology that poses “gotcha” questions. You are not a journalist trying to trip up or expose the other person; you are not out to pursue that person’s shadowy places. This is not about that. This is about seeking to explore and understand. We go deeply into this individual’s story, hoping to capture more universal themes. The work is deep and penetrating, but it must never be voyeuristic. Those of us who are experienced portraitists know very well that line when our inquiry begins to become voyeuristic, and we try our best never to cross that line.

When I’m out in the field I’m trying to document as much as I can; nothing is too trivial to record. I’m trying to capture the context, not just the physical context, but also the socio-cultural context. Context, after all, is the best resource for interpreting the talk and actions of people. We do not know the intentions, motivations, and meanings attached to people’s behaviors unless we see them embedded in context. As a portraitist, I am also interested in mapping the aesthetic context that surrounds the person or the institution, seeking to capture sensory dimensions, the visual, the tactile,

the auditory. I am always “listening for” the metaphors, the images, the allusions people use, and the repetitive refrains that lace their talk. Then the portraitist triangulates the data from these multiple sources.



How do you refute any skepticism about the rigor or validity of portraiture?

I have mostly stopped refuting or defending my methods and approaches. I regard it as a waste of my energy to even try. Originally, when I started doing this work, it felt audacious and very risky. I did not have tenure here at Harvard and all of my colleagues, even those who thought I was doing wonderful and valuable work, advised me to do a more traditional research: a project that followed the tenets of positivist approaches where there was already consensus over what counted as scholarly or rigorous. I certainly could have done that, but I had a sense that the questions I was seeking to answer through my work were not answerable through the methods and measurements of traditional genres of scholarship. I also sort of knew even then that we researchers and academics do our best work when we lead with our gifts, with the ways in which we might have a unique and singular perspective. So I resisted the warnings and worries of my senior academic colleagues and decided to proceed. In those days I did spend a lot of time, not so much defending portraiture, but, rather, finding a way of not being, or seeming, defensive when I talked or wrote about it. Instead I always wanted to be affirmative and clear.

The reason I wrote the book, “The Art and Science of Portraiture,” was because I wanted to say there is a rigorous methodology here. Today portraiture is being taught all over the country using my methodology text. And many of my former students are teaching methodology courses in colleges and universities where portraiture is part of the qualitative research sequence.

In terms of my career, which has been here at Harvard (I’m now in my 44th year!), I really don’t have any time left in my life to be worried about defending portraiture as a valid research methodology or refuting other people who might be skeptical of its science and usefulness. From the very beginning I was very sure that I didn’t want to spend a lot of time in a defence posture. Rather, I wanted to be precise and clear about methods and uses of portraiture in an affirming, productive way that says this is one among many social science methodologies that is appropriate to use in certain contexts.



In your classes at the Harvard School of Education, what kinds of things do you have students do to acquire the skills of portraiture?

I teach a course called the “Art and Science of Portraiture,” a seminar designed for advanced graduate students who have already had a lot of training in research design and methodology, both quantitative and qualitative. We read a number of qualitative and narrative works as well as portraits in the course, some of them written by me and some by other social scientists. We begin by reading “Souls of Black Folk” by W. E. B. Du Bois, more of a socio-historical mural than a portrait, where Du Bois paints himself into a southern, segregated, racial landscape as a rural school teacher and it’s very interesting. We read essays by Lightman, an MIT scientist who writes about the fusion of art and science. And we read and look critically at Geertz, Eisner, William James, and Dewey, people whose work has been historically related to portraiture and humanistic, artful inquiry. From the very beginning of the course I ask students to identify a question, a burning question, and then a researchable question. Students begin their fieldwork early in the semester collecting data, writing impressionistic memos and emerging hypotheses, conducting data analyses, and composing their interpretive narratives.

One of the things that’s very effective about the course is that by the end when people have developed their portrait, we all read them, and in the last three or four sessions of the seminar one critic is speaking to the portrait of another individual. The portraitist really doesn’t get to say anything...maybe five minutes of remarking about something interesting, insightful, and compelling or problematic about doing the work that they want to let us know about. It is the critic who holds forth for about 30 minutes, a very probing, thoughtful, and discerning critique of the piece. And then we all come into the conversation so that people get a response to the work that’s very vivid and very specific, and that is a rare kind of exchange in university classes. It is really a wonderful experience in the end.



Can you give an example of one?

There are so many wonderful examples. One portrait, written by someone who was born in Russia and emigrated from there when she was eight years old, focused on the pedagogy of a teacher in a Russian mathematics school in Newton, Massachusetts. Another portrait by an African-American student who grew up in New Orleans, whose family was displaced by Hurricane Katrina, did an extraordinary piece on a class in literature and poetry that he was teaching to incarcerated men in a maximum-security

prison. The student had been a public school teacher in a poor Black neighbourhood in Baltimore, and had witnessed the terrible impact of the “school to prison pipeline.” Another portrait, by a woman who was a former science teacher interested in environmental activism, focused on a young community organizer in East Boston who was leading a youth group of high school students who were designing campaigns to clean up the city landscape around them. Over the years, students have produced portraits of individuals, organizations, relationships, processes, and even concepts. Many of their pieces have been published in social science and educational journals.



What does the discussion sound like when the critic discusses the piece?

First of all, my suggestion to the critics is that they not try to comment on everything, and that they be very specific. They need to be able to show us in the text to what they are referring and they also need to be constructive. “What would make this a better piece?” Some of the critiques focus exclusively on methodology, looking at the interview protocols and strategies, the observational data, the documents, how these lenses and data are triangulated. Others focus on the content of the narrative. “What is this about, what’s the problem being discussed, what did we learn from this piece?” It’s more content rich, substantive, purposefully trying to mine the major issues that this portrait allows us to see with more clarity and insight. Still other critiques resemble a literary analysis. The critic might say, “I’m really going to look at this narrative as a piece of literature; focusing on the aesthetic presentation, the arc of the narrative, and so forth.” People enter into their critiques in very different ways, but in order for a 20- or 30-minute critique to be useful, it has to be relatively narrowly circumscribed.



What kinds of things would you suggest to researchers who are keen to use a portraiture methodology?

Sometimes when doctoral students come in to see me in my office they will say, “I want to use portraiture in my dissertation.” And I say, “That’s the wrong way of going about it. In other words, tell me what you’re interested in, tell me what your question is, and let’s talk about what methodology would be the best way to pursue that question.” The first thing is that one never begins with a commitment to a methodology without first designing a question. If the researcher asks a question appropriate for portraiture then they need to bring all the diligence, discernment, and rigor to bear that they’ve learned in their other research methods training, but they also have to be open to the ways in which some of those things do not work in portraiture. Portraiture is in part

about following the rules of good research, but also in part about breaking the rules of traditional positivist research. You have to figure out a way to enter where you both appreciate good social science research and find ways in which, at least for this project and this question, those are not appropriate strategies and those don't allow us to see, perceive, understand, and document in the ways that we need to.

I think that most people who want to do portraiture have an artistic impulse in them. They want to tell a rich, comprehensive, deep story and they want to speak to broader audiences beyond the Academy.



Do you have any other comments you'd like to add about artful inquiry?

I think that more and more it's becoming part of the lexicon, repertoire, and canon of social scientific inquiry. As we use it more, as we find a way to use it for the right things, in the right way, as we practice it, rather than try to defend it, as we appreciate the other kinds of research methodologies that are out there for what they do, it begins to become a part of the continuum of methodologies useful to social scientists for studying human experience and social phenomena. Just like I believe that education without artistic training and experience is an impoverished education, so too I believe that the University and Academy should allow for this kind of artistic expression. It's nice to be the standard bearer of that, but it's also nice to pass it along to other people. One of the things about teaching portraiture and then witnessing and reading the work of my students is that the methodology continues to develop, be refined, and diversified. I see that as a wonderful advance in the work.

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Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, a MacArthur prize-winning sociologist, is the Emily Hargroves Fisher Professor of Education at Harvard University, where she has been on the faculty since 1972. Educator, researcher, author, and public intellectual, Lawrence-Lightfoot has written 11 books, including *The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture* (1983), which received the 1984 Outstanding Book Award from the American Educational Research Association, and *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (1997) (with Jessica Hoffmann Davis), which documents her pioneering approach to social science methodology. She has served on many professional and scholarly committees and boards of directors, and received numerous awards, including 30 honorary ones from colleges and universities in the United States and Canada. Upon her retirement, she will be the first African-American woman in Harvard's history to have an endowed professorship named in her honor.



Commentary

Fiction as a Transformative Tool

Patricia Leavy

ABSTRACT

This piece explores the potential of fiction as a powerful pedagogical tool within and beyond the academy. Drawing on professors' examples, literary neuroscience, and my experience as an author of sociological fiction and editor of the *Social Fictions* book series, I suggest how fiction can be used to foster critical thinking, consciousness-raising, forge micro-macro connections, engage learners in deep reflection, teach substantive content, and promote understanding and empathy across differences.

The arts can be used as powerful tools in research and teaching. Arts-based research practices (ABR) are tools that adapt the creative arts in research across the disciplines (Leavy, 2009, 2015b). ABR can be used to make research accessible and engaging. Further, as a pedagogical tool it can transform passive learning into active, and even joyful learning. Renowned scholar Maxine Greene (2008) advocated "aesthetic education" to promote student engagement and foster imagination.

Fiction is one genre with enormous potential to transform understanding and deepen engagement. I have written extensively about fiction as a research practice or fiction-based research (see Leavy 2013b, 2015b), which I view as fiction that is informed by or grounded in scholarship. In this brief commentary I focus on the unique capabilities of fiction in teaching and learning, which is also a subject near and dear to me. However, I intend a broad definition of teaching and learning that is not bound to the academy. Under this conception, learning may occur with students in classroom settings or lay citizens engaging with public scholarship (including fiction-based research). This is one of the beauties of fiction: it's jargon-free, accessible, and experienced as enjoyable by the many, not the few.

In classroom settings, Colin Irvine (2008) suggests that students are likely to see novels, particularly if selected well, as relevant to their lives. Learning that is relevant to people's lives is more likely to engage them (Leavy, 2013b). Fiction can be used to foster critical thinking, consciousness-raising, forge micro-macro connections, teach substantive content, and promote understanding and empathy across differences. Why does fiction hold so much potential for transformative learning? When we're reading a short story or novel that we enjoy, we can become immersed in the story world. Many of us can relate to the feeling that the house could burn down when you're reading a good novel and you wouldn't notice, or you go to bed later and later because you just have to see what happens. We can relate because there is actually neuroscience to help explain our immersion in fiction.

"Literary neuroscience," a growing field that explores the connections between our brains and literature, has produced fascinating research that may explain why fiction is a particularly effective learning tool. Research in this field suggests our brains function differently when reading fiction (as compared to nonfiction) and that the effects of reading fiction last longer.

Natalie Phillips (2012) conducted a study about how reading affects the brain (see Thompson & Vedantam, 2012). She became interested in studying "distractibility" based on her personal experiences and observations. Phillips explains:

I love reading, and I am someone who can actually become so absorbed in a novel that I really think the house could possibly burn down around me and I wouldn't notice. And I'm simultaneously someone who loses their keys at least three times a day, and I often can't remember where in the world I parked my car. (quoted in Thompson & Vedantam, 2012)

Phillips led a research team to measure brain activity as research participants engaged in close versus casual reading of a Jane Austen novel. The preliminary results indicated that the entire brain appears to be transformed as people engage in close readings of fiction. Moreover, there appear to be global activations across a number of different regions of the brain, including some unexpected areas such as those that are involved in movement and touch. In the experiment, it was as if "readers were physically placing themselves within the story as they analyzed it" (Thompson & Vedantam, 2012). In another example, Gregory Berns (2013) led a team of researchers in a study published in *Brain Connectivity* that suggests there is heightened connectivity in our brains for days after reading a novel. Thus, the feeling of immersion and deep engagement we have in a good work of fiction (good meaning one we enjoy),

is partly a result of physiologically changes in our brain stimulated by the fiction. The potential for teaching and learning through fiction is immense.

Many high school teachers use novels to teach a variety of subjects. For example, historical novels can be used to bring primary source material to life. Now, it seems more university professors across the disciplines are also incorporating fiction into their classrooms, and sharing about the positive outcomes. Here are just a few examples from the social sciences and gender studies in which professors have written about positive learning outcomes.

Sociologist Kristina B. Wolff (2008) uses novels to help beginning students forge micro-macro connections. Similarly, sociologist Peter P. Nieckarz Jr. (2008) uses novels in intro-level general education courses to offer students with limited life experiences more material to draw on as they build an understanding of the social world. Some psychology professors use novels in lieu of case studies. For example, Joan Chrisler (1990) asks her students to examine the main character of a novel who is dealing with mental illness; William Tucker (1994) has his students read short stories in order to consider what conducting therapy with the characters would be like; and Dana Dunn (1999) uses fiction to explore a range of topics including the nature of the self, stress and coping, and issues related to aging (Grososky, 2008). Psychologist Hillary Lips (1990) uses science fiction in order to explore gender-based assumptions students typically take for granted (Grososky, 2008). Mary Crawford (1994) has students read romance novels in order to investigate gender stereotypes (Grososky, 2008). Amy C. Branam (2008) uses novels in a general education course in order to illustrate the idea of women in literature. Sandra L. Faulkner (2013) uses short stories and novels in her communication courses to teach about relationships and relational processes (Leavy, 2013b). Again, these are just examples.

In 2011 I created and launched the *Social Fictions* book series with Sense Publishers (I serve as series editor). The series publishes scholarship written entirely in literary forms including novels, plays, short story and poetry collections. Our intent is to produce books for both classroom and popular use. I began the series as a way to house my first novel, *Low-Fat Love*, which was inspired by nearly a decade of sociological interview research with women. Since then we have published a total of 19 books, including an anniversary edition of my first novel as well as my novels, *American Circumstance* (2013a) and *Blue* (2015a), each inspired by my research, teaching, and personal experiences. As both an author and series editor I have received countless emails and notes from readers, students, and lay citizens. Readers' responses to fiction are incomparable with their responses to nonfiction.¹ People often reveal an emotional

connection to what they have read, recount what resonated with them, demonstrate a lasting memory of and engagement with even minute details, and express personal change and growth related to the reading. These sentiments have been expressed by both students and lay readers exposed to the same work, often one reading for an assignment and another for leisure. This suggests the power of fiction and fiction-based research to reach and move multiple audiences, transcending popular misnomers that learning is reserved for school and dusty “big word” books, as ironically I wrote in one of my novels.²

Notes

1. I also edit five nonfiction book series and have published numerous nonfiction books of my own from which I can draw a comparison to the response to the *Social Fictions* series.
2. I am referring to my novel, *Blue* (2015, Sense Publishers).

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Patricia Leavy, PhD, is an independent scholar (formerly Associate Professor of Sociology, Chair of Sociology & Criminology and Founding Director of Gender Studies at Stonehill College). Her 19 published books include *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (first and second editions), *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, *Fiction as Research Practice*, *Essentials of Transdisciplinary Research*, and the best-selling novels *Blue*, *Low-Fat Love: Expanded Anniversary Edition*, and *American Circumstance*. She is series editor for six book series including *Social Fictions*, *Personal/Public Scholarship*, *Teaching Gender*, *Teaching Race & Ethnicity* and *Teaching Writing* for Sense Publishers, and *Understanding Qualitative Research* for Oxford University Press. She has regular blogs for *The Huffington Post*, *The Creativity Post*, and *We Are the Real Deal*.



Commentary

Urban Arts Pedagogy at James Lyng High School

Melissa Proietti

ABSTRACT

Melissa Proietti is a PhD student at McGill University as well as a youth worker and street art coordinator at James Lyng High School in Montreal. In this interview, she describes an urban arts pedagogy project at the school. In its first year, the students, in collaboration with McGill and various community groups, created a gallery space in the school and held their first exhibit. Ms Proietti talks about the advantages of incorporating urban arts in the school curriculum and the lessons she learned from working with students on the project.

 *You have been working in the area of youth intervention for many years and this involves doing street graffiti and street arts programs in schools. Can you tell us how you became involved in this area?*

 *I've been working in this area for about 10 years now and it began through my involvement with the Under Pressure Festival, a graffiti and hip-hop festival that takes place in Montreal. As a volunteer for this festival I was able to meet with artists and see their interactions with the general public. As I saw those interactions, I thought the students that I was working with in community centres and schools would be really interested in having those kinds of people working with them. At that point, I was able to see a coming together of two very different worlds. Slowly, I was able to integrate a little bit of muralism and graffiti into some of the schools where I was working. This started in an after-school program in elementary schools and then I started working in high schools. In developing those projects I would always go into the schools as someone who had a lot of youth work experience and I brought an artist with me in order to really be able to reflect graffiti*

and street art culture. This is something that both legitimized and enriched the experience for the participating students.



Currently, you are involved in an SSHRC-funded project as a research assistant and as a PhD student at McGill. The focus of the project is the transformation of the James Lyng School curriculum to reflect urban arts pedagogy. Tell us about how all this started and what has been evolving at James Lyng.

This began about five years ago when I first started at James Lyng. At that time, school on Wednesdays used to end at 12:30. We were asked to do an after-school graffiti program on that day, because it's quite an early end time to send the students either home or out into the world. We wanted to make it a very true-to-the-culture kind of graffiti-based club because a lot of the students that we had were actively involved in graffiti culture in Montreal. That just meant that we brought sketchbooks for all of our students, we had about 12 in the group at the time, and we would just take the time to draw and talk together.

Through that experience we were able to get to know our kids better, get to know what their experiences were like in school, what they found difficult, what they enjoyed, and the positive or negative points of their life. We built a strong bond with those students. We started at 12:30, and our program often went all the way to 3:30 when school would normally end. That was really huge. The administration took notice of this because it's not something very common for students to participate in any kind of an extracurricular activity for that long. Once the administration started noticing that the students involved in urban arts programming (we were not the only one; there was also a hip-hop literacy program that was taking place as well) were really connected and engaged, they started to imagine ways of incorporating these kinds of urban arts into the actual school day for the students.

Our principal at the time, who had been an art teacher, understood that the arts is something that really levelled the playing field for all of our students. It made them feel more comfortable engaging in different kinds of activities and gave them a lot more space to be present in different areas in their school. She began to suggest ways that we could incorporate the urban arts into classrooms. My supervisor Bronwen Low, at McGill, also took notice of this project and it was suggested that we build a partnership together. Through McGill and community partners (like the YMCA), we were able to apply for a SSHRC grant, which was successfully received. We are in the first of three years of SSHRC funding to transform this whole school

into an urban arts pedagogy school. This means that in class time the students are doing urban arts programming.



How would you define an “urban arts pedagogy” and what are the advantages of a curriculum that reflects this?

We’re just learning what all of that means because we are the first school in Canada to bring the urban arts into a pedagogical situation. We’re trying to understand how to define the urban arts pedagogy. All the different components of the urban arts are about responding to an environment, being a voice for marginalized populations. It’s often about finding a way to express yourself and take space in an environment that may not be either reflecting you or may not be giving you that space to begin with. Based on the histories of the urban arts culture that exist outside of a school, those are the important components that we’re trying to inject into our school context and each classroom.

Having students find ways to represent themselves within their school and within the greater school context is probably the most important starting point. Students need to know how to take ownership of their work and take responsibility for what it is that they’re doing in a classroom. Those are the strengths that we’re working with when we take the urban arts from a street context and put it into a more formal setting.



We’re sitting outside the exhibition space that you’ve been involved in at James Lyng High School. Can you talk a little about how this space evolved and a pinnacle event that you had this semester?

This is a gallery space that we are running with the 15+ class, which is an entrepreneurship-focused class. With the urban arts curriculum that’s been developed, we’ve been working with different curricular classrooms; that means music and art, but also French, English, and math. For the curricular requirements of the 15+ group, running the gallery space seemed like a fit because it is an entrepreneurship project. The space behind me was used as storage in the library and we were told that we could use it as an exhibit space however we saw fit. Understanding that it was to become an exhibit space mainly for the visual arts, I toured all the classrooms (we have about 160 students in the school) and discussed with the students how they thought a gallery space could play an active role in their school, something they could take pride in.

Through these discussions we discovered that our students wanted to have a very classic exhibit space, which meant white walls and spotlights. If that's what they wanted, then what we were going to build for them.



Fig. 1: Gallery space at James Lyng high school

With the students in the WOTP class, which is the Work-Oriented Training Pathway, we were able to completely empty out the storage and then start the construction. The walls that had been cement were framed with wood and then dry wall was placed on top. There was sanding and painting and all the things that come along with building an actual space. Through those experiences the students were able to understand the different steps in constructing a space and how these things are all very possible. You just have to understand how to reach out to your community and get people involved who would like to support you. Once the space opened, the students in the 15+ class decided that they wanted the first show to be a Black History month show, because of the time of year and because it reflects our student population quite well. The students put together a call for submissions. It was put out to our community at large and then they started receiving submissions both from student artists, including high school and CEGEP, but also from professional artists. The show, which was called "The Struggle for Black Equality," opened here at the school. We had a vernissage; we invited the media and it was very successful. The students were able to go through the entire process themselves and were completely responsible for the running, curating, and opening of the show.



You described a subsequent event that was a very interesting one. Can you talk about that?

Once the show had successfully opened, the students decided that they wanted to invite the artists who participated in the show to come and see the work if they hadn't been able to attend the vernissage. They invited the different school groups in particular to come and tour the gallery space. One of the groups that submitted a piece was an adult ed. class for adults with special needs. One of the adults in the class is completely blind and when he arrived at the school two of our students took it upon themselves, completely independently without being asked, to take this student around and describe to him each and every single piece that is in the gallery space. Not only were they showing a great deal of empathy and real commitment to being the curators of this space, but they were also showing that they are engaged with the actual artwork itself, which they were able to fully convey to another student.



What are some of the lessons that you've learned from this experience, building the gallery with the students and working with the students in this way?

I've learned a lot of lessons and I've learned a lot from the students going through this experience in our first year. We are really learning together what it means to run a gallery space in a school, what the constraints are, what the strengths and challenges are. What is fantastic is that we're learning this all together. What I'm realizing also is the importance of flexibility and that being able to respond to the students and their needs and desires is something that is of the utmost importance for a project like this to succeed.

I'm also learning the importance of incorporating what the urban arts is structured on into an actual classroom and how the students can then see themselves becoming participants in that culture. What I had said to the students at the beginning of the year is that this project is not about me—it is about them and this is their gallery space. I have experience and expertise coming from my background, but I'm just here to help them do whatever it is that they want with this space. It's really a reflection of them. It's a space for them to start discussions, to critique society, to express themselves, and be a voice for the rest of their school community as well. If they're able to take that on and really use the space in that way, then I think that we're achieving something together.



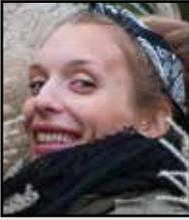
What are your hopes for the future?

My hope is that our students find this a successful experience and that they feel connected to something. It's important to connect the students to communities that exist outside of their school community, like the Under Pressure Festival. By integrating the urban arts into the curriculum, we're also integrating the students into a community that is strong and positive and that already exists within their city. When you feel like you can identify with something, not only in your school, but also in your surroundings and daily life, that is something really positive that will help our kids both now and as they become adults. My hope is that this is just a first step to a long future together.



What suggestions would you have for other educators who wish to promote urban art pedagogy?

It's very important to integrate the people who are true participants in the urban arts culture. In order for students to feel like they're having a legitimate experience, you need to bring in people who can speak on behalf of the urban arts, whether it's graffiti or hip-hop or break dancing. Without those people it's really difficult to understand the reality of what it means to be in the urban arts. Often these artists are happy just to come in and share their experiences with the students. For the most part, these artists felt that the high school curriculum did not reflect their needs when they too were students. When you can have these invited guests, it gives students more to connect to and a greater sense of ownership over their learning.



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Musical Leadership and Societal Transformation: Inspiration and Courage in Action¹

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ABSTRACT

Music is a form of leadership. Music-based interventions in organizations and society are being used throughout the world, including in situations of extreme conflict and consequence. Artists are going beyond the dehydrated language of economics, politics, and war to achieve goals that have eluded those using more traditional approaches. This article presents musical interventions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Estonia, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, South Africa, the United States, and Venezuela, in which musicians have had the inspiration and courage to make a difference.

The radical shift in the structure of the world begs for creativity; it asks us to rethink who we are as human beings... It may be that writers, painters, and musicians have an unprecedented opportunity to be co-creators with society's leaders in setting a path. For art, after all, is about rearranging us, creating surprising juxtapositions, emotional openings, startling presences, flight paths to the eternal.

—Rosamund and Benjamin Zander (1998, p. 7)²

Art transforms apathy into action.³ Social scientist Ken Gergen (1999) invites us all to become “poetic activists” (p. 12). Perhaps there is no better label for the use of musical interventions in global and organizational crises than that of poetic activism. Activists, great artists, and great leaders share three fundamental perspectives (Adler, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2015). They all demonstrate the courage to see reality the way it is. They all exhibit the courage to imagine possibility—positive

futures—even when the world labels such imagination as naïve for daring to express optimism. And they all have the courage to inspire people to move from current reality back to possibility.

Over the past half-century, with no singular organized movement or unifying philosophy to guide them, artists and artistic processes have attempted to transform reality in numerous contentious situations. In particular, music has been used to address extreme conflict and the threat of conflict, along with the dysfunction and degradation that conflict so often causes (see Tongeren, 1999; Urbain, 2008; Ippolito, 2008).⁴ Music, most often when combined with other approaches, appears to have produced generative outcomes in some, although not all, situations in which it has been introduced. In many circumstances, musical interventions have inspired the broader community (see Tongeren, 1999; Welch & LeBaron, 2006; Ippolito, 2008; Cohen, Gutiérrez Varea, & Walker, 2011). Such initiatives exemplify the frame-breaking perspectives and approaches that music has the potential to offer.

Poetic Activism: Going Beyond the Dehydrated Approaches of Economics, Politics, and War

Transforming ourselves, our relationships, or our culture need not await the intervention of some expert, a set of laws, public policies or the like. ... [We all] participate in creating the future for good or ill. If we long for change, we must ... confront the challenge of generating new meanings, of becoming poetic activists.
—Kenneth Gergen (1999, p. 12)

Musicians and musical ensembles have a history of poetic activism—of acting as leaders by revealing the truth of reality and giving shape, form, and sound to “the possible.” The act of creating music and the music itself inspire people to go beyond ugly, dysfunctional, and all too often brutal reality to create possibility, thus offering the beauty inherent in newly found opportunity. Musicians and ensembles do not rely simply on intellectual constructs and commitments, but rather powerfully influence situations through emotions and strong subconscious dynamics (see McNeill, 1997; Freeman, 2000; Benzon, 2001).

Musical interventions have not been universally successful, no matter how broadly success is defined (Bergh, 2010, 2011; Bergh & Sloboda, 2010). What is universal, especially today, is aspiration: the aspiration to do better than we have done previously;

to return to the best of what humanity is capable of; to move from ugliness back to beauty (Adler, 2011, 2015). This article highlights collaborative musical interventions among both like-minded people and adversaries. Among the former, music inspires, motivates, supports, and encourages people in their quest to collectively achieve goals of great consequence—such as political independence, democracy, poverty reduction, and the rehabilitation of criminals—that are of the utmost importance to them and their society. Among the latter, musical initiatives bring foes together to heal the seemingly insurmountable divisiveness that prolonged conflict produces. The selected examples are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather illustrative of how musical interventions are used in response to individuals', organizations', and societies' very human desire not just to reduce problems, but to function better and to thrive. The caveat, of course, is that whereas such exemplars reveal an apparent universal yearning, they do not represent a step-by-step guide for achieving success. Unfortunately, the world has yet to discover such an assured approach—music-based or otherwise—which is but one reason why this is a time for a more systematic understanding of initiatives worldwide and not just for action—poetic or otherwise.

The following section presents musical initiatives that have been used in situations of extreme tension and consequence. The examples from Venezuela, the United States, Estonia, and South Africa highlight proactive attempts by unified groups to use music to transform fundamental aspects of society. The examples from the Middle East, the former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland reveal multicultural initiatives that have attempted to heal society by bringing together opposing factions. Whereas societal challenges often appear most demanding, the dynamics apply equally to organizations.

Collaborative Musical Interventions

Venezuela: Music Providing the Potential to Escape Poverty

Venezuela's El Sistema program provides a powerful example of music-based societal development that offers young people a route out of poverty. Founded in 1975 by economist and musician, Jose Antonio Abreu, El Sistema now involves almost 400,000 young people, many from Venezuela's poorest communities, in a network of 500 choirs and orchestras across the country. El Sistema offers young people quality music education along with the individual discipline and community values that come with ensemble music-making. Thus, beyond excellent musical training, the program

provides participants with the skills to escape poverty and an explicit alternative to the country's endemic crime and drug culture:

Children engaged in the program attain above-average results in school and show a tremendous capacity for collective community action. The orchestra and the choirs, the heart of the program, help create a sense of solidarity. Involvement becomes a weapon against poverty and inequality, violence and drug abuse (Abreu as quoted in Burton-Hill, 2012).

According to Abreu, music teaches “citizenship, social awareness, and an aesthetic sense of life” (as quoted in Apthorp, 2005) and “transmits the highest values—solidarity, harmony, [and] mutual compassion” (as quoted in Tunstall, 2012, p. 273). Ensemble music-making helps to build a culture of cooperation and mutual respect (Uy, 2012).



Fig. 1: Gerard Uzcategui, 2012. Jose Abreu with El Sistema participants



Fig. 2: Photographer unknown, 2015. Young musicians of El Sistema Japan in Fukushima

The El Sistema model is neither culture-specific nor limited to a particular age cohort. The model is now being used not only in Venezuela, but also in more than 50 countries worldwide (<http://www.elsistemausa.org/el-sistema-around-the-world.htm>). In addition to young people, the El Sistema model is also being employed with adults, some of whom are in the Venezuelan prison system (Asuaje, 2008).

The original pilot project involved three jails, with each jail constituting a different section of the orchestra—strings, winds, and percussion. The musician-inmates practiced by exchanging CD recordings of each other's sections, and then came together for the first time as a unified ensemble when they performed in concert. In spite of handcuffs and two guards per inmate, the response was enthusiastic. Based on the success of the pilot, the program has been expanded to include more than 7,000 inmates in eight prisons with plans to add more (<http://fundamusical.org/education/penitentiary-academic-program/>; Grainger, 2011). El Sistema, whether involving young people or adults, demonstrates how community—and a respectful collaborative culture—can be built through ensemble music-making.

United States: Music Humanizing Incarcerated Prisoners

El Sistema is not the only program that has brought music into extremely challenging organizational settings. The Carnegie Hall-Weill Institute's Musical Connections Program in the United States, for example, also provides musical experiences to inmates. Composer Daniel Levy facilitates one such initiative at New York's Sing Sing Correctional Facility, a maximum security prison. This music composition program assists inmates with an interest and aptitude in music to compose works that the inmate-composers subsequently perform together with professional musicians. Concerts showcasing the compositions are held in and for the community (see Musical Connections, 2014 at <http://www.carnegiehall.org/MusicalConnections/>). Experts contend that artistic interventions in correctional systems offer prisoners a form of creative engagement that is educational, therapeutic, and rehabilitative (Djurichkovic, 2011; Cohen, 2009). Given that traditional prison philosophy typically is based on punishment and pain, advocacy for positive, arts-based programs requires enormous courage on the part of those who attempt to bring beauty, empowerment, and happiness into the lives of incarcerated individuals (Johnson, 2008). As program director Levy explains:

[Prison] Superintendent Heath said when these men get out of prison they're going to be your neighbors. Who do you want to have as your neighbor? Someone who's been through a process where they're learning to think and work and engage with life or someone who has just been left in their cell for 15 or 20 years. That's a pretty potent argument. (*Behind Bars: Music in Sing Sing*, 2012 Video)

In addition to arts-based interventions assisting in educating, improving, and rehabilitating incarcerated individuals, Djurichkovic's (2011) review of studies from multiple countries suggests that such programs reduce inmate incident rates,

decrease recidivism, enhance general well-being, and create opportunities for positive transformative change. Such efforts have been found to benefit inmates, correctional institutions, and, ultimately, the society to which former prisoners return (Cohen, 2009). The Musical Connections program, among numerous other music-interventions in projects around the world, underscores the potentially transformative nature of music and collaborative music-making under the most extreme conditions.



Fig. 3: Aaron Favila, 2010. Inmates at first public performance of Bureau of Corrections Orchestra and Chorale, New Bilibid Prison maximum security compound Muntinlupa, Philippines

Estonia’s Singing Revolution: Harmonized Will and Intense Conviction Lead to Freedom

Among initiatives that strive for societal transformation, numerous exist in which collaborative music-making has promoted unity and solidarity. Such initiatives empower the general public to persevere during times of extreme duress while they work together toward desired change. Aspirational anthems and protest songs sung by large groups of people have a history in almost every culture (Whitehead, 2008). In the United States, for example, the spiritual “[Wade in the Water](#)” supported the slaves during the 1800s when they endured enormous hardship fighting for their freedom. A century later, “[We Shall Overcome](#)” became the anthem of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement (Whitehead, 2008). Today, [Playing for Change](#), and its de facto anthem, “[Stand by Me](#),” exemplifies the ways in which music is supporting global, digitally interconnected communities worldwide.



Fig. 4: Kevin Jaanko, 2013. Tallinn Song Festival Grounds, Estonia



Fig. 5: Ilmars Znotins, 2014. Girl with Estonian Flag, Tallinn Song Festival Grounds, Estonia

Choral singing as a form of non-violent protest during the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States provides a powerful example of a successful music-based societal initiative. Referred to as the Singing Revolution,⁵ song inspired Estonians to persevere against Soviet oppression by finding their united voice and singing until they achieved freedom. Historically, Estonians have always had a strong singing tradition. Since 1869, Estonia held a national song festival every five years to celebrate the folk traditions of each region, with thousands of Estonians of all ages gathering to sing in mass choirs. While the Soviets permitted the festival to continue throughout their almost 50-year occupation, they required the Estonians to sing pro-Soviet songs. In response, the [Estonians adopted their own folk songs as de facto national anthems](#), musical symbols of their fight for freedom. With the rise of *glasnost* ("free speech") in 1988, singing became an essential form of non-violent protest. In June 1988, 100,000 people spontaneously gathered for seven nights to sing songs that had previously been banned by the Soviets. Confident that the Soviet military would not attack the gathered singers, particularly with the world watching, the Estonians realized the real power of their voices. Three months later, 300,000 Estonians held a massive demonstration on the song-festival grounds in Tallinn, singing protest songs accompanied by political speeches demanding the restoration of Estonian sovereignty. After years of oppression and struggle, Estonia achieved independence in 1991. Music succeeded in binding Estonians together in a community of harmonized will and intense conviction. Through song, they not only found the sustaining power of hope, but also the motivating strength that ultimately led them to freedom.

South Africa: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony⁶

Similar to Estonia, music united and sustained Black South Africans during the repressive apartheid regime. For 50 years, song formed a powerful narrative in their struggle against oppression. Referred to as “a revolution in four-part harmony,” musicians, singers, and composers—all poetic activists—became the voices of leadership, confronting the State with their lyrics and powerfully advocating political change. Songs, chants, and the *toyi-toyi war dance* served to mobilize millions of South Africans. As one activist described, “The *toyi-toyi* was our weapon. We did not have the technology of warfare, the tear gas and tanks, but we had this weapon” (Blackstone, 2008). Music, as a form of underground communication, united the oppressed and gave them inspiration to continue fighting. At a visceral level, the apartheid regime understood the *Amandla*—the power—of music. As Plato expressed it in *The Republic* more than two millennia earlier, “Any musical innovation is full of danger to the whole State, and ought to be prohibited. ... [W]hen modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the State always change with them” (Plato, trans. 1948, 360BCE, Book IV).



Fig. 6: Official Movie Poster, 2002. *Amandla!*
A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony

The South African police and military constantly arrested musician-activists, revoked their passports, and censored their songs and radio broadcasts. Music and the courage of South Africa’s poetic activists played an instrumental role in shaping the political struggle and ultimately in ending apartheid (see Schumann, 2008; Makky, 2007; among others).

Music Healing Society: Multicultural Ensembles Transforming Enmity Into Friendship

Whereas the previous examples from Venezuela, the United States, Estonia, and South Africa describe how music supported like-minded people in achieving significant goals, the following examples reveal how music can bring together people from multiple cultures who are publicly viewed as enemies. In these examples from the Middle East, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and the former Yugoslavia, the musical interventions aim to heal the damage and divisiveness that both causes conflict and that conflict causes.

In each example of poetic activism, one must respect the profound courage it takes for musicians to publicly be seen together with “the enemy,” often in ways that the general public not only rejects, but, for the most part, remain unimaginable. History is littered with cases of individuals who have paid the ultimate price for such forward-thinking displays of courageous community building. Such attacks are not just perpetrated by supposed enemies, but all too often by extremists from their own side who view the artists, musicians, and poetic activists as traitors for collaborating with the enemy. In all cases, whether involving world-renowned political leaders or relatively unknown poetic activists, the act of joining with “the other” to co-create music and a better world is always inherently risky and requires profound courage.

Middle East: West-Eastern Divan Orchestra Performing the Poetry of Peace

While the initiatives in Estonia and South Africa engaged and influenced the general public, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra primarily targets a subset of the population, elite Arab and Israeli musicians. [The Orchestra focuses on high-profile collaborative music-making](#) to create communication and relationship bridges among people from opposing cultures in the Middle East conflict. This world-class orchestra of 19- to 25-year-olds was the inspiration of Israeli [pianist-conductor Daniel Barenboim](#) and the late Palestinian literary scholar Edward Said. The orchestra has both an Israeli and an Arab concert master and players from opposing sides of the conflict share each music stand, as well as a number of Spanish musicians who act as “neutral partners.” Every summer since 1999, orchestra members have met for a four-week intensive rehearsal workshop.⁷ Throughout the workshop, the musicians eat, sleep, and share their daily lives together. Each evening they join in social and political discussions.

The supposed adversaries then tour as a unified orchestra. The goal is for participants to take home positive experiences from engaging with the “enemy” and for those experiences to subsequently have a cascading impact on their family and friends.



Fig. 7: Luis Castilla, 2006. Daniel Barenboim with West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

Less bad is not good. Less ugly is not beautiful. Similar to most musical ensembles that attempt to unite societal enemies, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra attempts to create beauty, not merely to reduce the ugliness of animosity and war. In viewing music as social medicine, physician David Washington notes that

...permanent healing in [the Middle East]... can occur only with the institution of social structures that provide a stable source of positive and novel interaction; that is, peace depends on activities that can construct society rather than destroy it. The [West-Eastern] Divan Orchestra does just that. (Washington & Beecher, 2010, p. 131)

The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra is clearly responding to singer-songwriter Phil Ochs’ admonishment: “In these ugly times, the only true protest is beauty.” Their choice of music reflects the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra’s musicians’ profound understanding of their role and voice in the world: “Beethoven gave humanism a sound.”⁸

Admittedly, critics have questioned the ability of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra to achieve its ambitious non-musical agenda, disparagingly regarding it as a “problematic utopia” (Beckles Willson, 2009a, p. 21). Drawing on more contemporary understandings of how organizations and societies change, we can now appreciate that the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra is best understood as a positive deviant (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004; Pascale & Sternin, 2010) and not a “problematic utopia.”

Evidence to date suggests that attitudes and behaviours toward fellow musicians have, in fact, become more positive, but that similar positive changes only rarely extend beyond the members of the orchestra (Beckles Willson, 2009a, 2009b; Riiser, 2010). Supporting the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) on which the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra was founded, Barenboim recalls a personal performance he gave in Ramallah for 300 Palestinian children. After the concert, a young girl told Barenboim how happy she was that he was in Ramallah. When asked why, she responded that he was the first “thing” from Israel she had ever seen in Ramallah that was neither a soldier nor a tank. While no individual concert can end the conflict, as Barenboim states, “at least for a couple hours, it managed to reduce the level of hatred to zero” (Barenboim as quoted in Smaczny, 2005; see also Barenboim & Said, 2004 and [Daniel Barenboim’s Edward W. Said Lecture, 2015](#)).

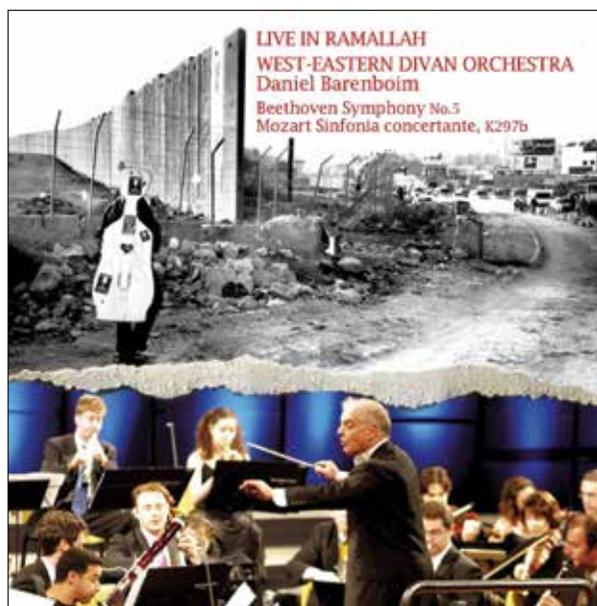


Fig. 8: Front cover from CD Recording, 2006

In 2015, the Rand Corporation (2015) estimated that there would be a net peace dividend of more than \$150 billion if the Israelis and Palestinians agreed to a two-state political resolution to their conflict. Even with such extraordinary political and economic benefits, no solution has been reached. Perhaps relative to the broader society, neither the political nor the economic discourse in the Middle East is quite ready for Beethoven’s or the Orchestra’s message of collaborative humanism.

Bi-Communal Choir for Peace: Greek and Turkish Cypriots' Daring to Sing Across the Green Line



Fig. 9: Photographer unknown, 2004. Bi-Communal Choir for Peace, Cyprus

The Bi-Communal Choir for Peace provides yet another example of collaborative music-making in the face of societal conflict. Exhibiting profound moral courage, Greek and Turkish Cypriot musicians cross the Green Line, a demilitarized zone that divides the country, to rehearse and perform together (Ungerleider, 1999). By singing traditional songs of Cyprus, performed in both languages, and by commissioning works by Greek composers and Turkish lyricists and vice versa, these musician-activists present a powerful message reflecting their unique identities and interconnected roots. The symbolism and embodiment of their plea for trust, reconciliation, and affirmation became highly visible once again when the Choir recently joined cultural, religious, business, and trade union groups to sing at the 40th-anniversary effort to achieve reunification (see <http://choirforpeace.weebly.com/>).

Northern Ireland: Different Drums Create Synergies Born in Unique Identities

Similarly reflecting courage, [Different Drums of Ireland](#) brings together musical instruments carrying immense symbolism from both sides of the conflict. The group purposely uses the *lambeg*, a large military-style Protestant/Unionist drum, and the

bodhran, a smaller stick-played Catholic/Nationalist hand-drum. During the conflict in Northern Ireland, referred to as “The Troubles,” the consequences of publicly playing the *wrong drum* could result in being beaten or even killed. Members of Different Drums have not been immune to such threats as their music-making challenges deeply held prejudices. Once, for example, when Different Drums played in Belfast to a working-class Protestant audience, all their *bodhrans* were smashed. Despite such hostility, the group continues its efforts to divest the drums of divisive political connotations and invest them with a new symbolism of coexistence that can only come from co-creation.



Fig. 10: indyCelt (n.d.). Roy Arbuckle and Richard Campbell – Different Drums of Ireland

Much like the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra and other music-based initiatives in regions of high conflict, Different Drums focuses on creating novel, positive interactions—and not simply on reducing ugliness. By uniting the distinct voices and rhythms of the two drums, the ensemble shows how unique co-created identities can be used to produce synergy and create harmony in their performances as well as in society.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Pontanima Choir Singing Sacred Synergy

The Pontanima Choir highlights how collaborative music-making fosters reconciliation and healing following conflict. In Latin, *pontanima* means “soul bridge.” The Pontanima Choir was founded in early 1996 just as the Bosnian war was ending, when a Catholic church in Sarajevo could not find enough members for its choir. Choir director Josip Katavić asked the parish priest, Father Marković, if it might be possible to invite “the others” to augment his choir’s vocal ranks. That courageous

frame-breaking request resulted in a choir made up of Christians, Jews, and Muslims who came together to sing each other's sacred music. The unprecedented repertoire and inter-faith membership of the Choir catalyzed both outrage and support from the members' respective communities. In reflecting on the unorthodox approach, Father Marković understood that the Choir was encouraging the most important form of communication and ecumenism. "[Singing each other's sacred music] ...doesn't mean we lose our identity, [but rather] that we all win. We have a new mirror" (Marković as quoted in Gienger, 2003). "The diversity forms a beautiful, ecumenical mosaic, which eliminates mistrust and xenophobia, and restores communication, cooperation, dialogue, coexistence, pluralism, empowerment and enculturation" (Marković, 2004).



Fig. 11: Photographer unknown, 2011. Pontanima Choir of Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Choir has not only become an accomplished ensemble, but also a dynamic community that models the possibility of an integrated society for all of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Similar to *Different Drums* in Northern Ireland, the Pontanima Choir does not just talk ecumenism, it lives and performs it. Its music spreads a message of enlarging the self by embracing the other. As Father Marković (2004) explains:

The song of our neighbor affects us and we receive it and grow through it. Likewise, our song becomes our neighbor's heritage and impacts their growth. In that interwoven spirituality and in the discovery of our own reflection in the other, no one loses, but instead it is the only way to grow.

The Pontanima Choir has won numerous peace prizes, despite ongoing opposition. By singing its aspirations, the Choir inspires participants, audiences, and community members alike with its message of unity, synergy, and the possibility of a vibrant, transcending, and shared future.

Sarajevo: A Cellist Reclaims Humanity in the Face of War

A particularly compelling example of musical leadership and individual courage took place in Sarajevo during the Bosnian War. In response to sniper and mortar attacks on civilians during the siege of Sarajevo, world-renowned cellist Vedran Smailović, formally dressed in his tuxedo and tails, positioned himself in the ruins of the National Library, defying sniper fire, and played. People gathered to listen. Uplifted and encouraged by his music, humanity, and courage, they repeatedly asked him to play. Smailović returned to this and other sites and played again and again in honor of the people who had been killed in the conflict (Smailović, 1998; CBC News, 2008; Sharrock, 2008).



Fig. 12: Mikhail Estafiev, 1992. Vedran Smailović, the “Cellist of Sarajevo,” playing in the destroyed Sarajevo National Library



Fig. 13: Photographer unknown, 2012. Vedran Smailović’s return to Sarajevo

Smailović’s actions caught the attention of the world press, exposing the debilitating, yet all too commonly held, nature of their perspective. During a lull in the shelling, an incredulous journalist confronted Smailović, demanding: “Aren’t you crazy for playing music while they are shelling Sarajevo?” (Lederach, 2005, p. 156). Smailović countered the widely held illogic of the journalist’s perspective with his reply: “Playing music is not crazy. Why don’t you go ask those people if they are not crazy shelling Sarajevo while I sit here playing my cello” (Smailović, 1998 cited in Lederach, 2005, p. 156). Smailović’s cello was not a tool to end war. Rather, his music reclaimed life in the face of war. Music reminds us that there is life beyond war, humanity beyond degradation, beauty beyond ugliness. Scholar and poet Swati Chopra (2007) captures the profound meaning and impact of Smailović’s poetic activism:

Smailović played to ruined homes, smouldering fires, [and] scared people hiding in basements. He played for human dignity that is the first casualty in war. Ultimately, he played for life, for peace, and for the possibility of hope that exists even in the darkest hour.

Music Transforming Society: Reclaiming Our Commitment to Bring Beauty Into the World

The world is rife with challenges that so seriously and pervasively threaten the stability and sustainability of the planet that many suggest that the future of civilization, as we know it, is in question. Faced with such a reality, we cannot help but appreciate Albert Einstein's prescient observation that is as true today as it was more than a half century ago when he first stated that, "We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." Society needs new approaches that can only be found "outside of the mainstream of international political traditions, discourse, and operational modalities (Lederach, 1997, p. 25)." Contemporary society and the challenges it faces demand innovation. Global society urgently requires the development of ideas and practices that go beyond conventional economic, political, legal, and military approaches with their often narrow focus primarily on reducing ugliness (see Lederach, 1997; Ippolito, 2015). Less bad is not good. Now is the time to invoke beauty, and not simply continue with attempts to reduce ugliness.

This article has presented a range of music-based societal interventions that highlight the dynamics of music and ensemble music-making that appear robust enough to transform both major and day-to-day organizational and societal dysfunction. Rather than repeating past approaches and expecting different results, music-based interventions go beyond most previously tried approaches and their repeated failures to explore the potential for a different kind of future success. The stakes are very high. Notwithstanding, guarantees of success remain elusive (see Bergh, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011; Beckles Willson, 2009a; and Bergh & Sloboda, 2010, among others). Given their history, music- and other arts-based approaches appear to offer hope for transforming conflict, developing more generative organizational and societal cultures, and addressing serious world challenges (see Ippolito, 2015).

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How El Sistema Changes Lives Through Music

- ▶ Changing Lives Through Music: CBS 60 Minutes
- ▶ Tocar y Luchar / (To Play and to Fight): Documentary
- ▶ A Higher Key: Music Program Helps Kids Learn
- ▶ El Sistema: Juvenile Detention / Jail

Behind Bars: Music at Sing Sing

- ▶ Role of Music at Sing Sing Correctional Facility

Estonia's Singing Revolution

- ▶ Singing From the Same Hymn Sheet: David Drummond
- ▶ The Singing Revolution
- ▶ The Singing Revolution: A Single Nation. A Million Voices. The Fall of an Empire

South Africa: Music Supporting Revolutionary Change

- ▶ South Africa: A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony
- ▶ Soweto Freedom Song & *Toyi-Toyi* Protests
- ▶ *Toyi-Toyi* Protests in South Africa During Apartheid

West-Eastern Divan Orchestra: The Middle East

- ▶ An Introduction to the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra
- ▶ Inside Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra
- ▶ Daniel Barenboim: Why I'm Proud of My Orchestra
- ▶ Daniel Barenboim: Spaces of Dialogue

Cyprus: Bi-Communal Choir

- ▶ Choir Sings at Voroklini Town Hall

Different Drums of Ireland

- ▶ Different Drums of Ireland Performing Bidy McDole at Big Top Chautauqua
- ▶ Different Drums Talk About Their Ethos and Background
- ▶ Different Drums of Ireland

Pontanima Choir: Singing Sacred Synergy

- ▶ Pontanima: Rachmaninoff's Bogorodice Djevo, Sarajevo
- ▶ Pontanima: Cuando El Rey Nimrod

The Cellist of Sarajevo

- ▶ 20 Years After the Start of the Siege, A Return To Sarajevo: Radio Free Europe (background)
- ▶ Cellist Vedran Smailovic Playing Adagio by Albinoni
- ▶ The Cellist of Sarajevo: Steve Galloway Interview

Notes

1. Adapted from Ippolito and Adler (2015) in Johansson Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Berthoin Antal (2015). Original research on collaborative music-making in high conflict situations drawn primarily from Ippolito (2008).
2. Ben Zander conducts the Boston Philharmonic and serves as a guest conductor for orchestras worldwide.
3. Title of Adler's 2009 art exhibition at The Banff Centre, where she was an artist in residence.
4. The literature suggests that extreme cases are valuable in revealing phenomena that are often camouflaged in less extreme, more common, and therefore, more familiar, circumstances (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010).
5. The Singing Revolution is commonly used to refer to events between 1987 and 1991 that led to the restoration of independence in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (Thomson, 1992; Ginkel, 2002). The term was coined by Estonian "poetic activist" (activist and artist), Heinz Valk, and published in an article a week after the June 10–11, 1988 spontaneous mass night-singing demonstrations at the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds (Vogt, 2004, as cited at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singing_Revolution). Also see Vesilind (2008) and *The Singing Revolution*, the 2006 documentary film by James Tusty and Maureen Castle Tusty.
6. From the 2002 documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*, written and directed by Lee Hirsch, which presents interviews, archival footage, and filmed performances highlighting the role that music played in South Africa's struggle

against apartheid. Singer-activists include such voices as Vuyisile Mini, Miriam Mekeba, Dorothy Masuka, and Roger Lucey. Also see the 2013 BBC documentary by Canadian filmmaker Jason Bourque, "Music for Mandela: A Legacy with a Backbeat," depicting the same history and impact.

7. Since 2002, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra has made its home in Seville, Spain and been supported by the Andalusian Regional Government (Junta de Andalucía).
8. As cited in "An Introduction to the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra." Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K22pkacxfN0>
9. Every effort is being made to acknowledge the copyright holders. The authors apologize for any unintentional omissions and would be pleased, in such cases, to place an acknowledgment in future reprints of this article.

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Portraits of High Potential-High Need Students: The Role of Teacher Inquiry

Ariel Baska and Joyce VanTassel-Baska

ABSTRACT

This article examines inquiry-based instructional approaches to working with students who have high potential, but also special needs. The article focuses on inquiry as the thread that weaves together a plan of instruction that has been successful for these students across the high school years in one teacher's classroom. Profiles of students are described with commentary as to the approaches employed with positive results. Commonalities of instruction, such as the use of metacognition, the use of acceleration, and the use of career counseling, are provided alongside student commentary where appropriate. A plan for the use of inquiry techniques in the classroom concludes the article.

*T*o teach the higher order process skills of critical thinking and creative thinking to learners is to engage them in lifelong learning skills that provide the scaffolding for all worthwhile learning in the future. It is "teaching them to fish," not providing just one to be eaten for only a day. This constructivist approach to learning, however, requires similar approaches to be employed by the teacher, requiring long-term investment in learning new ways to think as well as teach.

Because higher order thought is not formulaic, it requires being open to the moment, asking the probing question at the right time, engaging students in the right activity based on when they most need it, and assessing levels of functioning with regularity. Inquiry-based teaching also requires teachers to provide students with useful models in order to have schema on which to hang their ideas. However, even useful models cannot be taught mechanistically; they must be

thoughtfully applied and used idiosyncratically by learners so that the greatest benefits accrue. Finally, teachers must help students understand that real thinking is hard work, that it takes effort over time to improve, and that the outcome is frequently uncertain (VanTassel-Baska, 2013).

Artful inquiry as applied to the acts of teaching requires classroom teachers to attend to the needs of individual students and to apply accommodations that may vary from routine classroom practice. Thus, inquiry-based instruction may often be about asking the right questions about learners and experimenting with interventions that may work for them. This article features four profiles of special needs learners and documents the higher level questions that a thoughtful and reflective teacher asked in considering options in response to their needs. Where appropriate, it also features thinking schemas that promote student inquiry at the next level. It also presents a set of guidelines for inquiry that other teachers may use to generate similar results.

Special Needs High Potential Learners

Research suggests that certain gifted students have deficits in learning, attention, and socialization behaviors (Foley Nicpon, Allmon, Sieck, & Stinson, 2011). Because of the dual exceptionality, these students experience great difficulty in negotiating learning pathways. Recent studies also suggest that the numbers of these students have almost doubled in the last decade (NEA, 2006). Research on twice-exceptional students, English language learners, and students of poverty (see Weinfeld, Barnes-Robinson, Jeweler, & Shevitz, 2013; Angelelli, Enright, & Valdes, 2002; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2014) demonstrates that they are often overlooked for gifted services because of a curriculum that does not play to their strengths. Alternatively, if identified, many of these special needs students underperform when faced with rigid curriculum structures that require narrowly defined behaviors and responses.

Because of the individual issues that minority, ELL, and twice-exceptional profiles present, it is often difficult for them to be identified for gifted or special education programs as these students are likely to develop compensatory strategies that mask either the disability or the talent. Educators many times see a flat profile that blends in with the crowd, because a student's giftedness is tempered by a learning disability, while at the same time, a student who should be identified for special education services will be denied because her giftedness lifts test scores and academic achievement just enough to fall within the "normal" range (Weinfeld et al., 2013).

Portraits of High Potential-High Need Students: The Role of Teacher Inquiry

As a result, national data indicate that this population is not systematically programmed for, or even properly identified as, either gifted or disabled in some way. Researchers have also found that comorbidity is a common problem for these students, suggesting that learning disabilities often pair with ADD/ADHD, autism spectrum disorders, depression, anxiety disorders, and various other complicating variables such as minority status and low income that often make identification particularly difficult (Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2014; Weinfeld et al., 2013).

The following profiles of four special-need students describe their characteristics, their needs, and the accommodations that have been successful with them. Because there is great heterogeneity among these students, there is no one strategy that can claim to work universally. Moreover, working successfully with these students requires access over years so that there develops a bond of trust between the teacher and learner and so that a teacher can come to better know student motivations and capabilities. Yet, the role of artful inquiry pervades these profiles as we examine the practice of a flexible teacher in asking the right questions about individual student needs.

Methodology

In constructing these student profiles, the teacher collected data from three different sources: written documentation on student behavior and performance, interviews with stakeholders, and observations in the classroom context. The teacher began research on each student by evaluating their IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) and 504 plans. After incorporating the knowledge gleaned from school documents into practice, she evaluated their efficacy, documenting what did and did not work best for each student. She also began interviewing the students themselves, their counselors, and their parents using a common set of questions. She carefully observed students behaviorally in class, in respect to their approaches to learning, taking notes. All data were analyzed qualitatively, using a content analysis model, looking for themes that best represented the commentary collected.

Student A—Profile

“Max” is a male student, diagnosed with ADD (attention deficit disorder), ED (emotional disability), and specific learning disability for dysgraphia, who was enrolled in my Latin I and Latin II classes. From my observations, Max is a generally

happy student, who varies between extreme excitement and boredom and/or fatigue. He can be very charming, vocal, and attentive when engaged, but very often retreats into books when exposed to the same or similar material for more than 10 minutes. He also seems fatigued on a daily basis and will usually nod off at least once, but with focused attention of the teacher and specific direction, he seems to come alive. He is a highly verbal student who excels in presentations and classroom discussions, but can't express his thoughts in writing easily, due to his dysgraphia and poor organizational skills. His parents do not feel that they can adequately explain Max's academic difficulties. They theorize that he is a "bored gifted student with a possible mood disorder." Max says of himself, "I know I'm smart, but I only realize that outside of school, when I'm making connections to the real world. School is so far from reality... I can't play the game [of school]."

Student A—Accommodations That Work

Teacher questions: What *specific* help does Max need to function in daily learning situations? How can I *evaluate* the options available?

Because Max often does not pay attention to the details of what he reads, he should have test directions read to him or instructions given to him, rather than reading them to himself. In other settings, his reading and writing needed to be structured with graphic organizers wherever possible. Max tends to become overwhelmed by assignments and spends more time thinking in tangential topics, rather than focusing his thoughts on the topic at hand. He needs a clear road map or table of contents to help him in reading English passages on history or mythology, and a similar road map to help him outline his thoughts or translation when he needs to write.

Teacher questions: What *supportive technology* does Max need to augment his learning? What approaches may he use to self-assess? How will I know he has made progress?

Ideally, Max would have a computer on hand at all times to help him take notes, since he can type much faster than he can write with a paper and pen. Unfortunately, given his history of losing school-supplied Neos and other electronic equipment, the school district will no longer provide him with one, nor are his parents inclined to purchase one. As a result, I encouraged him to invest in a small recording device that he wore around his neck to record lectures and class discussions for future reference.

Portraits of High Potential-High Need Students: The Role of Teacher Inquiry

Max also needs further opportunities for metacognition to help him think about his own thinking process. He became deeply engaged in the conversation we had about how he thinks and how he learns best, and immediately wanted to test out his own hypotheses. He needed to be aware of himself on this level, and spend time evaluating his own learning.

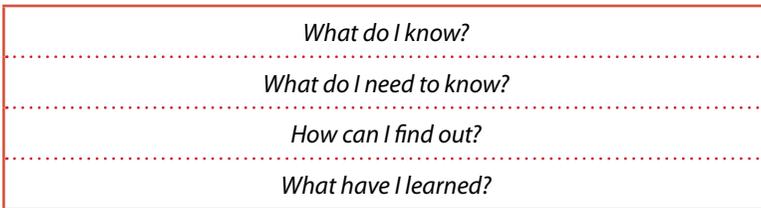


Fig. 1: Thinking schema for Max

Teacher questions: In what ways can Max become more *motivated* to learn? How might he regulate his emotions to channel them for productive learning behaviors?

Like many gifted students, Max suffers from chronic boredom in many of his classes. He knows that he is very bright, and feels uninterested in doing “busy work.” Since Max can’t control either when a teacher will give him this kind of work, or when activities in class will fail to engage him, the problem of motivation is best addressed affectively, rather than cognitively. Max should continue to reflect on his own feelings and emotions and evaluate when they are or are not keeping him from understanding the material. He has admitted to me that sometimes he takes pride in not listening and still being able to understand the material, though he also admits that he hasn’t had that particular sensation in a while. He needed to become more aware of these sensations and feelings as they happen, and begin the process of learning to regulate them when possible.



Fig. 2: Activities

Teacher questions: What *activities* will demonstrate Max’s progress to himself? How may his interests be used to address his self-concept?

Max also worked on developing his strongest skills and abilities through acting and presenting where possible. He is a student who needs to be able to develop his strengths and skills and use those to access new information wherever possible. He desperately needs to know that he is developing and growing—this is key to his self-concept.

Ideas for Max in respect to self-knowledge might include the following approaches:

1. Pre-assessments that allow students to consider what they already know on a topic, and discuss what and how they’d like to learn more.
2. Exit tickets/surveys regarding what confused them about a reading (whether grammar sections, particularly after assessments [what did I do to study that worked, what didn’t?]).
3. Keep sticky notes on hand for students to write down study questions and identify themes while working on translations, reading articles, and so forth.
4. Model good strategies—discuss how *you know* when you are done with a translation or paper.



Fig. 3: Monthly questions for Max to consider

Student A—Student’s World Language Trajectory

“Max” completed two years of Latin before deciding to switch to Spanish for two years, where he says his work with the Latin language helped him learn to read the Spanish language more fluently, and helped with the “organization of the language”—in particular, vocabulary and grammar.

Student B—Profile

“Laura” is a female student who was born deaf, and uses American Sign Language (ASL) as her first language. Laura is fully mainstreamed in the public school setting, accessing all of her classes with the aid of interpreters who translate for her in the classroom. She has excellent work habits in all of her classes, except for math, which is

her weakest subject area. She is an avid reader, who read many college-level texts in middle school, and continues to express herself well both orally and in writing. She comes from a low-income family that cannot afford to send her to college; thus procuring college scholarships is an important consideration for her.

Teacher questions: What *strategies* can be used to reach Laura regularly, rather than intermittently? How can her daily performance become more steady across subject areas?

While Laura is a student who regularly shines in class, she has difficulty accessing some areas of the curriculum due to her disability, and can sometimes shut down, either by retreating into a book or, at times, becoming defiant. She responds well to stories about people, facts, and details, and translates literature at a higher level than most of her peers, but often has difficulty understanding the finer points of grammar and will disengage from the material at hand if it is not represented visually.

In Latin, she experiences difficulty relating to the “sonics” of poetry, such as meter and figures of speech. At one point, she insisted that I could not expect her to learn how to scan poetry due to her disability, and that she simply couldn’t, no matter what. Scansion refers to how many short versus long vowels there are in a line of poetry, which affects how it is pronounced, and can affect interpretations of the grammar, and therefore, how a line can be translated. Because scansion is in the program of studies and on the AP exam for Latin, Laura could not be excused from this material. Because she couldn’t hear the vowel sounds, she didn’t believe she could evaluate them, but by working individually with her and a like-minded interpreter, and giving her a list of rules about how to tell a long vowel from a short one, she was able to learn scansion better than her hearing peers.

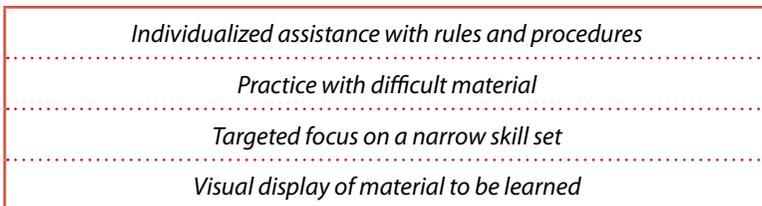


Fig. 4: Strategies for Laura

Student B—Accommodations That Work

Teacher questions: What is the role of *visual strategies* in helping Laura learn? How do multiple strategies, used together, help Laura?

This anecdote taught me that Laura could learn anything in my classroom, and learn it well, as long as she was provided a list of procedures to follow, in a step-by-step process. She needed the structure and visual confirmation of the rules for both scansion and other grammar points. I knew that all information needed to be presented to her visually on some level, but never realized how important the “formula” would be for her.

As with any deaf student, graphic organizers and organized notes are important accommodations, because they allow her to process the material in structured ways. She also benefits from use of the SmartBoard, as it allowed me (and the students) to mark up the text we were studying at any given time, so that she could see our discussion unravelling on the board, not just through her interpreter’s hands.



Fig. 5: Further strategies for Laura

Teacher questions: What *communication tools* might aid Laura? What models of discussion might teachers use?

Like Max, Laura can suffer from chronic boredom with school, due to her intellectual ability which sets her apart from her peers, and at times, because of the difficulties of communication with others. To succeed, she needs teachers who will structure conversation in class, through a Socratic Seminar or other means, and engage with her in discussion, and make connections with any of her various intellectual interests.

Teacher questions: What strategies might aid Laura in considering her *career path*? What opportunities might be useful?

She also requires guidance regarding her future career path. She says,

I don't have definite plans for the future when it comes to jobs, but perhaps I'll be a history researcher, translator of works written in foreign tongues, or a scholar in classical history or languages such as Hebrew, Latin, or Greek.

Working with students like Laura on future career choices and how best to pursue them is crucial, as sometimes accessing that information can be difficult. Creating connections to real-world job opportunities can be crucial in establishing identity, preparing students, and empowering them. It would be helpful if the school could provide internships or mentorships for such students, contexts where they had contact with real-world professionals in fields of interest to them.

Student B—Student's World Language Trajectory

"Laura" completed five years of Latin, while concurrently enrolled in Spanish for two years. She attended the prestigious Governor's School Latin Academy over the summer after her junior year, with the aid of interpreters. She also won numerous awards related to her study of Latin, from gold medals on the National Latin Exam, to scholarships offered by the National Junior Classical League. She described her time in the Latin program by saying:

Truly, the period which I spent in the Latin program... was a time of great intellectual flourishing in my life... [Latin] class was always the eye of the storm, so to speak, in the barren desert of my formal education... Indeed, my time in the Latin program cast a luster on that part of my life which had been utterly shorn of meaningful accomplishments...

Student C—Profile

"Ryan" is a male student, diagnosed with ASD (autism spectrum disorder), ED (emotional disability), and a specific learning disability for dysgraphia. He is always eager to share his knowledge and participate in class in any way that he can. He is highly motivated in his classes, but when frustrated, he tends to react very strongly. He sometimes raises his voice, or uses inappropriate tone or language in reaction to certain triggers. He has been a victim of bullying in the past, and is very concerned with

the perceptions of other students. Ryan can become embarrassed easily. He also is very worried about equity in the classroom, and will immediately stand up for himself or any other student if he perceives something as unfair.

Teacher question: What approaches might be used with Ryan that address his needs, but also play to his strengths?

Ryan suffers from problems with organization, and with his motor coordination, particularly in respect to writing. He often has difficulties finding homework or notes if they have been hand-written, and will become frustrated looking for things in his backpack or binder, which can be a trigger for him. Ryan also becomes frustrated when teachers don't recognize his talents, either because of his difficulties with handwriting or social communication. He excels in his scientific knowledge of various species, and brings outstanding vocabulary skills to the Latin classroom, in addition to many interesting scientific connections. Ryan is deeply focused on a few subjects that are of interest to him. He talks a lot about certain characters from teen fiction and comic books that appeal to him, but he is most passionate about animals.

Student C—Accommodations That Work

Teacher question: What *technology* works for Ryan?

As for many students, the use of a laptop was crucial for Ryan. The laptop allows him to access saved homework assignments, e-mail his homework and classwork assignments, and access helpful applications and websites that extend his knowledge on certain topics. The laptop also allowed him to learn a new way of thinking about organization of files, and he began scanning important papers into .pdf files on his computer.

Use of web-based research on a scientific issue to stimulate interest: evolutionary biology, genetic manipulation, or animal behaviorism

Desktop graphic organizer that asks basic questions about the day

Fig. 6: Strategies for Ryan

Teacher questions: What *strategies* might teachers employ to assist Ryan’s progress? How can thinking about a career help Ryan at this stage?

Ryan requires a good amount of teacher direction to stay on task if other students in the room are talking, as they are a significant source of distraction for him. However, at the same time, he cannot bear to complete work outside in the hallway or in the neighboring computer lab, as that separates him from peers. This caused me considerable frustration until I realized that he needs to learn to organize his thoughts, his time, and his work in highly structured ways as a part of a regular routine. By asking him to work on a separate graphic organizer, separated out by how much time he has to complete an assignment and giving specific time requirements for each section, I’ve found that other people are much less of a distraction for him, as his work becomes a race against the clock. I also found that helping him to organize his binder and his backpack aided his concentration as well.

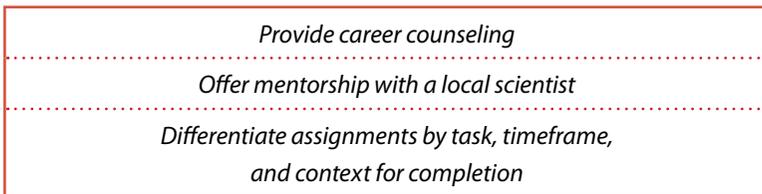


Fig. 7: Further strategies for Ryan

At the National Association for Gifted Children Conference in Denver, Colorado, I had the good fortune to share a conversation about Ryan with Temple Grandin. Given her own experiences and her passionate interest in animals, I asked her advice as to how to help Ryan. Her advice was clear-cut: get him as much career advice as possible, and make sure he is counselled in directions that will help him become a strong candidate for jobs. As a result, Ryan visited the Career Services center at school once a month in his junior and senior years, doing research on what careers would be appropriate, and familiarizing himself with the requirements.

Student C—Student’s World Language Trajectory

“Ryan” completed his third year of Latin in his senior year, which he hopes will further his interest in working with animals on a scientific level.

Student D—Profile

“Mitch” is a male student, and the only one from this study formally identified as gifted. He has been diagnosed with ASD (autism spectrum disorder) and ED (emotional disability) due to his selective mutism. He is an excellent writer with outstanding verbal skills that put him far above his peers in respect to his use of vocabulary, critical thinking skills, and maturity of thought. Mitch completes all assignments and assessments with the top grades in the class. Mitch is very reluctant to speak, even in situations where he has much to say on a topic, due to social anxiety. When he does speak, he speaks very quietly, and can often be misheard or misinterpreted. Many teachers have underestimated his skills, based on his problems with communication. Sometimes his problem is comingled in teachers’ minds with English not being his native language.

While his peers respect his skills and talents, he has few friendships at school. His older peers from Latin class and Latin Club have been his social network at school, after school, and at extracurricular competitions. His mother believes very strongly that Latin helped him to grow in his social development. Mitch is very interested in social issues, and can make excellent arguments for his stances. He feels very strongly that he would like to work for a non-profit organization.

Student D—Accommodations That Work

Teacher questions: What is Mitch’s preferred learning context? What *grouping arrangements* in the classroom may support Mitch?

One of the more important accommodations for Mitch was allowing him to work independently. I found quickly that he shut down in group work situations as soon as he had completed his part of the task. At first, I suspected this was due to his social anxiety. However, further inquiry revealed that he didn’t feel challenged when asked to work as a part of a group, doing only one component of a project. He far preferred being able to delve into all aspects independently. He also needed (on occasion) to give presentations to me after school, or present information in a different format that wasn’t as stressful for him as an oral presentation.

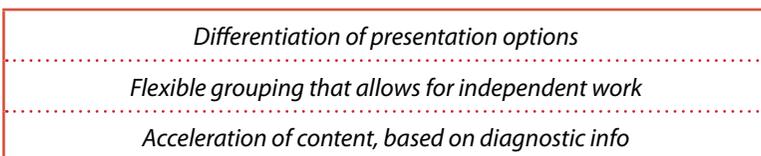


Fig. 8: Strategies for Mitch

Teacher questions: How can content acceleration aid Mitch in his path toward advanced learning? How might that be accomplished within the school context?

Acceleration has been the most important accommodation for Mitch. In Latin I, I took far too long to recognize his gifts, and could not do much for him beyond independent projects and alternative assessments. In Latin II, he began work on advanced Latin III material, and was able to pass the Latin III final exam with flying colors. At his request (and after a little teacher investigation), Mitch skipped Latin III and jumped into AP Latin as a sophomore. His mother felt that the acceleration may have made it more difficult for him to make friends in class, but I argued that he needed to be with his intellectual peers, engaged with higher level material. He scored a 5 on the AP exam, the highest level possible, demonstrating that he was more than ready to engage in the advanced level of study mapped out for him.

Student D—Student’s World Language Trajectory

“Mitch” is currently enrolled in his sixth year of Latin, an independent study course designed especially for him. He has earned perfect scores on every National Latin Exam, and won various awards from the National Junior Classical League. Of his work with the Latin program, his mother writes the following:

I am most grateful for the transformation that I have seen in my son, in terms of his participation in Certamen... [which he kept as] his top priority... for the last three years, which in itself is nothing short of miracle, considering how limited his social world has been all of his school life since first grade; his coming out of the comfort zone to be in these team competitions has been possible only through the deep trust that the teacher has built within him. No therapists or counselors have ever been able to help him take such risk to be out in [the] public eye on a regular basis.

Commonalities Across the Four Profiles

According to research, special needs students are under-identified for gifted services, at a ratio as high as one in two. Yet, in the case of three out of four of these students, identification came about through a challenging curriculum. Curriculum that forces students to think in complex ways and at an accelerated pace brings forth behaviors overlooked in other classrooms. Moreover, the interaction that occurs between teacher

and learner in daily interactions across a four-to-five-year period clearly accentuates the role of inquiry as a primary process to spur motivation and performance.

While all four of these students differ in respect to their needs and talents, there are commonalities among them, and perhaps among many special need students. All of the four need interventions that are both academic and social-emotional. On the academic side, each of them required different forms of acceleration, either within individual assignments or for a whole grade level. They also needed to work on metacognitive skill sets, such as planning and organizing as well as reflecting on their own learning. At the social-emotional level, these students needed to learn to take academic risks and to have an advocate who would be available to discuss coping mechanisms and special problems that arise in the academic sphere of their lives. At the conative level, these students needed to use their motivation in productive ways. They also needed career guidance provided by a counselor or career services specialist, as well as career-oriented advice and help with relevant skills from all teachers.

Long-term planning, for example, was a critical need among these students—to be able to see a few years ahead, rather than just a few months. The following approaches may assist other students with this process:

1. Embrace multipotentiality—encourage, don't limit student interests and new directions for learning.
2. Share information about planned education/career path and current destination.
3. Discuss interview skills, job skills, and self-advocacy.
4. Locate peers and mentors for students at varying stages of school/career/life.
5. Encourage career/school research by teaming up with Career Services or guidance office.

Teacher characteristics these students responded to also varied, but some were common among all. They all appreciated teachers who were open to trying new things, especially if student-selected or suggested. One student said, "Even if a strategy doesn't work, at least it lets you know they care enough to see if it does." Another said that he preferred teachers who were willing to teach to his strengths, "since very few teachers see me for who I am if they teach me in [my area of weakness]." Another desirable teacher trait was patience, helping them work through their difficulties or disabilities, and particularly supporting them when they failed at something, refusing to let them quit. These students all commented on the need for a teacher who will help them succeed, allowing them freedom of choice wherever possible and focusing on what works for them as learners.

Portraits of High Potential-High Need Students: The Role of Teacher Inquiry

In each of the four portraits cited, the teacher provided the following scaffold to promote higher level inquiry in the students:

<i>The teacher guided students to:</i>
• ask questions about learning needs and accommodations that would work for them;
• research various topics to understand content and to make decisions;
• generate resolutions for their perceived problems that were feasible;
• refine personal problem-solving strategies to make skills more effective and efficient through self-evaluation;
• apply creative and critical thinking skills to problem-solving behaviors; and
• display positive attitudes to enhance self-regard.

Fig. 9: Inquiry-based learning

All of these outcomes are simultaneously achievable within a learning situation where students engage directly with their own learning problems in which they take charge of its pace, style, and organization. Autonomy in learning becomes the goal alongside the specific content and skill-based learning to be mastered. In the four portraits highlighted, one teacher provided this scaffolding across four years, resulting in enhanced performance at high levels for the special needs students under her care.

Action Research

Just as inquiry drove the learning of the four students highlighted in this article, so too the urge to know drove the teacher's desire to ask questions and pursue strategies that were effective for these students. Thus, the inquiry process has meaning at both the student and teacher level, with the teacher as constructor of a classroom-based study that yields important information on what works with special needs students. Teachers' use of data available to them when carefully organized, analyzed, and evaluated, can provide important insights into advancing the learning of students, especially those who present challenging profiles.

Conclusion

This article has presented profiles of four special needs learners who exhibited high potential, but lower general achievement than expected at the beginning of their high school years and traces their journey in being provided challenging curriculum and inquiry-based instruction across four years of high school. It also focuses on the role of question-asking in the teacher's repertoire that framed the interventions which elevated student thinking and motivated them to pursue their passions. The article concludes with a commentary on their performance and the commonalities in their accommodations in school that were successful.

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“Designerly” Ways of Reading: Insights From Reader Response in Drama for Enriching the “A” in Language Arts

Treavor Bogard, University of Dayton

ABSTRACT

In this interpretive case study of reader response in drama, a drama troupe is the context for illuminating how young actors read in “designerly” ways; that is, how their reading processes facilitated constructive, solution-focused thinking in their development of characterizations. By examining the nature of reader response in the drama troupe, I hope to help educators understand how design thinking occurred as an aesthetic reading practice and consider ways in which design thinking can be cultivated in the language arts classroom. I argue that design thinking inspires the young to engage the imagination, practice teamwork, and take risks as they work to make their visions real. Perhaps most importantly, I contend that design thinking can help prepare the young for facing complex and highly ambiguous problems characteristic of 21st century participatory cultures.

“Designerly” Ways of Reading: Insights From Reader Response in Drama for Enriching the “A” in Language Arts

Twelve teenagers gather on the stage floor at the Civic Stage Theatre. Their first day of rehearsal, the empty stage activates imaginings of the characterizations they will embody and perform for hundreds of spectators. Clad in loose T-shirts and sweatpants, the young actors attune their bodies, voices, and minds to the creative space. Some stretch their bodies. Others chant a

whimsical vocal warm-up, “If you saw a pink pug puppy playing ping pong with a pig, or a great grey goose a golfing with a goat...” The rest of the actors read their scripts with pencil and highlighter in hand. Suddenly, a loud voice reverberates throughout the theatre. All activity stops and, with rapt attention, they turn to face the production director who is now standing before them. With bravado, he conveys his expectations for the dramaturgical process they will soon undertake:

Every single one of you in this entire company is talented. That is how you got here. But I don’t want to see a bunch of talented teenagers. I want to see characters. I want to see what you can do. I want you to take your character beyond what you would ever dream of.

I saw this invitation to design come to fruition during my three months of fieldwork at the Civic Stage Theatre (all names are pseudonyms) as part of a qualitative inquiry into literacy and the arts. Detached from everyday surroundings and concerns, the young actors released their imaginations and voice in a dynamic interplay of texts, readers, and bodies as they worked to make their characterizations real and concrete to audiences. Their intentional, active design of characters emerged from aesthetic readings of texts. They inferred meanings, attended to the details of dramatic composition, and demonstrated the “capacity to imagine what is not yet” (Greene, 1995a, p. 24). The “drama kids,” as I came to call them, became critical consumers of text and engaged in many complex design decisions that shaped embodiment and performance.

As a former high school English teacher who now supports pre-service teachers in English Education, I could not help but notice that the drama kids’ collaborative interactions around text evoked higher-order thinking, creativity, and problem solving. These processes, indicative of learning deeply, are often hoped for, but too seldom realized, in traditional language arts classrooms (Noguera, Darling-Hammond, & Friedlaender, 2015). Yet, they were daily occurrences in the troupe’s participatory culture. In light of my work as an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher educator, I wanted to know: What is the nature of reading response in drama? And what insights might be used to enrich literacy learning in language arts classrooms?

In this interpretive case study (Yin, 2003), I draw upon the theoretical perspectives of aesthetic literacy and design thinking to make sense of reading response situated in design practices. Specifically, I explain how the drama kids’ aesthetic reading of dramatic texts attended to the sounds of language, the craft of writing, and the physical-psychological dimension of characters. I also describe the way they took

risks as they worked to materialize their visions. I argue these engagements with texts revealed aspects of design thinking that were mediated by aesthetic literacy. In doing so, I offer a view of design thinking as a pathway to embodied knowing and higher thought. I conclude with implications for cultivating designerly ways of reading in the ELA classroom to promote constructive, solution-focused thinking and creative agency through the language arts.

The Arts and Aesthetic Literacy

Student learning in the arts is purposeful, active, sensual, and directly felt in the formation of the whole person; these attributes allow it to contribute to academic, social, and cognitive growth (Heath, 2001). Participatory cultures of arts organizations facilitate this personal growth. In these cultures, members have “low barriers to artistic expression, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, informal mentorship, social connections with others, and the sense that their contributions matter” (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robinson, & Weigel, 2006, p. 7). Literacy practices in drama, for example, can mediate participatory culture via interactions around texts, embodied responses to literature, role-play, appropriation of mixed media, and other practices whereby literacy is a means of community involvement, performativity, and composing through multiple modalities (Bogard, 2016; Bogard, 2011).

Although classrooms are seldom sites for participatory cultures, arts integration is seen as one way of engaging students with content in a manner that produces some of the beneficial interactions of those cultures. Efforts to integrate the arts within ELA have often endeavored to cultivate students’ aesthetic literacy through their responses to paintings, drawings, photography, new media, and performance (Athanases, 2008; Bomer, 2008). By aesthetic literacy, I mean direct encounters with the arts that elevate thought and perception and enhance awareness of the qualities and attributes of things. Aesthetic literacy entails “a skill of attending to, conceptualizing and communicating aesthetic qualities present in daily life” (Rautio & Lanås, 2011, para. 6). It is the “capacity to observe, imagine, and engage with all that surrounds” (Gale, 2005 p. 9). Aesthetically literate people live consciously and read the world using all the senses; therefore, they experience things more directly. Being attuned to what resonates with them, they are aware of the particular elements in time and space that coalesce to evoke an aesthetic experience. Such higher-level cognitive functioning engages the reasoning mind and the sensing body. As a result, emotion, intellect, and embodiment are synergized in learning. When a direct encounter with art stimulates these sensations, learners experience a “resonating state and a readiness to perceive and act” (Gallagher & Ihanainen, 2015, p. 17).

Whether students are spectators or producers of art and whether the art is a painting, poem, literature, or live performance, they can learn ways of perceiving and attending that stimulate the emotion, senses, and intellect. A curriculum that integrates aesthetic literacy teaches students to align themselves to the thoughts, feelings, and meanings a work evokes. It also teaches them to become attuned to a text's features, such as its content, craft and structure, that elicit aesthetic responses (Greene, 1977; Rosenblatt, 1978). Students develop skill in listening to surroundings and responding imaginatively in ways that enable them to "transcend the common place and live more consciously" (Greene, 1983, p. 185). Such close reading and critical framing of texts grow students' capacity to "see, shape, and transform" (Greene, 1977, p. 18) and cultivate an aesthetic sensibility by which to judge their own compositions.

Aesthetic literacy, therefore, can inspire vision and voice, which learners use to respond to texts and to produce them. However, learners need a "designerly" way of thinking, common among composers and artists, to bring their visions into form and structure (Cross, 1996). This way of thinking is preoccupied with inventing something of value that does not yet exist, but fulfills a real-world need and creates an aesthetic experience for an end user or audience.

Design as a Way of Thinking

Whether they are actors, painters, poets, novelists, playwrights, or architects, creative people have ways of perceiving that stir their imaginations and compel them to put what they are seeing, thinking, and feeling into aesthetic form. As designers, they are driven by a sense of vision and a need to bring that vision into reality. According to Jones (1992), "Designers... are forever bound to treat as real that which exists only in an imagined *future* and have to specify ways in which the *foreseen* thing can be made to exist" (p. 10). A designerly way of thinking is solution-focused and guided by a vision that must be actively constructed by the designer. Thus, when articulating a vision, designers think and express ideas through a wide range of modalities such as images, sketches, models, demonstrations, and other creative expressions that transcend the written or oratory modes of communication. As a result, design thinking activates multiple cognitive domains—auditory, tactile, and visual.

In the execution of vision, which is a mental image of what the future will or could be, design thinking values emergence and possibility. Meinel and Leifer's (2011) four rules of design thinking reflect this sensibility: (a) design is a social practice (the human rule); (b) design thinkers must preserve ambiguity (the ambiguity rule);

(c) all design is re-design (the re-design rule); and (d) designers must make ideas tangible (the tangibility rule). Collectively, these rules sustain creative agency and support the emergence of optimal outcomes. McKim (1980) describes the process of design thinking as the Express-Test-Cycle in which designers express an idea for a possible solution, then test the idea to determine what works and what does not. With each cycle, previously unrecognized properties are perceived. Attuned to emergent potential, designers build upon what works until an optimal solution is achieved or resources are depleted.

Design thinking is divergent in that it produces ideas that may appear “outside the box.” Yet, it is also convergent in that it focuses on synthesizing ideas that most bear upon arriving at an optimal solution. While an idea opens new possibilities, what is used is determined by the parameters of the problem context and a felt sense of what is most appropriate for the collective vision. Throughout the process, design thinking keeps the audience or end user at the forefront of decision-making and therefore considers multiple perspectives and stakeholders in arriving at desired outcomes.

Within arts-based participatory cultures such as a drama troupe, what an artist envisions is often bound by what is ideal or most appealing for obtaining an optimal experience, effect, or response in spectators. That being so, design values “practicality, ingenuity, empathy, and a concern for appropriateness” (Cross, 1996, p 2). For example, in the dramaturgical process, the actors design and embody characterizations using their own creative agency. As a compositional practice, their design work entails the intentional arrangement of image, sound, gesture, gaze, print, music, speech, and other sign systems in light of their social purpose, intentions, context, and audience (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). They accomplish this, though, within the genre, style, and intent of the playwright’s work, in alignment with the director’s overall vision, and in consideration of expectations and response of the audience.

In this study, I use the drama troupe as a context for illuminating how young actors engage design thinking as part of their aesthetic literacy. By presenting this case, I hope to help educators understand aspects of design thinking as a reading practice and consider ways in which design thinking can be applied in traditional academic settings, particularly the language arts classroom. As I will show, design thinking can help students engage creative thinking, practice teamwork, and take responsibility for learning. Perhaps most importantly, design thinking can help prepare young people for the complex and highly ambiguous problems characteristic of 21st century participatory cultures.

Designerly Ways of Reading at the Civic Stage Theatre

I came to know the drama kids during three months of fieldwork at the Civic Stage Theatre. Its Summer Youth Program provided tuition-free drama training to teenagers and cast them in full-scale stage productions of dramatic masterpieces. The troupe included 12 youth (four male and eight female, all between the ages of 13 and 18) and two adult male actors who served as mentors. From June until mid-August, they adhered to an intensive 10-week production schedule with rehearsals each weekday evening. On Saturdays, they attended workshops on set construction, lighting design, character makeup, and costumes.

Because this case study concerned reader response in the drama troupe, I aimed to capture the drama kids' lived-through experiences of reading dramatic texts as part of their character development process. Therefore, during my fieldwork, I collected the following data: two interviews with each of the drama kids about their reading processes, field notes, and video recordings of rehearsals that documented the dramaturgical process. My unit of analysis was the drama kids' aesthetic reading stance, which was their "thinking, feeling, and seeing" (Rosenblatt, 1980, p. 387) during reading. I transcribed the interviews and field notes and coded them using a constant comparative analysis procedure (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), focusing on the thoughts, emotions, and associations the drama kids reported experiencing as they read their scripts.

Four features of aesthetic reading emerged from my analysis of the data set, and each had a central function in the drama kids' design of characterizations. These features were reading as design, attending to the sounds and craft of language, attending to embodiment, and taking risks in the actualization of vision. These elements enabled the drama kids to expand and synthesize their interpretation and embodiment of characterizations into a meaningful form. Incorporating excerpts from my field notes and interviews with the drama kids, I describe design thinking as it manifested in the aesthetic reading stance the drama kids took up as they developed characterizations, and I explain how this resulted in dramatic transformations of selves. In doing so, I aim to show design as a way of thinking that involves aesthetic literacy, strengthens creative agency, and holds promise for the teaching of the language arts.

Reading as Design Work

Greene (1977) writes, "Works of art only come into existence when a certain kind of heeding, noticing, or attending takes place" (p. 17). An aesthetic space emerges in which "learners align themselves to the possibility of learning, and then attune themselves to the specificities of their environment for learning" (Gallagher & Ihanainen, 2015, p. 17).

In this aesthetic space, we are both spectators of the thing perceived and authors of new imaginings evoked by our experience. For the drama kids, the design of a characterization gave them a reason to align themselves to learning about their character and attuning to the qualities and attributes of things they could appropriate into their vision of the role. Tuning in to their roles necessitated that they read the script with an aesthetic stance that helped them resonate with the experience, feelings, and physicality of their characters in the story world (Rosenblatt, 1978). To get to an aesthetic space of envisioning themselves in the role, the drama kids engaged in design thinking as a reading practice, which facilitated their constructive, solution-focused thinking during reading. For example, one of the drama kids, Wyndom, distinguished between “just normal reading” and reading with a design mindset:

Don’t just read the lines and then try to go off it. Read it, read it out loud, and read it in your head. Don’t read it as in just normal reading, think about the line, think about the meaning, and what you would be doing during that line.

By associating printed text with meaning, emotion, and embodied action, they learned to perceive and attend to aspects of the script that supported their design of the role. Because they used reading as a design practice, reading mediated the drama kids’ aesthetic literacy.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) have noted the active process of reading in mediating designs: “Reading involves active mental work. But that work is taking place on the levels of discourse and design, and it leads... to ‘inward production’” (p. 68). For the drama kids, this inward production involved the integration of mind-body during reading and attending to interacting modalities of characterization in their mind’s eye. Wyndom continued:

You start with little things. Is your person handsy? Are they vocal? Their eyes? What part of the body do they use the most? I have big hands for my guy. And you kind of decide on an accent for the person. Yeah, just little things. What would that person do? Are they always like screaming a bit?

By attending to the different modalities of characterization during reading, the drama kids elevated their thought and perception. Reading as a design practice brought about an internal dialogue with the text and the application of an “initiating, constructing mind” (Greene, 1977, p. 23). Based on their ongoing analysis of the character, they uncovered emergent possibilities of themselves in the role and gradually synthesized the ideas that formed their creative vision.

Attuning to the Sounds and Craft of Language

In the aesthetic space that emerged from reading as a design practice, the drama kids materialized visions of their characters by aligning and attuning themselves to the qualities and attributes they discerned in their close reading of the script. They began by focusing on the sounds and craft of language as a mode of design thinking. For example, several drama kids described hearing the sound of characters' voices as they read silently and tried approximating the inner voice they heard. Marty eloquently expressed this phenomenon:

Whenever I first read [the script], it is like when you are reading a novel. I don't know if it does for everyone, but each person has a certain sound. And when I read the script there will already be a way that person sounds in my head. And then I try to emulate what that was. And sometimes it just does not work at all, and sometimes it pans out beautifully. But where the sound comes from is based on what the initial feeling was.

Vocal variety, as a design choice, originated from their intuitive, felt sense (Perl, 1980) of the character in concert with a rational awareness of the vocal qualities most appropriate for their role. Importantly, Marty's attending to the sounds and voices of characters while reading was a "designerly" (Cross, 1996) way of thinking. A similar phenomenon has been noted among artists. John-Steiner (1985), who interviewed over 100 novelists, poets, actors, playwrights, sculptors, choreographers, and other creative professionals, found that these individuals used many "languages of thought" (p. 521) in combination. British author Margaret Drabble explained that, when writing novels, she relied on a "dramatic inner voice that spoke the lines and an active imagination that created visual images of the story" (as cited in John-Steiner, 1985, p. 521). Much like it is for artists, reading for the drama kids was a design practice that entailed many languages of thought that informed their embodiment and performance of the role. Their exploration of pitch, rate, accent, intonation, and other prosodic features during reading became some of the many languages of thought that they relied on to form their characterization.

When reading, the drama kids took their prosodic cues from sentence structures, punctuation, words, and phrases in the script to determine the tempo and rhythm of their characters' dialogue. Eric described how attuning himself to the structure of the printed dialogue enabled him to infer the internal state, vocal delivery, and embodiments for his character:

Um, let’s say he likes to speak in four and five word sentences. Then it feels like that person would speak very fast. *Very quickly*. And that lends a tension to the character. You can draw on just the fact that he has lots of very short sentences all in a row. You can create all kinds of physicality to that.

By aligning himself to his character and attuning to cues that signaled tonality, tempo, and inflection of the dialogue, Eric was able to imagine the psychological state of his character. As an aesthetic literacy process, this alignment and attunement enabled him to explore design choices that could convey to an audience the various internal states of his character. The young actors delighted in the ways inflections, rates, and accents shifted the text’s meanings and helped to signify character type, social class, geography, and the character’s state of mind. Often, generating an idea for one modality—such as the cadence of a character’s voice—inspired other ideas for stance, gesture, and gaze, all of which added depth and complexity to the characterizations. By engaging aesthetic literacy, they began to see beyond the givens and conceptualize what could be possible in their roles. They then engaged in the design process to make their ideas a reality.

Conversely, reading as a design practice brought the young actors into an aesthetic space where they grew skill in perceiving the attributes of dramatic texts such as diction, speech patterns, and vocabulary. Because of their awareness of these text features, the drama kids associated good writing with subtext clues that might inform their physical and psychological embodiment of the role. Describing the process of getting ideas for a character, Kyle said:

It takes a lot of detailed going into the script and just reading it and reading it and trying to find little clues. And *that is what good writing does*—it gives you clues constantly of where the character is going and what they are wanting and what they are trying to achieve.

By engaging reading as a design practice for developing characterizations, Kyle and other young actors gained skill in identifying and analyzing aesthetic elements and in communicating their own aesthetic sensibilities and judgments of literary texts.

Materializing Vision Through Embodiment

By engaging reading as a design practice and translating their constructed meanings into embodied acts, the drama kids began to bring forth their vision into the world. They explored a wide range of embodiments until settling on those

that felt the most natural for the role, and this process demanded they respond to real-time reactions from peers and the director. David described this as a collaboration in which the inner vision one formed from the words on the page is refined, shaped, and brought into the material world:

You are creating a character from words. You know, a fully fledged person with a voice and a gait and a style and a rhythm and an energy. None of that is going to be on a page. Words are on page. Sentences are on a page. Lines are on a page. But all the rest of that is all a collaboration. You have an idea. He has an idea. She has an idea.

Typical of design thinking, the collaboration David mentioned involved both divergent and convergent thinking regarding the legibility of character choices. The drama kids learned to ask of themselves and one another: “Does my embodiment look right? Does my voice sound right? Does what I am doing make sense in this context and situation?” By making their ideas tangible through embodied expression, the young actors now read and responded aesthetically to their bodies as texts, not just the printed page. Through ongoing revisions, they learned to re-see and self-assess their work by relying on felt sense as an evaluative response to the choices they made.

In order to inspire confidence and ownership of their roles, the director posed questions that framed an aesthetic space around their characterization. In that space, he helped the students attune to the script and notice various qualities of their role that could inspire their character design choices. Doing so helped them link embodied action with intention and textual evidence from the script. Their director explained:

If a kid comes up to me and says, “I was thinking of trying this,” I will say, “Okay, why? Tell me why you are thinking that. Where is that coming from?” What it does is it forces them to know the story. It forces them to get more deeply involved with their characters. And I think they just have a better appreciation for their work instead of my work.

In addition to increasing the drama kids’ creative agency, the director’s collaborations with the young actors illustrated design thinking as a social process that facilitated divergent thinking in order to express and test ideas for characters. As considerations of form and structure arose, though, their structuring of embodiment exemplified convergent thinking as they worked to synthesize mind, body, and voice to achieve a believable characterization. This process of expressing, testing, and refining embodied

reader responses required taking risks and letting go of anxieties over correctness that had pervaded many of their school learning experiences. Therefore, they needed to feel safe taking creative risks to extend their embodiment and performance far beyond their usual disposition.

Risk-Taking in Embodied Reader Response

Greene (1995a) contends that the role of imagination is “... to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected” (p. 28). In the ephemeral maybes of design, it mattered that the drama kids had an interpretation, but also that they were open to the unknown, emergent potential of themselves in the role and open to exploratory embodiments. Ambidextrous thinking—“thinking outside the box”—was essential to innovation and involved “...the spontaneous and egoless act of invention by which individuals improve themselves and their world through expression and learning” (Rolf A. Faste Foundation for Design Creativity, n.d., para. 1).

To set a precedence for the risk-taking inherent in ambidextrous thinking, the director encouraged the drama kids to play different levels of physicality and prompted them to determine what part of the body a character leads with: the chest, head, groin, and so on. They worked at cohering embodiments into culturally recognizable character types. At times, these designs deviated from normative expectations; outside the theatre context, they would have placed the young people in socially vulnerable positions and identities. Yet, this also allowed them to explore texts, identities, and embodiments without experiencing a threat to identity. For example, Daryn was cast as two characters of different gender in the same production; one character was a mother and the other a male preacher. His design of gesture in these roles conveyed maternity for one character and spirituality for the other. He played the mother’s gestures lower and nurturing, as if always kneeling to caress, gather, and protect, while he played the preacher’s gestures toward the heart and heavens. In these ways, the choice of embodiments registered archetypal images and discourses and required the young people to take public and social risks in inhabiting diverse others.

Typical of design processes, character choices, when embodied, were subject to real-time peer reactions and director feedback in a test-express cycle (McKim, 1980). In this process of materializing vision, the actors let go of choices that did not produce a desired effect, kept aspects of a choice that worked, and built again from that point. Initially, however, the group spectacle of embodiment and performance demanded a level of risk-taking that made some drama kids apprehensive. This was especially true of Daryn. In the early rehearsals, he was reluctant exploring gendered embodiments

that deviated from his shy manner. Fearful of being perceived too outlandish, he held back his performance whenever the troupe focused on him. For example, in his role as the preacher, he played scenes addressing a church congregation in the oratorical style of an enraged evangelist. Daryn floundered with authoritative gestures and with getting his voice older and deeper. As he stood up high behind a pulpit, he looked down on a congregation of his peers who cheered and applauded the character choices he made that broke from his quiet disposition, but heckled him when he showed sudden reluctance to get bigger. In fact, their responses affirmed embodiments that showed emergence of his characterization, but Daryn did not yet know how to interpret or play to his peers' reactions, so he shut down. Afterward, Daryn complained to the director, "I feel like everybody is on me." He gestured back at the empty chairs where the congregation had been. "Some of that is just you," said the director. "Some of that is an excuse for you not to work harder. We do that when we feel we are going out on a limb or we are visiting virgin territory. We make excuses not to go there." Quiet and sensitive youth like Daryn, whose search for voice drew them to the stage, were pushed to go further with their characters and put their bodies on the line. In Daryn's case, that pushing developed into an ethic of courage and hard work. Gradually, he learned to take risks bringing his vision into form, which required a readiness to express his ideas through embodiments that were tested and refined through peer reactions and the director's feedback.

In the troupe's participatory culture, learning was located in the doing, and nothing had to work the first time. Indicative of design thinking, the troupe regarded choices that did not work as essential to discovering what might work, which opened new possibilities for growing characterizations. As a result, risk-taking was not merely encouraged; it was a necessary condition for bringing their visions into embodiment. The director said:

I tell them, "It is okay to fail. It is okay to do something totally stupid and laugh about it. And who knows? Maybe something stupid is the beginning of a new creation." We laugh about it but say, "But wait, there is a kernel that I really like," so I welcome it in the rehearsal hall and I think many of them take to it.

Youth learned not to fret much over how they were perceived for the choices they made to grow their characterization. They became comfortable dealing with the ambiguities of complex problems whose solutions are not found or ready-made, but constructed through divergent and convergent thinking, synthesis, and analysis. Gradually, as all these processes came together, a clear path forward appeared.

Inherent to this design process, risk-taking created an environment in which the drama kids felt comfortable shedding social fronts and loosening the grip of established norms and relations. And design thinking cultivated an aesthetic space that directly engaged the body, mind, and senses, heightening their readiness to perceive and respond anew. As a result, both texts and selves were continually reimagined and re-designed throughout the dramaturgical process.

Dramatic Transformations of Selves

I have so far described reading as a design practice that facilitated vision, embodiment, and risk-taking in the performance of characterizations. In the aesthetic space that emerged, the drama kids described releasing diverse aspects of self that they ordinarily hid. Deborah explained:

I just let it all hang out. I mean it all hung out. You know, it was just really fun. I feel like that’s more of myself, but I don’t always let that part show... I kind of just said whatever I thought at that moment. You know, I mean whatever it was, I felt like my true self came out a lot more. I could just say it.

Brought forth through the design process, one of the outcomes of aesthetic literacy was enlivening in the drama kids a “resonating state” and a “readiness to perceive and act” (Gallagher, & Ihanainen, 2015, p. 17). In their readiness to respond imaginatively, they gave voice to aspects of themselves that they ordinarily silenced and in doing so temporarily suspended normative expectations of themselves and others. Identities typically invisible or marginalized in mainstream contexts became heard and seen among the cast of characters at play in the troupe’s participatory culture. By materializing the imagination, they made a space for themselves where they enjoyed greater coherence between inner states and the outer presentation of selves than they usually experienced.

Additionally, reading and embodying difference opened a space of self-authoring for some drama kids that resulted in a more nuanced view of themselves and other people. Because the actors related to diverse characters and peers socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively throughout the dramaturgical process, some drama kids began questioning their world view. Jason said:

Theatre is a safe way to question the world because it is not a rebellious, dangerous sort of “oh my parents have been lying to me all through life.” No, it is sort of “Okay, but why did they say that to me?” It is just—it definitely will stretch you in different ways.

By coming into contact with a multiplicity of identities and personas, people can enter into an internal dialogue that questions the dogma of authoritative discourses (Greene, 1995b), and this happened for some of the drama kids. The plurality of voices, bodies, and points of view that circulated in the design of characterizations invited them into a space of self-authoring where they could question normalizing discourses and contemplate the possibility of choosing for themselves the kinds of persons they wanted to be in the world.

Finally, design thinking and aesthetic literacy in drama transformed the drama kids' views of learning. On the closing night of the production, the director asked the troupe members to reflect on their creative process. Ben said, "For me, developing my character was not only an acting experience, but also a way in which I learned how to learn." And Michael commented, "Here in the theatre you just like totally expand everything, but at school we have to work inside the guidelines." As a result of engaging the collaborative process of bringing textual interpretations into embodied form, they associated learning with use of the imagination, critical thinking, and acting on possibilities. These designerly ways of reading and thinking are necessary for solving messy, ill-structured problems, but stood apart from their experiences of school-based learning as "rational, linear, systematic, and controlling" (Heron, 1996, p. 45). By reading, perceiving, attending, and using their bodies in motion, the drama kids began to bring severed parts of themselves together into a more self-actualized whole, a work of art.

Insights for Design Thinking and Aesthetic Literacy in ELA

Greene (1995b), staunch advocate for the arts in education, cautions: "Boredom and a sense of futility are among the worst obstacles to learning" (p. 149). My inquiry into reader response in drama, particularly reading as a design practice, has made me mindful of ways educators can combat these obstacles by inviting students to perceive, relate to, and respond to academic content in ways that can cultivate presence of mind, energy, focus, and the use of the imagination. I offer four ways language arts educators can cultivate design thinking in the classroom to inspire aesthetic literacy.

Situate reading in design. Situating reading in a design task can provide a purpose for attending to the unique attributes and qualities of the thing perceived. Aesthetic space can emerge when attending to the craft features of a short story, a stanza from a poem, a quote, song, staging, or any composition. Yet, among the most promising ways to elevate perception of text features is situating reading within a design task that gets young people interacting with texts and composing works they

care about. If we want students to deconstruct and critically examine texts for the discourses they reproduce, then students need experiences making design decisions in consideration of their content, purpose, and audience. An aesthetic space can then open for reflecting on the discourses that they, as designers, are reproducing.

Increase modalities for generating and representing meaning. A vision is more likely to emerge when students have opportunities to compose through multiple sign systems. If we expect students to generate multiple perspectives and interpretations of literature, then they will benefit from more modalities than printed text alone to focus their attention, make connections, and deepen their responses. When allowed to produce meanings through multiple sign systems and to work in many languages of thought, students who struggle with verbocentric literacy often experience gains in volition, achievement, and a sense of purpose in academic literacy (Siegel, 2006). With more languages of thought with which to create meaning, they may be more inclined to use ambidextrous thinking and work through the challenges of ambiguous problem situations.

Create a holding environment for developing and actualizing vision. Sustained perception and attention must be taught and modeled, then directed into a space that can give shape and form to the ideas perceived. Aesthetic space can grow by being aware of one’s senses and emotions, then directing those energies into a holding environment, a space for incubating ideas and cohering them into some embryonic form until they are ready to hatch. For the actor this is the rehearsal space; for the artist it is the sketchbook; and for the writer it is the writer’s notebook. In such spaces, people are free to explore ideas, find patterns, make connections, and develop a vision. While the process begins with a lone, focused mind, what is materialized is socially mediated and inspired by collective interest or endeavor. Being surrounded by other artists, writers, and performers arouses creative sensibilities, instincts, and potentiality. In that safe space of possibility, students generate desire and momentum for bringing voice to vision and vision into form.

Position students as designers. Young people take up a range of subject positions such as active producers, creators, directors, editors, composers, writers, and even actors when they are engaged in multimodal composition. Considerations of design, of seeing how pieces fit together, and testing the affordances of potential modes in shaping meaning are ways they can learn to perceive and attend to texts as designers. Producing and responding to a text can be integrated with consideration of its design, of how its meanings could be shaped, embodied, and rendered anew. In the process, young people become positioned as designers of text, rather than passive consumers of print and image.

Finally, educators might help young people discern how the author's purpose and audience influence the choice of modalities that comprise a text. Such conversations, particularly in students' own compositions, may grow an aesthetic awareness of how one's modal choices affect a text's meanings. The sense of self as designer may grow by asking students to explain their choices, the emergent decisions that led to their final product, and by encouraging risk-taking inherent in the formation of texts and authors. Such conversations create an aesthetic space of inquiry into the techniques, forms, and themes of students' compositions, and the texts that inspire them. A more nuanced perspective of the creative process and a work's meanings can elevate perceptions of self as a creative agent capable of shaping and forming the material world.

Dare to See Beyond the Givens

"I want to see what you can do. I want you to take your character beyond what you would ever dream of."

– Director, Civic Stage Theatre

Bringing insights from the stage to the ELA classroom demonstrates the potential of design thinking for actualizing aesthetic literacy in ways that can heighten awareness of texts, ourselves, and the world. The crusty terrain of standards, curriculum, and assessment may be looked upon with new perspective, opening up possibilities for instilling creative agency and voice in learning that is active, not inert or uninspired. Doing so is imperative at a time when pathways to aesthetic literacy are too often disregarded in national academic standards, benchmarks, pacing guides, and accountability measures. As a self-actualizing step toward fashioning a higher reality, we might "...move the young to notice more, to attend more carefully, to express their visions, to choose themselves" (Greene, 1977, p. 20). We might, like the drama kids, dare to embrace design thinking and aesthetic literacy as an orientation toward learning. In the doing, we might perceive anew what we can do, then take ourselves—our teaching, our character—beyond what we imagined was possible.

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Access Stories ... and a Bit More: A Talking Circle Inspired Discussion

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on what happened when a doctoral student wanted to study an Indigenous group's approach to leadership. Three accounts are presented: the student's, her advisor's, and an Indigenous culture leader's. The accounts were developed and are being reported by using a modified version of the talking circle process employed in many Indigenous cultures. Despite modifications, the approach retained many of the characteristics of traditional talking circles and demonstrated a talking circle's potential for "transforming understanding through creative engagement."

Historically, cultural anthropologists studied Indigenous cultures. Over time, however, members of Indigenous groups suggested that: (a) Western researchers' methods are inconsistent with the relational aspects of Indigenous cultures (Atkinson, 2001; Bishop, 1998; Julien, Wright, & Zinni, 2010; Kenny & Fraser, 2012; Wilson, 2008); (b) the stories that mainstream culture researchers have told about the cultures they have studied frequently are inaccurate—or at least inconsistent with the stories that Indigenous people tell about themselves (Tuck & Fine, 2007; Smith, 1999); and (c) mainstream culture researchers normally have exploited Indigenous groups to pad their résumés and become tenured without providing significant benefits to the groups they have studied (Batisste, 2008; Jacob, 2012; Smith, 1999). Not surprisingly, there has been a movement within Indigenous communities not only to develop culturally appropriate research methods,

but also to have Indigenous cultures studied by Native scholars (Atkinson, 2001; Battiste, 2008; Farris, 2003; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008).

So, what happens, today, when a mainstream-culture researcher wants to study an Indigenous group? This paper details a doctoral student's attempt to gain access to an Indigenous group for dissertation research on the Indigenous group's conception of and approach to leadership (Buchanan & BQFNC, 2010). More specifically, it presents three accounts of what happened: the student's, her advisor's, and the account of a member of the Indigenous culture the student wanted to study.

The accounts presented here were developed by using an inquiry strategy inspired by the talking circle process employed in many Indigenous cultures, including the Cree culture that the doctoral student wanted to study. In that culture, talking circles are used for a variety of purposes (e.g., problem solving and healing). In 2008, Cree scholar Sean Wilson (2008) suggested that talking circles could even be thought of "as a research technique" (p. 41). When used for purposes of research, talking circles are, in essence, qualitative interviewing without the interviewer: "A talking circle involves people sitting in a circle, where each person has the opportunity to take an uninterrupted turn in discussing the topic" (p. 41).

One reason the three of us who participated in the talking circle-inspired discussion transcribed here believed that it might be appropriate to use an approach inspired by talking circles to reflect on what we had all just experienced—albeit in different ways, in different roles, and from different vantage points—was that talking circles invariably serve a teaching and learning function. The assumption is that every member of the circle has something valuable to contribute. Consequently, group members must attend to what is being said by everyone. After each person has spoken, the process begins again. Circle participants might respond to what others had shared earlier, or they may take the conversation in a new direction.²

The teaching and learning we envisioned differed somewhat from the teaching and learning in traditional talking circles. In this project, the audience for each speaker was not only (or even, at times, primarily) the other circle participants; rather, a major purpose for creating the material that follows was to educate *external readers* about what was being discussed.

The talking circle-inspired process we employed also differed from traditional circles in at least four other ways. First, talking circle participants in this project did not *literally* sit in a circle. They were not, in fact, in the same room, or, even, in some

cases, the same country. Second, rather than literally talking, the participants wrote what they had to say and then sent what they had written to the two other “talking” circle participants. Third, while traditional talking circles normally occur in a timeframe of hours, the “talking” circle dialogue presented here happened over a multi-month timeframe. Finally, because our modified “talking” circle was conducted in writing rather than orally, some of the conventions of written text—especially written text prepared for publication—influenced what was done. These conventions included editing for clarity and abbreviating what was written initially to fit the page-limit requirements of scholarly journals.

Despite these differences, we believe our modified talking circle process retained many of the advantages of the traditional in-person talking circle activity: We were able to represent a range of perspectives; the conversation was not overly constrained by a pre-determined purpose; and, like traditional talking circles, one speaker’s/writer’s stories are not privileged over the stories of other speakers/writers.

The Talking Circle Transcript: Round One

Julia (The Dissertation Researcher): I have been interested in leadership for as long as I can remember. While living in Hawaii and working with Native Hawaiians and Samoans, my protective shield of white privilege began to develop some *pukas* or little holes. I realized that some cultural groups thought about leadership—and many other things—differently than I did.

Fast forward to my graduate studies: When engaged in a research project for one of my classes, I was troubled when a Native American student told me about a leadership course in which he was “corrected” by the professor when he shared his view of leadership. As I probed, I learned that his view of leadership was much more collective than individual and that even his concept of *the collective* was not the same as my own or, even, the same as collaboration-oriented scholars such as Burns (1978) and Rost (1993). For the Indigenous student, concepts of collaboration were rooted in a view of the collective that pictured all things in the universe as being interrelated in a way that was as much spiritual as literal.

The more I learned, the more I realized that the Indigenous student’s view of leadership did not need to be “corrected.” Rather, I concluded that leadership literature in the West needed to be reconsidered. I began to think about Paulo Freire’s (1990)

insights about the role of colonial pedagogy in maintaining inequality. I thought, for example, about his “banking” concept of education in which students must check what they know and care about at the classroom door and play the role of *empty vessel* that teachers fill with alien knowledge. “Are the leadership ideas that I learned about in my formal education and now teach symptomatic of a ‘banking’ approach to education?” I asked myself; “do I really want to be a part of that system?” In short, I began a process I now understand as *decolonization* (Smith, 1999).

During my dissertation proposal development process, I shared my interests with Robert, my dissertation committee chair. He encouraged me to contact two First Nations alumni of the university, Pat Makokis and her sister-in-law, Leona Makokis, who Robert told me worked at a First Nations college in Canada. I decided to reach out to them through email.

I soon received a response: “Nice to meet you, Julia. Can you tell us about your family?” I was thrown a bit by the question. I could not understand the interest in my family? I thought, “What does my family have to do with this research?”

I laugh at myself now; I had a lot to learn.

Robert (Dissertation Chair): I was excited about Julia’s plan, in part because I understood that the academic literature on leadership exhibited a Western bias. My only concern was whether Julia would be able to get access to an Indigenous group to study. I had read Smith’s (1999) *Decolonizing Methodology* and the work of another Maori scholar, Russell Bishop (1998); consequently, I understood that Western scholars who want to study Indigenous groups are likely to meet with understandable resistance.

I urged Julia to contact two women who I knew about because they had completed our institution’s doctoral program before I had arrived on campus. I assumed that, as graduates of the same Leadership Studies program as Julia’s, they undoubtedly would agree—and be able to get their community to agree—to become research participants in Julia’s study.

In retrospect, I should not have been so cavalier ... or so naive.

Patricia (Indigenous Participant): My introduction to this talking circle will use the following format:

- 1) *Who am I?*
- 2) *How am I related to Julia and Robert?*
- 3) *How do I feel about this relationship?*

tân'si, Patricia Makokis nitisíyihkâson, onihcikiskwapiwinihk ohci nîya, ekwa ninehiyawî-wîhowin "iskwew kâtepwâtât piyesîsa." My name is Patricia Makokis. I live on Saddle Lake Cree Nation, and my ceremonial name is "woman who calls the birds." When I was given that name, the Elder who gave me that name said, "Patricia, you call much more than the birds."

I am a servant of the people! Greetings. I am honored to be a part of this "talking circle" via the newest "iron horse that sits on the table," the computer. This is a new form of talking circle, and it is with respect to our age-old form of dialoging that I have consciously and respectfully chosen to participate with my two colleagues, Dr. Julia Buchanan and Dr. Robert Donmoyer.

My educational journey with these two colleagues (whom I call dear friends now) started several years back. Julia was trying to finalize her dissertation on leadership, and, in an un-coincidental way (as the Elders would say, "Patricia, there are no coincidences!"), she was led to Blue Quills First Nation College (BQFNC), and, more specifically, to me. So, to provide a little more detail on who I am, I need to step back and reframe the current educational context between Julia, Robert, and myself.

I am an Indigenous educator; I have worked at a First Nations college located in northeastern Canada. BQFNC is the first locally controlled Indigenous institute in Canada. The college is located in a former Roman Catholic residential school. In the early 1970s, the local Indigenous Nations decided to have a "sit-in," protesting for the right to educate their own children, as few students were graduating with a high school diploma. This is very important information as it sets the context of our current post-secondary history, and, more importantly, as one of the first "decolonizing Indigenous educational centers" in Canada. This history and the current context contributed to Julia's trek north.

Who am I in the context of this decolonizing educational journey at BQFNC? Well, first and foremost, I am a Cree woman; I am a wife (married to Eugene); I am a mother (to Janice and James); I am a daughter (to my mother and late father); I am a sister (to my five brothers); I am a friend; I am a colleague; I also am an educational warrior and a lifelong learner of my own Indigenous Cree ancestry. Thus I am a baby in kindergarten on this lifelong learning journey that our Elders speak of.

I am a humble servant of the People! I am a graduate of BQFNC; back in the early 1970s, after the educational takeover, I started my post-secondary education at BQFNC. Thus, Blue Quills First Nation College runs deep in my veins.

I am, in fact, an instrument of the Cree Nation decolonization journey, and I am committed to the “cause” of helping others on the decolonization journey. That decolonization journey includes taking allies along with me on the journey ... thus my involvement with Julia and Robert.

So, when Julia contacted me when I was going to the University of San Diego to receive an alumni award, I agreed to meet with her. We met; we had coffee together; we talked. I wanted to physically see this woman who wanted to learn about Indigenous leadership, I wanted to see how I “felt” about our meeting, and I wanted to see if she was serious enough to come and visit us, on our territory. And, yes, I “felt” good; the Elders say we learn with both our head and our heart, so I listened, I observed, and I invited Julia to visit Blue Quills First Nation College. I thought, “If she seriously wants to learn, she will take the time and spend the money to come and visit.”

I invited her to stay at my house, to meet my family. It was an opportunity for us, my colleagues and me, to learn about *who Julia was*. You see, in our world, relational leadership is very important. Too often, Caucasian people have come in, taken, and left ... and they leave with our information and have not taken the time to learn more about who we are and our “worldview.” Yes, *our* worldview ... not impose theirs, but learn from us, take the time to come visit, learn, listen, share; and Julia came.

So, I felt good about our initial contact. I prayed about our relationship, and that I would feel a connection with Julia, that she would open her mind and her heart to us ... to learning about who we are as professionals working in an Indigenous college setting. This was the start of our collective learning journey ...

Ay ay! Thank you for “listening.”

Round Two

(At the start of the “talking” circle’s second round, both Julia and Robert deviated from the designated topic—a frequent occurrence in the talking circles the three of us had participated in—to acknowledge that each had ignored the traditional talking-circle protocol of, first, talking about one’s lineage and cultural background. Julia, then, attempted to mimic what Patricia had done at the beginning of her first-round comments and discussed what she knew [in some cases, very little] about her German relatives on one side of her family and the Scotch and Irish relatives on the other side. She concluded her sharing of personal information by writing,

"I can hear my mother's voice saying, 'Don't be so familiar.'" Julia then continued to tell her version of the access story.)

Julia: After I sent the email, I received a thank-you email from both Patricia and Leona. I said some prayers, and then I waited. Months went by. I tried to restart our email exchanges, but there was no response. So, I waited. Eventually, I went to seek counsel from Robert, and we started to consider a Plan B for a dissertation proposal. Any Plan B we came up with just didn't seem right, however. So, I waited.

In time I did pursue getting access to other Native American participants through Native acquaintances and connections, but nothing solid materialized. I wrote another email message offering to call (on my dime) Patricia and Leona, but didn't receive a response. One day, another doctoral student who worked in our school's international office—and, also, knew the access difficulties I was experiencing—said, "Do you know the Makokis sisters [*sic*] are in town to receive an alumni award? I have their cell phone numbers right here." I took the numbers and decided I would make contact the next day.

The following day I dialed Patricia's numbers and heard Patricia's kind but direct voice on the other end. I immediately liked Patricia. Patricia agreed to meet for coffee near the University. We had a great conversation, and I felt like I had known her for a long time, even though, of course, I hadn't.

During our conversation, I made sure I dropped the fact that I had read Smith's (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies*. Patricia seemed pleased. Toward the end of the conversation, Patricia invited me to visit Blue Quills First Nation College and engage in some of their cultural experiences. I said, "Yes, I would love to visit." And then I waited.

(Robert also began his second-round comments by acknowledging and attempting to correct the breach of talking-circle protocol in his first-round comments. As he talked about his relatives and the culture that had socialized him, however, it became readily apparent that his relationship with his Pennsylvania Dutch culture was radically different than the relationship Patricia had with Cree culture. At one point, he wrote, "Early on, I became more than a little skeptical of what cultural socialization leads to. Indeed, had I not moved away from the culture I grew up in—metaphorically, but also literally—I almost certainly would have had little interest in a topic like Indigenous leadership [or Indigenous anything, for that matter], except, maybe, to view, from a distance, the exotic dances and colorful costumes of Indigenous groups." He then returned to telling his version of the access story.)

Robert: Initially, there were some hopeful moments. For example, Julia being invited to visit the Cree college and, after the visit, Julia telling me the visit went well. She even stayed in Patricia's home. But after the visit, she heard nothing.

Eventually, I became impatient, in part because I knew Julia's job at another university was in jeopardy if she did not complete her doctoral program within a specified period of time. I urged Julia to let Patricia know the seriousness of the situation, but Julia did not take my advice. By then, I think she had begun to assimilate aspects of Cree culture (at least the Cree culture at Blue Quills First Nation College). She had accepted Patricia's notion that things would happen when they were supposed to happen (and if they should happen). And she had learned to be respectful when one is an interloper in another's culture, a lesson I still had to learn.

Patricia: Okay, in my second round of this talking-circle dialogue via the iron horse (i.e., the laptop) that sits on my desk, I will go backwards to respond to the two questions addressed, at least implicitly, by Julia and Robert:

- What is leadership and how am I connected to it?
- Why the interest in Indigenous views of leadership?

They started by addressing these two very specific leadership-related questions, while I started with a little information about "who I am." I started as I did because, from an Indigenous perspective, it is important that we "position" or "contextualize" who we are in our work and in our relationships, including any partnerships we form. This is likely to seem strange to those operating in the Western world of work, for they tend to stay in the head, to intellectualize, and might say, for example, "I AM PATRICIA MAKOKIS, AND I AM THE PRESIDENT OF BLUE QUILLS FIRST NATIONS COLLEGE." In other words, they state their name and they identify themselves by the positional leadership place in which they sit, and this is contrary to how we position ourselves. (I might add there is nothing wrong with this. Problems arise, however, when people fail to understand that how they see—and live in—the world isn't how others see and live in the world.)

Rather than defining ourselves by the positions we hold, we identify ourselves more holistically, speaking a little about who we are mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically (or, in Cree, as a *nehiyaw*, i.e., a four-directional person). All of this signifies that I am connected to much more than simply my brain; rather, I am interconnected holistically to four aspects of self, or, to get a bit more complicated, as well as philosophical and spiritual—I am connected to my relatives, the four-legged

ones (i.e., animals), the plants, the winged ones (birds), that is, to all those that walk and those that crawl, those that swim, and the plants.

So, from this larger interconnected space in which I live, I am but a small, humble human being. If I were to leave this world tomorrow, my positional leadership place as President of a First Nations college is really insignificant in relation to my leadership place within this larger cosmos I speak of. Life will go on (as my plant, animal, and water-based relatives will live on) without me. But I cannot live on without them! This is a sad reality from the Western perspective which sees man as superior and ruler over all things. In our worldview, however, I am small, fragile.

I am, in fact, no more than a speck of dust in my relationships to all things around me. I am dependent upon my relatives in the water, the water itself, the air, and those that fly in the air. They look after me, they sustain me; therefore, in my leadership role, I am dependent upon them as they give me life and allow me to do my small leadership role in the larger context.

This philosophical and spiritual understanding informs my leadership practice. So when I awake in the morning, I give thanks to all of my relatives, and to the fact that I am loaned another day to serve my people, the Cree of Northern Canada. Yes, I am loaned this day, and, therefore, in my leadership practice, I must remember that my leadership actions today impact seven generations ahead, and those of my Ancestors impact me and bring me to where I am today. Thus I am interconnected with huge leadership responsibilities that are far more complex than simply the “individual” that I am, because I have “collective” leadership responsibilities that far exceed me as the small, humble, fragile human being that I am. Thus, when I practice leadership, it is for the greater good, the collective.

The graphic below adapted from my dissertation (Makokis, 2000) depicts the “interconnectedness” I speak of. It depicts my relationship to the trees, who teach me about honesty, as they stand straight and tall; the mountains (rock) that teach me about strength and determination; the grasses that we stomp on, we cut, we walk all over—they teach me about kindness as they continue to grow despite what I do to them; and to the animals, who give their lives so I have life, so I have food! What a blessing.

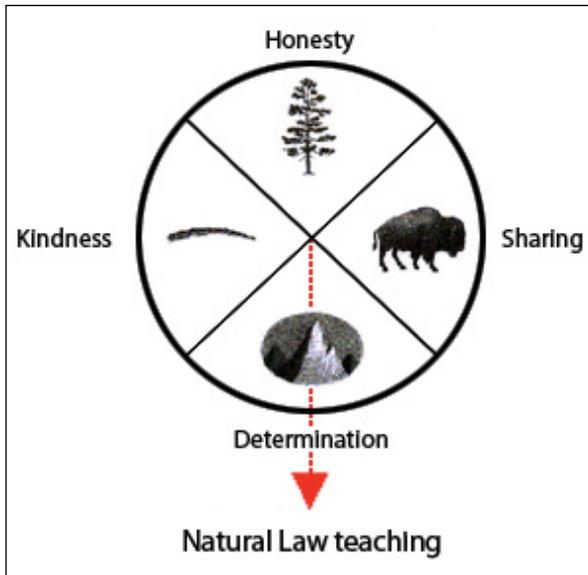


Fig. 1: Natural law teachings

Also a blessing is the interconnectedness to my relatives, my land-based teachers who share oral history about the time prior to colonial contact. The synergistic interconnectedness of my land based-relatives keeps me humble and a servant to the people, for I am connected to all of my relatives. The Natural Laws graphically shared here articulate the values—the guiding principles of practicing what some have called *servant leadership* (Greenleaf, 2008).

In the Western world, what I did by starting with a little information about who I am is unusual, for, from a professional standpoint, “who I am” really doesn’t matter. Since I am hired to do a job, I should keep myself safe within that intellectual context, because, in that context, I do not have to feel and express emotion as I am simply using my head, the intellectual part of myself. One of my Elder mentors always says, “The hardest journey is the four to six inches from our head to our hearts.” So, in a nutshell, that is one little lesson about differences in how we get into the complex topic of dialoguing around “relational leadership,” for example.

For the most part, Indigenous people—our history and our way of living and being in the world—have been seen as “inferior, heathen, savage, and in need of change.” Thus the Indian Agent was sent out to assimilate us into mainstream culture and “take the Indian out of the Indian,” as the late Elder Joe P. Cardinal from Saddle Lake Cree Nation once put it. The irony is that Western concepts of leadership that include

hierarchical structures and power sources are also proving to be complex and maybe not always the “best way,” as Western leadership authors like Ken Blanchard (2009) and others are realizing. After all, there is an “emotional” aspect to good servant leaders; consequently, relying on “positional power” may not be the “best” way to lead.

To conclude for now, I want to simply say that worldviews are unique. No worldview is better than another; they simply are different. Complexity and conflict arise when each of us defines leadership for others from our worldview, and we end up with confused states of being and poor “relational leadership.” AY AY, thank you for listening to me, all my relations.

Round Three

Julia: Thank you, Patricia, for sharing the Natural Law Teachings. Among other things, you have said that animals are teachers. This week, as I was thinking about my latest contribution to our talking circle discussion, I tried to be a good student and learn from an animal who came into my life for a bit. Way too early, before the sun was even up, I heard a strange noise. I looked out the window and saw a raccoon. I watched him high in the tree; he wanted to get down. Each time as his weight went over the side of the branch and his last foot almost let go, he would reconsider and go right back up. He must have tried 27 times before he finally succeeded.

I could not help but think the raccoon’s demonstration of persistence somehow mirrored my dissertation experience, an experience I have had to relive a bit as a result of working on this project. Now, as I sit and think about the experience, and the relationships that were formed as part of the experience, I realize how transformational this work has been. My mind is much more open to different worldviews, and it is becoming easier to critique the assumptions about research that are embedded in the Western worldview.

Undoubtedly, this work was so personally transformational because Patricia and others expected that the study would be done using an Indigenous methodology. Indigenous methodology, according to Cree scholar Sean Wilson (2008), requires reexamining the boundaries between the researcher and the researched and viewing those who traditionally are seen as research *subjects* as coresearchers. Indigenous methodology also emphasizes establishing close ties among those involved in a coresearcher relationship. Among other things, relationships help

increase the likelihood that Indigenous people will not be exploited by researchers (especially Western researchers) as they often have been in the past (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Wilson and others refer to this as *relational accountability*.

Given Indigenous methodology's emphasis on establishing a close coresearcher relationship, it is hardly surprising that the experience I had was personally transformational. Whenever coresearchers come from different cultures and, consequently, see the world differently, some degree of transformation must occur to establish a functional coresearcher relationship.

For me, at least, personal relationships began to develop in earnest several months after Patricia and I met in a San Diego coffee shop. Immediately after that meeting, I sent Patricia a one-page description of the research I wanted to do. She had promised to circulate anything I sent her throughout the Blue Quills First Nation College community and emphasized that a decision to allow me to do my study would be a collective decision with her colleagues.

After several months of waiting with little communication, things suddenly moved quickly. Patricia sent me an email that said that she was able to confer with her colleagues and that "it's a go" for a visit. She said to come during an upcoming gathering of Indigenous Western-educated physicians and Indigenous healers during which I would be able to interact with the people at BQFNC. Two weeks later, I was sitting on a plane heading north. I assumed that, by the time I headed home, whether or not I had permission to do my study would be clear. Things didn't happen as planned (or, to be more precise, as I planned).

Patricia had invited me to stay at her home, in part so I could meet her family. I wondered: Where did Patricia live; how would I get around? I vowed to let go of my inner "control freak." I decided to find a good leadership book that I could bring as a gift to thank Patricia for inviting me to stay with her. I also found three boxes of beautiful and quite artistic Native American-made note cards and threw them in my luggage, just in case I needed them.

Patricia was waiting for me at the airport and knew exactly where I would be walking out of customs. She had driven two hours to pick me up, and we talked all through the two-hour drive back to her home. I was humbled by her willingness to drive all that distance to pick up a mere "doc" student who was asking for a favor.

When I arrived at Patricia's home, I discovered she was also hosting three female Elders from Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana. They all sat around the kitchen table speaking in Cree; they were telling stories, telling jokes, and laughing.

The three Elders virtually adopted me. They took me to the different events in their car, made sure I knew protocols (such as walking in the correct direction inside the teepee and wearing a long skirt or wrap), and translated their jokes and stories into English for my benefit. Patricia made me feel very welcome in her home, but the Elders took such great care of me that I suspect, at some point, Patricia must have wondered, "Where is Julia?"

The Elders referred to themselves as *the Golden Girls*. The name came from an American television series about three lovable older women who were friends. I thought it was such a coincidence that I had exactly three gifts in my luggage to give to these three wonderful Elders who were so generous with me. Later, Patricia reminded me that there are no coincidences.

In time I realized that, if I wanted to get permission to do my study, the Golden Girls were not the only individuals I needed to get to know. Patricia, in fact, reminded me to make sure that I shared information about myself and why I was there during the talking circle. Up to that point, I had been quiet during circle time. I was quiet, in part, because I am an introvert. However, I also was quiet because of my whiteness. I wanted to make sure that I behaved in a humble way and that I, in no way, exhibited the sorts of behaviors associated with white privilege (see McIntosh, 1989; Regan, 2005).

The day after Patricia had prodded me to speak up, I found the right time in the talking circle to share information about myself and the research I wanted to do. Over the course of the conference, I met and made many new friends and had a chance to engage with others over meals, through listening during talking circles, and during teachings. I learned that my new Cree friends were more generous, hospitable, and funny than I could have ever imagined before I met them.

Not all experiences were positive during my first visit to Blue Quills First Nation College, however. I also learned of the wounds and pain of the past that still existed in the present at the former residential school that is now Blue Quills First Nation College. As I was sitting next to one of the teepees on the college grounds one evening around dusk, a man drove up in a pickup truck and came over to ask me about the event that was happening there. He told me he had attended the Residential School as a child. As he talked about his childhood experiences, I could see the trauma of the past in

his eyes. I knew it must have been hard for him to be near the building that held bad memories for him.

This experience helped me realize *what* I was asking of Patricia and her colleagues (who were also her friends) to do. It also helped me understand why, after a long-anticipated visit during which I met wonderful new friends, I was returning to the States without knowing whether or not I had permission to do the study.

Robert: Patricia's second contribution to this talking circle discussion—in particular, her discussion of differing cultural worldviews—reminds me that no matter how often I might visit the Blue Quills First Nation College and the reserve associated with it, I can never completely check my own cultural assumptions at the Reserve's borders. After all, I have been socialized not just by Western culture, but by Western *academic* culture. I have been socialized, in other words, to believe it is the mind that matters. (Thanks a lot, Plato!) Because of this socialization, I will always be, at best, a cultural impostor when I visit the reserve at Saddle Lake and Blue Quills First Nation College.

Still, like Julia, I *love* to visit. Last year, Julia and I brought a group of PhD and MA students enrolled in an international studies course to the Cree Nation territory to participate in the College's annual "Culture Camp." We constructed (and some of us slept in) teepees; we tried our hand at native crafts; we listened to teachings and participated in ceremonies. It was an exhilarating experience!

We came to Culture Camp, in part, because one of the conditions of Julia getting access to BQFNC for data collection purposes in her dissertation study was that the study would not be a one-shot deal. (Indigenous communities, we were told, are tired of Western researchers who "take the data and run.") Rather, Julia's study needed to be the start of a long-term relationship. The international studies course was a first step in fulfilling our part of the informal agreement. (The writing of this paper, incidentally, is a second step.)

The hardest thing for the students we took to Culture Camp—and, also, at times for Julia and me—has been not to romanticize what we saw and not to mentally transform the people we met into some sort of exotic and alluring "other" who inhabit an entirely different universe than the one we live in. To be sure, I take seriously Patricia's talk of differing worldviews. But I also have observed ways of operating that seemed quite familiar to me. Patricia's diplomatic skills, for example, would be highly valued in the West.

I encountered Patricia, the diplomat, on a number of occasions. Soon after I met her, in fact, I told Patricia a story about myself that intentionally demonstrated how naive I had been about Indigenous culture, and, more specifically, Indigenous approaches to research. The story involved me seeing a presentation about an Indigenous research study by Russell Bishop, the Maori researcher from New Zealand. Later, I had told Julia and others that I really did not see how what they had done in their study was any different than what most qualitative researchers do. The only difference that was visible to me, at least, was that they had brought an Elder with them and the research team sang a song with the Elder at the beginning of the presentation. But, *other than that*, there was no difference.

Of course, in an Indigenous culture in which ceremony is a central part of life, the *“that”* in the phrase *“other than that”* is highly significant. Among other things, it speaks to the respect that Russell had for the people he interacted with and the coresearcher relationship he had established with them. By the time I told Patricia the story, I understood all of this and, in fact, the point of my story was to demonstrate how ignorant and foolish I had been. Julia, who was present when I told the story to Patricia, laughed at me, as I anticipated (and hoped) she *and Patricia* would do. But Patricia only nodded politely.

Much later, Julia and I were staying in Patricia’s house on the reserve and I repeated my story. By now, Patricia knew who she was dealing with. This time Patricia guffawed at my foolishness. The diplomat knew me well enough by then to understand that laughter was the reaction I expected, and she happily—and quite sincerely—obliged.

Are the diplomatic skills I observed Cree? Are they skills picked up by interacting with mainstream Canadian and United States culture? Are they, in some respects, universal? I do not yet know the answers to these questions. But I do know that the diplomatic acumen I observed quite frequently when I visited Blue Quills First Nation College felt awfully familiar.

Patricia: In this round, I want to share a leadership story. Specifically, I want to share an account of a recent business meeting with two oil-business executives I hosted at BQFNC. We met to discuss possible training-industry partnerships, so the meeting had potential fiscal implications for the college.

Our protocol, regardless of who we are meeting with, is to start any meeting with our own smudges³ and a prayer. I explained to the two Caucasian businessmen that the plants are our relatives and we are burning a plant (in this case, sage) as a way of

cleansing ourselves to prepare for the meeting we are about to participate in (see the photo below.)



Fig. 2: Burning a plant for the cleansing ceremony

Then I had a male colleague (who also happened to be Caucasian) light the smudge and bring it to me. I started by smudging first, and while I was smudging I was teaching them the importance of participating in this **ceremony** PRIOR to starting our business meeting. With the smudge burning, I started by waving the smoke over my **hands** so I remember to “**do good with my hands.**” I smudged my **eyes** stating that, according to the teachings of our Elders, we are smudging our **eyes** so we “**see**” the goodness in those present. We smudge our **ears** so we “**hear**” goodness in the meeting we are about to embark on. We smudge our **mouth** so we “**speak**” with goodness in our meeting. We smudge our **heart** so we “**feel**” goodness, and remember to connect our head and our heart in our relationships.

I can only assume this was a uniquely different business experience for our visitors from the oil company. After all, in Western business, “time is money.” Indeed, anywhere else, what we do at Blue Quills First Nation College might be seen as “unorthodox” business practices. Not so at BQFNC where we are continuously decolonizing and reclaiming our own ways of knowing in all our relationships. So, we all smudge, and, that day, the two businessmen smudged; we said the prayer; then we proceeded with business.

Round Four

Julia: Thank you, Patricia, for sharing the story and also describing the smudge ceremony process and its meaning. I recall being a bit nervous the first time I was invited to smudge before a talking circle. Later, when I got past my am-I-doing-it-right concerns, I realized that the ceremony helped me to become very present (i.e., psychologically present, to the people in the circle and to the talking circle process).

During a number of visits, I participated in multiple talking circles, and by my second visit, I had learned that, in this culture, relationships mattered. During my second visit, Patricia asked me to review the Blue Quills First Nation College (2009) policies on research ethics. (In United States universities like the one I attended, these would be called Institutional Review Board [IRB] policies.) The policies were thorough and clearly signaled that forming relationships was a way to humanize the research process and protect members of the Cree community. This emphasis on relationships forced me to ask myself whether I could live up to the expectations so clearly laid out in the ethics policies. After all, I was studying at a Western institution that emphasized the need to keep distance (objectivity) between the researcher and the researched. Even the anthropologists I had studied recommended against “going *too* native.”

Patricia and Leona, my two major contacts, mentioned during my visit that if any research was to happen, the research would have to be done with Indigenous methodology. I thought to myself, “What is Indigenous methodology?”

After I returned home, I read and learned. My rereading of Smith (1999), for example, reminded me that any research that was done with an Indigenous group needed to be beneficial to them and not just advance the career of the researcher. “What would the benefits of my project be for the people at Blue Quills First Nation College?” I asked myself. I had difficulty generating a satisfactory answer, but I had come to realize that an answer should have something to do with relationships and that relationships are a source of reconciliation and humanization.

I continued to send emails now and then. Every time I wrote, I tried to signal that I wanted to be helpful, even though I was not quite sure what that meant. At the very least, I tried not to be annoying. I told myself, “Be patient!” By now I had learned that, in the Cree world, if things were meant to happen, they would happen.

After months of waiting, I started the difficult emotional process of facing the fact that perhaps this research would not happen. After all, some pretty awful things have happened in the name of research with Native people, so I thought, maybe, after over two years of searching and waiting, I would need to just let go. I dreaded the conversation with Robert, because I knew we would both be disappointed. I decided to send another email to find out if there was any interest in collaborating on the research before I faced up to the conversation with Robert.

In response to this email, Patricia once again encouraged her colleagues to consider my request to do the study so she could give me some sort of answer. The timing, as it turned out, was fortuitous. One of the Blue Quills First Nation College faculty members had recently traveled to Ghana for a meeting of Indigenous people from around the world. She told her colleagues upon her return to Blue Quills First Nation College that, during her experience in Ghana, she needed to explain constantly that she was not Western, not an American or a Canadian like other Americans or Canadians. Rather, she was First Nation—Cree. She needed to explain because people in Ghana did not know the story of her people. Because of this, she said to Patricia, “Tell Julia to come; we need to get our story out there.” Others agreed.

This paper is a modest attempt at “getting the story out there!”

Postscript

One of the reviewers of this paper seemed genuinely confused about what we hoped readers would learn from reading the paper. We actually had two a priori goals. One was methodological: We wanted to explore the utility of employing talking circle-inspired procedures as research strategies. The other was substantive: We wanted to discuss, in intentionally personal ways, a topic that has been discussed more abstractly and procedurally in the literature: doing research in a just and fair way when there is a power differential between the researcher and those the researcher is studying. The reader will have to assess whether we accomplished these goals and, if so, whether what we accomplished was worthwhile.

From the start, however, we also thought of talking circles as something akin to Western curriculum theorist Elliot Eisner’s (1979) *expressive activities*. According to Eisner, an expressive activity is a rich encounter that different people will learn different things from depending on what they bring to the encounter.

Because what one gets is contingent on what one brings, the contribution of an expressive activity cannot be predicted in advance. And because our expressive activity is appearing in a journal and not a classroom where ex post facto assessment can occur, we are not even in a position to assess after the fact what readers learned from our talking circle-inspired discussion.

We can, of course, detail some of the things we, the participants, learned. We now, for example, each have a better understanding of what others were thinking and why others acted as they did during the access process. These matters often mystified us as they were occurring.

And, consistent with what sometimes happens when participating in traditional talking circles, we also learned things that had little or nothing to do with the articulated topic. Patricia's ontologically oriented description of her thinking about leadership in Round 2, for example, helped one of us, for the first time, distinguish between Indigenous views of leadership and Greenleaf's (2008) servant leadership. Furthermore, the failure of the two non-Indigenous participants to begin their initial contributions to the talking circle-inspired discussion in a way that was consistent with talking circle protocol is a reminder of the difficulty in working cross-culturally, despite the best of intentions. In addition, the two non-Indigenous participants' self-conscious attempts at the beginning of Round 2 to rectify their oversights and talk about their cultural backgrounds, much as Patricia had done in Round 1, are reminders that different cultures socialize members in different ways and these different ways can be at least somewhat incommensurable.

Ultimately, of course, what really matters with a published article is what readers learn, and, as we indicated, this question cannot be answered by us at this point in time. Those who organize any kind of expressive activity can only hope that something of value will occur. That was our hope for readers when we opted to use a talking circle-inspired format to explore access issues ... and a bit more.

Notes

1. To be consistent with the egalitarian nature of the talking circle process that was adapted to develop and present this paper, the authors used the convention of listing their names in alphabetical order. The order, in short, does not indicate first, second, and third authorship. Also note that, at the time this paper was written, Patricia Makokis was President of Blue Quills First Nations College. She is now Indigenous Engagement Research Scholar at the University of Alberta.
2. The description of the talking circle process may not be appropriate for all Indigenous groups.
3. A smudge is a cleansing ceremony.

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Encouraging a Curiosity of Learning: Reflecting on Arts-Informed Spaces Within the Classroom

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ABSTRACT

It is through imagination that we create arts-informed inquiry spaces of learning. Our teaching practices and research include being awake to would-be artistry by encouraging a curiosity of learning. In these spaces we have learned to be open to surprise, play, and possibilities. As we make arts-informed methods integral to teaching and learning, we purposefully engage; in our classroom is where experiences call forth inquiry. In this paper we make visible four common threads. These threads include: considering the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of our practices; the significance of relationships; playfulness, imagination, and world travelling; and reconsidering our teaching and research practices.

Vera and Susan remember a recent time when they drove out to the old log house, situated at Strawberry Creek just west of the city where we live. The road still wet from the warm January temperatures made the drive far less treacherous than it could be on the cold and stormy winter days we have come to expect at this time of the year. Their eyes were drawn to the sky that dances in colors of orange and blue, like only an Alberta sky can when inviting dusk. The weekend was dedicated to some sustained writing time, necessary to move ideas onto paper and to further inquire into the experiences they have had alongside students in classrooms, or as researchers using arts-based methods. Our experiences spanning personal and

professional landscapes are diverse, and our lives as researchers and teachers often blend in unexpected ways. Yet, there is also a shared sense of inquiry and learning across our experiences as teachers and researchers, inquiry that draws on art to engage in ways that help us think *with* lives.

Drawing upon Eisner's (2002) emphasis of the importance of artistry in learning, we attempt to create a space that fosters students' and our abilities to take risks, to play, and a space that welcomes reflections. We always begin by situating learning in the experiences of our lives, and through risk taking and play, live alongside others as they begin to imagine the world differently. In this process we often draw upon theatre, photography, poetry, and creative nonfiction writing. In part we draw on arts-informed methods; as Polanyi (1958) reminds us, we know far more than we can tell. As we make arts-informed methods integral to our teaching and learning, we purposefully engage in performance, where experiences call forth inquiry.

In this paper we make visible how we engage in arts-informed inquiry spaces of learning. Thinking *with* our stories, we will highlight some of our learnings. We will first attend to our experiences in a classroom alongside first-year university nursing students, where questions of personal and professional identity were raised through the use of arts-informed methods. We then turn to some of our research and explore how we engaged in poetry to inquiry into our experiences. We look for common threads across these experiences and what has shaped them over time, in diverse places and contexts. We conclude with possibilities of arts-informed inquiry spaces for learning landscapes.

Setting the Context

Inquiring, learning, wondering, and teaching come together in interactions with students and others in spaces of inquiry along the pathway to deepening understanding and meaning. In our role as educators, specifically within faculties of nursing at universities, we are aware of providing such space within the structures of preparing students to enter a profession. Over the course of our careers we have often encountered many ways of curricular that are mandated. This at time has also been extended to prescribe ways in which we teach. Our teaching practices include being awake to would-be artistry through encouraging a curiosity of learning for students and ourselves.

By exploring our evolving selves, we see ongoing moments that build on experiences, views, and values that influence our teaching practices. The aim, as articulated by Walsh, Bickel, and Leggo (2015), is to “be present to the possibilities and potentialities that exist at the intersections of the artistic and the contemplative.” It is to be present to the moment as well as “open to what is not yet known” (p. 1).

Vera remembers:

It was the first class of the new term and I had been nervous and excited to welcome a group of first year students. As I prepared for the class, my eyes were turning towards my bookshelf. Besides the usual textbooks, were the many children’s books and stories that so often helped me start a class. This class was no different and I wondered how I could set the tone that would allow students and I to begin our class in a relational way. What stories and images would draw forth their and my experiences? How could we shape the space in which we could learn from each other?

Experience in the Classroom

For us, arts-informed teaching practices are not reduced to moments of creativity. Rather, thinking with arts-informed methods to create multiple avenues for conversations infuses our teaching practices. These practices become central and are core to our being as teachers.

In a first clinical experience, nursing students began their work of teaching wellness principles and healthy behaviour practices in an elementary/primary grade school. For most of the nursing students, it was the first time they had been back in an elementary school since their childhood. Following the first few weeks of the clinical placement, Susan structured an exploratory session using image theatre during class time. Image theatre, under the umbrella of Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed (1985), was produced by the students using each other as characters in a frozen scene depicting a moment in their experience, as nursing students, teaching a health topic. Each student took turns creating their scenes, exploring the constructed elements of place, spaces, facial expressions, body positions, proximity of the characters, and the distances between student and teacher. The students fashioned themselves as teacher, portrayed by a character requiring them to revisit their own gestures, expressions, and body language. Characters were molded and staged by the student both as an expression and as an analysis of their experience. Learning occurred while constructing

the image and further while discussing the image with the audience of other students. The use of theatre had created a space of risk for the students in which to ask questions of each other such as, “*Why do you have so much distance between yourself and the kids?*” or “*Do you think you look bossy?*” This, in turn, opened up new spaces for conversation.

The imagery of theatre in everyday life (Goffman, 1959) uses dramaturgical analysis of commonplace encounters to frame social interactions, actors, and settings. Having students explore their performances in a new role within an old setting brought forward a place to consider feelings and behaviours that were not immediately apparent in their verbal or written considerations of their experience. Much like Barone and Eisner’s (1997) metaphorical journey into space that takes an astronaut to the moon and back, using theatre in the classroom took the students from their lived-in world to an aesthetic place that is close enough to be recognized, yet far enough away to hold a new context. The new context, a “virtual reality,” brings a “fresh outlook, perspective, paradigm and ideology” (p. 74).

Susan recalls her learning alongside students and writes:

I was introduced to the magic of live theatre as a child. The idea of creating an imaginary spot that everyone else accepted as a legitimate reality fascinated me. The actors became someone else—a character, in a place created by sets and props enhanced by mood influencing lighting and theatrics. The audience suspended reality and with shared imagination and story making, a transformation occurred. The power of aesthetic experience introduced new understandings beyond mere entertainment in a magical way.

The transformational power of theatre to create a reality and offer avenues to make meaning has become part of Susan’s pedagogy and is intertwined with her research. Susan sees opportunities with students to use theatre games, attend plays, watch and discuss movies, create scenes with multiple endings, and enhanced simulation as a counterpoint to other academic teaching strategies. As with other arts-informed learning, nursing “knowledge” takes on a new perspective of information because of the aesthetic experience (Marshall, 2014).

Experiences in Research Spaces

Roslyn teaches nursing students at a different institution. As she listens carefully to Susan's experiences in the classroom, she begins to reflect on where her interests in gerontology began. This interest has become a large part of her research. She recounts:

I connect it to my lifelong journey of co-composing stories alongside Grandma. Her stories have been ones of extremes. She has experienced times of richness and poorness; joy and loss; love and isolation but most of all, it has been her life. I have traveled many roads with her and taken detours along the way, and at each new place we came to, I learned from her wisdom, kindness, patience, and respect. In deepening my understanding of what it meant to grow older, I found myself playing with words and poetry. Found poetry (Butler-Kisber, 2002) provided me with an opportunity to say something, yet leave space for other peoples' words. The incomplete sentences, the white spaces on the page, changing fonts, and positioning of words in relation to each other and the page, might invite others to tell their stories. I believe sometimes, these stories may be the hard to tell stories that never appear complete. It is here I remember a poem I wrote about feeling alone and loneliness.

Situated within a context of research involving older adults and their experiences in relation to place, Roslyn began to inquire into the experiences she had alongside her participants using found poetry. She wrote:

alone
LONELINESS
I am not much older than you are
what if we measured life not in years, but in the moments of
aloneness

Writing found poetry has led Roslyn to explore other mediums to deepen her understanding of others and herself. As part of her research she began to work with photographs, which provided her with spaces for imagination and playfulness. In this photograph showing an image of her Grandma at a young age, Roslyn wondered: "Who is Grandma saluting to and what is her relationship with the photographer? How did her life in a small farming community, many miles from the sea, change her?"



Fig. 1: Roslyn's grandmother

As Roslyn shares her poem and photograph of her Grandma, Charlotte starts to enter the conversation.

As a child I was always fascinated by stories told by my grandmothers; stories of times unfamiliar to me and yet connected through our shared family history. A similar fascination was in the foreground in my professional landscape as a geriatric nurse. I was interested in peoples' narrations and wondered about life experiences of people living in long term care facilities. I was often frustrated because I felt a disruption of people's life narratives and identities when they were being institutionalized and at risk of being de-storied.

As this dialogue happens, Vera begins to rewrite the poem. And in listening to the poem, we recognize that arts-based methods create spaces of possibilities to counter the silent and silenced stories.

storied as alone

*even so I am not much older than you are,
I too have come to know the impact of being institutionalized
what would change if
we measured life not in years, but in the moments of
possibilities*

What begins to happen is linked to a generative way of engaging with lives and experiences. Generative spaces that opened up through the use of arts-informed methods.

Threads Across Our Experiences

The log house on the Alberta prairie landscape started to have familiar rhythms and the voices of others carried Vera and Susan back to some of the memories of their experiences. Experiences that continue to ripple into their lives and practices as teachers, researchers, and as people in relation. As we think *with* our experiences of making arts-informed methods central to our practices, we can see resonances across our experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1998) wrote,

[t]he promise of storytelling emerges when we move beyond regarding a story as a fixed entity and engage in conversations with our stories. The mere telling of a story leaves it as a fixed entity. It is in the inquiry, in our conversations with each other with texts with situations with other stories that we can come to retelling our stories and reliving them. (p. 208)

This ability to retell and relive our experiences is important to us, as it allows us to discover dissonances and resonances that shape who we each are and are becoming. Arts-informed practices can enlarge the possibilities to this, as it creates the possibilities to draw forth and in embodied knowing. In the following sections we will turn to resonant threads: being grounded ontologically and epistemologically; making relationships central; playfulness, imagination, and world traveling; and reconsidering practices in teaching and research.

Being grounded ontologically and epistemologically. Over time we have learned to ground our work by returning to the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of our practices, which raise questions for us about what we know and how we have come to know. Working within a pragmatist tradition (Dewey, 2005), we see the importance of experience and it is critical to recognize the continuity of experiences.

Like other pragmatists, we see our work as future oriented, recognizing that each one of us is always living in the midst (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Greene (1993) calls us to think about, that

even in the small, the local spaces in which teaching is done, educators may begin creating the kinds of situations where, at the very least, students will begin telling the stories of what they are seeking, what they know and might not yet know, exchanging stories with others grounded in other landscapes, at once bringing something into being that is in-between. [...] It is at moments like these that persons begin to recognize each other and, in the experience of recognition, feel the need to take responsibility for one another. (p. 218)

Like Greene (1993), we see educators not just as teachers, but as people who exist at the intersections of many categories and roles; people who strive to create a space in which others can be wide awake and continually evolving, becoming. Roslyn draws our attention to the importance of the experiences in her own life, alongside her Grandma. These experiences, even after the death of her Grandma, do not become fixed stories. Instead, the telling and retelling of these stories show how the stories are still working on Roslyn. The stories continue to shape Roslyn's practice as a nurse and as a teacher, where arts-informed methods like photography open up spaces to consider intergenerational reverberations (Young, 2003), and reconsider what age and aging means in the context of relationships. Rather than theoretical ideas, for us experience is always the starting point for entering relationships with participants and students. In a recent clinical course, Roslyn invited the students to engage in photography work to explore their notions of what it means to grow older. In a subsequent class they were then invited to respond to this and explore how they would practice nursing in relation to their understanding of what it means to grow older.

Making relationships central. Through our research practices as narrative inquirers, we have come to know that we do not stand at a distance from our participants; rather, we actively negotiate relationships (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These relationships are central and necessary to our work, as we often wade into the muddiness and murkiness of participants' and our lives. Thinking about Roslyn's invitation to students to reflect on what it means to grow older creates a possibility for the students to see that their understandings shaped how they engaged with older adults and that their lives were not separate from those they encountered in practice. It is here, in the messiness, that matters of the greatest human concern are found and where we wrestle with questions that often reflect social inequities and challenges. To wrestle with these questions not only requires commitment to the questions, but also to participants or students.

As we stay in relation and make relationships central to all of our practices, we see how much our work, as researchers and teachers, has drawn our attention to resonances that live within these relationships. Resonance requires us to pay attention to

how I listen for the knowing of persons whom I [am in conversation with], how I imagine their lives, how I sense the limits of their words to convey what they feel and know, how I sense my own inability to comprehend what they know and learn even as they speak. (Neumann, 1997, p. 91)

We are mindful that as we enter lives and engage in relational experiences that there is always the possibility to undo and reconfigure participants, students, and ourselves in relationships. This speaks to the connectedness of lives and the vivacity of being in relation. Yet this too requires us to be willing and able to imagine a world other than our own and to be able to see difference (Andrews, 2007). For us, this way to imagine is closely linked to arts-informed practices.

Playfulness, imagination, and world traveling. To imagine a world other than our own it is important to be playful, and to engage in imagination and world traveling. Arts-informed methods allow us to engage in world traveling and to explore the resonances that live between lives. Our intent is always to bring forth personal knowledge, values, feelings, and beliefs; to identify them and to name conflictual ones; to begin to imagine otherwise; and to enter relationships and the possibilities to share experiences.

Stories are not only the way in which we come to ascribe significance to experiences [...] but also they are one of the primary means through which we constitute our very selves [...] we become who we are through telling stories about our lives and living the stories we tell. (Andrews, 2000, pp. 77–78)

And while our classrooms allow us to create reciprocal worlds, places where we share stories *of* practice and stories *in* practice, they remain only the beginning places to explore and imagine nursing practice and professional identity. Arts-based practices open up places to remember, tell and imagine stories, but they can also bring experiences to the forefront that were untold, silenced, or invisible. In these moments we, as researchers and teachers, must remain attentive, playful, and open to surprise. Vera recalls vividly how students began to share stories of attending to their own family conflicts, to their experiences of difficult child birth, to the loss of their grandparents, or to the times in which they were most happy. Many of these stories were expressed in poetry, letter writing, or images that they had created.

Engaging in playful practices in education invites us, as educators, to work from a position of vulnerability. To Brown (2012), vulnerability is “uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure” (p. 34) and is central in meaningful human experiences. It is the birthplace of courage and creativity (along with other desirable traits). Vulnerability in teaching involves being open to the risks that accompany arts-informed methods. Art is not didactic, but instead draws on characteristics of “complexity, ambiguity, multi-layered meanings, and richness of imagination” (Jackson, 2007, p. 181). Art opens spaces.

Lugones (1987) refers to playfulness as an attitude “that carries us through the activity, a playful attitude, turns the activity into play” (p. 16). This kind of playfulness asks us to stay wakeful to surprise. For Lugones playfulness is critical to world traveling, where we become fully engaged with the other. Through world travelling she recognizes that,

[t]here are “worlds” that we can travel to lovingly and traveling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that traveling to someone’s “world” is a way of identifying with them is because by traveling to their “world” we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. (p. 17)

Susan recalls

...questions that tempered my initial uses of theatre in the classroom. During a seminar with twelve nursing students early in their program, the conversation centred on obesity in adolescence. I knew that this presented an opportunity for a theatre activity to influence learning. We could create a short scene using components of forum theatre where conflict can be dismantled and then reassembled using new perspectives and insights. Despite these possibilities, I hesitated. Will the students engage? Can I facilitate this? Is it worth the risk? I did not know what the students’ experiences would be or what learning might emerge. I remember purposefully making a decision to take the risk. We created a scene within an imaginary play, staging a teen and parent interaction, switching student actors and rerunning the scene a number of times. The conversation that followed had a richness and student investment, which had eluded the earlier classroom discussion. It awakened an emotional connection, a completeness to an experience of learning, seen by Dewey (2005) as an esthetic “rounding out.”

Susan realized her teaching required reinventing herself as a fundamental component of a dynamic teaching practice. As Susan engaged in teaching, she realized that she was strongly influenced by her role as a mother of a number of children,

a role that at times overlaid a maternal sense that conflicted with the risk taking she saw as necessary in her classroom practices. Arts-informed teaching invites risk taking in both student and teacher by disrupting linear thinking and opening ways of exploration and imaginative interpretation. It reframes issues and calls to meaning-making, necessary for understanding complexities in health care. Being alongside students seeking identity and capability as future practitioners in nursing asks of Susan to also reflect and refine her pedagogy.

As we think *with* Susan and Roslyn's experiences, we can see that the educative spaces both within the classroom and in research hold possibilities of becoming and they are a place for imagining. Play in this way is a "medium that allows us to bring forth our embodied knowing" (Caine & Steeves, 2009, p. 5). At the same time we are mindful, that,

[b]y attending to this playfulness, our spaces of knowing enlarge and spaces of possibility are never ending; yet embedded in these possibilities is also a recognition how difficult it is to stay in relation, to remain wakeful to the tensions and boulders of the landscapes and stories we live within. (p. 1)

While Susan was initially drawn to arts-based methods in the classroom as a way to add to her teaching tools, she realized that it required a much more fundamental shift in her practice to create spaces for playfulness and imagination. This was important as

[i]t is the notion of play within imagination that helps us move inside the stories of others, of being and becoming. Play is a medium, which allows for the exploration of self; while at the same time the imagination can never "take leave of the other" (Kearney, 1998, p. 218). Imagination, Kearney (1988) argues, "needs to be able to laugh with the other as well as to suffer" (p. 367). In this laughter and suffering, this play with the other, our imaginings in relationship are brought into the present time and space. (Caine & Steeves, 2009, p. 5)

In these moments Susan realized that imagination is also a form of embodied knowing (Sarbin, 1998, 2004). This way of being is supported by arts-informed methods that often bring forth uncertainties and possibilities of new understanding. Learning in this way is not predetermined.

Reconsidering practices in teaching and research. Our classrooms allow us to create reciprocal worlds alongside our students and ourselves, spaces where we share stories of practice and stories in practice. It is often the beginning place to explore and imagine differently, a place of fragility and vulnerability. In many ways,

[a]rtistry is important because teachers who function artistically in the classroom not only provide [students] with important sources of artistic experience, they also provide a climate that welcomes exploration and risk-taking and cultivates the disposition to play. To be able to play with ideas is to feel free to throw them into new combinations, to experiment, and even to 'fail.' It is to be able to deliteralize perception so that fantasy, metaphor, and constructive foolishness may emerge. (Eisner, 2002, p. 162)

Encouraging students and research participants to be involved in arts-based practices builds understanding of schema that may not fit students' existing frames of reference. In many ways it helps them and us to recognize that experiences and

...stories are inner things: you're interacting with a living story. The way western man is taught to read is to find the meaning, the *symbols*. Instead I say no, a story is not something you figure out the meaning of, but something you carry with you the rest of your life to talk back and forth with. (Sarris, 1997, p. 229)

Seeing stories as inner things, and as always in motion, shifts our attention to processes rather than outcomes, and opens opportunities for negotiating learning aims and objectives with students. By doing so, we are responding to the need for considering whole lives and recognizing life making as always in progress. Richardson's (2000) plea for writing as an act of inquiry reminds us of the importance of leaving blank pages, pages without lines, without pre-determined structures, plots, and answers. In attempting to explore the white spaces we recognize lives are lived in the midst, and sometimes we need a place to playfully imagine new possibilities. Arts-based practices, including writing, is a way of troubling certainty and cultivating multiple ways of seeing within the white space, where multiple dialogues reminds us nothing ever stays the same (Greene, 1995). As we come closer to the end of the current teaching term, we sit together and realize that in as much as we have come to know the students in new ways, we each are also deeply shaped. Vera returns to the poem she wrote as part of the first class activity that invited students to share a memory of their name. The students engaged in the activity after listening to Vera read the book, *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (2001). Vera ended her writing of her poem with, "*when I first came to Canada people pronounced my name differently and I often would not recognize it ... it was a constant reminder that I was not from here.*" She wonders now if this sense of uncertainty that she shared with the students at the beginning of class had shifted not only who she was in relation to them, but also had for the first time more clearly allowed her to position herself as an immigrant that struggled to make sense of her early immigration experiences.

Conclusion

The lodge had turned quiet again and the sun shines through the trees. Vera was reminded of her and also Roslyn's poem and the profound connections between loneliness and possibilities. The poem and photograph of Roslyn's Grandma are the visible reminders that arts-informed methods, if integrated within the context of relationships, hold the possibility to imagine, play, and world travel, and most importantly shift the experiences of teachers, researchers, and students. It shifts who they are and are becoming. By entering new places in teaching and learning, we have the opportunities to share our stories of vulnerability and fragility, troubling certainty and imagining new stories. It is through these stories, the white spaces, the silence, the multiple dialogues, and the openness to risks, that we begin to think *with* our experiences and centralize arts-informed methods within our practices. They are no longer moments of creativity, rather teaching practices that invite a sense of inquiry, of learning from experiences, new avenues to conversations, and a way to help us think *with* lives.

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Charlotte Berendonk is a registered geriatric nurse. After completing her doctoral work in Gerontology at the University of Heidelberg in Germany in 2014, Charlotte has been doing her postdoctoral training with Vera Caine. Her postdoctoral work is funded by the German Robert-Bosch Stiftung in the program, "Changing viewpoints: Young researchers develop new ideas for a long and self-dependent life." One of her major research foci is narrative care, a nursing philosophy and intervention, strongly based on acknowledging persons as narrative beings and as embodied stories.



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Transition From Primary to Secondary School Through Visual Arts Education

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ABSTRACT

Moving from primary to secondary school is a major challenge. This article presents the concept of educational transition, makes a case for its relationship with identity formation, and discusses its effects on students' academic achievement, social adjustment, and self-concepts. It explores the role of art and creativity to foster resilience and presents an example of how visual arts were used to help students negotiate and reframe transition. It concludes with further practical considerations for art education with the hope that visual arts can play a critical role in ensuring that students successfully meet the challenges along the way to secondary school.

Moving from primary to secondary school is seen as a significant event in every child's life and a major challenge in early adolescence. Students may find it exciting and/or scary and feel anticipatory anxiety and satisfaction to be moving from a small familiar environment to a larger, more heterogeneous school and going from being the oldest group in the school to the youngest. A range of practices have been employed by schools in order to ease transition and adjustment to the new environment. These include dissemination of information about the new school, use of "bridging" material, prior visits by students, teachers, and/or parents, distribution of booklets, talks at schools, orientation on arrival, peer support programs, and joint social events between schools (Hanewald, 2013; Evangelou et al., 2008).

However, a literature review and web search provided few examples of how the visual arts can be incorporated in school programs to address transition. Considering that the visual arts have the potential to enable students to explore and examine themes and issues relevant to transition, I conducted an artful inquiry with sixth-graders at a public primary school in Athens, Greece. After presenting the concept of educational transition and its relationship to identity formation and resilience, this article reports on the inquiry. Moreover, it discusses further practical considerations for art education with the hope that visual arts can play a critical role in ensuring that students successfully meet the challenges along the way to secondary school.

Defining Educational Transition

In educational terms, transition refers to the process of moving from one setting or activity to another and is associated with a move from one phase of education to another (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm, & Splittgerber, 2000). During transition periods, students have to cope with and adapt to a number of changes relating to school structure, culture and ethos, social interactions, classroom organization, contexts of learning, teaching style, academic work standards, student diversity, curriculum discontinuity, and new forms of school discipline (Fabian & Dunlop, 2005).

Educational transitions bring with them the excitement of new beginnings, the satisfaction of successful completion of a learning cycle, and the opportunity of learning new things. They also bring with them the anticipation of meeting new teachers and classmates and making new friends as well as concerns of social acceptance and fear of losing old friends. Transition, therefore, can be understood not only as a period of change, but also as the experience of changing (Gorgorió, Planas, & Vilella, 2002). The ways students experience transitions are affected by their biological, psychosocial, cognitive, and emotional development and social factors such as family, school, and community.

Transition as an Ecological Concept

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory, children's development occurs within a complex system of contexts, activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations that are affected by the wider socio-cultural environment in which the children inhabit. Adjustment to a new situation is seen as an ecological transition that: "occurs whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the

result of a change in role, setting, or both” (p. 26). This implies that transitions are influenced directly or indirectly by a) the interactions and relationships that occur in an interlocking set of microsystems including home, neighborhood, primary, and secondary school; b) the knowledge, attitudes, predispositions, and skills acquired within these contexts; c) the interrelationships among these microsystems across time; d) educational policies and programs; and e) cultural values, laws, ideologies, and subcultures (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). It is clear that that these variables shape the manner in which students experience primary-secondary transition. Yet, because students can be viewed as active constructors of the transition process, their own psychological and biological structures as well as self-concepts play a significant role in the ways they will adapt to the new school environment.

Transition and Identity Reorientation

As happens with all complex and multifaceted transformation processes, transition to secondary school involves the establishment of a sense of self-identity in the new setting. Commuting between different developmental contexts demands adjustments and brings about changes in identity, relations, and roles. Moreover, transition to secondary school¹ in many educational systems occurs at the same time as children enter adolescence. During this period students come to negotiate an excess of interpersonal, biological, cognitive, and academic changes in order to form or reform self-concepts and identity. These are related to academic competence, popularity, reputation, physical appearance, behavioral conduct, self-worth, and self-knowledge (Harter, 1999; Lucey & Reay, 2000; Tonkin & Watt, 2003).

Redefining and reconstructing self-concepts is associated with looking at available social, cultural, and cognitive resources that help students make sense of new situations, think and behave in new ways, and encounter new teachers and classmates (Zittoun, 2004). The ways the self is reflected through the interactions with significant others, social comparisons, and evaluations of “fitting in” new environments also plays a significant role in the identity reorientation process (Maunder, Gingham, & Rogers, 2010).

Negative Effects and Resilience

Research has shown that transition may have a short-term negative impact on students’ academic attainment and achievement, social adjustment, and self-concepts (Evangelou et al., 2008; McAlister, 2012). The decline in academic attainment and achievement following transition observed by researchers and educationalists

has been associated with several factors, which include the change in students' concepts of themselves as learners, an increasing interest to non-academic activities, student motivation, and social relationships (Eccles & Wigfield, 1993; Lucey & Reay, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003; Langenkamp, 2010). Regarding adjustment, the sufficiency of information about the new school, the existence of student support programs, and the disruption of friendship networks influence students' success or failure to adjust to secondary school (Barone, Aguire-Deandeis, & Trickett, 1991). Moreover, during transition, changes in self-concepts and sense of self may become overwhelming and may lead to increased tension between stable and emerging self-identities, and consequently may result in a decline in school performance and adjustment during transition (Eccles, Lord, & Midgley, 1991; Elias, 2002; Walker, 2002).

It seems that most of the students find their way and adjust sufficiently by the end of their first year at secondary school. However, for those who are especially vulnerable there is still a possibility to poorly manage transition and, as a result, present reduced motivation and poor self-concept, social adjustment, and/or disaffection. Vulnerable students during transition are considered those being immature, shy, less confident, or withdrawn; having reduced sense of competence, self-motivation, and autonomy; being influenced by within-child, micro-systemic, or meso-systemic risk factors; having special educational needs and emotional difficulties (McAlister, 2012).

Cultivating resilience through transition programs can be considered essential in order to support them, negotiate effectively, and change by developing and strengthening relevant age competencies. In particular, educational explorations of transition may focus on offering students opportunities to develop problem-solving and self-regulatory skills. They may focus on enhancing flexibility, creativity, and intrinsic motivation, and cultivating responsibility and social competence. Such explorations may provide students with opportunities to increase autonomy and optimism; stabilize self-concepts; and develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of self-efficacy (Langenkamp, 2010; Niesel & Griebel, 2005). Moreover, students may be offered opportunities to develop attachment relationships and a sense of purpose and future and increase a sense of mastery. The following section explores the role of art and creativity to foster resilience and presents examples of how visual arts were used to help students negotiate and reframe transition to be understood as a positive time of new discoveries, transformation, and excitement.

Transition Through Visual Arts and Creativity

Creativity is an inherent facilitator of resilience as it has been associated with qualities of resilient individuals, such as flexibility, elasticity, divergent thinking, and self-awareness (Metzl & Morrell, 2008). Effective use of creative approaches with at-risk students has been documented by art therapists, educators, and researchers (Heise, 2014; Jindal-Snape, 2012; Metzl & Morrell, 2008). In such approaches, art-making is essential as it is a meaning-making process that has the potential to help students process stressful events and make sense of their worlds (Heise, 2013). Art-making can also provide opportunities for students to speak about and share their own experiences, fears, and concerns in order to discover the cause of possible distress and regulate emotions.

Sixth-graders at a public primary school in Athens were engaged in such a creative process as part of an extended “transition to secondary school” educational project that took place between March and June 2014. The classroom teacher conducted visits to the reception secondary school and disseminated information about the new school and new curriculum subjects. As the Head Teacher² of the school and the art teacher, I conducted this artful inquiry, undertaking the role of teacher-researcher. The classroom teacher and I collaborated throughout the inquiry and exchanged views about students’ needs, fears, and worries regarding their forthcoming transition.

The first activity involving the 10 boys and 7 girls in the class engaged them in a spontaneous drawing of their way to secondary school. Most of them portrayed this as a path of learning and change. Depictions of bare roads, streets, and crossroads decorated with flowers, or unadorned stairways with stops from Grade 1 to Grade 6, indicated how these students viewed their way to high school. For students, showing themselves moving from one grade to another was a way to visualize their educational journey. However, at the end of these roads or staircases the depiction of high school was not always clear. This indicated an uncertainty about what the new school would be like, worries about stricter teachers, more homework, not being able to make friends, and being around older pupils. These worries were also expressed in the discussion that followed: “My brother says that teachers in high school are too strict, they expel students who misbehave”; “How many hours per day do we have to study? Will I have free time for soccer as I do now?”; “I think that I will have to register to a different high school. Do you know if I can ask for a transfer because I want to be with my classmates?”

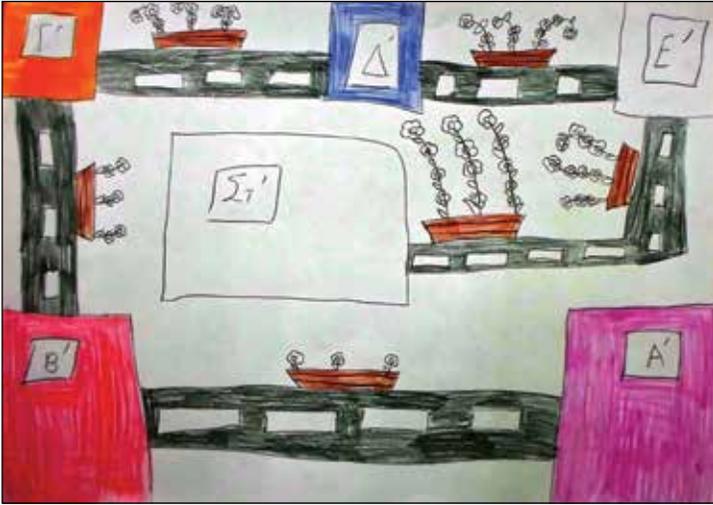


Fig. 1: "My way to high school"—pen and pencil colors by Mathew

Similar concerns and worries were revealed in the two murals the students created working in collaborative groups. These depicted the current and future educational settings. The primary school was portrayed as a beautified, happy place surrounded by trees, flowers and music notes, while the secondary school was represented as an austere building encircled by piles of books with monsters opening the front door or sitting on books. These students probably understood their move to secondary school as a move from a protective, familiar environment into an impersonal and intimidating one. Both art-making activities and the ensuing discussion provided these students with opportunities to express and liberate themselves from anxiety. During the discussion they talked about student responsibilities, possible parent and teachers' expectations, insecurities regarding their own capacities, interests, and future behavior patterns. As one student said:

Starting secondary school means that I must be more responsible and that I should have to study and study and study ... My parents want me to be a good student and go to university so I need to do well in high school.... I think I can manage that as I am a pretty good student here.

These activities appeared to facilitate an understanding of themselves as future secondary school students, which might have helped in regulating negative emotions and led to greater emotional intelligence and resilience (Jindal-Snape, 2012).



Fig. 2: "Primary school"—felt tip markers and crayons, group work mural

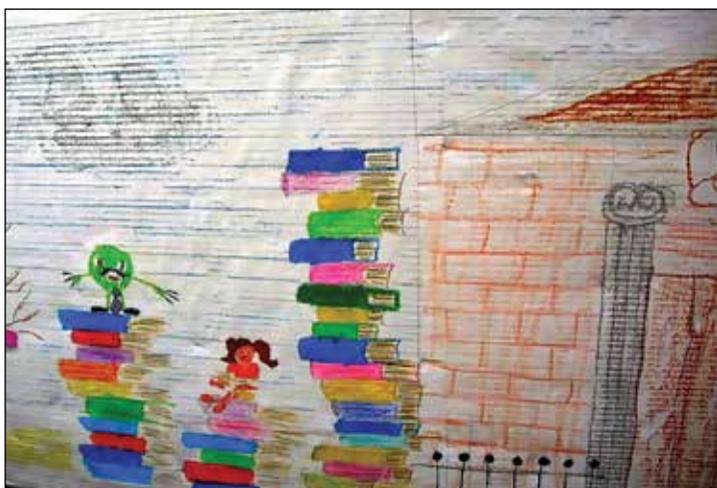


Fig. 3: "High school"—felt tip markers and crayons, detail of group work mural

Since moving to secondary school is connected to simultaneous changes in personal, biological, cognitive, emotional, and environmental levels, the students were asked to explore the concept of change through graffiti, digital photography, and digital video production. The main aim of these activities was for students to learn to respond positively to the changes they would encounter in future. In their graffiti projects most of them approached the concept of "change" with humor and associated it with subjective and age-related changes (i.e., things they used to like or do, changes in appearance, size, and age). For example, a boy illustrated his change in interests, writing that he "used to like ice-creams but now likes girls." It is probable that these students tried to dispel anxiety by using humor, probably because it provides individuals with comfort

and relief and helps to view perplexing life circumstances in perspective and with optimism. During the collaborative reflection on their graffiti, students appeared to understand “change” as a transformation process that “sometimes makes us feel a little bit confused” and reached at the conclusion that “growing up is a good thing...It is good that I can do things different, by myself and not crying and asking for my mum as I did when I first went to nursery.”



Fig. 4: “Graffiti: change”—pencil colors and crayons, by Fotini

In their photographic self-portraits these students negotiated potential future changes as they acted out evolving roles and activities associated with age and gender stereotypes regarding physical appearance and behavior. These were related to student responsibilities, personal interests, activities, and attire, such as teenage girls wearing make-up and high-heels, disliking homework, spending time on the Internet, and so forth. By integrating such potential future roles, expectations, and experiences in their art-making, the students had the opportunity to secure a sense of the changing self that might have already begun to emerge. Their verbal accounts about these photographs revealed comparisons between “being” and “becoming.” In particular, they revealed concerns and/or subjective appraisals of future bodily and appearance change and self-assessments in relation to others. They also disclosed identifications with cultural and social standards provided by older siblings, peers, mass media, and popular culture resources.

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I'm getting that since day one at high school I have somehow to look a bit different. My sister changed her clothing and hair style to look like a high school student and now she has a boyfriend. That is why I wore lipstick, eyeliner, and the nose earring in these photographs.

Reflecting on their photographic portraits provided students with opportunities to contextualize visions of future selves with some of the social practices associated with adolescence and transition to secondary education. Developing an awareness about the changes in identity that are relevant to transition and about their own predispositions towards particular perceptions, actions, and ways of viewing the secondary school world and themselves, probably gave them the prospect of viewing the whole process of transition with optimism and anticipation.



Fig. 5: "It's heavy"—digital photo by Andrew

Similarly, the students produced a digital video, using these photographic portraits, old photographs of themselves and photographs of artworks they had made during primary school. The concept of the video was to show change over time, so it was named, "I who change." After selecting and processing the photographs with the photo editor software of their choice, the students sequenced them and added music. They particularly enjoyed revisiting and altering photographs, especially those

transgressive moments of their potential future selves as they added humorous labels and stickers. Throughout the photograph processing and the video production, the students appeared to exercise choice in expressing and presenting themselves and in constructing representations of their own place within the world. To gain greater awareness of how their self-representations were constructed and how images projected particular identities or self-concepts, the students reflected on the choices they made during the creation process and the final product of this activity. Recurring themes in this discussion were: appearance, homework, changing relationships with parents and teachers, and possibilities and/or boundaries of friendship in the new school environment. Student artworks and verbal accounts revealed a considerable amount of projection and planning as they rehearsed new roles and/or situations. For example, one student said: "I didn't use any photographs of myself with any of my old friends from this school. I think I will have to make new ones. It goes with the new school." This awareness, along with the creative experience with and management of digital technologies, offered opportunities to develop problem-solving skills, autonomy, and self-confidence, which are considered resilient traits.



Fig. 6: "Me who change"—snapshot from digital video, by Dora

In these examples, art-making was used to help sixth-grade students to reframe their future transition to secondary school, reduce concerns and anxiety, and transform their thinking about the challenges they might have to deal with in their future lives. Despite the fact that they seemed relieved from tensions or anxiety after lessons, it cannot be assumed that this artful inquiry had the same positive impact on all of them, especially after its completion. By engaging students in problem solving and decision making in the art-making process, critical and creative thinking

was promoted. However, these students found it demanding to visually represent the elusive concepts of transition, change, and identity. This was counterbalanced through classroom discussion and brainstorming, which proved to be helpful for the majority of them. Obtaining mastery over the art media they used, especially the photo editor and video maker software, required time for experimentation. This was an issue as the time allotted for the art subject was only a 40-minute teaching period per week. To overcome this limitation, students had to experiment at home. The task of obtaining mastery over art media contributed to becoming more flexible as they experimented with them. By encouraging positive emotions, humor, and creativity, these lessons illustrate how fostering resilience can be materialized in art classes since art-making was based on real-life issues that are relevant to students' lives.

Further Practical Considerations

Other activities, such as visual diaries, book-making, and creative drama, can be also used so that students explore issues relating to transition. Visualizing through art-making or acting out through creative drama real-life scenarios can prepare students for transition to new school as they can rehearse options, actions, emotions, and thoughts (Jindal-Snape, 2012). To celebrate and communicate their achievements during primary school, students could create passports that would include visual and written statements. Or, they can create assemblages of important images and objects to represent their memories of primary school. Also students could explore "the habits or behaviors of resilience" needed in high school (i.e., being self-caring, reliable, compassionate, and courageous through art-making and role-play).

The purpose of these activities is to give students opportunities to express themselves about their forthcoming transition and develop resilient traits. Listening, soothing students' concerns and worries and trying to help them imagine possible solutions to problems, like bullying or isolation, that they may have to deal with through creative arts, is one of the requirements of visual arts programs that explore transitions. For example, through simulated role-play and visual essays, students may explore the changing roles, expectations, and possible future experiences in order to secure a sense of their emerging self. Another requirement is to guide students to use their personal strengths "as a use of ideation for art making" (Heise, 2014, p. 29). For instance, students may negotiate visually, or through creative drama, the interpersonal, biological, cognitive, and academic changes they will encounter in order to acquire an awareness of their personal strengths (i.e., abilities, talents, and skills that contribute to the sense of self).

In artful inquiries that attend to transition issues by including themes such as identity, self-esteem, friendship, physical appearance, and academic performance, assessment goes beyond the evaluation of outcome of students' work. It also goes beyond the evaluation of use of techniques, materials, and principles, and elements of art and design. Here the assessment's focus should be on students' depth of thinking and independence in exploration of ideas. Responsibility in learning and capacity to collaborate with others should be evaluated as well. It is essential students be given time and opportunities to reflect on the content of their artworks and the processes they used. This can empower them to explore further personal meanings and conceptualizations of these themes and take ownership of their educational experience.

Concluding Thoughts

This artful inquiry, in conjunction with the "traditional" approaches the classroom teacher used, attempted to provide students with positive transition experiences by engaging them in exploration of possible future changes as a way to increase their sense of competence and confidence. The visual arts can facilitate transition by incorporating strategies to enhance students' self-esteem, resilience, emotional intelligence, and agency (Jindal-Snape, 2012). Providing students with opportunities to visualize their future status as secondary school students as well as their anxieties, concerns, and achievements, has the potential to empower them to manage the change that transition to secondary school presents. Art-making can heal and enhance life as it offers safety and freedom of displaying and expressing desires, opinions, attitudes, concerns, and fears, and relieves tensions. It provides a secure exposure to transition-related issues and, as such, can give students opportunities to challenge them. Moreover, art-making can support and improve transition programs already used by schools as it allows students to make mindful choices and gain some element of control over their environment and the context of learning.

Notes

1. Transitions to secondary school occur at different ages in different countries, usually between 11 and 14. In the Greek educational system, students make a transition from primary to secondary school at the age of 11/12.
2. Greek Head Teachers in primary education are expected to perform managerial duties, which mainly involve applying the decisions taken centrally by the Ministry of Education, rather than planning, organizing directing, controlling/evaluating. They also have administrative, pedagogical, and teaching duties (8 to 12 hours per week).

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Attuning to the Interstices of Arts-Based Research and the Expressive Arts: An Experiment in Expanding the Possibilities for Creative Approaches to Inquiry

Kelly Clark/Keefe and Jessica Gilway¹

ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors² examine the generative, yet heretofore under-articulated convergences and divergences between the field of expressive arts (EXA) and the sub-genre of arts-based research known as a/r/tography. Experimenting with the discursive and practical terrain between the two fields, the authors discuss what they see and sense as the potentiality for an EXA-informed variant of a/r/tographic research informed by new materialist theoretical perspectives. Overall, the work aims to contribute to the expanding dialogue among arts-based researchers who are reaching across diverse discursive and disciplinary boundaries, mining relevant conceptual and practical linkages for thinking the role of creative making practices in social and educational inquiry anew.

What leads some researchers to want to take up the arts as an avenue for exploring social and educational phenomena? What is, for some, the physical and emotional terrain that compel their turn to the arts, making it difficult, or even impossible, to examine the complexity of the world otherwise? And what possibilities exist for bridging ideas in the fields of arts-based research and the expressive arts, where both uphold, albeit differently, habits of the human penchant for poesis, or to create, as a fundamental point of embodied inquiry?

As educational arts-based researchers trained in the professional field of expressive arts (EXA), we offer a beginning set of responses to these and related questions,

doing so by examining the generative, yet heretofore under-articulated similarities between the two fields of EXA and the sub-genre of arts-based research known as a/r/tography. Partly due to the inherently process-oriented nature of both fields, a new path of interest emerged, causing us to recalibrate our initial examination to also consider some of the productive divergences between the two fields. We became curious about the ways in which certain concepts show up for us in an embodied, habitual way as EXA-trained practitioners and how these ways of thinking and being participate in shaping our understandings and practices as a/r/tographically informed researchers. The writing picks up this thread of divergence, placing emphasis on the particular influence of one key concept in EXA, that of *presence*. Experimenting with what happens to our thinking under the influence of exploring the concept of presence across both EXA and a/r/tography, we discovered the possibilities for taking this experiment still further, putting the concept of presence into contact with our own and other social scientists' turn to new materialist perspectives. Overall, our aim in this writing is to contribute to the expanding dialogue among arts-based researchers who are reaching across diverse discursive and disciplinary boundaries, mining relevant conceptual and practical linkages for thinking the role of creative making practices in social and educational inquiry anew.

As a way into the discussion outlined above, we begin on a personal note, introducing readers to some of the individual pathways taken to our current provocations and practices as arts-informed educational researchers. These brief autobiographical "herstories" will then converge, positioning us on a mutually constitutive plateau—an *ourstory*³—where we work (albeit swiftly) to make clear the primary disciplinary lines of interest taken up in the work: arts-based research, a/r/tography, and the field of expressive arts respectively. The work then turns to considerations of where ideas and practices across these domains intersect, briefly pointing to what we experience as points of divergence with a close-in look at the function of the concept *presence*. Finally, we close by opening a new line of intrigue: one that starts to suggest the potentiality for an expressive arts-informed variant of a/r/tographic research through especially the lens of new materialism.

Kelly's Herstory of Becoming Arts-Informed Inquirer

I first learned about qualitative research during my doctoral studies at the University of Vermont in the mid 1990s. Dr. Corrine Glesne, author of the well-known text, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers* (2016), was my major advisor. Under her tutelage, I mastered the variety of techniques that qualitative researchers deploy in their interpretivist ethnographic fieldwork and ...

Wait. That's not it. I mean, that is it, in the sense that what I wrote is accurate. But accuracy has little to do with my becoming so deeply indebted to art-making practices as a form of embodied inquiry in education. If this is, as promised at the outset of this article, to be a pathway toward introducing you to the provocations that came to matter to me as a researcher and the inquiry practices that continue to materialize in artful form, then I need to forego the habit of trusting my tale to accuracy. After all, terms that connote precision, information, and the truth, while long-trusted linguistic containers for conveying how and what we claim to know are, like all words, always already accumulating different meanings and significances depending on their disciplinary, cultural, or methodological lineage. As Bakhtin (1981) has taught us, "All words have the "taste" of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party... Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (pp. 293–294). Accuracy, in this instance, simply won't do.

I will begin again, this time yielding to sensation and imagination—leaning into Wallin's (2011) rallying cry "to mobilize the powers of the false" (p. 105). The importance of doing so, in Wallin's words, lies in the potential for a breed of inquiry and expression that not only asks "how things are machined," or put differently, how people and meaning are made, "but further, must actively compose circuit-breaking machines against the very models and images meant to think *on our behalf*" (p. 110). Wallin extends this thought:

This entails that the creation of concepts, images, and affects produced by arts-based researchers be understood not simply in terms of their accumulative or additive power ($n + 1$), but rather, in relation to the kinds of forces they modify and unleash from material repetition ($n-1$). (pp. 110–111)

The land, language, and art's release. I am young, sixteen and three-quarters, and I am walking in the woods behind my childhood home. It seems I've been walking for hours. I am alone, as I most often am. But it is not because I don't have friends or enjoy the company of others. I just like not having to talk. As I walk, I imagine someday expressing to others my antagonistic relationship to words (Clark/Keefe, 2009). The ultimate irony, I think to myself, would be growing up and choosing a profession that values me on the basis of the volume and quality of my speech and text acts. If that were to happen, I am not at all sure how, but I would need to help those I am working with understand how language feels like a second language to me. Growing up in my family, where no one went to college, and attending my vocational high school, where me and my friends' moms and dads work in the local leather tanning factory or do construction jobs, talking just means trouble. If you're talking, you're not working.

If you are not working then you are not making what your shop teacher told you to. Talking means you are suspect and complacent in terms of your labor-capable value in my high school. Still, I get that people *get* language, meaning they both get how it works either for or against you and they get *it*—a lot of it, growing up. This seems to help them go places, get things, and worry a lot less about most things (Lareau, 2011). Walking, I can't help but miss my friend Sarah, who used to walk, quietly, in the woods with me. She stayed at the regular high school. Her family talks a lot about a lot of things, including talking; what to say, when to say it, and why. I listen. I want to be like Sarah. She's going to college. I'm just afraid of how much I'll need to know about talking, and how much I'll need to talk about what I know.

When I walk like this, in the forest, it is the smells and sounds that release me from the want and the worry of making sense to others (or of the world around me) through the logics of language. The woods make their own sense. I just come into contact with what they have to say; the bark(ing) against my hand, the wind(ing) between the boughs. All percept, and affect, the land moves me, and makes me, without claiming to know me or insisting I know myself in advance of our encounter. Knowing I need to go home, I sit for a moment, turning to my small visual journal and begin a variation of the same drawing I've been doing for as long as I can remember. Working with my right hand, I draw my left in relation to any nearby branch that seems to be reaching out. In the drawing, my fingers take on qualities of the branches and my skin becomes bark-like. Sketching these hand-branches somehow lets me extend the sensation of me in relation with the trees—a small, intimate hinge between the quiet companionship of the forest and my human need to make meaning of my experience and to communicate.

Jessica's Herstory of Becoming Arts-Informed Inquirer

I begin with a subjective side note. I cannot speak about my process of becoming a researcher without first acknowledging that I am a maker, the daughter of a skilled craftsman. I was an artist first, long before I became a researcher. As an artist and arts-informed inquirer, I turn to my body first as I filter and process the world through my eyes and my hands. It all starts for me from a place of mindful observation. Out of the corner of my eye, I catch a glimpse of light or color, the diffractive rays of sunlight illuminate and cast into shadow many different lines of interest and insight. Put simply, my body sees and senses something, then my bodymind takes a picture of it, and finally, as the sensations and affects of initial experience wash over me, I enter into what I refer to, in my dissertation (Gilway, 2015), as a "transpositional space" (Braidotti, 2006) where I create/craft/make something in response to what I see, feel, and experience in the world and in myself. This is my process—one that I find myself battling with,

and even actively resisting on a daily basis. Yet in the end, I almost always quietly sneak away from the seductive institutional pull of enacting more traditional forms of qualitative research, allowing art to seep through the cracks in my resistance, as I think about, then enact inquiry differently. Art becomes, for me, a translation—my own liminal version of plugging a foreign language into an Internet translator, and watching an entirely different language appear before your eyes, words transformed, and the unspeakable is rendered perceptible. Therefore, it is here, in this intentional space of examining my own journey toward becoming artful inquirer, that rather than picking up a smart device to help me translate words linguistically, I defer to my artistic, transpositional (Braidotti, 2006), intermodal (Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2005) traveling companions of painting, collaging, poetry, journal-making, jewelry-making, pottery, and dance (movement) to help me navigate and negotiate life and research.

However, before I venture more deeply into how I navigated the precarious ground of producing a heavily arts-informed dissertation inquiry in a time when reproducing “science as usual” (Clark/Keefe, Gilway, & Miller, 2013) tends to be more and more heavily valued, I need to trace my journey a few steps further sideways, following the winding road of a maker’s path toward enacting an embodied, or somatically-informed/-infused, inquiry. Now, why sideways, rather than backward, you may ask? Just as the roots of a tree emerge as a grounding force both beneath and beside the solid trunk of the tree, my art-making practices are always already with me, both rooting and grounding me, journeying beside me as my constant companion, pushing and challenging me every step of the way, becoming neither something that I can put behind me or move beyond, but rather something that I work everyday to acknowledge and embrace as an inextricable part of me.

Tracing my artistic roots sideways. As a child, I watched my father’s skilled hands magically craft something from “nothing”—enchanted extensions of his body transforming scraps of leftover metal from a roofing job into a bouquet of coppery gilded lilies; or shards of splintered slate into meandering garden walkways. Like my father, my never idle hands found a home through craft—in the doing and making. In my high school years, I found solace from a docket of cognitively oriented academic classes in the art room—a transpositional space where I could explore the borderlands of the affective and academic as I was soldering jewelry, hand-coiling pots, and weaving wall hangings, instead of attending to the socially awkward spaces of study hall and lunch. Equally as proud of having passed my Advanced Placement (AP) art portfolio as my AP Calculus test, I left high school confident in my ability to balance both an academically rigorous and artistically enriched educational experience, only to have the realities of college smack me in the face. Advised that pre-med science

majors could not, should not, dare not minor in ceramics, or 3D art—“it just won’t work,” I was told. So, I set myself adrift, abandoning my beloved, daily, artful inquiries with clay, jewelry making, and fiber arts, and donning the white lab coat.

Living in my body in the absence of art became an estranged and strangling experience punctuated by a deep sense of loss, vacancy, and longing. In my mid-20s, art-starved and creativity bereft, I stumbled into the field of education in search of a different, more sustainable way to live and work. As I simultaneously studied elementary education and second language acquisition, I felt the cold, icy fingers of artistic starvation loosen their grip, thawing each frozen extremity slowly, as the arts gradually and quietly crept back into my life. I began slowly and unsteadily to experience myself as an artist again, first through jewelry making, then pottery, and finally my broken body and starving soul began to move again as I found my way back to healing forms of dance. I found in the arts, as I literally used them to map myself, my body, anew, a way to reroot myself like a tangled piece of ivy climbing up and down a wall at the same time, shooting out multiple anchors, extending in many different directions all at the same time.

Becoming a K-8 educator afforded me the opportunity to joyfully and creatively infuse the arts into my pedagogical practices. When I began in education (over 15 years ago), no one looked suspect upon the act of making, crafting, or dancing with the young. Unfortunately, today, instead of the arts being offered as a counterbalance to our accountability-driven, standards-based curriculum movement (Davis, 2007; Fowler, 2001; Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006), children in schools are instead being systematically deprived of the creative outlets and educational opportunities that classes like art, music, dance, physical education, and the magical freeplay space of recess, offer children of all ages. Having witnessed firsthand the encroaching onset of the performance-driven push to maximize teaching time and literally starve the creativity out of learning in the formal setting of public schooling, I found myself driven to re-envision schooling by engaging in the study of educational leadership at the doctoral level. This is where I met Dr. Kelly Clark/Keefe.

I wish I could recount for you the romantic story of how I embraced arts-informed inquiry and arts-based research practices like old friends, with open arms and a warm heart. But I did not. Having been heavily schooled in the sciences, statistics, and data-driven instruction, I arrived in my doctoral program exhausted from the daily effort of trying to maintain balance between academic rigor and creativity as an educator, ready to settle into the systematic, heavily data-driven process of learning how to do quantitative research in the field of education. Shortly after I enrolled in my doctoral

program, I found myself pushed into a leadership role as the principal of a charter school, where I, unknowingly, situated myself in a desolate and isolating field of artistic starvation all over again. Only when Kelly, my professor at the time, dangled the tempestuous opportunity to engage in some serious play with artful inquiry as an alternative assignment format, did I recognize myself as a half-starved professional educator languishing from creative deprivation.

Throughout my first arts-informed pilot inquiry, where I intermodally integrated and layered dance and photography on top of and throughout each other as modes of inquiry, I found my way back into the arts and became aware once again that as I engaged in the bodily act of “doing” art and enacting qualitative inquiry simultaneously. It felt like home. As Wilshire (2006) validates, “Artistic creation, in its many forms, is an indispensable mode of being aware and knowing. The impetus to create artistically holds an immense moment of dilation of awareness and receptivity” (p. 110). My expanding space of awareness and receptivity, where inquiry and the arts intertwine, became a sanctuary, a transpositional space (Braidotti, 2006), where I decided to reside for the rest of my doctoral journey and now, beyond.

An Ourstory of Becoming Artful Inquirers

Several recent practical and two conceptual lines of interest act as undercurrents to our herstories. These flight lines, when brought together in the moment of this writing, form an ourstory: a productive convergence of energies and inspiration that, in the case of this writing, compel our desires toward expanding our instincts and ideas as arts-based researchers in ways that are that foreground materiality and bodily creativity as a source for examining the personal and the social.

Practical lines of interest. We have both recently been trained in the field of expressive arts (the principles and practices of which are discussed in the section, *Conceptual Line of Intrigue II.*). Specifically, both of us recently completed an 18-credit graduate certificate program in Expressive Arts at Appalachian State University in North Carolina, in the southeastern United States. Jessica did so over the course of a two-year period, during which she left her position as a public charter school principal and became a mother. Kelly completed her graduate certificate at a time when she and her family were facing the likely prospect of moving from their home in the southeastern United States back to New England to care for aging parents. This meant Kelly leaving her post as a recently promoted full professor, with (then) no formal prospect for an academic post elsewhere.

Holding true to its mission of cultivating a creative, therapeutic community of educators and practitioners who engage in interdisciplinary, intermodal creative practices for personal and professional growth, Appalachian's program in Expressive Arts became a holding space for the precarity that defined both of our daily lives at the time. We lived (and loved) the ways that art-making was skillfully used as the curricular tool for inquiring into the emotional precarity of our circumstances. We grew to understand the power of engaging in the embodied experience of intermodal (Knill, Barba, & Fuchs, 2004; Knill et al., 2005) expressive arts theory and practices as we used the therapeutic modalities of movement, visual arts, ceramics, and creative writing (just to name a few) to hold open and inquire into our professional and personal lives. While never in the same classes together, we could and did meet on the same grounds, figuratively and as often as possible, literally. These grounds were where art-making was the foundation for expressing how it was to be and become in the undertow of our mutual transpositions, our socially, emotionally, professionally transcendent locations, as educators, artists, and researchers.

A second significant practical dimension of ourstory was the merging of our teaching/learning arrangement, specifically with respect to developing arts-based research practices and our emergent interests in theorizing these practices through material feminist perspectives (a perspective that we elaborate below). As members of this journal's audience can likely attest, the most generative experience we can have as educators is when the epistemic lines of authority in our classrooms become so blurred as to be almost indistinguishable. While lines can be firmly drawn between Kelly beginning as Jessica's teacher during her doctoral program, these lines swiftly became punctuated and eventually completely porous as time ticked on. Qualitative methodology courses first taught to, then taught with, became the breeding ground for experimenting with art-making as a medium for analysis and expression. Questions about Kelly's assignment of readings in arts-based research and feminist and poststructural thought became the basis for more cups of tea than we could count, walks where we got lost, and eventually co-presentations at professional conference venues. Ourstory of becoming artful inquirers took shape through our mutual encounters with ideas, practices, and the eventual commitment to lean deeply into the heretofore undone; the exploration of how it is to be in the process of engaging in a form of artful inquiry that foregrounds the body's relationship with the material world, including art materials, putting to work habits of making, or poesis, while exploring the entanglements of the personal, social, and natural worlds.

Conceptual line of intrigue I. Arts-based research. Picking up on the threads of the practicalities of ourstory, we continue here by briefly tracing some historical

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and definitional grounding for the two most significant and shared conceptual lines of intrigue influencing this writing: first, arts-based research (and the sub-genre of a/r/tography), followed by expressive arts.

Elliot Eisner (1995, 2005; Eisner & Powell, 2002) and his former student Tom Barone (2000, 2001) are credited in the United States with having ignited a set of debates about the role of the arts, especially in qualitative research in education. We draw attention here to the central dilemma of Eisner's argument in favor of arts-informed inquiry, noting that he believes "the arts are largely forms that generate emotion," (Eisner, 2008, p. 3) but in academic research, "emotion is not always considered a way of knowing, and is often pushed out of the research process in the name of scientific objectivity" (p. 4). This consideration of emotion in the research process is a crucial point, and one we return to later in our discussion of intersections and divergences. In the wake of age-old dilemmas and debates about what sorts of knowledges "count" in the research enterprise, several pioneering researchers in education and other social fields have taken to demonstrating and theorizing the arts as a mode of scholarly inquiry and as a method of representation, finding ample opportunities for engaging audiences (see especially, Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Finley, 2003; and Knowles, & Cole, 2008).

While still considered "alternative" to many mainstream forms of qualitative and social science research traditions and techniques, momentum around expanding what it means to engage the arts as a form of inquiry shows no signs of abating. In 2008, Canadian-based researchers Gary Knowles and Ardra Cole produced the first edited volume of the *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*. Researchers describe engaging arts-based methods of research as a means of forwarding social justice aims (Foster, 2015). Rich texts explaining the "how-to's" and "why's" of arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2011) continue to emerge, as do texts from feminist and other critical theory perspectives (Leavy, 2015). Resources have also surfaced that assist researchers in understanding and exploring the ways that arts-based techniques can inform analysis practices (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Also available are contemporary debates about everything from criteria for judging arts-based research (Faulkner, 2007) to questioning the epistemological and philosophical grounds upon which the arts can illuminate empirically generated phenomena (Jagodzinski & Wallin, 2013).

If the past two decades of arts-based research's steadily climbing presence in the scholarly discourses surrounding methodological principles, practices, and quandaries can be the basis for evidence, then the interest and the influence of the arts in relation to social inquiry is undeniable. With sensibilities informed by our mutual interests

in following this genre of qualitative research as well as our personal herstories, where creative making practices serve central, we have been particularly drawn to the special breed of arts-based research known as *a/r/tography*. *A/r/tography* is a term arrived at by Rita Irwin and Alex de Cosson (2004) and their colleagues through their deep critique of certain theories and practices that link artist, researcher, and teacher. According to Irwin and de Cosson, *a/r/tography* centers “theorizing or explaining phenomena through aesthetic experiences that integrate knowing, doing, and making: experiences that simultaneously value technique and content through acts of inquiry” (p. 31).

Stephanie Springgay (2003, 2004, 2008; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005) develops especially the poststructural dimensions of *a/r/tography*, which hold particular meaning in relation to the theory and practice of expressive arts, a point we return to in the next section. Infused in our appeal to readers regarding especially intersections with the expressive arts are Springgay’s (2008) important correctives to the ideals or even possibility of transparency in research accounts, as well as claims to the separation between artistic subjectivity and art:

In *a/r/tography* the representation of research cannot be seen as the translation of experience. Instead *a/r/tographical* research as living inquiry⁴ constructs the very materiality it attempts to represent. In other words, engaging in *a/r/tographical* research constructs the very “thing” one is attempting to make sense of. (pp. 37–38)

The idea that the medium, the very materials engaged and the modes for these engagements, are, in themselves, productive of what we come to know is something that those trained in the expressive arts come to know well.

Conceptual line of intrigue II. The field of expressive arts. Practitioners in the field of expressive arts (EXA) identify that the development of EXA theories and practices can trace their roots back to a few programs and their associated founders and/or faculty/staff members. Historically, the Expressive Therapies program at Lesley University (2016) was founded in 1973 with a focus on helping students develop their identities as artists and clinical mental health providers through the integration of multiple art modalities (McNiff, 1998, 2013). Expressive Arts Therapy at Appalachian State University began in 1985 by offering a course called Therapy and Expressive Arts. In 1997, both an Expressive Arts Therapy concentration and certificate emerged at Appalachian from the work of an interdisciplinary group of faculty members, who met regularly to build a creative, therapeutic community of practice. These intermodal, interdisciplinarians called themselves the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective (Atkins, 2002, 2007).

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The European Graduate School (EGS) Expressive Arts programs (2016), located in Switzerland, were founded in 1994 and continue to offer an interdisciplinary, intermodal approach to utilizing the arts towards healing and peace building. In addition to the influential roles they played in these EXA programs, some individuals also emerged as strong leaders in the field of EXA, as they explored art-making in the spirit of self-discovery—a way to reclaim ourselves as actively playful, spirited, and conscious individuals (Allen, 1995; Rogers, 1993). While each expressive arts program and practitioner has its own unique qualities, they also share many of the same core values, which we will take a moment to explore further below.

According to the Expressive Art Therapy program at Appalachian State University, where we both received our training, the expressive arts are defined as the practice of using the multiple modalities of music, drama, dance, poetry, imagery, movement, dreamwork, and the visual arts altogether in an intermodal way in order to “foster human growth, development, and healing” (Appalachian State University, 2016). As participants in the Expressive Arts program, Kelly and Jessica experienced how the expressive arts could work to help us unearth, cultivate, and reclaim our inherent and natural capacity for the creative expression of our individual and collective human experiences.

Knill and colleagues (2005) establish that the principles and practices of the expressive arts have emerged out of the intentional cultivation of a “therapeutic aesthetics” (p. 9), with a firm foundation in the practice of the arts. Expressive arts practices are a set of intermodal (Knill et al., 2004; Knill et al., 2005), therapeutic tools used by helping professionals (counselors, psychologists, teachers, social workers, etc.), with a focus on trusting the process (McNiff, 1998), and cultivating presence (Atkins & Eberhart, 2014). The notion of letting the creation of artful expressions be the avenue for being and becoming in the complexity of the world is captured in the concept of *poesis*. Levine (1997) writes of *poesis* as a way of enacting a *shaping of the world*, where art originates not through or from carefully crafted moments of reason, but rather within a field of play and exploration that embraces the notion of the creative chaos that one feels when engaging in the act of art-making (Knill et al., 2005).

Poesis, as Levine conceptualizes it, is a much needed response to the fast-paced, unsustainable state of post-modern times and lives, in that it presents a critique of Cartesian dualism’s and/or modernism’s mind-body split (Knill et al., 2005), arguing instead for a therapeutic aesthetic that works toward the re-integration of mind and body through the intermodal expressive arts. As we mentioned before, *poesis* in Greek specifically refers to art-making, but for our purposes here, in thinking with

Levine (1997), it refers, in a more general sense, to any activity that brings something new into the work (Knill et al., 2005). For Kelly and Jessica, and for Levine, what emerges for the maker, or artist, (in the process of art-making) from within the liminal space that poeisis cultivates, is in-depth transformation; emerging as a cultivation of presence in the world, in our work, and in our lives. In other words, poeisis offers both expressive artists and practitioners the opportunity to engage in both individual and collective somatically oriented inquiry in action, with a focus on how our habits of “doing with” bodies, art, affect, and movement in the expressive arts becomes both ground and force for transformation.

Participants and practitioners alike engaged in the expressive arts experience its emergent nature as they discover that what they uncover in the process is often very different from what they originally sought. This is also true of the field of arts-based research, and the artful inquiries that are enacted within this field. The field of EXA could even go so far as to argue that artists need to get out of the way of what is happening in the art-making process, or engage in *auto-poeisis*. Auto-poeisis, or self-organization, is defined in EXA as surrendering to what is taking place in the process of art-making which requires the embodied presence of the artist (Knill et al., 2004). Furthermore, Knill and colleagues (2005) explain that inquiry, therapeutic or otherwise, taken-up via art-making becomes “a time out of time, a pause in everyday life in which habitual behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs can be examined and transformed” (p. 45). As our herstories merge into and emerge as an ourstory, Kelly and Jessica see and sense their engagement in a form of *co-poeisis*, where a new energy and curiosity forms compelling us to consider how it is to be between the two fields of EXA and a/r/tography, and what expanded possibilities take flight along the way.

Cultivating the In-Between of Expressive Arts Inquiry and Arts-Based Research: Presence and Process

For both authors, learning about and encountering the rich examples of a/r/tographic inquiry simultaneous with studying and training in the expressive arts has allowed us to see several productive parallels. As foreshadowed above, the distinct fields of expressive arts and a/r/tographic research share some important territory. For example, both the expressive arts (Atkins, 2002; Knill et al., 2005; McNiff, 1998, 2013) and poststructurally informed arts-based research practices such as a/r/tography (Irwin, 2004; Springgay, 2008) draw on the body-centered, artistic modalities of dance, music, embodied writing, drama, visual art, and many other mediums. In both fields, it is the creative process, rather than the end products, that are attuned to and followed for their sensorial provocations into what is unknown, where things open up,

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becoming uncertain pathways for previously unimagined scenarios or futures.

Divergences across the two fields exist as well, with the perhaps most obvious being the purpose toward which active engagement with art-making during inquiry is aimed. The field of expressive arts engages multiple mediums and modalities with the goal of inquiring into the personal for the purposes of change, growth, and/or healing. Arts-based research, including a/r/tography, is fundamentally a social science, with its creative practices aimed at exploring relationships and opening new questions and possible explanations for complex phenomena related to individuals and groups within the social realm.

Disciplinary objectives aside, we believe something important happens to our ability to gain insights and to make novel connections across our individual arts-based research projects when we engage arts-based research as expressive artists. With this belief, we have begun wondering what would happen to our understandings of both arts-based research and the expressive arts if they were intentionally brought into contact with one another. We are also curious about the possibilities for expanding our relationship to especially a/r/tography by recalibrating certain principles and shifting our inquiry practices to align more with the expressive arts. It is in the spirit of this curiosity that we begin an experimentation guided by the question: *How is it to be in the interstices of a/r/tography and EXA especially under the influence of one of the key concepts underwriting EXA: presence?*

Presence. Imagine if you will, entering a classroom where, every time you do so, the immediate expectation is that you remove your shoes and without talking, find your way to one of the cushions carefully placed in a circle. At the center of the circle you will encounter a simple, attractive artifact, sometimes a small vase with a flower or a bright scarf surrounding a hand-made pottery bowl. A shared responsibility across the semester, this day's facilitator will engage the class in a three-four minute low-skill activity such as an awareness of breath meditation or a round-robin of all who desire to answer the question: *How are you arriving today?* Class ends as it begins, always, with a practice—a *ritual*—that affords students the opportunity to arrive and be as present as possible in mind, body, and community.

As authors entering into dialogue about how it is to be at the interstices of EXA and a/r/tography for this present article, we are both immediately brought to the embodied idea of *presence* that the above vignette reflects. Our training in the expressive arts has conditioned us to begin any process of opening ourselves to connections—especially to connections that are uncertain or do not yield well to language—by attuning to our

bodies, to each other, and to our immediate environment. In other words, we have developed a habit of becoming present. Because these ritualistic encounters with presencing are always, in an expressive arts session, followed by studio-length (2.5 hour) sessions with art-making inquiry practices, creative processes quickly become coupled with thought and talk. The herstories that opened this writing are an example of what happens when our questions about arts-based method, about education, or about life come under the influence of EXA. Does the guiding principle of presence as articulated in the field of EXA do something to the rich methodological arena of arts-based research and a/r/tography? We believe it does.

When we come to our respective fieldwork projects with both a) the conceptual strength and nimbleness related to researchers' subjective presence and the disposition toward living inquiry that a/r/tography promotes and b) the experiential and embodied sensitivities to presence as a multilevel personal quality and interpersonal process with EXA, our sense is that something different and, for us, deeper, happens in the field and during analysis. We feel more adept at doing fieldwork observations with an embodied sensitivity toward, for example, the buzz of high energy and other emotional contagion sweeping between students just before they get released for outdoor recess. We feel freer to explore through line, shade, and form, the sensorium of a classroom or campus atmosphere; to its rhythms of compliance or its felt register of fear.

This makes us wonder, then, about what possibilities exist for further opening the notion of presence in arts-based methodologies to argue the type of "multileveled awareness" and "multifold openness" that EXA promotes (Atkins & Eberhart, 2014). As Atkins and Eberhart (2014) help us understand, presence is not simply a matter of showing up (i.e., in the field, or to an interview, or during analysis, or a therapy session) and giving our work our undivided attention (if that were even possible). Cultivating presence in EXA includes a multilevel awareness, whereby "to be fully present means to focus attention on the other person, on oneself, on the atmosphere *in between*, and on the ongoing process that is emerging in the moment" (p. 70).

When we encounter descriptive accounts by a/r/tographers of how they are in the field, we can see and sense that they are likely engaging in a type of multilevel awareness. Indeed, Irwin, de Cosson, and Pinar (2004) acknowledge presence as an important "thematic element" in at least one of their contributor's essays in the edited collection titled *A/r/tography: Rendering Self Through Arts-Based Living Inquiry*. Consider Atkins and Eberhart's (2014) description of the type of awareness and presence necessary in a given expressive arts encounter: "the change agent is attentive and sensitive toward everything that shows up, not only in the spoken words,

but also in the facial expression, the tone of voice, body stance and gestures” (p. 70) ... “At the same time, she is offering attention to what is happening within herself in the present moment, to feelings, inner sensations and images, associations, imaginations, emotions and bodily experience” (pp. 70–71). The material environ becomes another level at which the therapist (and we would argue, researcher) attends personally and interpersonally “to sense the tone and rhythm of the changing atmosphere of the session” (p. 71).

Another level of presence articulated across the EXA literature, which we feel shares significant territory with a/r/tography—though again, differently—is the nature of the human-art material relationship. Here, presence shifts from being something considered only as a quality held by individual humans, to also being about the presence that materials themselves offer and to which we can respond. Both fields theorize the importance of the maker-making relationship and the special role that materials, including visual art media, fabric, instruments, text, technologies, and so forth have in mediating experience and meaning. In the expressive arts, art and art-making are conceived as fundamental elements of what it means to be alive, as a human or nonhuman. Beliefs about art and aesthetics in EXA are rooted in ancient and indigenous ontologies. In their articulation of the way that EXA frames an understanding of the human behavior of art, Atkins and Eberhart (2014) note

that in ancient cultures and in all indigenous cultures today there is no word for art. While all of these peoples engaged in art-making activities, these art behaviors were so integral and integrated into daily life, that there was no designation of these behaviors as something separate and apart. (p. 38)

Disanayake’s (2000) work that frames art-making as a biological necessity connected to human (and nonhuman) survival also holds importance in EXA.

Similarly for a/r/tographers, compelling questions orient the material as a relational hinge to what it means to do the work of inquiring. In her article, *Becoming A/r/tography*, Irwin (2013) and her teacher-candidate participants pose the question, “What is the relationship between material practices, processes of engagement, and aesthetic products?” (p. 204). As they explore how “artists, researchers, teachers engaged in a/r/tography are living lives of inquiry: Lives full of curiosity punctuated by questions searching for deeper understandings while interrogating assumptions” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 901), Springgay and colleagues (2005) describe the liminal space of living inquiry, where materiality and making practices intersect and provoke deep questions, such as the one presented above by Irwin (and/or the ones we have presented in this

article). Furthermore, a/r/tographers explore how it is to be present with an aesthetic form of inquiry that:

engages with a continual process of not-knowing, of searching for meaning that is difficult and in tension. Tension that is nervous, agitated, and un/predictable. When fabric is distressed it is said to be 'marked' or 'treated.' Examples are staining with tea, washing with stones, more difficult distressing using substances such as bleach and acid, and even cutting. Thus, nervousness as living inquiry distresses art and text, calling forth new meanings and knowledges. Nervousness is also relational, reverberating between art and text, a living inquiry that is in continuous movement. (p. 902)

Here Springgay et al. acknowledge the tension that occurs when one engages in a living inquiry. They personify this embodied sensation of tension through their art-making examples of distressing fabric, metaphorically extrapolating that which emerges from such tension, amplifying the nervousness that is both physical and relational in nature.

Opened endings: Presence in a/r/tography and EXA meet new materialist thought. The second level of presence described above that discusses the nature of the human-art material relationship, and where materials themselves come into presence on their own accord and conceivably outside of or at least in addition to human will, is where we sense an emergence of ideas and practices that remain connected to, yet diverge from, both EXA and a/r/tography. While beyond the scope of this current writing to fully articulate its form, we have begun to imagine the possibilities that exist for a variation of an expressive arts-infused a/r/tographic methodology that upholds the proprioceptive knowing of materials themselves; that is, their relay of and reception to other energetic presences, and the penchant for humans as well as other living creatures to be drawn to and directed by them. Kelly is drawn to the forest's invitation, its quality of presence, and its way of provoking a register that compels her to ritualistically create hand-branches. Jessica is enticed by the sensorial image of her own never-idle hands, working alongside her father's hands, enchanted extensions of intertwined and entangled bodies using art and craft to translate the world anew, over and over again. The wind, the bark, the skin-covered flexion of bones and muscles that respond to material energies, signal for us the earthly body's (including but not exclusively, the human body) agency in the meaning-making matrix—something we are keen to experiment with following, rather than repeat our tendency to treat agency as flowing from, in a retrograde fashion, human thought.

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It is to this radical foregrounding of the *material*, to the objects of our aesthetic attraction as well as the immaterial yet nonetheless potent energies circulating among and between objects, that our attention as arts-based researchers has begun to turn in earnest. At the interstices of our experience and sensibilities as expressive artists and arts-based researchers is a desire to give materials their due. With other social scientists, we are keen to decenter our preoccupation with human meaning and agency and sidle closer to a set of beliefs and practices that, as Fenwick, Edwards, and Sawchuck (2011) explain, help us “move away from analysing ... objects as simply traces of something assumed to be culture, as we might see in conventional anthropological accounts” (p. vi). The move is instead toward a set of inter- and intra-actions, where again Fenwick and colleagues note, “the material world is treated as continuous with, and in fact embedded in, immaterial energies, such as certain social relations and human intensities” (p. vi).

As we continue this living inquiry into *how it is to be in the interstices of EXA and a/r/tography*, our still-emerging sensibilities about methodologies that honor indigenous wisdom about a relational aesthetic necessary for human growth and survival, as well as our increasing insights about the biology of affect and creative practice, compel us to continue considering an arts-informed somatographic⁵ approach as a variant of other arts-based methodologies, including a/r/tography. Trusting what we often experience as the productive yet murky theoretical and practical middle ground between a/r/tography and the expressive arts, we have begun to envision additional contour lines, ones taking shape as a type of “circuit-breaking machine” (Wallin, 2011, p. 110) that we believe helps us modify our habits of a social science that repeats models and modes that are all too human, where it is language systems that claim to *think on our behalf*.

Making increasingly productive use of the affective forces cultivated by the special breed of *presence* that EXA promotes, and that a/r/tographic method tends to produce, we feel the edges of what is already known and then lean, thoughtfully and creatively, into bewilderment. We can feel our relationship with a/r/tography expanding under the conditioning that is the expressive arts, where our cue to seek open-ended understanding via *poiesis* promotes making practices that insist on actively re-integrating the body with mind and re-discovering the fundamentally and productively habitual ways in which this entwinement has always already been the way we humans, like all forms of life, have survived. In this way, a new materialist orientation to what could be called expressive arts-based research (EXABR) takes up in theory and practice a Deleuzian definition of art: the belief that “art is the practice of creating sensations (percepts and affects)” and the attendant belief that “individual

works of art are blocs or compounds of such sensations” (Conway, 2014, p. 13). Ontologically, then, an expanded derivation of expressive arts-based research sidles closely to what Barad (2007) refers to as an “agential realist” accounting of existence and causality. Barad’s is an ontology of *entanglements*, where individuals, things, and meanings all emerge through and as part of an unbounded, ceaselessly processual set of *intra-actions* and relations. In Barad’s view, these entanglements that give rise to meaning and to matter are not intertwinings per se (i.e., not the joining of separate “things” or entities). Here, for example, paintings are not the product of a bounded individual artist, intertwined with their separate materials and the ideas or the natural landscape of inspiration. Paintings instead come through “the mutual constitution of entangled agencies” (p. 33), that is, through the intra-actions of discursive practices that *come to mean* artist, researcher, tree, paint, and so forth, and the material participation of bodies holding brushes, mountains, pigment.

We are keen to join other social scientists, arts-based researchers, and expressive arts practitioners interested in foregrounding the body’s relationship with the material world, including art materials, putting habits of making, or *poesis*, to work in combining embodied exploration and analytical insight. In so doing, we desire to work relationally, deepening habits of “thinking about” social and educational phenomena alongside habits of “doing with” bodies, art, affect, and movement. In this way, it is our collective habits that could themselves become the stabilizing ground and imaginative force for transforming what can be known about each other, our work as arts-based researchers, and our relationship with the material world, calling us, when are willing and able to listen, into a special breed of *presence* where the wind meets our hands’ ancient capacity for making *with*, rather than about, our experience in advance of the encounter.

Notes

1. Equal authorship, alphabetical by surname.
2. The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful and generous comments on an earlier draft of this work. Their efforts significantly influenced the direction our revisions took, we hope for the better. We would also like to acknowledge our wise colleague, Katrina Plato, whose comments assisted us in re-orienting certain words and phrases throughout the work to better communicate the tone of connection and expansion we were trying to convey.

3. In a 2006 article written for the journal *Qualitative Inquiry*, Kelly developed the term “ourstory” to signify a feminist relational conceptualization of the “mystory” form of interpretive ethnographic writing developed earlier by Norman Denzin (1996). Denzin and others described mystories as “montages” that juxtapose strands or fragments of personal narrative with popular culture and scholarly discourse. Similar to my deployment of the term in 2006 to underscore the interdependency of my narrative with my research participant’s shared expressions, Jessica and Kelly use “our” here not as a reckless dismissal of Denzin’s careful treatment of the ‘Other’ in his explanation of this and similar forms of interpretive, critical, performative texts. Nor is the use of “our” a misread of arguments centered on the impossibility of a researcher’s “pure presence” and the “crisis” surrounding attempts to represent others’ lived experience. Rather, the term “ourstory” takes the representational crisis to heart, reflecting the spirit of Denzin’s call for interpretive work that holds a feminist ethic central. It honors the one indisputable truth about this narrative: its possibility lies in its co-construction and our affiliations and affections with one another.
4. Springgay, Irwin, and Kind (2005) qualify that in a/r/tography the notion of living inquiry refers to “an embodied encounter constituted through visual and textual *understandings* and *experiences*, rather than mere visual and textual *representations*” (p. 902). We take a moment here to clarify how a/r/tography thinks about the conceptual notion of living inquiry in order to contextualize our discussion later in this piece of presence and the disposition toward living inquiry that a/r/tography promotes.
5. Initially introduced by Kelly in her 2010 book entitled, *Invoking Mnemosyne*, “somatography” is a term used to signal a broad set of beliefs grounded in material feminist perspectives about the importance of promoting epistemologies anchored in “the noticing and noting of the bodily features of discursive subjects involved in and asking questions about social, scientific, and psychic life” (Clark/Keefe, 2014, p. 5). In our present writing, aspects of somatography shift, dissipate, and expand under the theoretical, physical, and relational circumstances of exploring the interstices of EXA and a/r/tography, a provocation we hope to explore in future work.

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Artful Research Approaches in #amwritingwithbaby: Qualitative Analysis of Academic Mothers on Facebook¹

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ABSTRACT

This study contemplates one facet of academic motherhood through the use of artful research approaches in qualitative research to examine the (im)balance of being a mother writing academic works while raising and caring for a young child, as presented in an online hashtag Facebook campaign, #amwritingwithbaby. Specifically, this study uses an analysis of online posts and arts-based representations of findings through a comparison of narrative, poem, and word clouds. Through using popular media for representing the findings, this study helps address the accessibility of artful inquiry into the growing body of works seeking equity for women and mothers in academia.

 In March 22, 2015, Karen Kelsky, a former tenured professor who moved out of the professoriate and into a highly popular academic coach, requested her followers on Facebook to post a photo demonstrating how it is possible to complete academic work while raising and caring for a young child. Kelsky's (2016) followers at *The Professor Is In*, and the associated Facebook group, were asked to simply, "Hey, please share your photos of writing with babies! Call it #amwritingwithbaby! Let's show it can be done!" Shortly after posting, there were over 150 likes, comments, and shares on the hashtag she suggested, #amwritingwithbaby. Women (along with a handful of images including men and a few including pets) posted photos demonstrating the combination of working and taking care of young children/babies. Most of the photos also included a brief description explaining what the mother and baby were completing at the time, such as finishing a dissertation

chapter or revising and resubmitting a manuscript. In some instances, there was a brief history provided giving context, such as by explaining soon after a picture was taken, the mother reached tenure.

Many of the comments on the photos were supportive and demonstrated how women felt empowered by seeing and hearing about the experiences of other mothers in academia. However, there was a select set of comments that started the discussion, mentioning a varied perspective. Those first sets of comments deviated from the latter ones by not including a photo and positive caption about completing academic work, but instead detailed conflicted feelings related to the campaign itself. The complexity of women's lives as mothers and scholars was highlighted, pointing to the duality of feeling empowered and sad/bothered by the *need* for mothers to balance both home and academic work. In other words, mothers' need to balance both home and academic work in this campaign pointed to larger issues about work/life policies, gender in academia, mothers in academia, the glass ceiling for women in the workplace, and the academic pipeline in general.

These comments posted about troublesome sociocultural policies and practices relating to academic mothers, at times referred to as "mother-scholars" (Lapayese, 2012) or *motherscholars*² (Matias, 2011), shed light on persistent problems in general inhibiting recruitment, retention, and equity in academia. Representations indicate inequality between those graduating and those moving throughout the academic pipeline that is a matter of concern for providing equity in academia (CohenMiller, 2014b). Institutions of higher education, primarily established to develop men, have transitioned over the years to accept women, yet despite allowing women in the classrooms and as faculty, there are still gaps in enrolment and positions (Mason, Wolfinger, & Goulden, 2013). Additionally, the faculties of assistant, associate, and full professors in the United States and in Canada have shown significantly disproportionate representation of women (American Association of University Professors, 2014; Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2015). While we have seen an increase of women in higher education in Western nations, even outnumbering men in some graduate programs (Allum & Okahana, 2015), there are obstacles faced by women internationally (Women in academia, 2015) and continued problems regarding promotion of female academics to full professor (Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011).

Previous research has shown a preliminary understanding of the challenges faced by mothers in academia, as seen through online texts (CohenMiller, 2013). Furthermore, additional research explains there is a glass ceiling hindering women from reaching the highest levels of the professoriate (Williams, 2005). In other cases,

it is argued there is another obstacle that stands in women's ways of progressing through the academic pipeline, the maternal wall. According to Williams and Segal (2003), the "maternal wall" is an obstacle that emerges once women are associated with family, whether becoming pregnant or having a child. Thus, to be associated with family life becomes negatively linked for women in academia. In contrast to the negative association for women in academia, for men, research indicates family does not hinder productivity or perceptions from others, but instead enhances their academic output, "Women who have children soon after receiving their Ph.D. are much less likely to achieve tenure than men who have children at the same point in their career" (Williams, 2005, p. 91). In other words, women in academia, often already underrepresented in faculty positions, especially at the most senior levels, are penalized within their academic career for becoming mothers and being associated with the family. While this is not unique to academia, it is a key element to address in working to reduce/eliminate discrimination and establishing equity in higher education, such as in recruitment and retention of women throughout the academic pipeline.

Continued efforts persist to thwart discrimination against women in academia, in particular as it relates to pregnancy (Mason & Younger, 2014) and can be seen in the movement towards bringing together the identities of mother and academic as an act of resistance (Matias, 2011) to traditional practices in the academe. These efforts to improve equity in academia for academic mothers can be seen in an additional way through national funding, such as in the United States with Title IX regulations and with National Science Foundation (NSF) funding. Enforcing regulations around Title IX, which were established to equalize women's access to higher education and prevent discrimination, has not been without issues. Yet some of these challenges are being addressed. For instance, NSF funding, which provides considerable financial support for research, has recently challenged discriminatory behavior, pointing out, "The National Science Foundation (NSF) joins with other leading U.S. scientific organizations to emphasize its strong commitment to preventing harassment and to eradicate gender-based discrimination in science" (Press release, 2016, para. 1). Ultimately, the public discourse and academic research points to a continued need to address obstacles hindering the success and equity of women, and mothers, in academia.

An Artful Research Approach

This study contemplates one facet of academic motherhood (see Adrienne Rich, 1976/1995, for discussion on the "institution" of motherhood) in terms of the (im)balance of being a mother writing academic works while raising and caring for

a young child. Through the use of an artful research approach—and arts-based practices—in qualitative research, this study examines the online hashtag Facebook campaign, #amwritingwithbaby. Specifically, this study uses an analysis of online posts and presents the findings through arts-based representations—narrative, poem, and word clouds. It is hoped this study can expand upon our understanding of motherhood in academia and the ways in which findings can be represented for a greater comprehension of the topic. Through using popular media and arts-based representations, this study helps enhance the accessibility of works seeking equity for women and mothers in academia.

Artful Research Design: Methods, Analysis, and Findings

For this study, the purpose was to examine one facet of academic motherhood, the (im)balance of being a mother writing academic works while raising and caring for a young child, as presented in an online hashtag Facebook campaign, #amwritingwithbaby. While not initially intending to utilize an artful research design, once I began working with the data, I quickly saw the need to delve within the qualitative research paradigm, specifically into arts-based research practices, in order to more fully understand, show, and describe the comments posted by the academic mothers. Additionally, I brought my work to colleagues to assess the degree to which I accomplished (re)presenting the narratives as is common with arts-based practices which address sensitive topics (Leavy, 2009). For this artful research design, I describe the thought processes and detail the applications of data collection, analysis, and findings.

To collect the data, I started with the original post on Karen Kelsky's Facebook page, *The Professor Is In*, as a stepping-off point. I downloaded all associated images, comments related to the images, and comments (posts) that did not include an image. Her post stated "Hey, please share your photos of writing with babies! Call it #amwritingwithbaby! Let's show it can be done!" (Facebook post, March 22, 2015). The response on Facebook included 155 likes, 67 comments, and 27 shares. (Interestingly, Kelsky also posted on Twitter and had surprisingly different responses, with one person uploading an image of her dog and one person re-sharing.)

After downloading all comments/responses to Kelsky's post (n=67), each verbal response was saved within a Word document. Images were saved separately along with the associated caption(s). While the images were not used as research tools for analysis of the text, they provided context for understanding and interpreting the comments. For instance, one photo included a comment, "good thing my arms are long." Without the associated image (see Figure 1), there is no context to understand

the meaning of the words. In examining the image, a photograph showing a protruding, apparently pregnant woman's stomach extending towards a desk, it becomes clear the academic mother is referring to the utility of her arms ("good thing my arms are long") to get beyond her pregnant belly to reach the laptop computer.

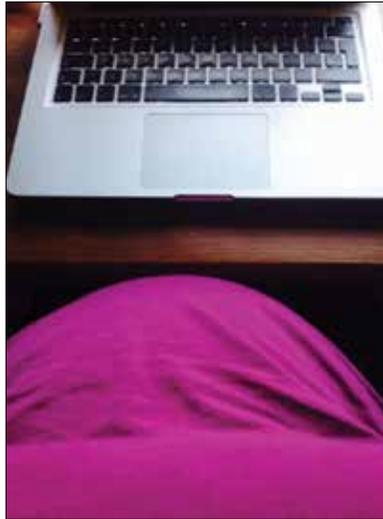


Fig. 1: An academic mother's vantage of having to reach across her pregnant belly to reach her computer

In compiling all the comments into one document, the total number of words from the comments reached just over 1,400. When I began the analysis, I had planned to go through the text line by line, coding for key words, concepts, and themes. This method of constant analysis, gleaned from typical grounded theory methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006), began the processes of analysis. Yet after beginning this process and working through multiple lines of text, I realized there was something different calling from the data, something asking to be revealed as a comprehensive unit instead of broken apart line by line. Allowing the data to speak is not a simple task, as there are typical methods of analysis, which generally dictate the manner of analysis and representation.

However, knowing there are times when data can urge depth of meaning through representations such as artful approaches, I switched gears and instead looked into the full text. I worked to let go of learned ways of data analysis and instead embrace more emergent methods addressing the digital data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Markham, in press). What did the full set of 1,400 words *say*? What was being presented by the various mothers in academia? What was the overall *feeling* from this data and from those contributing their thoughts and experiences?

When the captions were added together into one cohesive unit, I found they presented a narrative of the (im)balance of being a mother writing academic works while raising and caring for a young child. While the words provide many insights into the experiences of those posting #amwritingwithbaby, as mentioned previously, the words did not provide the whole picture. For instance, one academic mother's comment, "I was even fortunate enough to have a research assistant," appears to present a positive feeling of having support, yet the image that accompanied the quote shows a different aspect. The image (see Figure 2) showed a young baby crawling towards a set of academic books. As the image focuses on the baby, without situating the academic mother in the picture, it appears the baby is the only one with access to the books (as toys?) and thus suggests the difficulty of completing academic work.



Fig. 2: Baby crawling towards and touching academic books

Moving forward with the analysis, I found that collecting the comments into one narrative presented a particular vantage into the overall synthesis and feeling of the data. As an example, I have selected one portion of the comments, all of which were posted consecutively on the Facebook post.

Finished data collection on my last study participant while I was in labor. I love this thread! Dissertating with baby. When my son was 1 month old I did the final proofs for my monograph while nursing on one side and pumping on the other side. So many days I nursed my daughter to sleep and she rested beside me as I typed. Because it was what we had, we were on a sofa, my laptop sat perched on a TV tray in front of me. She was born in June, this was taken in Nov[ember], and I graduated in Dec[ember]. More lab work. (Looking through specimens). An office work day, visiting colleagues for manuscript work. I was even fortunate enough to have a research assistant. I shared this on another comment, but here it is again. National conference paper, son about

2 months old here. This is my first [baby], when I was working on a book proposal. I'm now writing my manuscript while holding my second [baby]. Helping me sort journal articles. Nursing and outlining a book chapter right now!

The comments present a narrative of beginning research, writing, and completing various assignments. These comments are collected from multiple academic mothers, with one comment addressing the availability of work space—the sofa and TV tray—conjuring imagery of a small space that was used for academic work. Below (see Table 1) I separate each line based upon each person who made a comment on the Facebook thread.

Table 1

Selected set of comments separated by individual academic mother who posted on the Facebook thread #amwritingwithbaby

1	<i>Finished data collection on my last study participant while I was in labor.</i>
2	<i>I love this thread!</i>
3	<i>Dissertating with baby.</i>
4	<i>When my son was 1 month old I did the final proofs for my monograph while nursing on one side and pumping on the other side.</i>
5	<i>So many days I nursed my daughter to sleep and she rested beside me as I typed. Because it was what we had, we were on a sofa, my laptop sat perched on a TV tray in front of me.</i>
6	<i>She was born in June, this was taken in Nov[ember], and I graduated in Dec[ember].</i>
7	<i>More lab work. (Looking through specimens).</i>
8	<i>An office work day, visiting colleagues for manuscript work.</i>
9	<i>I was even fortunate enough to have a research assistant. I shared this on another comment, but here it is again.</i>
10	<i>National conference paper, son about 2 months old here.</i>
11	<i>This is my first [baby], when I was working on a book proposal.</i>
12	<i>I'm now writing my manuscript while holding my second [baby].</i>
13	<i>Helping me sort journal articles.</i>
14	<i>Nursing and outlining a book chapter right now!</i>

In addition to hearing the narrative of the mothers and incorporating the images they included, I also felt drawn by the data to present the comments in additional artful modalities. In creating an additional mode of representation, there is potential for further understanding by audiences who may not all be drawn to the same representation. I chose to present the data in two additional formats: as a poem and as word clouds.

For the development of the poem, I used the same comments included above within the narrative and in the table, spaced and commented upon. In taking this step, I found the words provided expanded meaning. I used the selection of the comments as presented in the narrative, but have turned them into a poem, adding my own thoughts, in brackets, to move the poem along. The other intention of the bracketed words is to provide the reader with the potential feelings behind the academic mother comments (and associated images). In other words, deep analysis of the content and connotation of the words was being conducted through the development of a poem.

Finished
data collection on my last study participant
while I was in labor.
[Breathing. Sighing]
Dissertating
with baby.
[We are almost done. We are almost there.]
When my son was 1 month
I did the final proofs
for my monograph while nursing
on one side and pumping on the other side.
[Did you hear? Not 1 year old. Not a full 12 months.
Barely out of the womb. 30 days, 1 month]
So many days I nursed my daughter to sleep and she rested beside me
as I typed.
Because it was what we had,
we were on an [sic] sofa,
my laptop sat perched on a TV tray in front of me.
[You see, we can do it all.
Is that our goal?
Have we reached it yet?]

Lastly, the same set of comments were further analyzed through the technique of developing a word cloud. A “word cloud” is a digital tool to visually represent the most utilized words within a section of text. The words that are presented in a larger font are the ones that are more frequently used. Similarly, the words in smaller text size have been used less frequently in the selection of text. In other words, a word cloud is a quick way to see the gist of a set of text. Like a bar graph can provide an overview of a set of data, the word cloud provides an overview of a set of data in the form of words. With this in mind, the last step of the analysis included creating multiple sets of word clouds.

Through the use of an online tool, text can be entered and a word cloud is presented (see Wordle.net or http://www.abcya.com/word_clouds.htm). There are various ways in which the preferences in representation can be tweaked such as by color family, orientation of words, and size. While it is a fairly straightforward technique for analysis, there are times, such as in this case, it was important to go through the text and correct/update words for comprehensibility. The first word cloud presented below (see Figure 3) utilizes the same set of words from the 13 academic mothers who posted, which were used for the narrative and a selection was used for the poem. The most common words were: baby and work. Additional words that were commonly used included: book, manuscript, old, son, nursing, and side.

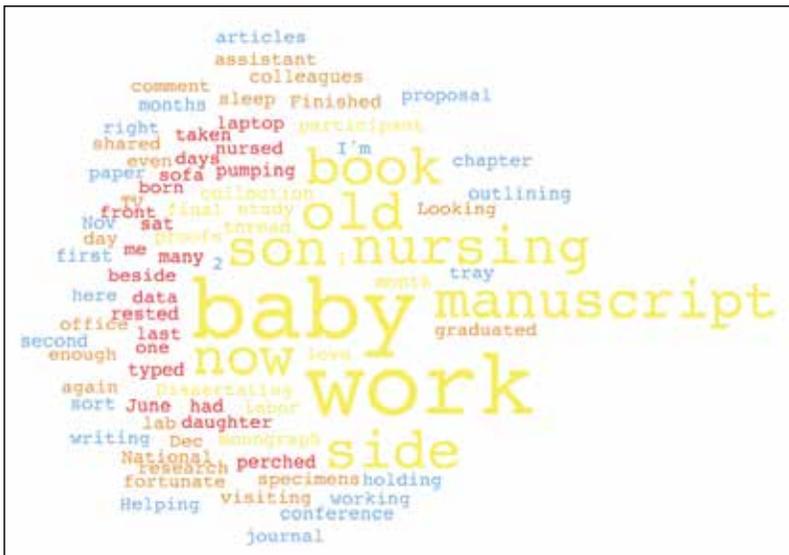


Fig. 3: Word cloud using the selected set of 13 comments from the narrative

In order to get a fuller picture of the overall feeling of the totality of comments and understandings of the academic mothers' posts on #amworkingwithbaby, I created three additional word clouds. The first additional word cloud included a set of eight comments discussing a conflict of feelings and concern about the "social pressure of being a supermom" (see Figure 4). The most common words were: time, during, and yes. Additional common words used included: academia, babies, academic, photos, expectations, expected, recovery, hand, sad, quite, support, women, many, leave, post, thank, second, done, maternity, and writing.



Fig. 4: Word cloud using a set of eight comments discussing a conflict of feeling

The next word cloud included the remaining 59 comments and excluded the first set of nine comments (see Figure 5). The most common words were: one, writing, dissertation, working, and baby. Additional common words used included: book, chapter, daughter, home, tenure, manuscript, I'm, first, son, write, work, defended, paper, amwritingwithbaby, helping, and conference.

These four word clouds, while providing similar sets of words that are used most frequently, ultimately end up highlighting a slightly different perspective on the experiences of #amwritingwithbaby. Likewise, the narrative and poem each present a nuanced perspective into the (im)balance of academic mothers' work. Across the four word clouds, the academic mothers' experiences can be seen through common types of terminology relating to writing (e.g., book, manuscript), feelings (e.g., expectations, sad), and children (e.g., daughter, son, first [child]). (See Table 2.)

Table 2

Commonly discussed words relating to writing and feelings. Organized by word cloud

	WORD CLOUD 1	WORD CLOUD 2	WORD CLOUD 3	WORD CLOUD 4
Writing	Manuscript Dissertation Chapter Proposal Book Conference	Writing Dissertation	Writing Chapter Manuscript Dissertation Proposal Review Paper Thesis Conference	Dissertation Working Writing Manuscript Proposal Chapter Conference
Feelings	Enough Love Now	Time bind Frustrated Support Thank Leave Sadness Limitations Expectations Expected Power Havoc Adorable	Successfully Preparing #itcanbedone Helping Good	#itcanbedone Successfully Enough Expected

Across the data, we can see academic mothers provide contextualization for the types of writing they are engaged with, while caring for and raising young children. These types of writings include writing “in general” and writing chapters, manuscripts, dissertations/theses, proposals, review, papers, and conference articles. Throughout the discussion of the types of writing these women engage with in academia, they also present embedded concepts relating to their feeling of (im)balance in being a mother writing academic works while raising and caring for a young child. Such emotional contexts are provided through words including: enough, love, now, time bind, frustrated, support, thank, leave, sadness, limitations, expectations/expected, power, havoc, and adorable.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to contemplate one facet of academic motherhood through the use of an artful research approach in qualitative research to examine the (im)balance of being a mother writing academic works while raising and caring for a young child. Specifically, the study presented data and analysis from the online hashtag campaign on Facebook from Karen Kelsky’s page, *The Professor Is In*, where she requested comments and posting of images with the tag #amwritingwithbaby. This study utilized multiple artful approaches in decoding the data as presented within the Facebook thread #amwritingwithbaby. Through the use of artful data analysis—arts-based research practice—and presentations of findings including narrative, poem, and word clouds, the 67 comments from academic mothers provide a contextualization for the (im)balance of being a mother writing academic works while raising and caring for a young child.

Overall, there appears to be a complex relationship regarding the (im)balance of family and work for academic mothers, with opposing forces of stress/sadness and support/love. Such tension between feelings and experiences as seen in #amworkingwithbaby can be found in previous research studying academic mothers, in particular highlighted in research studying graduate student motherhood in academia (CohenMiller, 2014b; Holm, Prosek, & Godwin Weisberger, 2015; Tiu Wu, 2013; Trepal, Stinchfield, & Haiyasoso, 2014). Findings suggest basic steps that can be implemented to support academic mothers, such as by providing accessible onsite childcare (CohenMiller, 2014a, 2014b), transparent policies, and a “culture” of using such policies (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012; Lundquist & Misra, 2015).

This study provides a first step in understanding how mothers in academia present themselves online within a Facebook hashtag campaign. While this study focuses on the comments posted, future research could delve first into the associated imagery of academic mothers (46 photographs) posted as part of #amwritingwithbaby hashtag campaign. Furthermore, to provide deeper understanding of the (im)balance of being a mother writing academic works while raising and caring for a young child, an enhanced step to truly understand the experiences of these women would be to conduct interviews with them (e.g., a researcher could apply for permissions to approach the women who posted on Facebook). In this regard, interviews could be conducted as follow-up to the images and comments posted, as well as the presented analyses and findings. In other words, the academic mothers would have an opportunity to provide additional interpretation/explanation upon their comments, providing a more complete picture of their experiences. Future suggested research could relate to (1) how academic mothers feel regarding working alongside/with their young children, (2) what types of supports (or lack thereof) are experienced/desired, and (3) what types of formal/informal learning developed as a result of being an academic mother. As we go forward delving deeper into the experiences of mothers in academia, there is hope for supporting recruitment, retention, and equity for women in academia through additional theoretical approaches, practices research, and methods.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Southwest Popular and American Culture Association Conference (SWPACA), February 2016, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA. Conference travel was generously supported in part by a Social Policy grant from the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan.
2. The term *motherscholar* (Matias, 2011) provides a way to “coalesce” the identities of being an academic and a mother. For this article, without speaking with the individual women about their preference for identifying themselves, I have selected the term “academic mother” to address the general concept of mothers working/studying in academia.

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Using Arts-Based Research Exercises to Foster Reflexivity in Qualitative Research

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ABSTRACT

Reflexivity is a ubiquitous, varied, and, at times, contentious concept in qualitative inquiry that presents challenges as we strive to understand and use the concept in our work. The authors present their collaborative understanding of reflexivity using their semester-long research journals, reflexivity models, collaborative poetry, and collage exercises as evidence. The article details how using arts-based research exercises in the classroom can facilitate understanding and use of the concept of reflexivity.

Reflexivity is a ubiquitous, varied, and, at times, contentious concept in qualitative inquiry that presents challenges as we strive to understand and use the concept in our work. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) have described reflexivity as the “heartbeat of qualitative research” (p. 72), but questions about conceptualizations and usage of the concept arise when we talk about reflexivity in the classroom and in our qualitative work: *What does reflexivity mean? How does one demonstrate reflexive understanding? Which position on reflexivity should we adopt as qualitative researchers? How do we teach reflexivity?* These questions reflect the diverse understandings of reflexivity in qualitative methodology, and how “this diversity has created a sense of openness for doing ethnographic research...in turn, this openness has rendered reflexivity a contested intellectual phenomenon that is often characterized by contrasting and differing perspectives” (Berry & Clair, 2011, p. 95).

In order to unravel the complexity of the concept of reflexivity, we share the experiences of students' enrolled in a qualitative research methods class in media and communication at a medium-sized midwestern university during the 2014 spring and the 2015 summer semesters. We detail how a semester-long investigation into reflexivity contributed to class understanding of the concept, the use of the concept in qualitative research, and how ABR exercises can be used to improve teaching practices. We suggest that the use of arts-based research exercises facilitates the understanding and doing of reflexive qualitative research.

Defining Reflexivity

Like many concepts in qualitative research, the concept of reflexivity cannot easily be defined in a few words. For qualitative researchers, reflexivity has been conceptualized as a process that enriches the dialogue between the subject matter and the researcher (Calafell, 2013). As such, reflexivity means being aware of and acknowledging the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process. It means acknowledging the impossibility of remaining outside of one's subject matter. At the heart of the concept of reflexivity, then, the researcher is viewed as an instrument of the research process. Thus, the researcher needs to acknowledge how he/she incorporates into his/her work a certain set of preconceived behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs, and in fact, we argue that these personal experiences enrich the research endeavor.

The idea of reflexivity challenges the view of knowledge production as independent of the researcher producing the knowledge and of knowledge as an objective entity (Berger, 2015). The researcher is therefore not only engaged with the process, but also a critical part of that process. In order to ensure quality in qualitative research, reflexivity needs to occur on all stages of the research process. Berger (2015) noted that being reflexive as a qualitative researcher "means turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research" (p. 220). It is important to analyze the effect that our situatedness has on the subjects we study, the questions we ask, as well as the data we collect and interpret (Berger, 2015). Reflexivity is thus considered essential, potentially facilitating understanding of both phenomenon under study and the research process itself (Watt, 2007).

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Reflexivity represents an important tool for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, because “[i]f we do not consider the ways in which who we are may get in the way of portraying the voice of the participant, we may miss important meanings that are being presented by our participants” (Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2006, p. x). Reflexivity allows researchers to increase the credibility of their work by detailing how their values, beliefs, knowledge, and biases influence this work (Cutcliffe, 2003). Further, Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argue that active engagement with reflexivity not only demonstrates rigor, but also helps ensure that our research practices are ethical. They argue that, “being reflexive in an ethical sense means acknowledging and being sensitized to the microethical dimensions of research practice and in doing so, being alert to and prepared for ways of dealing with the ethical tensions that arise” (p. 278).

Applying Reflexivity

Employing reflexivity within the classroom has the potential to make the classroom a less secret, dangerous place (Warren, 2011). Thus, we outline arts-based research activities that encourage students to strengthen their use of reflexivity as beginning qualitative researchers. Students during the 2014 spring semester engaged in two arts-based research exercises (reflexivity modeling and collage poetry) based on their semester-long reflexivity journals, and students during the 2015 summer semester engaged in three arts-based research exercises (reflexivity model, collage poetry, and exquisite corpse) and online discussions about reflexivity in order to deepen their understanding and knowledge of the concept. The journal served as inspiration and documentation of emerging definitions of reflexivity and demonstrated understanding of reflexivity as a process (Berry, 2013; Faulkner, 2016). We present the journal exercise and the arts-based research model, collage, and exquisite corpse exercises before presenting our different understandings of reflexivity that emerged. Our goals with this documentation are to offer others a way to process their own reflexivity and play with the tensions between definitions, practice, and knowledge of reflexivity within the classroom.

Reflexivity Journal Exercise

At the beginning of the semester, the course instructor asked students to keep a reflexivity journal wherein they recorded their reflections on research exercises and activities that we conducted in and outside of class given that reflexivity is a process that enriches the dialogue between the subject matter and the researcher (Calafell, 2013).

The point of the journal was for students to document their evolving sense of reflexivity as it related to them as researchers, their research, and how reflexivity is included and excluded in the research process. Through the journaling exercise, students began to create and explore their own internal dialogues. The students took notes on readings, answered reflection questions about in-class activities, and used the journal to develop a paper and/or performance that would be included in the final class presentation. This journal exercise was a way to anchor reflexivity in students' daily scholarly lives. Students re-created what they were experiencing within the classroom and were able to reflect on the implications of such experiences. The journal was also used as material for the arts-based research exercises we present now.

Reflexivity Model Exercise

After nine weeks of keeping a reflexivity journal, students answered the following questions based on Keith Berry's (2103) conceptualization of reflexivity as spinning: (1) What is reflexivity? What conceptualization works best for you and why?; (2) How is reflexivity important for qualitative work, and your work in particular?; (3) What is spinning reflexivity?; and (4) How will you incorporate your understanding of reflexivity into your work? The students then considered their answers when the instructor asked them to draw a model of reflexivity during class time using newsprint and markers; they were to define reflexivity through a model, words, and/or an image. See Figure 1 for an example of what students produced. The instructor took digital photos of all of the reflexivity posters and posted them in the on-line course management system for students to reference.

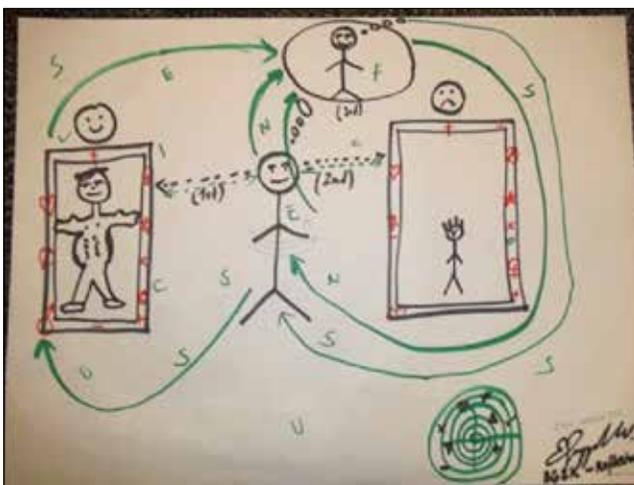


Fig. 1: Reflexivity model poster

Collage Exercise

In the class period following the reflexivity model exercise, students created their own reflexivity collages. The instructor asked them to bring their reflexivity journals and consider the reflexivity models they had created to present an interview or interviews from their class homework as a collage poem (see Figure 2).



Fig. 2: Reflexivity interview collage

As an alternative, students could present the self as a researcher showing their understanding of how their positionality influences their research (see Figures 3 and 4). The instructor provided students the collage poem exercise from her poetry book (Faulkner, 2014), which encouraged them to use interview transcripts, photos, field notes, letters, email, texts, their researcher journal, research memos, crayons, pencils, pens, paint, double-sided tape, glue, yarn, magazines, cardboard, metals, fibers, and recycled objects.



Fig. 3: Researcher reflexivity collage



Fig. 4: Researcher reflexivity collage

In addition, the students had the option to create their collages on-line, such as on a personal website or blog (see Figure 5). Since this was done during class time, students were able to share the processes behind their reflexive collages. Reflexivity is not done alone; instead it is a way to engage the classroom together in a powerful way (Warren, 2011).

the product. The focus on process in *Exquisite Corpse* mirrors the focus on iterative process in qualitative research. Many qualitative scholars acknowledge the importance of process and the emergent design is qualitative research (see Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ragin, 1987; Tracy, 2013). Thus, *Exquisite Corpse* allows students to practice spontaneity, to go beyond conventional methods, and to be more open to uncertainty.

The typical rule is that each person who plays will not see what the other has written in order to allow for creativity and surprise. Other rules can be made about the form, topic, length, and editing of the poem. During class, each student began a poem about reflexivity to circulate around the room. We ended up with seven poems, and we present the three best *exquisite corpse* poems created:

I. Reflexivity

It is the product of our past experiences
that we have internalized. Reflexivity helps us interpret those experiences.

It allows us to acknowledge how these
past experiences affect the research of the present.

Yet it involved looking at those experiences with a fresh & new
perspective.

Involves admitting that everyone is
a dynamic being comprised of

UNSTABLE

Energy

Constant learning and relearning.

It is important to examine the effect that
our situatedness has on our subjects.

II. Reflexivity...

is an internal dialogue

It is also an external dialogue-
a dialogue with the literature and
culture around you.

Reflexivity is digging for answers.

It is an integral part of research
itself.

How we create meaning from data
allows for us to determine how meaning
is fabricated within a certain culture

or society

It is the story we create when we close
our eyes and listen to our heart.

III. Reflexivity Two

When you step out of your own skin
to find out what is crawling
under your skin.

Taking a deep breath and truly focusing
inward.

In order to ensure quality in qualitative research
adding that voice that the silent yearn
to hear.

It is a rigorous journey inside
the self.

It is making your inside known
to the outside—that is to the
scholarly community.

It also involves a
conscious effort on ‘filtering’ as
we try & understand other
perspectives.

Reflections on Reflexivity

When students completed the arts-based exercises, they answered reflection questions about each project. The instructor noted that the use of arts-based exercises, in combination with a journal and online discussion, produced the most nuanced wrestling with understandings she has seen in methods classes. The students’ articulations demonstrated the continual process of defining reflexivity based on history, identities, relationships, and positionalities (Berry, 2013), and the impossibility of one answer to the question, what is reflexivity? Students discussed and presented reflexivity as recognizing privilege, as dialogue, as practice, as poetic, as analysis of identities, and as query. As such, these activities illustrate how reflexivity is a practice of mindfulness as students recognize their own identities and standpoints (Berry, 2013). We present examples of the reflections on reflexivity in Table 1.

Table 1
Reflexivity As...

RECOGNIZING PRIVILEGE

- I was thinking that positioning yourself and recognizing privilege would add to your studies. And, in some situations we are all disadvantaged (I'm thinking of this as a dialectic).
- Reflexivity itself is not always good. Some researchers question the assumptions and dark side of reflexivity: "Some forms of reflexivity are reproductive, repetitious and reinforce existing power relations, while others may be challenging and disruptive" (Fox & Allana, 2014, p. 367). The consequence of reflexivity depends on how we approach this reflexive exercise.

Reflexivity actually helps to constitute these structures and contributes to inequalities by its habitual representation of them: such analyses may be greatly underestimating the ways in which reflexivity is part of everyday habit and hence overestimating the possibilities of gender detraditionalization. (p. 34)

We should be wary of whether we only present our own voice and neglect others during the reflexive process. We always need to keep in mind the goal of reflexivity to counter the dark side of reflexivity.

DIALOGUE

- I definitely agree that reflexivity is "not a single or universal entity but a process—an active, ongoing process that saturates every stage of the research" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 274). I also like the idea of reflexivity as being dialogue with others and the literature. However, I want to add that it is also *internal* dialogue. Reflexivity includes dialogue with the self in order to scrutinize one's own biases in the research.
- I would interpret Berry's definition of spinning reflexivity as a process of exploring who you are and what you stand for in relation to your world. Such journeys can be exciting and wonderful and others can be extraordinarily painful. A good ethnographer will approach the study with compassion and be aware of the trust and respect that is needed to validate the subject's(s') reality.
- Can one be aware of his/her relationships without being aware of him/herself? When we look in the mirror, what we see is our face and our body. However, if you look at someone else that you know in the mirror, you will realize that the mirror is showing that person in a reflective way, but everything is the other way around. What we need is another mirror! We can't only see ourselves looking in the mirror; we also look into the reflection of our reflection in the second mirror. We need to look on both of them. We look to keep looking, shifting from one to another, and looking at ourselves without a mirror.

PRACTICE

- Reflexivity is the notion that we are always present in our work and that it is difficult to separate ourselves from our own knowledge and experience. It is also the process of engaging in and interpreting the works of others as we attempt our own research. The idea that reflexivity is an evolution is how I best see the concept. It is a continuous cycle of research in which we acknowledge ourselves and the thoughts of others into our work. This integration allows us to think deeper and look further into questions that we might answer with our own research.
- I'm going to draw upon "Reflexivity" using the class activity, where a model was drawn to show how we interpret reflexivity in the realities of our life. I understand that we all look at the world around us with a certain frame of lens, which is subconsciously ingrained in us at a very young age. Thus, sometimes we fail to imbibe or borrow from the ideas of different lenses. When we move away from the "typical" frame of mindset and approach the world with a fresh perspective, we have engaged in some reflection, where we don't always stay adamant to one particular understanding and are willing to be more flexible and integrative.
- Reflexivity is the continual analyzing of what the preconceptions of the researcher are based on: the research and the researcher's personal belief system. Knowledge is produced based on this circular analytical process. The researcher's assumptions or preconceptions may have an effect on decisions related to the research. Reflexivity allows for us to determine how meaning is fabricated within a certain culture or society.

POETIC

- Reflexivity is poetry, an intentional and artistic act that requires a naked intimacy and a level of honesty into which one cannot merely step. It must be nurtured. I see it as a circle of mirrors surrounding me, and as I write upon one mirror, my words are reflected back and forth, across and around infinitely; one level of reflections may show my words in reverse, while the next captures them legibly, but only partially, and still the next circle of reflection reframing my words in the relationships I develop as a human being and researcher; each reflection revealing something I haven't seen, a possibility I haven't considered. Poetry, perhaps more than any other approach or discipline, gets to the essence of qualitative methodology. It presents (and is a catalyst for) a window into the heart of human experience (McCulliss, 2013). Essentially, understanding humanity is the very premise of qualitative research. Utilizing poetry in qualitative research creates a space to unravel parts of humanity and convey the experiences to a larger audience.

ANALYSIS OF IDENTITIES

- Conceptualizing reflexivity as a personal reflection or analysis of my subjectivity works best for me because it involves an inward analysis of all that influences my identity.
- Reflexivity opens space for enhancement. By constantly reflecting on what was the most difficult part for me and what I would change for next time, I, as a green researcher, kept overcoming my weaknesses and enhancing myself. Reflexivity is not only at the heart of autoethnography and cultural critique as Berry said, but also at the heart of the studying process for a graduate student.

QUERY

- “Reflexivity is a way for researchers to account for their personal biases and examine the effects that those biases may have on the data produced” (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 3). This definition didn’t mean much to me when I first read it. At the time, reflexivity was a relatively new term to me, and I didn’t see much of a purpose to it. However, a recent research project made me realize how much of a bias I had before I even began collecting data.

Throughout our reflections, we considered reflexivity as an intentional engagement of relational meanings as they develop and shift in changing contexts. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) explain that by realizing that our work as researchers is always situated in relationships—in relationships with the research literature, with the people we are studying—we are able to get our bearings in a world of diverse, shifting, and often contentious meanings. This connectedness requires the researcher to be open, flexible, and socially conscious. We also consider the “labor of reflexivity” as defined through the mental and physical work that is reflexive thinking (Madison, 2011). This demands that students become transparent and accountable as researchers.

If we adapt Berry’s (2013) spinning metaphor about reflexivity, it means that we cannot go back to a space the same as when we arrived; we are always arriving with an altered sense of identity and reality. The consideration of a spinning reflexivity demonstrates the interactive and dynamic process of other and selves in the process of reflexivity. It allows us to consider research from multiple perspectives. Spinning reflexivity creates an opportunity for us to challenge our thought process and make room for alternate ways of interpretation; to move beyond previous knowledge and experiences.

Note

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Performing Leadership: John Cage's 4'33" Reprise

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ABSTRACT

This narrative article describes key moments of meaningful encounters and learning through performative inquiry as university students and their professor engage in creative play and inquiry. What emerges is an understanding of how leadership might be performed, by students, by teacher within the classroom, within our lives. The first performative inquiry experienced by the class and teacher occurs within the opening minutes of the first day of class. Learning arrives through creative engagement and reflection, as students engage in creating one-act plays. An understanding and practice of reciprocal leadership, as conceptualized and experienced by author and students through their work together, invites us to reimagine ourselves in relationship and action with each other. Who we are in leadership, and how we come to understand performative inquiry as an emergent journey of collaborative learning through embodied creative action, dialogue, and reflection, is the heart of our exploration.

An unidentified instructor sits in in the third row of chairs facing a podium on the first day of class, waiting for students to invite her into action. Students filter in, drop backpacks on the floor, and choose a chair facing the podium. Time passes. Two or three latecomers rush in, apologetic faces turn to relief as they note that no one stands at the podium. Throughout the room, a low volume of chatter rises in crescendo, pauses, then diminishes into uncertain silence as the wall clock is consulted, a soundscape that repeats like a sinusoidal curve. We wait, anticipating my arrival. Minutes pass.

Then slowly, oh so slowly, the instructor raises her hand. A scattering of arms immediately stretch upward like flagpoles; others are briefly raised then lowered, hands hanging like flags at half mast. Students cast anxious glances to those beside them, as if to see what others are doing. Conversation has ceased. Five, ten, fifteen minutes pass in silence.

This moment is a stop.

A stop, like a child's tug on our sleeve, is a moment that calls us to attention. Notice me, a voice whispers, *this moment matters*, even as the moment passes, ethereal, temporal. A stop is a moment embodied within action. How shall we listen? How shall we engage? Philosopher David Appelbaum (1995) recognizes the stop as *a moment of risk, a moment of opportunity, a caesura, a gap*:

The stop lives in the interstices of action. . . . it gives us a key to a deeper engagement in a meaning that unfolds our lives. For it offers a choice. Either to remain habit-bound or to regain freedom in one's approach to an endeavor. (p. 15)

The stop, explains Appelbaum, "is the advent of an intelligence of choice" (p. xi). A stop invites us to recognize moments of discomfort, or surprise, or uncertainty that call us to question the familiar or the unexpected as potential action sites of learning. As we inquire into the event, the encounter, the relationship, the action that has arrested us, we recognize an opportunity to interrogate our lives, our relationships, our choice of actions and responses, and, through individual reflection and/or collaborative dialogue, ponder on what else might be possible. The stop is a catalyst, an invitation, an embodied dare that through reflection opens us to new recognitions and ways of being in the world.

In this moment of arrest, here now in this classroom, where 35 students await instructions, seek clues, indicators of what to do, we are momentarily suspended. We have performed ourselves into a difficult position. I choose not to release them from this uncertainty, this discomfort. I wait for someone (anyone?) to take action. What will happen?

Twelve minutes and 43 seconds. My arm trembles, burns with the strain of being held aloft. Rustles of confusion, unease, curiosity, impatience, (fear?) circle the room of students caught in a performance they are struggling to understand. I listen to the emergent soundscape. Fourteen minutes and 56 seconds. I begin to panic. Will we remain frozen like statues in a tableau, unfortunate characters in a fairytale gone awry, until I am obliged by aching muscles to initiate action? Will no one perform us through

this moment? And then, a student in a chair behind me, asks, "Miss Fels, are we supposed to raise our hands?"

I teach theatre in education to university students, who with the odd exception are not enrolled in theatre, but rather in psychology, criminology, history, economics, education. (One semester, half of the wrestling team crossed the threshold of my studio). Many choose the course anticipating an entertaining escape from the rigorous demands of their academic studies. Others enter with fond memories of days in high school drama. The majority are looking for an easy A. The drama room is a place of fun, of creative exploration and engagement, an opportunity to explore relationships, issues, feelings, through the imaginary worlds created by role drama, play building, script writing. What they, and I, did not expect was that our work together would call us individually and collectively to reconsider how we embody leadership.

Released from the tension of my position, rubbing blood back into my hand, I applaud their perseverance.

"Congratulations! We've just beaten John Cage's performance 4'33" by 10 minutes and 49 seconds!"

I describe Cage's composition, 4'33" as I had experienced it: a motionless orchestra, the conductor's baton a single upbeat to introduce each movement. I explain that Cage's piece is a soundscape of ambient sounds in the room, primarily the audience's response—muted coughs, rustling of programs, anxious whispers, noise of bodies, nervously, impatiently, restlessly, shifting positions.

"I am curious about your response," I say to my students, as I stand at the podium. "What thoughts were you thinking as you sat there? Did you know the instructor was in the room? Why did you choose to do or respond as you did? Welcome to drama in education. This is our first performative inquiry."

And thus begins our first class, and our exploration into the learning that is possible through creative play, inquiry, collaborative dialogue, and reflection. What intrigued me was my students' response (or lack thereof) as they sat in rows of chairs before an empty podium, waiting for the professor to appear. Looking for the expected, my students failed to recognize an opportunity to take action beyond the dictates of a familiar script. They did not initiate a creative or resistant response. They wanted, as they informed me, to respond correctly, to receive direction, to not make a mistake, as evidenced in the student's query, "Miss Fels, are we *supposed* to raise our hands?"

When I asked how many knew that the instructor was in the room, only four had read my presence and performance as an instructor, notwithstanding my advanced age, lack of fashion, and raised hand. Are we, as educators tasked to prepare students for active citizenship in the larger community, unwittingly training our students to sleepwalk into their futures? Maxine Greene and Hannah Arendt would not be impressed.

Performative Inquiry as a Pedagogical Venture

The invitation of performative inquiry² is pedagogical, dialogical, and reflective, as we bring to our experiences in arts activities a reflective lens of curiosity: *What if? What happens? What matters? So what? Who cares?*³ As a researcher and educator, I am curious about how we perform and are performed by our environment, our relationships, by the professional and institutional contexts within which we perform, and in the ways how our habits of engagement and expectations of others limit or expand the possibilities of who we are and who we may yet become.

When our habits of pedagogical engagement are interrupted, we are called to attention, invited to investigate the institutional and relational scripts that we perform, the contextual and physical environments and practices through which we encounter each other in our everyday living. Such interruptions are not easily achieved in the environmental and institutional contexts within which we engage. When I offer my undergraduate students open-ended assignments, they interrupt to ask, *how many pages? What do you want? Is this right?* trained to perform to someone else's expectations and no longer able to create their own criteria of what matters. The wonder of Peter Brook's (1968) "empty space" that is the drama classroom within which we encounter our students is that we may create multiple possible worlds to explore, and in so doing, surface issues, relationships, ways of engaging that can be questioned, replayed, reflected upon, debated, explored, reimagined. There is, as I say to my students so often, no wrong or right answer, just possibilities within the limits of our imaginations and willingness to engage. Accept the possibilities that are yours to explore; notice and challenge dichotomies that define your understanding; be wide-awake. Just as we learn to engage through improvisation in the drama classroom, we also learn to improvise our lives within the enabling constraints of what is a co-created world of relationships, environments, and expectations, our own and others. Be willing, I tell them, to say yes, and ...

I seek to respond in my work to Hannah Arendt's question to educators: Do you love children enough so as to invite them into the world's renewal, not as you imagine it might be, but as they will come to create it? Thus I engage my students in performative inquiry so that they might learn to bring a critical, creative, and reflective lens of inquiry to the work we undertake together, that they may come to understand how we explore and play together may inform us about our lives, our relationships with others, our choices of action. We engage in role drama, playbuilding, improvisation, soundscape, and tableaux. Throughout the 13-week course, I encourage my students to attend to stop moments—moments that tug on their sleeve, moments that they experience in our work together that trouble, that illuminate, that call them to attention—through writing a series of reflective postcards, which have over time become a generative source for my own learning and understanding of my practice (Fels, 2015).

Awakening Leadership

*"Let's explore what just happened. Why did some of you raise your hands and then lower them? What were you thinking? How were you feeling? Who asked the question about what to do? You? Bravo! Why did you ask, 'are we **supposed** to raise our hands?' Whose script were you following when you walked into this room? What happens when the script is interrupted?"*

In our dialogue together, as they explained their actions, students shared stories that reflected a diversity of classroom management practices and student-teacher relationships. Many students were trained by teachers to raise their hand in parallel with a teacher's raised hand calling for silence. Others thought I was asking for their full attention, and were sitting patiently waiting for me to begin. Others had been schooled to wait in silence until their instructor spoke first. A few thought I was angry, which dismayed me. *Oh, oh! Here is a stop moment! How might I creatively explore practices of disruption and resistance within a space action of pedagogical responsibility, care and reciprocal respect? A tension that haunts every pedagogical encounter of interruption, within and outside of the drama classroom.* No one wondered if I was asking a question, nor chose, in a playful moment of recognition, to leap to his or her feet and to pretend to be a professor acknowledging my raised hand. Even though my students had entered a drama education classroom, no one recognized that I had arranged the seating and podium in a way to indicate that they were entering a performance space, one of play and improvisation. The script, our course outline, had not yet been introduced, and so they relied on their experience: the expected script of a university

classroom. Like Cage's audience, they anxiously, nervously, impatiently, restlessly, waited for the lecture to begin, not realizing that they were within that space-moment simultaneously performers and performance.

I was troubled by this experience, by the willingness of students to literally sit waiting, while I sat with my hand in the air for such an unimaginable length of time. The absence of leadership in action was disconcerting. Research indicates that leadership programs with arts-based practices positively affect leadership effectiveness (Romanowska et al., 2011), yet arts-infused practices have not yet been significantly implemented in the pedagogy of university classrooms. My students, who come from across the campus, are hungry for engagement, for speaking to what matters to them, for relevance in activities that have an impact on their educational and everyday lives. How might we create opportunities for students to actively interrogate their lives or imagine their worlds anew? As educators, how might we engage students in meaningful experiences of collaborative learning, reciprocal leadership, and reflective practice? How might we prepare them for lifelong learning, successful employment, and meaningful engagement in the worlds that they will co-create? What I've learned through our creative work together is that my students will, if challenged, develop an understanding and practice of reciprocal leadership and collective engagement that is creative, collaborative, embodied, critically and thoughtfully aware, and inclusive.

Calling Forth a Leader

Creative activities in the classroom require students to be willing to work together, to collectively share ideas, negotiate, and attend to feelings. As the instructor, I never know how much to intervene, when to leap in to resolve conflict, and when to let individual groups learn how to navigate their way through contentious issues. Often, I find, the group that encounters the greatest conflict—if its group members succeed in working through their creative and individual tensions—is rewarded with a performance that its members can be proud of and celebrate. Learning dwells within the journey of creating, navigating, collaborating, problem solving, and decision making. The learning is embodied not only when seeing one's creative ideas being enacted, but also when learning how to surrender, so that something new might arise.

Three weeks into the course, students are creating scenes on an issue that we have collectively chosen. I circulate around the room, eavesdropping as the individual groups brainstorm.

"Hey, listen! I've got a great idea!" His group members nod vigorously, a couple less so enthusiastically, as he outlines his idea of the scene and assigns roles. Collaborative engagement and dialogue is limited as this student brings his concept of the scene to action. It's a pattern that is common in student group work, noticeably so with this particular student, that one student will dominate, and others will acquiesce to his or her particular creative vision. Thirty minutes later, they perform as he has instructed them to applause. After class, I call him aside.

"Listen, you and I know that you have great ideas. Each time you participate in a group activity, the group adopts your idea. And inevitably, whatever you do is a success."

"So what's the problem?"

"Well," I hedge, "No one else has a chance to see their ideas in action. What if you took on the role of a facilitator, and encouraged the other members of your group to make suggestions? See what happens?"

He shrugs dubiously. I too am uncertain. This is the first time, in all my years of teaching, that I have chosen to interrupt a group's dynamic and asked a dominant leader to consider a new way to engage. Everyone appreciates a leader who has ideas, who motivates a group into action, who gets the work done in a timely way, unless one feels unheard, or only one perspective is being constantly considered. However, in any creative endeavour, engaging in multiple ideas, trying out different dialogue, inviting disruptions, scaffolding one idea onto another, throwing out everything planned and starting again, although challenging, often results in creative work that dwells outside the lines of initial expectations, often surprising creators and those who receive the work. And through such a dialogical consultative engagement, everyone has an opportunity to see his or her creative ideas breathed into collective action.

"I'll try," he says.

A couple of classes later, I wander over to his group, a group composed of students from different cultural backgrounds and life experiences, each with different degrees of willingness to participate and/or to engage in anything that might seem risky. I listen in, as they struggle to come up with ideas for the latest activity that I've asked everyone to create, a scene that involves a suitcase and someone going on a journey. I call over the student with whom I'd talked about creating opportunities for his group members to participate in brainstorming.

“So how’s it going?”

“It’s really hard, trying to get my group to come up with ideas,” he complains. “They keep waiting for me to make suggestions.”

“You’ve trained everyone to let you do all the creative work. Everyone knows you will take the lead if they let you. They have to learn to be responsible too. Maybe they are afraid to make suggestions? Maybe they’re out of their comfort zone doing drama? How might you invite them into the conversation?”

My suggestions have pedagogical intent. He doesn’t know that I’m hoping he’ll learn a different kind of leadership, how to create *with* his group, how to invite and scaffold ideas into a collaborative performance for which all can share ownership. He doesn’t know that I’m hoping he will learn through facilitation to teach the others in his group to recognize that their ideas matter, that they have a responsibility to actively engage in this collaborative activity, that their presence matters. And he doesn’t know that I am learning alongside him, reimagining leadership as a responsibility of opening a welcoming space for others to play.

Action Through Play Creation

At the end of the second month, I divide the class randomly into theatre troupes of five or six students. Their task over the next three weeks is to create an original one-act play about an issue of concern to them. I tell them that on the last day of class we’ll have a world premiere of all of their one-act plays. As inspiration, I’ve offered them a line from Leonard Cohen’s (1993) poem Anthem, “...there is a crack in everything/that’s how the light gets in” (p. 373). Over the next three weeks, students create their imaginary worlds on issues that matter to them: loyalty, trust, friendship, family relationships, belonging, consumerism, technology, death, unplanned pregnancy, loneliness.

Before they begin working together to create their one-act play, each theatre troupe brainstorms what I call a code of rights and responsibilities, its own set of ground rules for participation. Each group comes up with a different set of priorities based on previous group work in our class and in other courses, and many of the suggestions echo the principles that I have been informally encouraging throughout the term. *Listen to everyone’s ideas. Be supportive. If someone is absent you have to contact the group. Everyone does his or her share. Be creative. Solve problems collaboratively. Have fun!!!*

Their code of rights and responsibilities becomes the template by which they govern how they engage together, how they evaluate their work, and in cases of dispute, a reminder of how they had agreed to collaborate. As the weeks unfold, a number of students come to recognize that they have to learn how to actively listen, how to negotiate, how to compromise, how to encourage, how to be present. Conflict resolution and collaborative responsibility are a hidden curriculum.

On the second to last week of classes, I put on the hat of director, and each theatre troupe runs through its play in the studio. The other troupes are in the hallway, empty classrooms, working on their plays, until their rehearsal time with me. Together we figure out lighting, blocking, tweak individual performances, and address any disconnects in their script that need resolution. During the rehearsal of one play, I am stopped in my tracks as the scenes unfold before me. The play is about a university student who travels to a foreign country to teach English. I wince as she encounters “the natives” and teaches them the “proper ways” of the “civilized world,” from correcting pronunciation to serving English tea—a colonialist vision that surprises me given the steady diet of post-colonialism, cultural appropriation, all the things that I would have thought they would have come across in their other classes, readings, media, relationships with others. It was as if the clock had turned back to another time. This imaginative world created by my students was a troubling world ... *How shall I respond?*

“I’m having trouble with the portrayal between the teacher and the people she is teaching.” The student I had pulled aside during the break sighs with relief. *(Is leadership what happens behind the scenes? Why am I afraid to perform my concerns to the whole group? Why single out this student? Another stop moment to query.)*

“I know, I know. It’s full of stereotypes.” Her troubled eyes reveal her own struggle with the group’s failure to recognize its script’s cultural biases and inappropriateness. *(It would be a great teaching moment—let them perform for the rest of the class, and use their play as a way to speak to all the things that are wrong. But to do so would embarrass and shame, this moment needs to be contained within the group of students.)*

“So how are we going to fix it? Do you want me to speak with your group?”

She shakes her head, “I’ll do it.”

Taking leadership in the week between rehearsal and performance, she engages her group in a thoughtful critique of what they had created. Together, they transform their

play into a rich exploration of the liminal space of inter-cultural meeting, and what we may learn from each other. While I could have taken the lead role, she was willing to embrace the challenge, and her group was willing to renegotiate what it had created in ways that offered a valuable lesson for us all. Leadership is taking ownership and responsibility of working through challenges to create anew. Behind the scenes, leadership is not easily monitored, nor witnessed, other than among those who are sharing the experience. I received glimpses through conversations with her post-performance, and also from the reflections written by her group, that spoke of the challenges of surrendering what had been created, and working together, to reimagine a new possible world of encounter and learning.

Throughout the course, what I call e-postcards arrived weekly from each student that shares his or her learning. As I begged them on the first day of class, "Please don't regurgitate everything that you did in class. Choose one stop moment, something that tugged on your sleeve, and reflect on why this moment mattered, what you learned and how it might apply to your everyday life." Reflecting on our drama activities together, identifying key learning moments that occurred during our creative activities, whether during group conversations or in writing, developed within my students a practice of noticing, reflection, and emergent awareness of their own learning in relationship with others. The postcards along with individual informal conversations during, before or after class, became a dialogical pedagogical space, as I responded to their concerns, their questions, their insights, their words shaping my own learning and understanding.

And curiously, another stop moment occurs during the writing of this article: I learn from my students what leadership is, through our conversations, our problem solving, through reading their postcards, through reflecting on my own stop moments that arise in my relationships with my students, in attending to the tugs on sleeves that awaken me.

Leadership, explains one student, is stepping back so that others might step forward to offer their ideas, skills, expertise, imagination. Leadership, writes another, is being a facilitator, and encouraging others to actively participate. Students write about how they valued another student's leadership in their group, or how they were learning to collaborate, to compromise, to integrate each other's ideas into their play. Several write about feeling more confident in offering their ideas. Others are surprised that despite being shy, and initially afraid to participate in the early performative activities, they amazed themselves by undertaking starring roles in their play. "I never thought I would be the lead actor!" says one to me on the last day of class.

They write that they learned that leadership is a shared responsibility: everyone has something to offer if we are willing to listen. But, complains one student, *the guy who had all the best ideas in our group is no longer participating. He keeps asking us what our ideas are!* Yes! I write excitedly in response. "He is learning how to facilitate. So what ideas do you have? What ideas or contributions have you offered to your group?"

I am learning how to understand and embody leadership through the insights and experiences of my students. Reciprocal leadership is willingness to share what matters to us in meaningful and creative ways within a co-created space of hospitality (Wardrop & Fels, 2015); to collaboratively welcome challenge, opportunities to explore beyond the script and known environments, to learn what we do not yet know; to witness, to listen, to be present, to offer guidance and patience to each other and ourselves.

A Journey Travelled

While I have been teaching a long time, it is only now, as I sit here typing, that I recognize the gift that this particular class has offered me, lessons that I seek daily to relive with my new students. I have learned to trust that others will learn to initiate responsible action, to step forward when I stumble. I have learned to enact a reciprocal leadership, which encourages student voice and agency, as students draw upon each other's experience, stories, expertise, leadership, and creativity. Acquiring a performative lens of inquiry as we engage in drama activities together encourages my students and I to creatively and critically reinvestigate our lives and the roles that we perform within and outside the classroom. Together, we explore how reciprocal leadership might be enacted, and how theatre in education may be a vehicle for asking the difficult question posed by poet scholar Carl Leggo (2008), "To what have I given my heart?"

Maxine Greene calls educators to wide-awakeness, to engage in our own learning with mindful awareness. She cites Thoreau: "To be awake is to be alive ... We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep" (as quoted by Greene, 1978, p. 42). To be wide-awake is to take responsibility for our actions, to attend to possible implications and consequences, to engage in reciprocal leadership through creative and critical collaboration, inquiry, reflection, and compassion. To be wide-awake is to be aware of the stops that tug on our sleeve,

to understand that stop moments are catalysts for new learning to be shared in communion with others, so that we might learn together. Hannah Arendt (1961) invites us to consider education as a meaningful endeavour that offers students experiences that will prepare them for action in the world. I would like to invite my students to reengage in their learning in new ways; my hope is that we might come to stop moments that will startle us awake, to learning that will, as poet scholar Rishma Dunlop requests, astonish us.⁴

“So, how did it go?” I ask my student during our final class, as the next group sets up the stage for its one-act play, after his group has performed.

“It felt good,” he says, “encouraging my group to work together, bringing in everyone’s ideas. They were so happy when their ideas ended up in our play. It made me feel proud.”

“I’m proud of you,” I tell him. “You became a leader, one who listens, who opens up spaces of opportunity for others.”

I hope in my writing, in my work with students, in my research to create dynamic learning spaces, where we may creatively and critically learn how to engage collaboratively and compassionately together to create something new, something meaningful, that those who so often learn in silence might feel welcome to come forward with their ideas; that their ideas would be embodied in collaboration and action with their fellow classmates; and that collectively we might reflect on what we learned, and why being mindfully awake to our learning matters. I seek in my teaching to enact Arendt’s natality so that my students might recognize themselves as active learners who have something of value to offer. Gordon (2001) best explains,

Natality stands for those moments in our lives when we take responsibility for ourselves in relation to others. In this way, natality initiates an active relation to the world. It signifies those moments in our lives (and there are many) in which we attempt to answer the question that Arendt argues is at the basis of all action and that is posed to every newcomer to the world: “Who are you?” (p. 21)

My students have taught me what leadership might be, and how to embody leadership. Investigating curriculum and ways of being in learning through performative inquiry encourages students to look at the scripts they perform in their own everyday lives, and to ask: *who is performing whom? For what purpose?* Learning how to engage with others through performative inquiry highlights the importance of attending to the

relationships, the language, the contextual and physical environments that perform us, so that we might learn to critically and creatively interrogate and accept wide-awake responsibility for our choices of action.

By being wide-awake and attentive to the tugs on the sleeve that stop us even as we leap forward in action, we may come to a reflective, responsible practice of relational engagement. Encouraging students to take thoughtful action and nurturing a willingness to respond with creative agency to those events which surprise or disrupt them—a solitary hand raised in the air, “like a wavin’ flag” (K’naan, 2009)—prepares young adults and ourselves to fully engage in our lives as active compassionate citizens.

Two years ago, I attended a performance of John Cage's 4'33". The audience present knew the history and intent of the composition. We dutifully sat as silently as we could during each movement, the pauses between filled with suppressed coughs and shifting bodies. We listened to each other listening. What would happen, I wondered, if I interrupt this expected performance, and slowly begin to raise my hand?

Notes

1. John Cage's 4'33" was first performed by pianist David Tudor on August 29, 1952, at Woodstock, New York.
2. For articles introducing performative inquiry, see Fels, 1998, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015.
3. My gratitude to Dr. Karen Meyer for these questions along with my son who piped up with the answer, “Who cares?” when Karen introduced his grade four class to scientific inquiry and shadows and asked what questions do scientists ask.
4. In conversation, date unknown. Dr. Dunlop, a noted poet and scholar, in reply to her students' questions about what she wanted for her assignments, would say that she wanted her students to astonish her.

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The Digital Shrine: Community-Engaged Art and Sharing of Memory With Seniors

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ABSTRACT

This narrative reflects on the artist's involvement in two separate community-engaged art projects: a public event created to memorialize the dead and a digital storytelling project at a Seniors Centre in North Vancouver, B.C. Through a personal arts-based inquiry into ritual and memory, the two projects merge and begin to inform the artist's work with seniors. The inquiry helps to deepen a sense of shared community and to define what a genuine community-engaged practice may be. This article inquires into why art matters in community-engaged work and how creative practice can create new structures of learning and deepen bonds within community.

Ry the end of October in Vancouver, British Columbia, the trees are showing their skeletal branches as the moody and unpredictable skies summon winds that blow in a new direction and rain falls unexpectedly. The warmth of early fall gives way to frost as the harvest moon brings with it a sense of the great turning. In Vancouver's Mountain View Cemetery, a celebration of candlelight and fire illuminates the growing darkness at *The Night for All Souls*. During the past decade, most years at this time I walk the enormity of this cemetery at dusk. Some years helping to light the shrines that are scattered throughout the space, other years to replace burnt-out candles or refresh flower garlands in order to make ready for the quiet groups of visitors who will come once darkness descends to visit this place.

This newly found tradition of tending shrines and memorials to the dead was initiated in the fall of 2005 after my father's death, when I was invited by friend and community-engaged artist Marina Szjarto to create a personal shrine to commemorate

his death. That first year my shrine was a simple cloth lantern with a picture of my father and a poem that flickered amongst many simple shrines illuminating the darkness at *The Night for All Souls*.

This was the first year of a new public event created by co-artistic directors Paula Jardine and Marina Szjarto. Small personal shrines are built collectively in workshops during the month of October by anyone who chooses to come and make them. These shrines, along with larger memorials created by artists, illuminate the darkness each night for a week. The public is invited to reflect, add to the shrines, or wander through the cemetery on a journey of reflection where music and memory fill the night. This community-engaged event was intended to help to create collective ways to celebrate and create memorials for the dead through their own work, through commissioning other artists to create memorials, and through the invitation to the public to create small shrines. *The Night for All Souls* is the current expression of Paula Jardine and Marina Szjarto's artistic collaborations creating celebration events that are public and contemporary expressions of ritual. Marina Szjarto and Paula Jardine's work has, over the course of their careers, explored the values associated with tradition and notions of continuity in ritual-based work.

Clarke Mackey (2010) theorizes the making of art by hand and in community as an extension of the development of a vernacular culture. The vernacular is that which was homemade, or homebred, and derived from the commons. Vernacular art, in Mackey's terms, resides outside of consumer culture and is not made to be bought or sold on the market. Mackey writes about the value of vernacular art, and the erosion of the homemade, local, participatory craft and ritual by standardized products fashioned by trained professionals that are then put up for sale.

At Mountainview Cemetery, the making and reconstituting of ritual and tradition through the making by hand of objects and the making with others in community-engaged settings is an expression of vernacular art. Creating rituals that ask for the community to care for the dead, and in the doing, re-invoke our collective recollections of the past, is an expression of our common need to memorialize and care for the dead. The hand of maker is seen in all of the aspects of work created in *The Night for All Souls*.

The activism around reconfiguring our responses to death and bringing death and dying back under the domain of the personal, creative, and familial and out of the hands of commercial institutions is thought of by Marina Szjarto and Paula Jardine as part of their work as artists. While traditions like these are enacted in cultures around

the world, what makes this work art for “social change” is the evocation of vernacular art in multicultural settings and in places where tradition is being re-invented and re-constituted.

The Arts Health and Seniors Digital Storytelling Project

In that first year of *The Night for All Souls*, when I made the simple lantern shrine as a way to commemorate the passing of my father, I had returned to my tenure as artist in residence in the Arts, Health, and Seniors Project. This project was composed of four sites of research where community-engaged artists worked with seniors on art projects in order to study the effects of creative practice and art making on the health and well-being of seniors. Vancouver Coastal Health, the City of Vancouver Parks Board Office of Art and Culture, and the University of British Columbia Faculty of Nursing formed a partnership to fund and support this project. Media educator Corin Browne and I were commissioned to create a digital storytelling project at the Silver Harbour Seniors Recreational Centre in North Vancouver as a part of this project. Corin Browne and I share a long history of media education projects primarily with youth. In the first year of our four-year residency, we were discovering the unique challenges of educating and mentoring seniors in the art of storytelling through digital technology in a community-engaged practice.

Some of the participants, those least elderly, while thrilled with their growing mastery over the difficult mediums, and excelling at learning editing programs, were reluctant to spend precious time at the computers sharing their newfound skills with others. The culture of sharing information and skills, which is so much a part of the digital culture of youth, was not replicated in this culture of older adults at Silver Harbour. Many of the participants did not want to engage with media at all and wanted others to engage entirely with the technology and not with each other. Very few wanted to learn camera and sound. With the challenges of this difficult medium, combined with the age of the participants, it was proving difficult to establish a creative inquiry they shared as a community. While the participants were individually pleasant and cooperative, it was proving challenging to develop a collaborative or collective view into what was of vital interest in their current lives. I viewed this form of creative inquiry as a critical part of my role as community-engaged artist, as I was responsible for working with the seniors on the development of story. I did not see my role simply as a teacher of technical skills, but rather as an agent who, through creating hospitable environments, attempts to co-create artistic work with community.

The challenges and experiences inherent in creative collaborative work, given the right facilitation, have the capacity to strengthen the bonds between the participants and the bonds within the communities they share.

Yet, during that first year at Silver Harbour, while all participants were understandably immersed in producing their own story, with a great deal of help from younger technical mentors, we struggled to find the collaborative and interactive environment of creativity that I had come to expect as a part of our work together. My engagement with the group was unfolding not as a convener of inquiry, but rather as a technical assistant. I was there, as they saw my role, to assist them in learning digital video production skills.

After the first year the question arising within my practice and with this group was: what did this room of people share? What mattered? The work of using story as a form of narrative inquiry into what had meaning or import in their current lives still pulsed under the surface of their excitement of learning as they scanned photos from the past, heard their own voice on a recording, and manipulated photos through editing programs. But as the story mentor, the question of what was “framing” this work at Silver Harbour persisted the entire first year. We were neither co-creating new meanings, nor challenging our perceptions of each other or the world we shared. There was a desire on the part of the seniors to “produce” a story with production values that reflected what they had seen in mainstream media. The experience of the seniors, especially for the women, in mastering forms of digital technology and computers, was empowering. But from my perspective we were still engaged in a recreational activity.

Part of the challenge was the medium itself. It was a virtual world we were introducing to the seniors. The philosopher Albert Borgmann (1992) viewed the virtual world as having, in many ways, the same characteristics as a game, bounded by surfaces, limitless possibilities, and protected by boundaries. It was not vernacular art. Seeing “the hand of the maker” was viewed by most as a sign of the amateur and a disruption to the values of glamour associated with digital video productions. Mastering a digital video editing program within this senior’s centre meant mastering the capacity to enhance and perfect past “pictures” of one’s self and one’s life.

The “real” world and its incumbent “worldliness” fraught with difficulties, was what Borgmann (1992) saw as a realm of “grace and misery” (p. 96). As the seniors hunched over their computers, re-creating their past, the “real” world was being replaced by the virtual world that, according to Borgmann, “is disposable, and discontinuous, and glamorous, and the sign of the perfect commodity” (p. 96). It was not vernacular

The Digital Shrine: Community-Engaged Art and Sharing of Memory With Seniors

art we were attempting to create here at Silver Harbour that first year, but rather something that was attempting to replicate what we were consuming all around us in mainstream media.

In the first year at Silver Harbour, the participants in the digital storytelling project were shaping new stories of past lives that attempted to be picture perfect. At the closing event of the program, the entire membership of the Silver Harbour Senior's Centre was invited to dress up and attend the "Oscars" where the participants in our group were given awards. Everyone enjoyed themselves. We all know the value of having fun and being recognized for one's work. Part of the joy of being challenged to create something is the how it is received, and the audience at Silver Harbour was gracious in its support. But despite the fun, this event, not unlike the attempts with the digital stories, was a replication of mass culture. In my role as artist within a community-engaged practice, at the end of this first year, I was still asking the question: what was the pedagogy embodied within the work? What learning emerged to remind us of what matters? And what, the reader might ask, do these questions have to do with *The Night for All Souls*?

The Community-Engaged Arts Practice

During this first year at Silver Harbour, I uncovered, buried away in a flowered cookie tin in the back of my bookcase, a collection of digital tapes that I had been avoiding. They were digital recordings I had made of the last moving images of my father alive. I started to work on these images of the past and created a short digital video with this material. I didn't know at the time why I was doing this. I taught myself a simple editing program and played with the images and the voice of my recently dead father, using the idea of memorial as a way to look at these living representations of him for the first time since my father's death. I titled it, *A Postcard to the Beloved*.

I start to think about using this short digital "postcard" as the material for a personal "digital shrine" at the next year's *Night for All Souls*. While working on this deeply personal and challenging work, I began to see the archival nature of this footage was in many ways similar in nature to the old photos some of the seniors at Silver Harbour were working with. In the second year of my residency I made the decision to extend the idea of making a digital video memorial into the community at Silver Harbour. What if we invited the seniors to produce a short digital "postcard" video to be part of a larger collective media installation for *The Night for All Souls*? Their digital stories seen as missives to a loved one, a beloved, who had passed away.

I presented the idea of the media installation as a digital shrine. The intentions behind creating something that is described as a shrine was a shift in the way of thinking about media within this setting. My idea would challenge all of us to think beyond the recreational possibilities for our work together. I wanted to challenge the group members to think about a new venue for seeing their work and to how each individual postcard becomes part of a larger collective installation.

The media installation becomes the shrine. A shrine is created and approached with an attitude of reverence or reflection. By taking our digital stories out of the screening medium of computers and out of traditional public screenings with an audience, and placing them in an outdoor installation at night in a cemetery with candles, built artifacts, and the “changeableness” of weather, we would be asking the observer to interact with the media and its subjectivity in a very different way. This thinking of the work would be a way to re-imagine and evoke a different attitude to our work in the digital or virtual realities that we were encountering at Silver Harbour. In Albert Borgmann’s (1992) thinking, I wanted to bring the glamorous commodious superficiality of digital media into the world of grace and heart, and lived experience.

When we asked the older adults at Silver Harbour if they would be willing to consider participating in this project, there was hesitation and some resistance. We decided we would work that fall creating individual digital postcards and decide afterwards about whether we wanted to take the work into a media art installation and public screening.

Creating the postcards in memory of a loved one changed the way in which we all worked together. People in the group started to share their feelings, the atmosphere in the room when we gathered each week to work together became quieter, and individual participants became less demanding in their need for attention. Something was shifting between the participants as first one, then another, chose to make pieces about people who had recently died and whom they were still grieving. Although it felt risky to ask the participants to consider death and dying in a Seniors Recreation Centre, as the weeks progressed the participants became more content with what they were trying to achieve with their own unique voices. It also changed how we viewed the work and for whom the work was being created. What happened that fall was a quiet deepening of their work individually, and a deepening of relationships with each other, as we shared the complexities of being alive and losing those we love. This was one of the outcomes of arts-based community engagement project that I had come to expect in working together. At Silver Harbour Seniors Centre, as we collectively began to see what we were producing together, we came to understand how the demands of creative work asks something from us. As difficult as the request was to ask

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seniors to contemplate and create a response to caring for the dead, their willingness to engage opened them to a new understanding of why the creative tensions art making can produce matters.

The group members that year persevered as they deepened their relationship to the stories they were creating. For one participant, the work changed a relationship with a sister in how they perceived a shared grandparent, for another it was the first time she could look at pictures of her mother and feel comforted. Many of these older adults chose to create a digital story about their grandparents. One started a piece as a memorial to the general idea of soldiers and then realized here was an opportunity to talk to something much closer, and created a memorial to a niece whom the family had yet to speak about and openly mourn. Collectively, we were producing meaning in the here and now. The creation of the digital shrine represented a pivotal moment in this community-engaged project for the seniors at Silver Harbour. And, after much discussion, they made a decision to include their digital postcards as a part of the collectively produced digital shrine in that year's *Night of All Souls*.

What became apparent to me over the course of the first two years at Silver Harbour may seem obvious to the reader. It was my personal creative and critical inquiry through creating memorials to my father in order to deal with his death that was fuelling my own arts-based inquiry. It was this creative inquiry that helped to determine the community-engaged art practice at Silver Harbour. This self-reflective art-based inquiry helps to fuel artists within community-engaged art projects and aid in their practice with community. Community-engaged art work is not ultimately about asking people to come together to make lanterns or produce digital stories, but rather about using these crafts or skills to facilitate creative inquiry within communities and people and to create meaning for ourselves together in the here and now. To make something that has not been made before, with each other and in support of each individual expression of that inquiry. The making of my father's memorial and my work at Silver Harbour were connected; I just didn't see it at the time.

As it turned out, the older adults at Silver Harbour used what they learned on how to express intimate expressions of memory through digital postcards in their next year's work on stories about the living. We needed the difficult challenge of working with our emotions and our grief in order to create meaningful exchanges. And in order to attend to the present, we needed to create an offering of remembrance to the past. This was not easy work, particularly in a Senior's Centre, where the loss of one's loved ones is all pervading and acute, but the rewards the community gained through this challenge have been worth it. As previously mentioned, many of the people in this group remain to this day working together and supporting one another as they age and tell stories.

The greater public offering by artists Paula Jardine and Marina Szjarto becomes a calling to remind us of our temporal presence, and that to recognize and celebrate those who have died is to celebrate our presence, our lives, here and now.



Fig. 1: Digital shrine – Mountain View Cemetery 2006 (photo by Patti Fraser)

For many years now at the end of October, we gather around. Another iteration of The Digital Shrine is projected into the dark night on the walls of Mountain View Cemetery's Hall of Celebration at *The Night for All Souls*. Lit by candles on the night of the event, we watch shadows of unknown strangers walk into the projections, and we are challenged into accepting that even the images of our beloved, no matter how intense our grief and longing, are like everything we know, ephemeral and ever changing. Composed of shadow and light, sounds echoing into the dark silence of the cemetery's night.

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Patti Fraser, PhD, was the 2013 recipient of the Vancouver Mayor's Art Award for Community Engagement. She is a founding member of the *Summer Visions Film Institute for Youth*. Her community-engaged work has been recognized as best practice in the Chee Mah Muk Aboriginal Education with the BCCDC, and with the Canadian Council for Refugees. She was an artist-in-residence with the Arts, Health, and Seniors Research Project. Her most recent work, *the 19th birthday party*, was created in collaboration with Vancouver Foundation's Youth and Homelessness Initiative and she holds post-doctoral position with Simon Fraser's University's *Art for Social Change Research Project*.



Transforming Environmental Awareness of Students Through the Arts and Place-Based Pedagogies

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ABSTRACT

Incorporating the Arts into immersive place-based education programs can increase connectivity with the environment and facilitate the development of socially responsible and pro-environmental learners. Increasingly, children and adolescents are alienated and detached from the natural world. Given this noticeable shift, educators working in the outdoor setting need to rethink their *modus operandi*. Past attempts to promote learner connection with the environment have centred upon short-term stays and risk-centric approaches that embrace high adrenaline activities. This is the antithesis of Touched By The Earth, a yearlong place-based enrichment program using multi-modal creative methods with young learners to delve into the impact of experiential learning and how the Arts promote a personal relationship with the environment.

The Context: Touched by the Earth as an Experiential Learning Program

Recent educational shifts towards a more conscious connection with nature through ecological ways of experiencing, thinking, and knowing, are called “ecopedagogies” (Gray & Birrell, 2015). “Touched By The Earth” (TBTE) is an Australian immersive place-based education enrichment program for Year 7 and 8 gifted and talented students, conducted over a school year. The TBTE Arts-based program was informed by the rich environmental, historical, and cultural heritage at Bundanon Trust and involved cross-curriculum studies in geography, history, and science. The nature of the research collaboration between Western

Sydney University's researchers and Bundanon Trust is to ascertain if learners connect to nature in new ways through the practice of art-making in a place-based approach.

The program offered students the chance to be involved with artists and scientists connected with Bundanon Trust's SITEWORKS and their artist-in-residence program. Dialogue of students with artists, scientists, historians, and Aboriginal elders on the site sought to broaden the students' creativity and provide immersion in the place as a creative stimulus for film, dance, poetry, writing, drawing, and music. The program also links with Living Landscapes and Landcare Australia, which involved students in the removal of invasive exotic plants such as fireweed and lantana in an ongoing land restoration project at Bundanon Trust (see Figure 1). The specific activities in the immersive program included overnight camp at Bundanon, kayaking on the Shoalhaven River, exploring, drawing, and photographing that culminated in an artist book, and the creation of group projects to reflect learning for public exhibition.



Fig. 1: Students as eco-warriors extracting noxious weeds

Providing Transformative Experiences During Precarious Times

Increasingly, pedagogues, and scientists recognize humanity's future rests on the degree to which we can live harmoniously with the natural world (Gray & Birrell, 2015; Selhub & Logan, 2012). Baba Dioum, a Senegalese naturalist and poet, encapsulates the need to focus on love and attachment in environmental advocacy when he states:

In the end, we will conserve only what we love.

We will love only what we understand.

We will understand only what we are taught.

- Baba Dioum (1968, cited in Norse, 1993, p. 193)

Despite our ever-declining exposure to the outdoors and dire projections for the ecological future of the planet, educators realize that nature-based experiences can assist students in developing lifelong skills and a sense of “well-being.” To this end, Quay (2015) believes that outdoor education is an imperative for post-school work and life capacities of learners. A strong push has begun to produce programs that balance the rational or scientific with the intuitive creative dimensions of education (Gruenewald, 2003a, 2003b). Educators in the field are now being challenged to rethink the epistemological foundations of education that not only eschew learners from the natural setting, but also fail to capitalize on the value that ecopedagogies offers teachers and learners. We believe that education requires not just increased awareness of our ecological reality, but also greater curiosity about and attachment to—perhaps even love for—the natural world (Birrell, Gray, & Preece, 2013; Gray & Birrell, 2013, 2015). How a student feels connected to nature is not considered in indoor settings, often through an emphasis of knowing over being (Quay, 2015). The affective and transformative relationship that students experienced and documented in the TBTE project exemplified the power of nature as a pedagogical tool, with one participant claiming:

It was so peaceful with the water lapping up against the banks.

When I was sitting on the beach like, I could feel the poetry pouring out of me and ... um ... my artwork ... I think I have drawn the best I have ever drawn in my whole life.

Our research questions include: *What does it mean to be “Touched by the Earth,” and how can the Arts amplify a personal relationship with the environment?* This paper will explore how a felt connection with the natural world may be amplified through the Arts and a place-based approach. We also consider how the concept of “love” may be an integral component, both in the short-term relationships of humans with their environment, as well as the longer term sustainability and ethical responsibility of the human species towards its home: planet Earth.

Methodology

A mixed methods research design incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data gathering. During the TBTE yearlong place-based program, the two researchers co-journeyed through the entire program with the participants and Bundanon educators. The qualitative data was collected from 19 students (10 males and 9 females) over six times (T1-T6) throughout the academic year. From T1-T6, data was obtained through interviews, quantitative instruments, photo-elicitation, student generated material such as artifacts, video, photos, and field observation. The schedule of activities and data collection points are indicated in Figure 2.

TEST POINT	MONTH	DATA COLLECTED	TYPE OF DATA
T1	February Pre-test (NR scale) collection at school	Classroom activity	
		Nature Relatedness Scale	Quantitative
		Photo-elicitation	Qualitative
T2	March Site visit 1	One day	Observation
T3	May Site visit 2	One day	Observation
T4	September Site visit 3	2 days and overnight camp	Observation
T5	November Site visit 4 Post-test (NRS scale) collection at school	3 days and 2 night camp	
		Nature Relatedness Scale	Quantitative
		Artifacts, Major works	Qualitative Data interview, film
T6	December Classroom visit	One classroom Debrief and reflections	Qualitative

Fig. 2: Program schedule and data collection points

Journeying through the property at different seasons of the year, the students learnt about bio-diverse ecosystems at various locations on the property. The interdisciplinary nature of the program allowed students to engage with the Shoalhaven River through a kayak expedition and overnight camp at Bundanon. Additionally, poetry and drawing activities culminated in students' production of an artist's book.

Because of the desire on the part of researchers to gauge whether there was any shift in students' relationships with the natural world, participants were surveyed at the beginning and end of the academic year as a pre- and post-test using the Nature Relatedness Scale (NRS) (Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2009). Preliminary data suggests greater connection as a result of participation in the program. Although useful, survey data did not explore significant concrete questions about how students *felt* about nature. Affective relationships emerged more through the richness of interviews at the end of the program where students expressed attachments and feelings for places. After the research project, the researchers also wondered to what degree emotional links to specific sites like Bundanon—or for the Earth itself in a broader sense—might manifest in students' artistic, creative responses before they articulated a connection or responded in a measurably different way to the survey instrument. In other words, were artistic endeavours driving a changed relationship, and if so, would that changed relationship be evidenced in their artwork before it showed in surveys or interviews?

Love, Attachment, and the Arts in Place-Based Pedagogies

You must love the crust of the Earth on which you dwell more than the sweet crust of any bread or cake; you must be able to extract nutriment out of a sand heap.

(Thoreau, 1858)

Thoreau's statement firmly places "love" at the heart of our relationship with planet Earth. If Thoreau is correct that we "must love" the Earth—can we design an outdoor curriculum that encourages a transformation of the affective relationship students have with nature? Statements from a student such as: *"the earth touched my heart and filled my soul ... I yearn for the land once more"* (13 year-old female TBTE participant) reiterate the strong bond between nature and learner as well as how nature can serve as a learning vehicle.

Renowned author Aldous Huxley (1946) posits: “We can only love what we know, and we can never know completely what we do not love. Love is a mode of knowledge” (p. 95). This maxim resonates deeply for a multitude of our daily behaviours, values, attitudes, and beliefs and, hence, the ways we act in the world. A strong affection, even a loving devotion, can provide powerful motivation to learn about, protect, and preserve the object of love. If the same holds true for pro-environmental attitudes, the affective transformation would necessarily be part of outdoor education. A pedagogy that can engender love of places or the environment in learners might transfer to a desire to protect those places.

An ever-growing body of significant research adds support to the argument that teaching outdoors in the natural environment promotes an appreciation and lifelong connectedness to nature (Chawla, 2007; Herbert, 2008; Hinds & Sparks, 2008; Louv, 2008; Sobel, 1996). The notion of “appreciation” suggests a more ambiguously affective relationship: one can intellectually “appreciate” something, but fall well short of the emotional intensity suggested by “love.” However, the historical criticism of anthropomorphism may discourage theorists from describing relationships with the environment in such strong terms.

Historically, adventure and outdoor educators have attempted to promote a human-nature connection primarily through risk-centric approaches incorporating adventure-fuelled and high-adrenaline activities. This high-risk, high-action approach has now been widely acknowledged as blinkered and myopic (Brymer, Downey, & Gray, 2009; Brymer & Gray, 2010; Mullins, 2011; 2014; Nicholls & Gray, 2009). This paper is part of a broader movement in outdoor and adventure education to examine how “slowing down” the educative process and listening to the land can be a valid approach to magnify human-nature relationships (Martin, 2005; Nicholls & Gray, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Nicholls, Gray, & Hoban, 2008; Payne & Wattchow, 2008). It is imperative that discussions are premised on our acknowledgement of contradictory positions in the field of outdoor and adventure education where sometimes humans are pitted against nature.

Our current educative processes necessarily dissuade pro-environmental behaviours in learners as the environmental conundrums of the 21st century are presented as statistically dire and beyond human repair (Gray & Birrell, 2015).

Nature Experiences as a Foundation for Environmental Advocacy

A direct causal relationship exists between pro-environmental activities and a personal link to the natural environment, especially that made in the early developmental years (Carson, 1956; Dunlap & Kellert, 2012; Gray, 2013; Kellert, 2012; Sobel, 1999). The affective and transformative qualities of outdoor education are somewhat sidelined to the dominant epistemic foundations of education that disregard how a sense of “being” and learner experiences in the classroom are crucial to the promise of education (Quay, 2015). Moreover, a child’s disconnection and alienation from nature is a valid concern for 21st century educators struggling to combat issues of unsustainable resource use and environmental degradation (Birrell et al., 2013; Gray & Martin, 2012; Kahn & Kellert, 2002; Louv, 2008; Orr, 2002, 2004). All indicators suggest that we as educators are working with children who have experienced a denaturalized childhood (Gray, 2012, 2013; Kellert, 2012; Lloyd & Gray, 2014; Louv, 2008). The isolation begs the question of how we get children to love something they do not know first hand and, more importantly, how do we redress the imbalance. At the heart of this process is a personal dynamic Sobel (1996) observed: “What’s important is that children have an opportunity to bond with the natural world, to learn to love it and feel comfortable in it, before being asked to heal its wounds” (p. 10).

Seminal work in the field of social psychology by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) argued that knowledge alone is not a precursor to behaviour change. Along the same train of thought, educators in the outdoor and environmental field have consistently argued that knowledge and cognition alone are not enough to produce pro-environmental behaviours in children (Cheng & Monroe, 2012; Cornell, 1998; Herbert, 2008; Martin, 2005). Our nature-estranged lifestyle may have a direct causal relationship to our lack of love and connection to the Earth and our treatment of the natural world as if it is a dispensable luxury. This disconnect from the natural world is somewhat derived from the performance-centred culture in schools that does not view nature-infused learning as the vehicle to help students achieve (Quay, 2015). Such self-realization of the value to be found within the environment was aesthetically put in one 14 year-old girl’s poem in the TBTE program, likening her outdoor experience to that of utopia:

*Forgotten amongst
The looming giants;
Creating shadows,
Which consume
Her soul,
Binding her.*

*Whatever happened to Utopia?
To living at peace
With minds at ease*

*Instead we were
Confined to
Prisons of four walls
And calendars
And clocks
Tick-tock-tick-tock
Too fast
Too fast*

Similarly, the disconnect with the four walls was iterated in a student reflection of the TBTE that paralleled this notion: “people have been saying how in school we are limited to four walls and there is nowhere near as much inspiration—the kind of charts by time limits and expectations—everything (at school) is going a hundred kilometres an hour.” To slow down the educative process and listen to the land would be a requirement to avoid the constraints of indoor settings and feel “free,” as one boy observed: “you don’t have a time limit, so you are not rushing; so all your ideas just come to you, they are flowing.” There is realization of the affective powers of nature and the current predicament whereby traditional instruction is seen as increasingly outdated. Although nature-infused learning experiences appear to offer substantial benefits for students, Selhub and Logan (2012) reported that in the hypermediated world of screens, our sense of stewardship towards the environment is diminished as we view the natural world as increasingly primitive.

Two of the most respected researchers in the field of environmental education, Kellert (2002) and Orr (2004), uphold the belief that simply having a cognitive understanding of environmental issues may have little influence upon behaviour. Herbert (2008) also finds that, “simply knowing about environmental issues has little impact upon behaviour” (p. 63). Collectively, the research suggests that education

does not simply confront a knowledge problem, but also an affective challenge at the same time. The gap between environmental knowledge and pro-environmental behaviour has been well documented, for example by Ellsworth (2013), Gray and Birrell (2013), and Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002). Quite clearly, a purely intellectual understanding of environmental degradation is not enough to inspire action or behaviour change (Milton, 2002; Pooley & O'Connor, 2000). Our current teaching and learning practices dissuade the acquisition of pro-environmental attitudes as it is presented as something statistically dire that cannot be fixed (Gray & Birrell, 2015). Along these lines, Orr (1993) claims that a necessary precursor to environmental stewardship is deep love and affection for our planet. Without such a relationship, pro-environmental behaviour and the sustained impacts of outdoor and adventure education may not be realized.

The Emotions and Learning

Despite being neglected in the research, the affective domain has increasingly been shown to be crucial in all aspects of learning (Arnold, 2005; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Hinds & Sparks, 2008; LeDoux, 1992, 1997, 2003; Stern, 1985). The manner in which the affective domain is incorporated into the classroom environment has a direct correlation with student engagement and indelible learning (Hinds & Sparks, 2008; Kellert, 2002). Arnold (2005), in an Australian context, has designated a field of pedagogy called “empathic education” where emotional literacy is privileged in the same way that cognition has been to date in educational systems. Students can be taught to understand and express their own emotions and empathize with others, building love and trust in the classroom. A range of research shows that emotions such as surprise, anger, joy, distress, love, intrigue, fear, attachment, contempt, disgust, passion, interest, and shame need to be activated in order to initiate lifelong learning and behaviour change (Kudryavtsev, Stedman & Krasny, 2011; Liefänder, Fröhlich, Bogner, & Schultz, 2012; Perkins, 2010). Of course, to “activate” may be easier said than done. Surely, the development of empathy and forging ties with animals (or plants, for that matter) continues as a lifelong habit, rather than merely designated between the ages of four and seven. A strictly staged pedagogy would also seem to suggest that affective development occurs in a predictable and stepwise fashion, a suggestion that we think is questionable.

The Arts as a Catalyst for Transformation

Since humans first put pigment on cave walls, nature has inspired artists of all types as both the wellspring and focus of our creativity. More recently, environmental activism has stimulated the Arts across the globe, for instance Björk in Iceland, Robert Bateman in Canada, Ansell Adams in the US, Andy Goldsworthy in the UK, and Arthur Boyd in Australia. Arthur Boyd, for example, painted a series of artworks that expressed his pain over the threat and damage to his beloved Shoalhaven River. This series of works was one way among many that he engaged in Arts-based environmental activism. When you ask people what they like to do in their spare time, “virtually everyone will identify an activity connected with the Arts, the body, or the natural world” (Upitis, 2011, p. 1). Based upon these other research results, TBTE sought to demonstrate that the Arts, embodied learning, and artistic engagement with the natural world could be integral components of outdoor programs, especially to promote affective ties to nature. Embodied learning, love, affinity, compassion, and well-being are recurrent themes in relation to environmental education within contemporary research (Gray & Birrell, 2013). Because nature-infused learning experiences evoke powerful emotions, the Arts are a powerful tool for engaging students in cross-curriculum learning (Jacobson, McDuff, & Monroe, 2007).

Findings: The Design Elements of “Touched by the Earth” Program

The delivery of outdoor and adventure education programs has tended to focus on the physicality of the outdoor experience as a way to engender environment appreciation (Nicholls et al., 2008). A subtler interdisciplinary approach, such as that advocated by Nicholls and Gray (2008a, 2008b, 2009), characterizes TBTE. It is worth teasing out some of the components of the TBTE program in order to shed light on the relationship between nature and learner.

Immersion Program

The yearlong program encapsulated elements of embodied ecopedagogical learning (Green, 2012). A multi-sensory, immersive program that literally “touched the Earth” is part of experiential learning in the outdoors: hands flowing in water from kayaks that had no specific time imperative, hence, leaving those hands to explore

their surroundings at will; a water dragon plucked from the stream for several minutes of gentle stroking by wary fingers; forceful hands jerking lantana clinging obdurately to the soil; and feet treading warily on rough ground when a student's eyes were blindfolded and her arms held by another sighted student. Smells, sights, and sounds were ingested by each student and then expressed through a variety of artistic modalities (Jones, 2013). The in-depth experience of the way bodies are themselves touching the Earth is no one-way directional field, but more a reciprocity of self and world.

Any objective account of outcomes might miss the deep affection that developed between one student and wombats, a continuing source of fascination at Bundanon for many urban youths. In fact, the students developed a profound appreciation, gratitude, and even love for the founder of this property. The researchers were intrigued by the joy, energy, and sheer enthusiasm of a group of students who, in the soaring heat of the Australian summer, threw themselves wholeheartedly into digging out invasive fireweed and lantana. Although the official outcomes of the research project, such as the inspiring outdoors program enriched through the Arts and artists by Bundanon Trust Education programs, were remarkable, the researchers were even more impressed by the emotional reactions of students to their environment.

The TBTE boys' video—devised, made, and filmed by students (<http://youtu.be/hxGtMajUpLc>) provided images of vital bodies moving in places: jumping, risking, diving, digging wombat holes, flying through the air. In most modern outdoor education discourses, traditional classroom instruction is seen as the antithesis of holistic and transformative education. Countless participant self-reported claims about the impact of outdoor education over the years have shown that learners perceive the outdoor setting to be “free” from the constraints of the indoor, as emphasized in one of many anonymous TBTE comments:

Tweet, Chirp, Squawk!
I look up and see a flock of birds flying over happily,
They are truly alive,
No rules to weigh down their flight,
Life lived the way they want it ...
Why can't that be me ...?

Embedding an Arts-Based Approach

In TBTE, students recorded and expressed their observations and understandings in a myriad of ways: writing poetry, drawing, painting, performing dance, music, and digital film-making in order to broaden their own creativity through a multi-modal Arts-based approach (See Figures 3 and 4).



Fig. 3: Multi-sensory immersion activities



Fig. 4: Artefacts produced by students

The 2012 class was the Gifted and Talented class from a local high school. The program, devised and taught by the school, gave no specific emphasis to art or artistic responses. TBTE was viewed as an “enrichment” program by the school and by Bundanon Trust. Nonetheless, the way students had their creative selves activated may have been far more than what was envisaged in an enrichment program.

Take for instance, one student's awakening to creative potential: *"The connection between Earth and Art was triggered in me when I was painting. The brush strokes of the leaves and wind truly showed the beautiful aspect of the Earth."*

Similarly, another student wrote: *"We all have an artistic side and that is uncovered when we become closer to Earth."*

A sense of "aliveness through active engagement in creative activities" (Frauenfelder, 2011 p. 194) motivated further student learning and deeper engagement in the site. A young female student seemed to contain a real sense of this "aliveness": *"Art connected me to the Earth by making me notice things I wouldn't have noticed and also makes me appreciate the beauty of the Earth."*

So the impact of art activities on connecting students to the natural world through TBTE seems to support research that asserts that the Arts leverage deep engagement and links with the natural environment (see Figure 5).



Fig. 5: "Dialogue" with the Shoalhaven River through drawing, poetry, and so forth in an artist book creation following kayaking on the river and poet-in-residence recital

Just as the students mentioned being "connected to the Earth" and becoming "closer to the Earth," another shared about the usefulness of creative work: *"I think the art was important to express feelings and thoughts about the Earth."*

However, these comments are quite general and do not reveal exactly what is being meant by being "close to the Earth," let alone how this affect actually arose throughout the yearlong program. The comments might be more indicative of researcher emphasis

in designing interview questions, rather than a response by students. The very fact that the type of comments was included at all in the interviews, as stated earlier, took the researchers into an unanticipated way of understanding the data and making adjustments to the next iteration of TBTE. The students made us think about love and loving relationships because of what they had to say. Strong affects emerged as a thread throughout all the data as something of a surprise to the researchers.

Nature-Infused Learning Through Place Pedagogy

The importance of understanding, nurturing, and developing “place” relationships were the underlying imperative to this program. Somerville, Davis, Power, Gannon, and de Carteret (2011) state that we can understand and know ourselves differently by

...focusing not on one’s individualized self, whose identity is constructed in its separation from others and from place, but on oneself in relation to those others, including human, non-human and Earth others, who make up the places we live in. (p. 1)

The Arts can be incorporated into the design of outdoor education settings and serve to not only emphasize the holistic qualities of teaching and learning potential that can be extracted through ecopedagogies, but also seek out the best of both epistemological and ontological worlds of education (Quay, 2015). Such an idea was reported by one 14-year old student who claimed that:

The earth and nature give us so much artistic energy.

So much that it is pouring through our veins and sometimes leaks out onto paper or through our mouths or takes control of our body... Bundanon, the earth, has been my safe haven.

Dancing by the river with only the gentle breezes and birds chirping as music that is to me like heaven ...

I definitely feel as if I have been touched by the earth ...

The place-based learning model proposed by Sanger (1997) is a three-pronged model similar to the TBTE experience with the aim of building connections, building community, and using narrative. “Building connections” is an experiential, interdisciplinary approach to learning that develops students’ skills, confidence, and understanding of the value of their place. “Building community” entails using cooperative learning strategies to involve all members of a place in the process of education. And “using narratives” means listening and learning from stories of the community members and the land and the ways in which they are intertwined.

In the case of these TBTE Gifted and Talented students, the place (Bundanon) is local to their town (Nowra). The Shoalhaven River that so sharply defines the town and adjoins their high school (Bomaderry High) is the same river that flows through the Bundanon Trust properties. The river emerged through the data with a dominant role in the imaginary of many students. One remarked: *"I felt connected to the river and even though I am not an artist I felt compelled to draw."* Such statements reinforce the need for ecopedagogies to become a major consideration in traditional classrooms and curriculum. If nature-infused learning experiences can compel learners to undertake activities in the Arts, then surely such techniques are worth considerations in education.

With the benefit of researcher hindsight, it would have been productive to enquire initially into the pre-existing relationship of participants with their local river and more generally, their immediate environment. This preliminary inquiry may have revealed affective relationships with the river as well as other local knowledge. What emerged from interviews was the profound connection with the river, told through narratives, artworks, and performance.

TBTE involved more time being spent by students in the outdoors. The land itself is maintained as a working farm, although much of the property has become degraded due to weed infestation. This aspect of the place, besides the times spent in natural bush areas, seemed to trigger a strong response of caring and responsibility in students:

*"During the year long program ... I felt like my connection with nature has thrived
The whole experience has taught me how to work in conjunction with nature
and how we co-exist."*

*"It has given me a better idea of how we should preserve our beautiful land.
Without this land, I wouldn't have found my passion for nature. I love it!"*

The study revealed that ecopedagogies which incorporate the Arts into their school curriculum, and recognize affective transformation, are a powerful vehicle for personal enrichment and build a bridge between classrooms and deep connections with the Earth. Such enrichment denoted the impact that outdoor and adventure education had on learners as well as their renewed perceptions of nature:

*As I sit on the hill and look up to the sky,
I see the bright sunshine smiling by.
I watch the ocean sparkling like a pearl,
When the waves splash, slide, and swirl.*

*As the birds start to chirp and tweet
The animals move and dance to the beat
Winds entertain me with their breathtaking story
Telling me of adventures and sometimes of glory
And, similarly:*

*This is nature this is earth
This is the mother who gave us birth.
We are different but we are one,
Living together under the sun.*

The Dialogic Dimension: Dialogue With the Natural World and Dialogue With Artists, Scientists, and Poets

We felt that dialogue was integral to the experience of the TBTE program; however, because the impact is difficult to assess or measure, dialogical pedagogy is put forward here as a working hypothesis. Val Plumwood (2000, 2003) has categorically argued that dialogue is critical to place attachment, and Birrell (2007), Cameron (2003), and Cameron and San Roque (2003) have all used the notion of dialogue on Australian soil and through Indigenous contact. Birrell's research speaks of "an intimacy of place" acquired through a range of art modalities in response to places and Aboriginal cultural knowledge. Those art modalities dialogue with each other to create deeper layers of connectedness or intimacy:

What begins as a brief encounter, the first rudimentary beginnings of a relationship, then proceeds to develop into a deeper relationship, characterised by increased levels of intimacy...I do consciously continue to develop this relationship, to keep it alive and active and vibrant by continuing the dialogue begun in place. I feel I know that place and feel known by it. (Birrell, 2007, p. 288)

In most cases, relationships require time to develop into a deeper knowing of that other person—so too with places. Even further time is required to know some person or place intimately. Birrell (2007) speaks of dialogue as the means to establish intimacy. Had TBTE been a one-off program, intimacy with Bundanon would probably not have arisen. The students in this program enjoined various art modalities. Although the educators may not have been referred to dialogue explicitly, over time, the recurring encounters became "a dialogue begun in place."

Of course, students were constantly interacting with each other throughout the yearlong program, both at school and on the Bundanon properties, either through words or through exchanging the artwork they produced. On another level, a design element was incorporated into the program through conversations and workshops with scientists, writers, artists, and poets who were on site as part of Bundanon Trust's programs for artists and performers in residence, with many outcomes seen in comments such as, "we all have an artistic side and that is uncovered when we become closer to the Earth." This design element extended the vision of potential creative outlets through which students could express a sense of place. The direct contact with professional artists and scientists, who addressed the students as serious scholars and artists, may have also contributed to the effectiveness of TBTE. For example, students were taken deeply into the research methods of wombat expert Dr. Phil Borchard; a poet read her river poems to the students on the banks of that same river, pointing out her inspiration and techniques before students wrote their own poems; two travelling artists from Melbourne who had cycled to Sydney showed the students what their diaries were like, the artworks they produced, and set up conversations around the nature of the artistic process. All of these dialogues opened up new worlds of imaginative possibility and suggested different ways to express oneself in relation to a place.

In a similar vein, students reported that the creation of group projects to reflect their learning at Bundanon Trust was experienced in immersive and entertaining ways: "so we made a video on just being in nature and having fun—a few stunts and things we made a montage, we edited all the videos together and put titles and music to it." Such an experience reiterates the need for educators to rethink their *modus operandi* and consider ecopedagogies as a sound tool for teaching and learning in the 21st century.

Conclusion: Incorporating the Arts Into Ecopedagogies

Incorporating the Arts with ecopedagogies was a fundamental educational choice for TBTE, which produced unexpected results, especially in the affective domain. The preliminary analysis of the TBTE data suggests that love and connection with the Earth are central to promoting deep engagement and indelible learning. Immersion programs such as this pilot project are instrumental in fostering a closer connectedness of students with the natural world through an Arts-based approach.

An outdoor classroom that is student-centred encouraged stronger personal creativity and enhanced group cohesion and a sense of stewardship over the land, which is exactly the vision of the Boyd-Bundanon legacy. This view is conveyed in one student's voice and shows the impact of ecopedagogies on the perception of nature and the world for learners: *"Art connects the Earth because Earth is a work of art. It is beautiful and inspiring. Everything on Earth itself is art."*

Any of the student responses to the TBTE program emphasized that it was a valuable component in their development as pro-environmental and nature learners. This article examined different approaches to facilitating the relationship between art and nature as a model of place-based education underscored by an "ethically responsible pedagogy" which is dynamic, opportunistic, and relational (Sellar, 2009, p. 351 as cited in Somerville et al., 2011, p. 3). Further, we hope this paper has prompted outdoor and adventure educators to rethink long-held assumptions about the design of outdoor programs.

In the final analysis, students were unashamedly "Touched by The Earth" in ways rarely before witnessed by either researcher in previously implemented "traditional" risk-centric outdoor activities. Scottish Environmental Artist, Andy Goldsworthy, encapsulates our sense of hope in relation to a focus on connecting children to nature through Arts-based programs when he states:

We often forget that WE ARE NATURE.
Nature is not something separate from us.
So when we say that we have lost our connection to nature,
we've lost our connection to ourselves.
~ Andy Goldsworthy

During the multi-sensory immersion program, students studied the world of the wombat, photographed a feather-tailed glider at night in the natural amphitheater and made damper, a traditional Australian soda bread, around the campfire. They had the opportunity to explore the artistic heritage of the site, draw, kayak the river, and pull noxious weeds from the property. The final residential visit enabled students to develop an individual creative project (see Figures 3 and 4) as a public art exhibition or performance based on their year's experience and responses to their engagement with nature, the artists, and the setting.

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Tonia Gray's 30-year teaching career has been devoted to the benefits of outdoor learning for humanity. As a multi award-winning pedagogue, in 2014, she received a prestigious Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) *Australian Award for University Teaching for Excellence* in outdoor experiential education. The nexus of Tonia's research and teaching explores human-nature relationships and their impact on well-being and personal development. She is a Senior Researcher in the Centre for Educational Research at Western Sydney University, and Tonia's research spans a wide cross-section of nature infused teaching and learning initiatives.



Cameron Thomson is a pre-service English educator who is interested in the impacts and benefits of nature-infused learning experiences for secondary learners. Cameron is interested in how outdoor stays can help produce innovative indoor pedagogies and is currently working in settings incorporating elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 8-WAY learning methods in the outdoors to make cultural teaching and learning more transformative.



Artful Inquiry in the E-learning Journal

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ABSTRACT

E-learning is transforming the learning landscape. This paper focuses on photomedia participatory inquiry in an e-feed learning culture. It harnesses the benefits of artful inquiry and elaborates on interactive reflective opportunities when using participatory research methods. Student e-learning journal examples and the teacher reflective voice demonstrate how artful inquiry accommodates critical and reflective actions for new creative outcomes. The methods described and analyzed may have relevance to educators considering applying multi-semiotic learning approaches within e-learning journals as digital platforms become central to digital learning and communication of ideas.

Embracing Change

As the learning landscape shifts to accommodate social media, educators must embrace this change. In all learning that seeks creative and adaptive thinking as a learning outcome, the potential benefits of e-learning and how it can facilitate creative engagement across existing and new learning platforms is critical. This paper focuses on an example of a photomedia participatory e-feed learning culture in a first-year tertiary photomedia course. The course harnesses the benefits of artful inquiry within an e-learning environment while accessing the benefits of the traditional art studio learning (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007). It elaborates on the rationale of the pedagogical design and ways the photomedia teacher has designed interactive reflective and creative opportunities for the students. It assesses and reflects on the affordances of artful inquiry approaches applied through participatory research methods. It uses student e-learning journal examples and the

teacher reflective voice to demonstrate how artful inquiry, in the e-learning context, is applied in order to accommodate the critical and reflective actions of both the student and teacher as they observe, reflect, dialogue, and interpret their learning actions for new creative outcomes. The methods described and analyzed may have relevance to educators who are considering the benefits of 21st century digital literacies and multi-semiotic learning approaches, particularly when using e-learning journals as reflective and creative learning sites and for the communication of self-learning and new ideas to others.

Background: New Media and Photomedia Curriculum Design

Curriculum design and its practices have entered a new paradigm shift based on the assumption that new digital technologies, or multimodal devices, are now our social reality and shape learning in new participatory ways (Grushka, Donnelly, & Clement, 2014). The shift in curriculum design acknowledges the complexity and range of emergent new semiotic communicative practices that carry fluid, co-constructed, and mobile characteristics. As authentic learning, it must respond to the learning preferences of individual students and the new extra-linguistic field of semiotics or edusemiotics (Danesi, 2010). This field includes, “sign signification, such as aesthetic products, visual communication, new media, advertising, narratives, material culture, film and gaming or other performance based acts such as dance, body movement or drama, anything that is underpinned by sign based activity” (Grushka, Donnelly, & Clement, 2014, p. 363). Students now seek to access knowledge and to represent it across these different modes and media. Teachers will now have to consider the affordances of these new modes in their students’ learning and develop practices that allow them to access their new digital literacy skills and the ever-increasing possibilities opening up in these new digital learning cultures.

This shift in curriculum thinking corresponds to the call for learner-centered pedagogies that are greater than the application of a new technology and offer students greater levels of agency, social connectedness, and autonomy. They embed the creative opportunities that are intuitively present for students who work across semiotic systems (Mishra & Yadav, 2013) and provide innovative learning opportunities through participation, collaboration, and/or production (Lloyd, 2013). They are pedagogies that can focus on creative inquiry and performance; learner-designed learning; inductive and creative modes of reasoning and collaborative problem solving through the iterative

stages of inquiry, analysis, production, and presentation. Photomedia curriculum and the teaching and researching of student learning in photomedia education for the digital and mobile generation encounters these challenges (Jones, 2010). Images are now ubiquitous for the digital generation. This poses a dilemma for photography educators seeking more considered visual, aesthetic, and reflective dispositions from their students (McLoughlin & Lee, 2008).

Artful Methods

Artful methods acknowledge that learning is based (Dewey, 1938), embodied (Jevic & Springgay, 2008), and draws on memory work, our self-reflective capacities, and our adaptive or creative brains. Artful inquiry as a pedagogical method accommodates feelings and memories and the active role they play in each individual's perceptions of phenomena and learning. Artful inquiry echoes the work of neuroscience in acknowledging that human knowledge emerges from different sensory experiences—and that these experiences rely on affective memory and modality specific memory, such as visual, auditory, sensory, and motor memory, and that conceptual memory emerges from these origins, their usage, and the naming of experiences for meaning making (Arnold, 2013). This learning is not only multimodal, but also multi-temporal, carrying past and present embodied experiences, increasingly captured digitally, carried by an array of cultural forms now stored and accessed endlessly through digital means.

Moreover, artful methods acknowledge the evolutionary role of the arts and aesthetic experience in building adaptive skills that are essential for managing change (Dissanayake 2008) and how artful inquiry builds reflective sensibilities that are critical when considering the significance of affect on learning and memory work. We record events in our brains, based on the inferences we make when perceiving them, and later, in the narratives we use to communicate events (Damasio, 2006). These narratives can shift the order and emphasis of things, and links affect in learning as fundamental to adaption (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007).

Artful pedagogies bring the perception of openness to experience as they employ higher-order interactive processes, plasticity, and creativity (Silvia, Nusbaum, Berg, Martin, & O'Connor, 2009). The methods link observation, experience, intuition, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions of learning with creative problem-solving to generate a myriad of methodologies for investigating phenomena, to create new knowledge or processes, and to connect or integrate memories as prior knowledge and processes across an array of disciplines in the generation of new meanings.

Artful inquiry is also able to respond to the e-learning participatory culture and the habits of its learners as they build their capacities to drive different individual performative acts through the communicative and collaborative potential of multimodal platforms. In so doing, they are constantly reshaping their learner self-reflexivity repertoire. This self-reflective space is increasingly open to liminal possibilities that trigger our thinking, our actions, and our learning. As events or experience in the virtual world contain learning at the borders of the past and future, how we measure learner self-reflexivity and learner insight will need to respond the media flows generated by digital realities together with their re-mixing between their material experiences, storytelling as narrative, visual, and other textual forms, including poetry and performance, combined within e-feed productive processes. Artful inquiry that combines visual and poetic forms of self-reflection accommodates such reflective practices (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). This space resists the educational rhetoric of knowledge uniformity and accepts uncertainty (Sameshima & Irwin, 2008).

Photographic Participatory Inquiry

Photographic Participatory Inquiry (Grushka, Bellette, & Holbrook, 2014) is foregrounded by the visual. It was conceptualized for the teacher/educator as both a pedagogy and research methodology that acknowledges that critical insights into teaching and learning are performatively acquired through action and reflection within learning acts and the conversations between the student and teacher. It embeds arts inquiry methods, acknowledging the reflexivity, creativity, and adaptive thinking that underpins transformative learning. It centers visuality (Stafford, 2007) as both a legitimate design and socio-cultural research method in response to the cognitive work that images do and to its increasing role in multi-semiotic digital communication structures (Bailey & Van Harken, 2014). It embeds the ideas of participatory methods where the researcher and the student participant are co-creators of qualitative data (Vince & Warren, 2008) and the active role of images generated by mobile devices to communicate ideas and events. It pays attention to the significance of reading images (decoding), thinking in images and creating (encoding) or designing images that collectively become a new visual vocabulary (Emanuel & Challons-Lipton, 2013). It also acknowledges the growth of knowledge visualization methods through collaborative interactive graphics (Eppler, 2013) and aligns with the conversation on edusemiotics (Danesi, 2010) or multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004) in the representation of contemporary knowledge.

Photographic participatory inquiry (Grushka, Bellette, & Holbrook, 2014) that centers images embeds self-reflective participatory action research (Denzin & Lincoln,

2005; Gallagher & Kim, 2008; Mockler & Sachs, 2011) and draws specifically on the *Critical Practitioner Action Research* model (Kemmis, 2011). This model acknowledges the complexity of co-constructed meanings when reflecting and acting and sees critical practitioner action research as the ability to be able to share learning experiences in order to transform and change pedagogical practices. The student(s) and educator are co-participants in the exploration of the learning phenomenon. Together, they gather evidence of learning in order to reflect upon how the historical consequences of past cognitive acts influence current learning. It also pays attention to the cultural-discursive, social, and material acts, as well as the learning dispositions as performatively consequential for both parties. In collaboration the teacher and the student reflect on action, in action, and for action (Grushka, McLeod, & Reynolds, 2005). Reflection on action is informed by the memory of past learning experiences and awareness of personal learning preferences. Reflection in action sees the teacher and the student modifying their actions when working and paying attention to adaptive or transformative opportunities. Reflection for action will see them critically identifying how they can adapt their actions to achieve improved learning outcomes or, in the case of the educator, improve their participatory pedagogies.

Participatory inquiry draws on the research insights of *A/r/tography* (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005) located within arts education that acknowledges the educator as carrying the multiple roles of artist, researcher, and teacher, and is inherently about practice-based living inquiry. *A/r/tographical* work is concerned with exploring and paying attention to the conceptual ideas that can be rendered artistically and educationally through relational conditions of aesthetic inquiry (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). It seeks to pay attention to these cognitive and conceptual moments located within teacher-student dialogue. It focuses explicitly on the tangential ideas that can be grasped by both parties and draws on a range of multimodal learning tools such as video, photography, analytical writing, and reflective learning narratives. It also responds to an increasing dialogue in research about the significance and benefits of arts-based self-study methods (Hostetler, Macintyre Latta, & Sarroub, 2007; Pithouse, Mitchell, & Weber, 2009; Samaras & Roberts, 2011) and accommodates an ethico-aesthetic paradigm (Guattari, 1995) or what Springgay (2011) refers to as building a capacity for ethical pedagogical sensibilities. Such an approach acknowledges that teachers' learning and their subsequent pedagogies have been shaped by personal events, media, and institutional structures and that participatory inquiry requires them to acknowledge and balance their own subjectivity production as teacher with a critical lens that values the inter-personal relationships, multiple creative and aesthetic sensibilities, and cognitive complexities that surround the experience, stories, memory work, and affective responses of their students.

The learning data generated within participatory inquiry methods, whether material or virtual, when sensitively negotiated is able to create what Angharad Valdivia (2002) terms an “ethical theory of voice” (p. 435) and has the potential for new openings and connections that emerge as a productive force, self-becoming-other (Deleuze, 1987, 1990). Teacher self-reflection can support students to learn that aesthetic and ethical decisions are linked and they learn to value that they too can exercise ethical choices in an array of collective or collaborative learning contexts.

The Study With a Focus on Artful Inquiry in the e-Learning Journal

The larger, ethics approved study underpinning this paper, Photographic Participatory Inquiry in researching the teaching and learning of photography in the e-learning environment, is located in a higher education and multimedia e-learning environment of the photomedia student. It synthesizes both critical participatory action research in education (Kemmis, 2011) and artful research approaches (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010; Finley, 2008) in order to investigate the affordances of using Visual or Photographic Participatory Inquiry and associated participatory digital technologies (Gubrium & Harper, 2009) within an e-learning journal for digitally online oriented photomedia students.

In particular, the research presented and reported in this paper focuses on how the photomedia teacher has designed and embedded arts inquiry as an interactive aesthetic, reflective, and creative learning opportunity for the students utilizing the student e-learning journal. The multimedia tools used by the photomedia educator are illustrated and reflected upon for their potential to inform the teacher research project. The study seeks to identify the benefits of using e-learning platforms through the analysis of student work samples, conversations, and teacher critical reflections, in order to question, refine, and build knowledge about teaching digital photography in an e-learning environment. The paper will focus on how the students record in their e-journal: their research about a concept or the work of photographers, their thinking about the intentional act of capturing an image (pre-visualization) (Adams, 1934a, 1934b); their subsequent written and visual critical and reflective responses about the images they captured; and finally how they intend to manipulate their digital images in the computer in order to accommodate their original intentions and their intended audience (post-visualization) (Uelsmann, 2001 to 2002). These insights about the photographic visualization phases of their digital image production are captured through analysis of the e-learning journal content and through photo and video elicitation methods. Together, they inform the potential of this e-learning tool to accommodate the critical and reflective actions of both the student and teacher.

The findings will be communicated through student and teacher reflective voices and examples of photomedia and reflective narrative posts.

Photographic visualization as reflective learning using gopro and screen capture tools. Researching photographic participatory inquiry in an e-learning environment and its associated visual and arts-informed methods have been fully elaborated for their rationale and potential to investigate the personalized, participatory, and productive pedagogies for a networked learning society in “Researching Photographic Participatory Inquiry in an E-learning Environment” (Grushka, Bellette, & Holbrook, 2014). The paper above provides a more complete description of the theoretical underpinnings of the research methods presented in this paper. The photographic visualization Phases 1 and 2 (pre- and post-visualization) and the documenting and reflecting role of the e-learning journal and the students’ creative processes and how they are operationalized within critical participatory research are summarized below (Phase 3). In Phase One, the pre-visualization process, the students are asked to record the act of taking images using GoPro video capture. Video edits from GoPro footage can contextualize the before and after image capture moments for the student. They are then required to analyze this edited data, interrogating their motives, both aesthetic and affective, for why a particular image or visual moment was recorded through the camera. In Phase Two, the post-visualization phase, the students use screen-capture video software to analyze their Phase One images. This software can capture all the students’ aesthetic and technical processes, and record them chronologically in the computer. Any subsequent changes to the image or aesthetic decision about the post-visualization stages can be tracked for a deeper understanding of their reflections and intentions as they consider the audience and their own learning insights. As the computer records multiple iterations of images and technical processes, these can be screen captured, then shared online through the web or mobile devices. The selection, sharing, and reflection can be almost instantaneous and can become routine. Students are comfortable with collaborative acts and they are also adept at repeating processes multiple times until resolution is reached.

The e-learning journal in the photomedia participatory research. Within the e-learning journal Phase Three, the best opportunities to reveal the benefits of participatory inquiry can be seen. The e-journal brings together digital photos, digital image processing, video and audio recordings and other related files to inform the photo and video elicitation methods (Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Harper, 2002), visual analysis methods (Pink, 2007), and the role of the visual journal in arts research (Grauer & Nath, 1998). The e-learning journal captures information as digital artefacts or data that can then be accessed and harnessed to build critical and reflective photographic

practices as an extended dialogue. It allows access to reflective and creative thinking beyond the quick flicking and sharing of image ideas and technical notes through mobile devices. Phases 1 and 2 data is uploaded into the e-journal, edited, overlaid, and reflected upon. The e-journal becomes the platform for collaborative dialogue using photo- and video-elicitation interview approaches. The insights from the interviews allow both the teacher/researcher and student to inform their pedagogical learning or assessment. These moments provide opportunities for active learning (Drew & Mackie, 2011), and they emerge when the narrated voices of the student and the teacher/researcher are overlaid and together new co-constructed insights are possible.

Participatory inquiry as active learning occurs when connections between aesthetic spaces within dialogical encounters between student, teacher, and other audiences in the generation of meanings are actively reflected upon. Such a consciousness has been termed, “interaction aesthetics” (Xenakis & Arnellos, 2013) or the investigation of aesthetic choices when making images for particular audience responses. This is significant as increasingly photographic practices are entering a wide range of professional fields. The student/ photographer/artist is guided in the e-learning journal to employ levels of aesthetic, conceptual, and reflective inquiry using interactive reflection. Such reflection is only possible in a blended studio/e-learning framework where visual and verbal narratives can be built upon and inform photographic practice.

E-learning journal. The e-learning journal takes the form of a blog. It is the hub that facilitates the documentation of learning as a chronological documented process. This does not mean that the journal contains a fixed structure or linear thinking process, but a platform that can be customized. What it does is it affords students a systematic reference point for their learning moments, which can be accessed and revisited. It is also designed to contain the content of the photomedia teaching unit.

The following section elaborates on the structure and pedagogy of the blog. The brief for the e-journal starts with the following quote: “Never allow yourself to be hurt by what you imagine to be criticism by a teacher, nor allow yourself to remain elated because of praise. These feelings are barriers in your way, not conductors of it” (author unknown).

The intention of the e-learning journal is to not only contain the students’ best work, but also to actually show the process, reflections, and development of projects throughout the semester and to be inspired by the learning of others.

The students are encouraged and given permission to experiment and learn from mistakes and to articulate a process to facilitate growth and development for future projects. Fundamentally, the e-learning journal is used for displaying and documenting all of the students' work and assessment tasks. Participants are informed: "This journal is FOR YOU. Avoid treating it as an assessment task. MAKE IT YOURS" (Student Unit Information).

The rationale for the e-learning journal is to encourage the students (participants) to learn and put into practice research, experimentation of technical and aesthetic skills, documenting of their ideas and process for projects, and also reflection on each stage of the project. As the content of the blog can be customized and arranged according to individual preferences, it must require the students to demonstrate a clear set of skills. These include: i) Passion for the visual—sourced widely beyond photographs; ii) Observation and analyze other photographs; iii) Examination of field trends in aesthetic representation; iv) Reflection on self—what you love, hate, feel, despise, struggle with, think, and seek to understand on your creative journey; v) Documentation of work processes; v) Documentation of artists of significance and the critical relevance of their practice; and vi) how all of the above research and reflection relates to their own photographic projects. Finally, they are directed to locate resources widely and not be afraid to change ideas.

The documentation within the e-journal is as follows: the participants worked within a defined bushland space to shoot the project images with a head-mounted GoPro Camera. The camera recorded the shooters' eye-level perspective from a wide-angle view to capture a minimum of four to six final images. On returning to the studio, the participants downloaded the images and began the editing. The participants create a video of their editing process via QuickTime. Once the editing process was finished, the next step was the reflection process of the project via the e-learning journal. The participants had access to the following data for their reflection processes: raw camera images, edited final images, Go Pro footage, and screen capture software.

Students subsequently condensed and curated the raw data as a reflection piece in their e-journal. The student participants were not limited by any descriptive process for this task and were encouraged to set their own analysis criteria. Some participants did a comparative analysis of their wide-angle GoPro bushland shots before editing the image, while some focused on the screen shot before and after editing processes, adding a written brief analysis. Other students would post clips of the GoPro footage and screen-capture edits, reflecting on what they felt were important moments within the decision-making process. All of the students reflected on different elements of the

project with different degrees of depth, but overall the students engaged effectively with the process. Some students did multiple blog posts and others did very little as they reflected on how they could improve their process for future projects.

In the final participatory stages, students were encouraged to consider the reflections of their peers and to participate in video or photo-elicitation semi-structured interviews at the start and end of the unit. The open-ended questions were organized to seek descriptive analysis of the participants' photographic thinking and making. Questions such as 1) Describe what you were thinking and doing throughout this process of shooting the project; 2) Describe emotions felt in the construction of imagery from the GoPro footage; 3) How successful did you think you were in creating your image?; 4) How do you believe your image conveys your message to your intended audience?; 5) What photographic techniques have you used in the creation of your imagery? Finally the student participants were asked to reflect upon how they had improved their images and how their own practice compared to other photographers. The interviews are integral to the learning process and would be commonly used in studio pedagogies (Hetland et al., 2007) and reflective student-teacher learning moments.

Findings for the E-learning Journal: Student Examples

The students who participated in the Photographic Participatory Inquiry in researching the teaching and learning of photography in the e-learning environment agreed to share their rich data source of images, written words, and audio recordings. The following examples show a variety of different methods in the e-learning journal blog as interactive graphics to create, reflect, integrate, and apply as knowledge visualization (Eppler, 2013).

The first example (below) is from Felicity. She began her journal by first posting her selected images. She then posted screen shots of her GoPro footage of important images that she later edited. This visual post was also accompanied by a written analysis of her process.



Fig. 1: Felicity Cassie—PPI project gopro screen-capture shots: Shots of eye-level point of view as shooting project

Figure 1 illustrates a visual analysis and curatorial arrangement of her pre-visualization stage images as she evaluated the areas that could be improved upon if re-shooting the project. Felicity¹ shared the following in her e-learning journal:

I learned a lot by watching myself back. I don't stop and look enough. I find something, take the photo, and leave. I don't spend enough time making sure I got the best photo I could. If I just stopped and took it in, I'm sure I could take not only better photos but more of them. I will defiantly make sure to slow down and take in the big picture in my future projects.

Felicity was also very aware that she should pay more attention to the technical settings of the camera, such as the ISO (sensor sensitivity to low light) and the aperture, and that more time should be spent reviewing the photos. Felicity stated, “I have an expectation sometimes that the photos I take will be the same as how they look to me through my naked eye. The more I learn, the more I understand that it isn’t as simple as that.”

In Felicity’s post-visualization e-learning blog, she discussed and evaluated her editing techniques and the image selection processes, looking for ways to improve her editing. Time to reflect and view again emerged as more critical when considering the images’ message to the intended audience.

I just tend to make it look nice and move on, not looking at the bigger picture. Not thinking about who will be viewing it and how to grab their attention. I will make every effort to change this bad habit in the future.

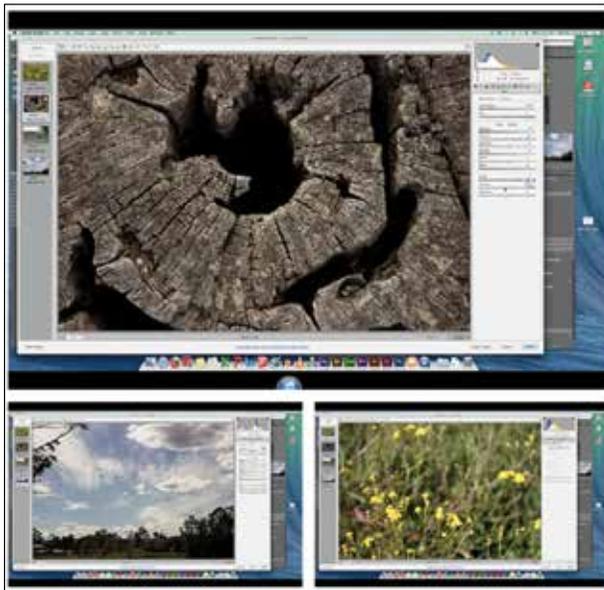


Fig. 2: Felicity Cassie—Project screen shots of editing process

The second participant, Kate Langbein, focused more on visually describing the different editing processes and ideas she had developed for different imagery. Her blog shows examples of before and after cropping of images with edit variations. In addition, the semi-structured interview revealed how she had also used her

GoPro footage and screen capture video tools to stop and highlight sections she believed to be important or could be improved on. Figure 3 (below) is a more detailed example of her analysis process in editing and selecting ideas.



Fig. 3: Kate Langbein—Editing and screen capture

Student participant Martin Crabtree observed and reflected on the data captured, first showing the angle of view of the shot from the GoPro camera, and then showing the editing process within Adobe Camera Raw. The final image was then shown with a brief statement of the intention behind the photographic image. Martin created a number of these visual observation and analysis entries within his workflow on his e-learning journal. The different images he edited were overlaid within the blog, as well as final posts showing the body of work as a whole.

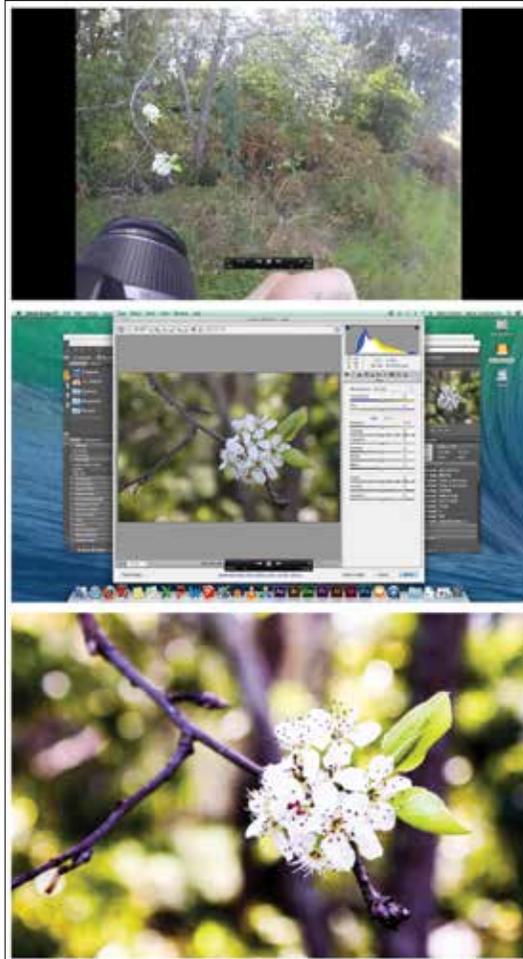


Fig. 4: Martin Crabtree—gopro shot, editing process, final image

I loved the innocence portrayed in this and the white of the flowers really has good character. The angle I went for was to show that the flowers were a part of something much bigger by having the branch go upwards. (Martin Crabtree)

As illustrated in the examples above, the student participants created diverse methods for analyzing and communicating in their e-journal. While this is only a very small snapshot of the content that each student created on the blog, it provides an insight into the wider class project learning. While students are taught in a lab or studio, they need to learn the skills to interact with the online environment. The e-journal blog is often a new experience, and was conceived to foster more artful aesthetic and reflective practice in the photomedia students. As Lee (2010) describes,

The act of photographing is not merely the act of pressing a button to mechanically fix a part of the world into an image or to reproduce a standardized gaze of photographic conventions. It can also be a practice of being attentive to a series of temporal and spatial moments in the locale and trying to make sense of and interpret a subject. Through the practice of walking around the site, searching for photographable objects, and framing what one wants to capture, one can face the challenge of how to make sense of what one sees. (p. 272)

One of the key benefits of the e-learning journal is that the editing and production dates are embedded so that the information can be tracked in a systematic manner by both the teacher/researcher and the students. The e-journal creates a space and opportunities where the students can view all three phases of the photographs development and it is in the e- journal blog that these iterative and reflective loops can be opened and closed, and revisited endlessly.

Discussion: Artful Inquiry in the E-journal

For the photomedia teacher, the main function of the e-journal learning space is to help students develop their visual and written reflections about concepts and material practices. It becomes a portal where they work on becoming visually literate through observation, analysis, and reflection, of other photographers' works and their own technical and aesthetic point of views. It is a place to document ideas and processes as well as experiment and reflect on projects. Its importance to educators is that they can have access to the blogs at designated times in order to work collaboratively with students to build aesthetic and critical sensitivities. It also provides them insights into how the co-construction of meaning links to subjectivity and interpretive knowledge and the plasticity of such knowledge, as well as the ability to resist mainstream ideas and build unique aesthetic solutions.

Interactive reflection and artful inquiry. The personal reflections that follow are those of the artist/researcher/photographer/author. As a teacher-researcher of photography working in an e-learning environment, I have noticed that there are extreme differences across the quality and approaches taken by students when they engage in the analysis of their own imagery to support image production. My observations were reinforced by an external peer reviewer, who also identified that the students were lacking in direction and often reverted to clichéd sentiments such as, “I think this looks beautiful,” or “this is great,” rather than actually forming an intellectual opinion that takes into account technical and aesthetic knowledge communicated through images or written/spoken texts. To support them in the development of critical language and knowledge, I have encouraged the students to use a guiding framework. This framework builds on photographic theory (Emanuel & Challons-Lipton, 2013) and includes categories of analysis such as quality and direction of light; composition; depth of field; relations between figure and background; and what is an interpretation of the image.

The inclusion of such a guide and peer discussion within class or through blogging was an important strategy in building more critical, reflective, and creative learning dispositions. Most significantly, the focus on audience as building an “interaction aesthetics” (Xenakis & Arnellos, 2013) within the design process or the investigation of aesthetic choices was a key pedagogical benefit: “...giving the students the opportunity in class to analyze the same images and then talk about their ideas as a group vastly improved the analysis skills” (author field notes).

The principle behind looking at other photographers and analyzing images is to actually learn techniques, ideas, and approaches to support the construction of a body of work that has relevance to the students’ contemporary world.

I have observed for years that students can often have an insulation mentality, and believe that their ideas are original. When I encourage them to research, they suddenly begin to see how many other photographers have explored similar ideas. I experienced this personally as a photography student where I needed to be researching, ideas, techniques of photographers and painters to conceptually and technical improve my artistic practice. (author field notes)

In the e-learning journal I have embedded this thinking, the idea of researching artists within a cyclic phase that can later develop into a professional thinking disposition applied throughout a photographer’s career. Not to copy other artists, but to acknowledge the constructed and socially mediated evolution of the

photographic images and to embed the creation and exploration of ideas as key artistic practices. This in turn ensures that both historical and current industry standards of practice are core learning. The application of this practice has evolved through reflection on my own learning processes and through observing those of my students as they are encouraged to visually explore composition tasks, lighting, and many other techniques documenting this progression in their e-learning journal.

As a photographer, researcher and teacher, I have found in my artistic practice the need to document my process through journals, papers and exegesis on a number of occasions. It has helped me criticize my ideas, informed me and changed my direction on a number of occasions. (author field notes)

What is unique about the digital e-learning journal is that it allows for multiple and iterative learning encounters that are different than the traditional artist journal, seen or read as a more or less linear reflective process, frozen to the page through writing, drawing, and imaged ideas as past experiences. In contrast, the e-learning journal seems to be about evolving one's experience over time. E-journaling allows the learner to shift the learning artefacts and narratives in iterative and non-linear ways through adjusting one's former observations and reflections (Dijck, n.d.), thereby allowing for the contributions of others through the blog to influence the students' personal pedagogical strategies. The e-learning journal can accommodate more recent theories on learning and memory that present narrative and memory as non-linear (Damasio, 2012), influenced by our affective learning (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007) and core to building adaptive and creative learning dispositions.

E-learning journal and the co-construction of meaning interpretive and subjectivity insights. The focus on pre- and post-visualization ideas within the participatory pedagogy was to build more complexity in the students' analytical and reflexive skills that would help them better understand the considerable impact of their past learning as subjectivity insights when making aesthetic and technical choices. Go-Pro tools have been significant in building this awareness. Rewinding their Go-Pro footage helps them ask:

- What ideas were in their minds as they were shooting?
- What technical elements were they thinking about and contemplating?
- How will they edit or re-imagine the image when they later manipulate it in the computer using imaging software?

By having conversations with students about creating an e-learning journal and producing new images, the teacher/researcher is able to ask the students to verbally describe their learning processes. In addition, the students can follow each other's progress and share techniques and research ideas. Thus, the e-learning journal becomes a portal where the participants, peers, and teacher/researcher can view and engage in the progress, help shape ideas, and support student projects. The benefits of the e-learning platform is that it can simultaneously capture the images, record the thinking and making processes, as well as identify new learning events as they appear during this image-creation phase. For the student, images can now be viewed, reviewed, and narrated upon when reflecting to improve elements for future projects. In addition, it can provide a place where the documenting of the post-visualization process is able to reveal those "in-between spaces" that may lead to an adaptation in their technical or aesthetic considerations or shift their thinking to new conceptual insights. In this space, documenting their process of becoming visual creators and designers helps them become aware of their subjectivity as it influences their decision making and reveals opportunities to reflect and change thinking patterns.

New media and the recursive-learning environment. The e-learning journal as new media communication embeds a recursive relationship among images, student-teacher conversations, and the interactive aesthetic. The processes facilitate the foregrounding of the subjective, experience, personal learning observations, and memory work within the recursive process. It allows for repeatedly applying reflection, imaging, and interpretation strategies to the inquiry or research process. The reflection within the multimedia interface of the e-learning journal allows a bridge between the present and the representational and non-representational past, while capturing emotion, time, and subjectivity experiences (Al-Saji 2004).

Student thinking when reflecting, undoing, and redoing is now a documented multiple imaging process. At any point in the development process, images can be digitally modified, curated, and saved. Students can revisit or return to past questions about the technical and interactional aesthetic of their image as they compare their own images to different photographers in conversation with self and others. Nothing in the process is fixed and everything can be changed digitally. Through this process they form collaborative understandings and generate more considered photographs that target a refining of the intentional communicative act of the photographic image being produced.

Conclusion

For the photographic teacher/researcher, the challenge to continually refine their pedagogies is complex and ongoing. The challenge of how to best redress the observed lack of considered intentionality in the photographic students' practice, while remaining respectful of the unique learning of each student, is problematic for photographic educators wishing to develop responsive pedagogies. The question of how to best engage students in a manner that enables them to become reflective practitioners to build both the technical and conceptual elements of the creation of an image to meet professional practice standards is ongoing.

Photographic participatory inquiry as a theorized and practical method of teacher research focuses on developing photomedia pedagogies in a tertiary e-learning environment. Its core tool is the e-learning journal that carries a powerful and legitimate means of capturing student digital learning within a co-constructed knowledge context. The purpose of the e-learning journal is to facilitate a recursive process supported by conversations with the teacher and peers through ongoing observation, analysis, manipulation, and curatorial applications of learning moments. In this space, the digital interface provides a new flexibility for independent learners as they engage with the intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions of their learning processes. The key benefit of the e-learning journal and the associated participatory pedagogies is its potential to open up the reflective learning process to the powerful social media and digital tools now accessible to every student and teacher. The e-learning journal facilitates the reflective work of teacher/researchers as they work towards refining the learning process. E-learning visual participatory methods and the design of the e-learning journal may have a wider value as an inquiry method within visual education or general teacher education as teacher educators shift to e-journaling and students increasingly prefer to document their experiences through new digital imaging techniques. Most significantly, the e-learning journal has the benefit of supporting both student and teacher self-study inquiry in the e-feed learning culture.

Note

1. The authors would like to thank the time and commitment of the three photography students, Felicity Cassie, Kate Langbein, and Martin Crabtree, who willingly gave up their time and shared their learning so that this study could be carried out.

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Re-locating the Self: Portraiture for Teacher Professional Growth

Heather Hancheruk, Judith McBride, and Kristen Witczak

ABSTRACT

In this article, three teachers at various career-stages describe the process and share evidence of artful exploration and engagement through self-portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997). The development of performance, poetic, and visual renderings of self proves empowering and transformative. Insights are gained through public presentation of portraits and involvement with colleagues as they create their own portrayals. Using literary *métissage* (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009) to braid voices across locations, emergent issues of vulnerability, community, and the possible contribution of teacher inquiry to knowledge of teachers, teaching, and learning are discussed.

In artful development, enforced conformity is reclaimed by self-chosen, experienced, embodied change. As teachers explore change as feeling and form, they intuitively, imaginatively, and confidently come to trust themselves as their own reliable agents of change.

– P. Diamond and C. van Halen-Faber, *Apples of Change*, 2005, p. 81.

Three teachers, Heather, Judy, and Kristen, gather around a table in a high school visual arts studio, late on a Friday afternoon. Unusually, there is a happy tension, given the time of day, and day of the week. They are surrounded by the delightful clutter of a creative learning space, and are planning a workshop on the topic of self-portraiture, to be offered at their annual

Teachers' Convention. In preparation, they are sharing self-portraits along with thoughts on the experience of creating them. Heather and Judy created mixed media collages, and Kristen, a spoken-word performance piece. Deep in conversation, deep into individual representations, deep into the project, a question arises: Why self-portraits?

Heather is a veteran art teacher, artist, and doctoral candidate. Her portrayal of herself as an art educator uses imagery from her present practice and from her early years as an art teacher, which are connected in order to represent the story of her career. Judy is a retired special education teacher and teacher educator. Her portrait is a four-paneled collage of photographs, contour drawings, and poetry representing her transformation from rookie to retiree. Kristen is an early-career English teacher and arts educator with a background in theatre. Her portrait took the form of a short performance, a reflection on her struggle for accurate self-representation. In this article we set out to explain our purpose and share our productions. Together we have embarked, somewhat serendipitously, on an expedition into the vagaries of self-portraiture, arts-based inquiry, and more importantly—and interestingly—into our selves. And, so, we braid our voices into a *métissage* (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009) and begin to answer the question:

- Why self-portraits?

Creating a portrait provides an opportunity for reflection on actions, beliefs, and outcomes. I look for an understanding of my self in my context, which I do not always have, because often when I think I know, it changes. My portrait informs and empowers me. As I look into my self, the portrait exposes and illuminates my teaching and my learning, and I am able to identify changes over time because there is evidence of who I have been, of what the road looked like at earlier times. I can consider my educative influence on students and colleagues, and find direction for furthering my endeavours both in the portrait as well as in what is not portrayed. (H. Hancheruk, J. McBride, & K. Witczak, professional conversation, November 9, 2015)

We are engaged in personal, situated inquiry, in self-study (Hamilton, 1998; Samaras, 2011), and our portraits are as much a method as an outcome. We explore issues of personal relevance (Diamond & van Halen-Faber, 2005) in creating products that are at once explicit and ambiguous. For example, taken at face value, Heather in her collage, is Heather (see Figure 1). Blond hair. Blue sweater. Favourite drawing pencil in hand. Canvas and landscape before her. That much is pretty straightforward.

Nevertheless, the ambiguity of her self-portrait is there for those who wish to engage with her in the inquiry beyond the image, for those who will risk disorientation and encounters with the possible perplexities of engagement. Within that in-between space, between what is obvious and what might be learned, our evolving identities incubate. We offer metaphorical renderings of our search for understanding of who we are, of where we are located or may be headed, of our identity quests.

Our portraits allow us to locate ourselves, and create narratives to share with others that are "...at once complex, provocative, and inviting, that attempt to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of values, personality, structure, and history" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 11). One purpose is disequilibrium, and we invite others to lose the way, find new locations along with us, "...to revisit the world from a different direction, seeing through fresh eyes, and thereby calling into question a singular, orthodox point of view" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 16). The locations are complex and include points in the physical world, individual, professional, personal, and psychological worlds, as well as at various points of intersection. These may be bright and vibrant, or reduced to greys. As we locate and explore parts of our selves within ourselves, we discover things not yet known. We locate, portray, give voice to, and open our selves to the perceptions of, and relationships with, others (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). We engage empathetically within and beyond our circle, illuminating and closing distances between us, and thereby enlarging understandings of what it means to teach, to learn, and to learn to teach (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

The Portraits

Real art has the capacity to make us nervous.

– S. Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 1966, p. 8

Heather

What sustains the passion and motivation of an art educator over the life cycle of her career? This is a big question. I asked it of myself and created a self-portrait in response. I found I couldn't answer the big question without first delving deeply into the ideas that a portrait of myself as an art teacher could provide. Smaller questions led me to the answer: Who am I as an art educator? What do I value in my teaching? What does it look like to be an art teacher?



Fig. 1: Through the eyes of change

In my mixed media self-portrait you see the larger figure holding a sketchbook, in what appears to be a dual-landscape setting: the Bahamas, where I spent my second to fifth year of teaching art, and the Eastern Townships of Quebec. I love Nassau, Bahamas, and the Townships, and I appreciate the environment of my first year of teaching in Chibougamou, Quebec. A large part of who I am, and what I value, is where I am situated, what surrounds me. Trees give me energy. Water also. Pencil marks and oil paint on paper excite my senses.

In order to create my self-portrait, I took an older drawing/oil painting on paper done during my Bahamas years, cut it up, and collaged it along with parts of photographs onto the acrylic painting, in which I am painting a covered bridge in a landscape. I merged the past with the present, bridging the gap between. I am seen from the back, but my hands are implicated through a collaged photograph of a hand coming into the right side of the painting, and a hand drawing in a sketch book using a collaged pencil. The layers of collage and various media, mirrored reflections of the portrait-within-the-portrait in the sketchbook, reflect the kaleidoscopic complexity of the art teacher that I am. My career spans 30 years and I have been required to master many media, and take on many roles. I look back and remember when I had time and energy to make art more often. As time passed, I became more a teacher-of-art, and have incorporated my artist persona into that identity. I added the role of researcher further still into my career.

The artist persona of the past is represented in collaged environments and the present in the Townships landscape. I view myself as an artist within the many artworks of thousands of students; a ghost-artist, so to speak. My students see only my hands most of the time. They are interested in what my hands can do to help them realize their work. I am a hands-on art teacher; old school, they might say. If asked, I will draw or paint for my students on their work, to show them how to accomplish something. Hence, the hands and the pencil are emphasized in this artwork.

As a researcher, I am looking at who I am and how passion and motivation for the job of art teacher are sustained over the career span. Teachers' capacity to sustain commitment and resilience are influenced by our professional life phases and identities, and these are mediated by the contexts in which we live and work (Day & Gu, 2009). The teacher, artist, researcher, artist-teacher, and artist-researcher are confluent identities that support and edify one another, and are not mutually exclusive (Thornton, 2013). Self-study (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2007), focusing on the self as research subject and the reflexive engagement with one's own experience, provides a means to trace the career-long shifts and evolution, as well as insights into the relationship among commitment, passion, life stage, motivation, identity, and job satisfaction (Crosswell, 2006). Clearly, teacher commitment is highly personal, and the self and its relationship to education must be engaged with intimately and subjectively. Self-portraiture provides a road to insights into the intimacies and intricacies of the life of the teacher-of-art. Creating and sharing self-portraits is a stepping-stone between what I hope to achieve in my doctoral research, and my present location at the beginning of the journey to answering my questions.

Judy

Portraiture as a qualitative research method (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997) offers intimate narratives for public consideration. Combining visual and verbal elements in a portrait moves me into the realm of light writing (Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Leggo, & Sinner, 2012; Sinner, 2013), a form of arts-based inquiry (Barone & Eisner, 2012). My living educational theory (Whitehead, 1993) embodies the core values that I bring to my endeavours as a teacher-researcher. In writing my claim to value certain things, I become self-aware, conscious of my self and of my acts. In portraying my values, I open my work to the scrutiny of others and to conversation. Such transparency gives me a mirror held up by others in which I may be seen as working true to my values, or in contradiction to the same. As an ensemble, portraiture, light writing, and living theory provide a framework within which I may continue to grow as a teacher-researcher. The portraits below are from a series of four panels entitled

Metanoia: A portrait of transformative change of heart, that is bound by the central metaphor of the river journey that is my career, key locations on that journey. In *The Cenote*, I confront myself as a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1993), successful with some students, but crucially failing others.



Fig. 2: *Metanoia*: A portrait of transformative change of heart, detail

The Cenote.

I find that I must stop and look back,
And, so, I curl into the gnarly roots of the ancient and wise mahogany tree
To sleep and dream another teacher dream.
I sleep beneath the soft sounds and warmth of the rain.
It washes over me, and carries my care below into the cenote, where others wait.
Hard, cold, stone cave walls rise upward into the netherwood of the tree.
I see the weary faces and pale, skinny arms of my students.
Some float lazily, exhausted by their efforts to live,
Certain hide where they think they might be safe,
Few grasp, frenzied, at dangling roots, rock face, and tiny tendrils of hope,

Others drown.

In my dream, I descend the slippery steps into this underworld where
The cold absorbs me.

I hear soft whispers and small sobs.

My eyes adjust to the slivers of pale green light from the faraway sun shining
ridiculously above.

Amidst the ripples and the roar of conscience in my heart,
I recognise the children I have left behind.

My living theory becomes a mechanism for feedback and reflection, accountability and rigor in my work, and self-portraiture functions in somewhat the same way. In holding the mirror up myself, I cannot help but reflect upon the ideas, acts, and outcomes of the work that I do, upon the values behind the face. In using third person, I am standing back or growing into the life of the lighthouse keeper. In the following piece I come to understand my self, and my purpose as a teacher-researcher in retirement.



Fig. 3: *The Lighthouse keeper*, from *Metanoia: A portrait of transformative change of heart*

The Lighthouse Keeper.

The life of the lighthouse keeper is a modest one.

She lives between somewhere and nowhere,

Between dawn and dusk she lives in the light.

In the night, she sheds light for others as they come and go,

Living their learning lives, passing momentarily under her view,

Briefly in the scape of her care, on their way to knowing.
Silent partnerships form within the circumference of the fleeting sweep of her light.
Collaboratively, the shallows of the delta and the treason of the shoals are
negotiated,
Safety is sought.
Once free, sailors and swimmers and paddlers and mermaids alike,
Advance and dance beyond the dangers of the shore
To the music of infinite, shining wonders that are life at sea.
Still she remains.
In the lighthouse, she attends to the various voices she can hear in the dark.
Making the sea beyond The River accessible to those with the desire
to explore, to expand, to know.
The beacon circles, flickers, reaches out, beyond what is known
To infinite perspectives and possibilities clear of the limits of the lighthouse keeper.
For her life is a modest one, and she lives between there and here.

Kristen

When I was first approached to be part of this project, and engage with portraiture as qualitative research (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997), I was nervous due to my lack of experience as a visual artist. Although it quickly became clear that my contribution could take a different shape, that sense of trepidation never left me throughout the process. As I sat down to devise my piece, the enormity of the task struck me—how do I tell an audience, meaningfully and concisely, who I am? How do I play-act myself, not only in this context, but also as an educator every day? Am I who I say I am when others ask the question? Am I who I say I am when I ask the question of myself?

The performance piece came from my struggles with these questions and emerged from memories of theatre school, when I was first asked to present a self-study performance piece by a favourite professor, Rachel van Fossen. I worked from the starting point of gesture—the movement evoked a sense of incapacitated reaching out, inspired by Shakespeare's Lavinia in *Titus and Andronicus*. This was the first time that my primary creative impulse came from movement and there was a stark contrast between the physical freedom and emotional stranglehold I experienced while working.

Sharing my auto-ethnographical performance (Naidoo, 2012; Spry, 2013) with others at Teachers' Convention was difficult. In that moment, I would have loved to produce visual art instead, to let that speak for me instead of my own mouth and body.

Nevertheless, I vomited out my text, and afterwards I was amazed at the reception we received from participants. More than that, I was humbled by the incredible, honest, and brave work that the teachers shared with us later in the workshop.

My piece, *Lavinia (Because RVF Asked)*, crawled out of darkness in a place where I'd hoped to find light. I was confronted by the image I had crafted of myself—I wanted to see a transformation, but the same sense of powerlessness came through as it had in my first piece of auto-ethnographical research over a decade earlier. Bringing it to Heather and Judy for the first time in early November, I was discouraged by my inability to manufacture a better, stronger someone to present. Yet, this is who I was, am, and possibly, always will be. It has taken me a few weeks sitting with the piece as it was presented to realize that, unlike most of the writing and performing I do, an arts-based self-study doesn't allow me to twist and shape the performance to my desired outcome. It will be what it must be. To do authentic work I must let go of trying to control the truths that emerge. It is in this realization that I finally find a sense of liberation. Even if I have been unable to speak, define, gesticulate, present, or perform a fully realized version of myself, this work-in-progress is my legitimate self and is worth sharing.

Lavinia (Because RVF Asked).



Arms outstretched,
Hands amputated by
Interminably long sleeves.
Lark's tongue sacrificed to Roman banquet,
I spat blood.
This who I hid behind
The first time someone asked me who I was.
...
That was ten years ago and
I have been hiding behind
Ill-fitting metaphors ever since –
Still-life in greyscale
Someone else's poetry
About the flight of black birds.
There is a lack of authenticity.
I thought by 32 I would have something
Unborrowed to say.
...

This, too, is a portrait of myself:
Photograph of possibly-extinguished stars.

...

I know now the question was meant to be empowering.

I ask it of my students every day.

I encourage fluidity in their answers because,

After all,

We are always changing.

Hypocrite, I wish for stillness in my own.

Engaging Empathetically With Others

Nineteen teachers gather around tables in the conference venue for the last session on the last day of the annual Teachers' Convention. Unusually, there is a good-sized group, given the time of day, the day of the week. The room is hot, stuffy, untidy, poorly lit, and not at all the wished-for creative learning space within which to deliver an arts-based workshop. Yet, there is a palpable, happy tension. After a sketchy introduction to the whys and hows of the portraiture process, Heather, Judy, and Kristen present their creations with brief comments on the value of the experience. Then, we posed two questions:

- How do you see yourself as an educator?
- What do you value in education?

Participants were invited to create self-portraits in answer, which they would later present to the larger group. Three hands-on workshops took place simultaneously. One offered an opportunity to create a visual representation using collage and oil pastel, among other materials. The second, a light-writing workshop (Chambers et al., 2012; Sinner, 2013) gave participants a visual prompt in the form of a print or a selfie, and the freedom to write in response to it. The third was an invitation to create a spoken-word piece, asking participants to write and perform their answers to our questions.

The outcomes were surprising, yet affirming of what we suspected was possibly true. A teacher takes a journey along a career path that is fraught with tension, as well as filled with periods of joy and satisfaction. Outcomes were surprising because we found we had synchronistic experiences. Teachers reported feelings that were aligned with one another's; frustration because life gets in the way of what we want to be doing in

the classroom; because the costumes that we are called upon to wear are not always the ones we dreamed of wearing in teachers' college; because we need more time to be doing our art in order to nourish ourselves and our practices. Also surprising and affirming was the level of engagement, risk-taking, and trust among strangers.

Evidence of Engagement

The self-portrait provides us with something substantial and tangible. It is a platform with a creative dimension that may contribute to engagement and, therefore, further understanding of tacit knowledge of the teacher, teaching, and learning. At the end of the session we understood this tacitly, however, as teacher-researchers we understand the need to be able to make a claim to validity of our inquiry. To that end, the final piece in our workshop was to ask participants for public validation. Working from Eisner's (1998) criteria of coherence, consensus, and instrumental utility, we searched for evidence of understanding, engagement, and usefulness in responses to two questions:

- In what way was the activity of creating a portrait meaningful to you?
- How might you use the idea of portraiture in your professional endeavours?

Using *verbatim* validation data we created *métissages* providing evidence of engagement and understanding.

Alice, on achieving understanding. Whenever I am feeling a particular emotion or am completely overwhelmed, it is useful to pause and reflect back on myself as an educator and to remember why I do this. Creating the portrait was useful as a moment to ground myself. It allowed me to express feelings of who I am as a person who happens to be a teacher. It was meaningful as self-reflection, but more importantly to help forge my professional identity. I have been struggling to figure out my sense of myself as a professional and this was a great beginning to find a new way of getting answers. I really love the idea of trying to see myself from a different perspective—perhaps how my students see me—and to understand how I want to be seen. Thinking about core values and education and art was a nice reminder of why I choose to do what I do. It was motivating, finding the love in something I constantly do, thinking of how self and values can be inspiration for education, and how not to lose our selves in the teaching process. The portrait helped me to look into myself, and my passion. It helped me to realize what I need for my future, to see and acknowledge how far I have come and to decide where I want to go in my career. It gave value to those early years, a form of recognition. It gave me a voice and strength.

Dorothy, on engaging with others. The connection, the verbal confirmation of the struggles art teachers face was affirming. I need some connection. I love the arts and need to connect with like-minded professionals. It was meaningful to look at myself as an educator, to hear how fellow educators view themselves. I realized that I am not alone in my feelings; other teachers have the same or similar fears and insecurities. I was touched by other participants' experiences, and felt that they normalized my own. It was a great release to be able to share with others words and thoughts on education. I was also amazed at how many teachers have the same experience on the subject of portraits. It is related to the portraits that we, teachers, are becoming more popular on websites, YouTube, Facebook, and other social media. I enjoy writing and am starting an MA online on culture and education. Portraiture could be a start, or an idea. I have been meaning to create a vision board, and this gave me the time and space. I might use it to encourage my students to explore how portraiture reveals character and emotion. I want them to see themselves as musicians and thus, as lifelong learners. I think that I need to portray myself as such to earn their trust.

Re-locating Our Learning Selves

We are, in a sense, looking for new stars. We are looking for new seas.

We are...exploring the edges.

– E. Eisner, *The Promise and Perils of Alternate Forms of Data Representation*, 1997, p. 7.

We gather yet again, late on a wintery Friday afternoon to chat about our portraiture experience and our continuing engagement in artful exploration of change as feeling and form (Diamond & van Halen-Faber, 2005). Outside, a pale sun is sliding westward, and the wind has a bitter bite. Inside, Kristen's classroom invites teacherly chat amidst stacks of novels, piles of essays, forgotten memos, and the shadow of a puddle of spilled coffee. We are more deeply aware of the complexities of location in our physical, individual, professional, personal, and psychological worlds and of the infinite points of intersection, locations we have visited in our artist/teacher/researcher selves. We do tread on capricious ground when we look within and then engage empathetically with others, but with colour and line, word and gesture we are closing distances between us, and enlarging understandings (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Toward the end of our conversation a question arises:

- What do we now understand of teachers, teaching, and learning?

Once again, we have braided our reflections into a *métissage*, a group portrait, if you will, giving voice to Hope.

Hope, on the experience of portraiture. I don't yet know all of what I have learned. Engaging creatively with our selves and our questions yields such different outcomes from a more traditional academic discourse. I did learn that art is hard for some people. Self-portraiture is a time of vulnerability, and time is another dimension. It's exposure, we make ourselves vulnerable when we share ourselves in our art. We talk about location, but it's important to look back in time. I feel more solid when I put past together with present. I am past and present in my portrait, and I engage with my portrait of my self in time.

I think my students are beautiful, and I have always tried to treat their questions as precious and valuable, spending a lot of time thinking my own questions are less significant, probably because publicly asking them would put me in a place of great vulnerability. Portraiture has meant engaging with my fears and sharing that confrontation. And, although the vulnerability is frightening, I feel safe in a circle of colleagues. Moving into the larger circle at Convention became less frightening because of the risks that teachers whom I had never met began to take. I learned that there are others like me. Normally, I work in isolation, but I see now that we are a community, sharing so much knowledge and joy for our profession. As teachers, we have moments that are very dark. As a community, we can lift each other up. We are all vulnerable, yet together we are vulnerable yet safe.

There are a lot of grey shadows on the landscape, and I know that there is a place there for me, working alongside teachers dealing with the frustration of not being able to achieve their ideals, not able to live their values in their work. I am beginning to see more clearly who I am as an artist/teacher/researcher. It has meant a huge leap, and has led me to something concrete—my doctoral proposal. My questions are valid, and I realized this in a room full of strangers sharing their own. I am inspired to create more portraits in community, most notably with my students. I have an idea for my next portrait, and I think maybe one day we could create a performance together. Portraiture is fun, and freeing, and I didn't think it would be. Now, I want to break open lots of boxes. (H. Hancheruk, J. McBride, & K. Witczak, professional conversation, January 22, 2016)

Our interest in the answer to the question about our learning is further piqued by questions posed by Elliot Eisner (1997):

- “How do we display what we have learned?
- What modes are legitimate?
- How shall we know?” (p. 9).

Teacher research engages us as teachers and learners, artists and researchers. Our resulting knowledge is located within our selves and displayed in self-portraits of our professional lives, reflecting challenge and efficacy, coping and commitment, role and identity in our educational endeavours. We locate and re-locate, create and re-create ourselves. The authenticity of our methods of inquiry and our claims to know is established when we present our portraits publicly, engage with others in conversations about what matters in education and about how we have come to know. We deliberately seek public validation of our claim to knowledge from participants in such conversations asking:

- In what way was the activity of creating a self-portrait meaningful to you?
- How might you use the idea of self-portraiture in your professional endeavours?
- What other comments would you like to offer to the presenters?

Finally, we submit our work for consideration for publication in scholarly journals.

As teacher researchers we have presented our understanding of self-portraiture as an experience that brings us to a point on a map, a location from which to look fleetingly behind and ahead. A portrait is a reflection of, and a reaction to, our teaching and our learning, and a point of reference at which we may engage with others on matters of mutual educational interest. We arrived at this point by following a path of reflection and action. To begin, we created self-portraits in response to the questions:

- Who am I as an artist/teacher/researcher?
- What do I value in my teaching?
- What sustains and motivates me?
- Am I who I say I am?

We reflected on what we learned from this slow, deliberate, introspective, and disturbing process of locating problems within ourselves. Because we found value in the undertaking, sharing our inquiries with each other, and subsequently with others at Convention, became our next steps. Further reflection following the workshop brought each of us to new questions, new directions. Heather has convened a group of art teachers who will meet monthly to create and share portraits, addressing the question, *What sustains and motivates the art educator?* Kristen will introduce

self-portraiture into her high school English classes. Judy will look for evidence of the commitment of the lighthouse keeper using video portraits (Fancher, 2013; Wilson, 2016), asking, *How might I live my values more fully in my practice?* Presently, we are enjoying the relief that comes from arriving in a new location and enjoying the safety of a community of like-minded inquirers. We will continue to work imaginatively, largely intuitively, and collaboratively within and beyond our group with the purpose of taking this project forward, exploring change as feeling and form while acting as agents of educational change.

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Creativity and Imagination in Schools: A Reflection on Practice

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I consider how valuing the arts, teaching artfully, thinking reflectively, and re-imagining the shape and scope of the classroom environment are elements of teacher practice critical in fostering creativity and imagination in the classroom. I share personal narratives of both my past school experiences and my son's more recent experiences with school as I address the question, "What might the opportunity to imagine an alternative to today's typical classroom look like, to envision a different perspective, and to do so within an aesthetic worldview?" Maxine Greene's (1978) notion of "wide-awakeness" underpins my response.

When I was six I saw a magnificent picture in a book about the jungle, called True Stories ... In those days I thought a lot about jungle adventures, and eventually managed to make my first drawing, using a colored pencil ... I showed the grown-ups my masterpiece, and I asked them if my drawing scared them. They answered,
"Why be scared of a hat?"
My drawing was not a picture of hat.
It was a boa constrictor digesting an elephant.
(de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, pp. 1–2)

How often does a child offer a piece of his or her creative work to the world only to be met with a lack of understanding, interest, or curiosity? What might happen if instead grown-ups say, "What an interesting

drawing! Tell me about it.”? How might the child’s creativity and imagination be kindled further? How might the adult’s? Often in schools, children create projects and crafts that follow templates or structures carefully prescribed by the teacher. How does such schoolwork engage the teacher’s or the children’s minds, spirits, and imagination? What might need to be different in classrooms in order for the environment and pedagogy to be such that they foster a sense of freedom, support, and safety for both students and teachers to imagine, reimagine, challenge, and create?

In this paper, I consider how valuing the arts, teaching artfully, thinking reflectively, and reimagining the shape and scope of the classroom environment, are elements of teacher practice, and are also critical in fostering creativity and imagination in the classroom. What might the opportunity to imagine an alternative to today’s typical classroom look like, to envision a different perspective, and to do so within an aesthetic worldview? How can teachers create classroom environments that support and foster creative and imaginative thinking? How might investing in creativity and imagination in our schools create change and innovation within the schools themselves? Innovation comes from thinking beyond our current confines of reality, in seeing a new, as yet to be created, reality, and striving towards bringing these visions from thoughts inside one’s head into action.

Valuing the Arts

The grown-ups advised me to put away my drawings of boa constrictors, outside or inside, and apply myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic, and grammar. (de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, p. 2)

Exposure and Immersion

In the elementary school I attended in the 1980s, art was a subject assigned a block of time each week. In my memory, art education was one hour per week, usually on Friday afternoons. Art, like recess and physical education, was also used for reward and punishment, “If you do not behave, you will not be having art (recess, gym) on Friday!” Eisner (1994, 2005) spoke to the commonness of this experience and he called it “educational inequity”: the configuration of what subjects are allotted time and how much. The implicit curriculum (Eisner, 1994) is the perception given to students, as a result of this inequity, that because the arts are given less time they are of lower value than core subjects such as math, reading, writing, and science. Eisner (2005) stated,

“[H]ence, students with abilities and interests in the arts are denied the opportunities that students in science, mathematics, or English receive” (p. 83). Eisner (1994) further asserted that there is an “intellectual value” assigned to the arts, “Children who shine in the arts will never shine as brightly as those who are excellent in mathematics; the arts, like the children attracted to them, will remain second-class citizens in the hierarchy of curricular values” (p. 82). This message was certainly the one I received at school. The arts were a time of personal reward for me, yet also one of little consequence. Although, academically, I excelled at school, it was in the times when the arts were given a higher regard that I felt most included, important, and valued as a student.

Moments with Monet.

In 2012, there was an exhibit of Claude Monet’s impressionist works in a Las Vegas hotel and so I traveled to this American city to see these famous paintings first hand.

The exhibit was tucked into a far corner of the lobby of my hotel, behind the vast floor space devoted to slot machines and card tables. There in the dimly lit corner was the ticket window for Monet’s exhibit. I bought a ticket for \$15 US dollars. There was no lineup, no crowd of people, and no fanfare of any kind. Had I not been looking specifically for the exhibit I never would have noticed the sign marking its location. I smiled at the security guard standing at the entrance, holding my breath as I stepped inside, for I was so excited.

The room was smaller than I had expected, with the customary white walls and bright spot lighting of a gallery. It had been divided into three spaces with security guards standing at the entrance to each section. These guards were like Queen’s sentries as they made little eye contact, stood at attention, did not engage with me nor did they move from their station for hours.

When I arrived, there were only two other people meandering their way through the exhibit and they exited likely only 10 minutes after I arrived. Their departure, save the guards, left me alone, one on one, with Monet’s work, of which there were approximately two dozen paintings. I slowly walked through the exhibit and took my time visiting with each painting. I went far beyond looking at the paintings which, if the space had been crowded, is likely all I would have been able to manage. Because of my access and solitude, I was able to engage with each painting slowly, methodically, and carefully. I studied them as an artist looking at light, brush stroke, and colour. I felt them as an observer, a lover of art, sensing how the moment, the feeling had been captured; I pretended, too, that I was Claude himself, standing in front of the canvas on the easel, looking out at the space before him and back to the canvas in progress. I stepped into the space of the artist. I followed with my finger, mere inches away, several short staccato brush strokes. I squinted at the kaleidoscope

of coloured markings when I was up close to the canvas and marvelled as I stepped three paces back at how quickly and beautifully the image opened up and revealed itself. I was in awe. I became fully immersed in my experience and my awareness that I was in the presence of a master, a man who revolutionized an entire art movement.

After two hours, I sat myself on a square bench in front of my favourite painting of the moment. In my aloneness (the guards were no more present to me than the light fixtures at this point), I allowed the emotion of the experience to flood me and with that the tears grew, escaped my eyelids, and spilled down my face. It was an overwhelming and joyous visit.

I will never forget what I felt when I was afforded the time and space to fully immerse myself in the works of a master artist like Monet. I am reminded, as I reflect on this experience, of Eisner's (2002) words, "Joy is not a term that is used much in the context of education, but if the arts are about anything they are about how they make you feel in their presence... The arts, experienced in the fullness of our emotional life, are about becoming alive" (p. 84). This experience affected me on a number of levels and I am thankful for it. What, I wonder, would classrooms be like if all students were exposed to creativity with this type of full immersion experience: emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually?

Grade 3. While the arts were minimized in my schooling experiences, there were, however, glimpses and moments that countered this prevalent perspective and, as I think back, they stand out to me now.

I remember my Grade 3 year vividly. Mrs. Beamer¹ was not a new teacher, but she was a new teacher to our school. With her came semi-circular desk configurations, silk-screen painting, xylophones, handbells, and a variety of other instruments, and also the Little House on the Prairie book series. I was captivated. Mrs. Beamer was not my favourite teacher; she was, in my memory, demanding and not quick to smile, but she, by far, created my favourite classroom experience because of her inclusion of arts-based practice on a daily basis.

Mrs. Beamer was a tall, slender woman. She wore slacks, glasses, large dangling earrings, and she wore her loose brown curls piled on top of her head. I remember a time when she wanted the students to practice written language skills. For her lesson she brought to class a loaf of white sandwich bread and a jar of peanut butter. The assignment was to write a paragraph explaining how to make a peanut butter sandwich. Once the task was completed successfully (without errors of spelling, grammar, or punctuation), she would make a peanut butter sandwich for that student. Eyeing the jar of peanut butter, I was focused on this

challenge. In previous years at school, I had only done writing in workbooks, filling in the blanks, matching the scrambled word to the actual word, that sort of thing. This assignment, though perhaps not creative in and of itself, was compelling and novel and I remember the class humming with quiet enthusiasm. I was a good student, but in my excitement I rushed through my work in an attempt to reach my final conclusion. I took my paper notebook up to the centre of our half circle where Mrs. Beamer was seated, butter knife in hand, and handed her my work. She looked at it and passed it back to me, without marking it with a pen, and said something along the lines of, "Not ready yet," and sent me back to my seat to figure out for myself where I had gone wrong. I was a little distraught as I was not accustomed to being sent back without mistakes marked for me to correct, but this challenge only made me dig deeper and really think about what I was doing. It was on my third attempt, hot with determination now, that finally I got the "all clear" on my paragraph and Mrs. Beamer made me, just for me, a peanut butter sandwich.

I had never paid so much attention to what I was writing and how I was writing it as I did on that day. Mrs. Beamer had not instructed us on what to say, how to structure our writing, how long it was to be, or how much time we were allowed to take. Using the knowledge and skills we already had, we were all simply to write what we wanted her to do for us, and that was make us a peanut butter sandwich. I was not used to problem solving at school and I relished the experience. I remember going on to write many creative stories in Mrs. Beamer's class and even to having one of my short stories, *Washed Ashore*, a story about a young girl shipwrecked on a deserted island and her determination for survival, published in the school newsletter. Some of the work I remember from Mrs. Beamer's Grade 3 class provided an opportunity for the students to engage creatively, artfully, and imaginatively with assignments. These opportunities led to a greater understanding and appreciation for continued artful, imaginative, and creative expression in other school and curriculum related experiences. Students also discovered in Mrs. Beamer a teacher who was able to foster a learning environment that felt safe to experiment with imaginative thinking and creativity.

Teaching Artfully

That is why I abandoned, at the age of six, a magnificent career as an artist.

I had been discouraged by the failure of my drawing Number One and of my drawing Number Two. (de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, p. 2)

Mrs. Beamer taught artfully (Eisner, 1994) and “[a]rtistry in teaching is not a common occurrence. It is an ideal” (p. 161). What does teaching artfully mean? One component of artistry in teaching is to provide students with a “climate that welcomes exploration and risk-taking” (p. 162), one that cultivates a playful disposition. I do not remember being praised by Mrs. Beamer for my efforts, persistence, or for completing tasks. I do not think that was her way. However, I do remember her confidence in all of her students, and her creative approach to getting an entire classroom of students with mixed academic levels to think for ourselves and trust in our abilities. Fisher (2004) stated:

Research by Robert Sternberg (1999) shows that when students are assessed in ways that recognise and value their creative abilities, their academic performance improves. Creativity can rekindle the interest of students who have been turned off by school, and teachers who may be turned off by teaching in a culture of control and compliance. (p. 11)

The process of rekindling an interest in school through creativity was certainly the case for me in Mrs. Beamer’s classroom. From Grade 3 on it was those snippets and snapshots of creative expression that kept me “awake” at school.

A second component of teaching artistry is to provide students with artistic experiences. Mrs. Beamer excelled here. When I was in her classroom she taught me how to play a variety of instruments, which we would play together as a class. I was introduced to playing xylophones, glockenspiel, and an autoharp, along with many handheld instruments. Later I learned handbells and participated in many performances. The time I spent learning to play music with my classmates was not extracurricular, and was not reserved for Fridays, but became an integral part of our daily lessons. In Mrs. Beamer’s class, I also learned how to paint and make visual art using a variety of techniques to which I was not previously exposed. This immersion was a far cry from the cut-and-paste crafts in previous years and the years that followed. Using the skills and techniques introduced by Mrs. Beamer, I was free to use my imagination and create the pictures in my mind, using multiple media and materials.

Renowned Saskatchewan sculptor, William (Bill) Epp², was the artist in residence at my school at that time. His studio was in the last classroom at the farthest end of the senior wing. I remember Mrs. Beamer walking the entire class of students down the length of the school, which was U-shaped and felt like a great journey, to Epp’s art room. Here he had a fabric canvas sprawled out on the floor, perhaps as large as 8 by 10 feet, and I watched him walk around the painting in a crouched position systematically splattering paint on the artwork. My class watched him work for a time, we asked him

questions, and then we walked back to our classroom. We were merely there to observe an artist at work and experience this type of creating. Eisner says that to cultivate the type of playful disposition in students that is required to teach artfully, a teacher him/herself must “feel free to innovate, explore, and to play” because there is an element of leading with example. I got to create, imagine, and explore in Mrs. Beamer’s classroom and I felt very much alive as a child when I was at school that year. Maxine Greene (1978) refers to the sense of feeling alive and engaged with life as “wide-awakeness” (p. 42).

Given the kind of teaching intended to enable self-aware persons to reach out for meaning in response to their crucial questions, we assume that every person can be moved to cognitive action. Everyone, no matter who he is, can learn to learn... the self-aware teacher, functioning in situations known to be dehumanizing, can give his students a sense of their possibilities as existing persons present to themselves. If he is to motivate them, however, and free them to learn, he must make sure that the learning they undertake is conducted within the vital order built up by their own perceiving and conceiving over time. (p. 163)

I like to think that if Mrs. Beamer had had access to an exhibit of the works of Monet, she would have packed my class up on the bus and given us a day to marvel at his work. How can teachers and students alike experience this wide-awake attitude? How can teaching artfully be cultivated?

Reflecting

Whenever I encountered a grown-up who seemed to me at all enlightened,
I would experiment on him with my drawing Number one,
which I have always kept. I wanted to see if he really understood anything.
But he would always answer, “That’s a hat.” Then I wouldn’t talk
about boa constrictors or jungles or stars. I would put myself on his level
and talk about bridge and golf and politics and neckties.
And my grown-up was glad to know such a reasonable person.
(de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, p. 3)

Thinking back to my visit to the Monet exhibit, I recall it was when I took my seat on the bench and allowed myself some time to reflect on what I was seeing and experiencing that I truly felt engaged with all of my senses. I needed time to process my feelings and my experience, to make sense of it, and to absorb it completely.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) described the need for this reflective time. He described creative types as having vast amounts of internally generated energy, but also a need to balance this energy with required quiet and rest. This controlling of energy output he described as “rhythm of activity followed by idleness or reflection” (p. 58). Csikszentmihalyi noted that “incubation” (p. 79) is the most creative part of the creative process because “thoughts evolve in this gap filled with tension” (p. 103). Providing time and opportunity for reflection is therefore a critical part of creativity, the creative process, and the composition of a creative individual.

In Peter Reynolds children’s book, *Ish* (2004), Reynolds tells the story of a little boy, Ramon, who was discouraged in his art making by his older brother. The result of the unconstructive criticism is that Ramon tried repeatedly to make all of his drawings look exactly like what he saw, with each attempt looking worse to him than the one before. Later, he discovered his younger sister, Marisol, had been collecting his discarded and crumpled drawings and hanging them on her wall to create a gallery. Finding himself in the gallery Ramon was given the opportunity to look at and reflect back on his own work, and he “began to see them in a whole new way” (n.p.). With a little time to reflect, and the offering of constructive critique from his sister, who encouraged the “ish” quality of his work, Ramon was once again able to enjoy art making and to express his feelings both through visual art and poetry.

Deepening the aesthetic experience through reflection is deemed to be one of the most important aspects of creativity. As Liptai (2004) stated, “A work of art as stimulus cannot simply be used as a springboard for discussion and then jettisoned; it requires repeated revisiting in order for new and deeper layers of meaning to be discovered” (p. 137). Greene (2001), speaking about aesthetic education, reinforced this stance:

Education signifies the nurture of a special kind of reflectiveness and expressiveness, a reaching out of meanings, a learning to learn ... We see [aesthetic education] as integral to the development of persons – to their cognitive, perceptual, emotional, and imaginative development. We see it as part of the human effort (so often forgotten today) to seek a greater coherence in the world. We see it as an effort to move individuals (working together, searching together) to seek a grounding for themselves, so that they may break through the ‘cotton wool’ of dailyness and passivity and boredom and come awake to the colored, sounding, problematic world. (p. 7)

It is this time to reflect, enabling processes and experiences to sink in and deepen within our consciousness, that invites us to wake up to the world. So, while students

benefit from exposure to the arts as well as opportunities to experience creativity first hand (in creating their own or observing others), they also benefit from time to reflect on these experiences, to think more deeply about them, and then revisit them again after they have had more time to process.

Children grow in the experience of the unpredictable, paradoxical, and uncertain feelings that creative endeavors both cause and provide. As Eisner (2002) stated, affording children time to work with and in the arts can provide this growth opportunity:

Work in the arts also invites the development of a disposition to tolerate ambiguity, to explore what is uncertain, to exercise judgement free from prescriptive rules and procedures. In the arts, the locus of evaluation is internal, and the so-called subjective side of ourselves has an opportunity to be utilized. In a sense, work in the arts enables us to stop looking over our shoulder and to direct our attention inward to what we believe or feel. Such a disposition is at the root of development of individual autonomy. (p. 10)

In order to grow and develop, as both learners and also as people, students benefit from taking calculated risks and being exposed to the unexpected, particularly when they are given time to reflect on what they have experienced (Fisher, 2004).

Fostering Creativity and Imaginative Thinking

Absurd as it seemed, a thousand miles from all inhabited regions
and in danger of death, I took a scrap of paper and a pen out of my pocket.
But I remembered that I had mostly studied geography, history, arithmetic,
and grammar, and I told the little fellow (rather crossly)
that I didn't know how to draw.
He replied, "That doesn't matter. Draw me a sheep."
(de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, p. 4)

Environment

What type of classroom environment will develop these skills within students of critical thinking, risk taking, and out-of-the-box thinking? As Mrs. Beamer enriched our classroom experiences with continuous exposure to artists, art making, a variety of mediums, daily music education, performance, and story, she developed a safe

environment that was conducive for students to deeply investigate their own depths of imagination and creativity. One of my favourite school memories occurred in Mrs. Beamer's class.

I remember being given a writing assignment. I was to write a report on something of interest to me. It was my choice. I decided to research and write about dolphins. At some point during or after the writing process was complete, I made my cover page for the report. Mrs. Beamer sat on her usual stool in the centre of our semi-circle of desks. It must have been early afternoon in fall or winter as the sun was still low enough in the sky to make an appearance through the row of windows. It spread a beam of light across Mrs. Beamer's burgundy slacks and matching sweater. With precision in her instruction and with her lips drawn closed in concentration, she demonstrated how to brush across the wire screen to make a print (introducing us to silk-screen techniques). I remember she also showed us how to run a thumb across the bristles of a toothbrush coated in paint and how it would spray the paint across the paper and leave a fine mist of splatter marks behind. Watching her with the toothbrush, making a "mess" with the paint, made me feel giddy with excitement inside.

There were two screens available to the class to use and when it was my turn I spread out my 11"x17" white art paper under the screen and placed my cutout of a dolphin on top. I combined the opportunity to create my report cover page with the techniques I was taught. I transformed that blank white page into a scene with a blue dolphin jumping out of water with a sunset in the background. A fine spray of toothbrush-splattered paint surrounded the scene.

It was thrilling to me to see my creation hung to dry at the front of the classroom in a long row with the other children's artwork. Better still was the feeling that I had been given a chance to play with the medium. Making art was about being introduced to an art-making technique, tied to my learning about a subject I was interested in, and given the opportunity to "make a mess," try it out, experiment, and see what I could do with what I had learned. It was a far cry from the craft making I had done in school prior to grade three and I remember, even now, how much I enjoyed the feeling of aliveness that making my own art gave me.

Enabling an environment that fosters creative and imaginative experiences and immersion is illustrated in Mrs. Beamer's openness to experimentation with the art materials and her incorporation of art making in a language arts exercise. Environment is not about being an interior designer and creating pretty spaces. Carter (2007) explained:

... if we are to embrace the idea of the environment as a significant educator in our early childhood programs, we must expand our thinking beyond the notion of room arrangements and rating scales. We must ask ourselves what values we want to communicate through our environments and how we want children to experience their time in our programs. (p. 22)

While rooms that look nice (organized, uncluttered, and reflecting values we wish to share) typically make us feel good, the notion of environment goes beyond the superficial (though important) design specifications of the room. When teachers set up a space, they are communicating messages to children and families about what they believe to be important and meaningful to them.

Frances was my son Owen's preschool teacher. Her classroom was in a rented basement of a church and consisted of four painted cinderblock walls and a row of windows on one side high up near the ceiling. Had it been empty, it wouldn't have looked like much—cold, echoing, and unoccupied. And yet, Frances created a space down those back stairs in which I loved to spend time. It felt warm and inviting. The tiny tables at snack time were covered with fabric table clothes and each had a small pot of plants or vase of flowers placed in the centre. She had coloured glass, crystal rainbow makers, and seashells hanging in front of the windows. All of her play areas for the children had an area rug covering the floor. Her bookshelves and baskets were organized and tidy, but they were also easily accessible and inviting. Her art materials were readily available in their small wicker baskets (easy to hold for child-sized hands) and they were well stocked with pebbles, ribbons, shells, feathers, and other notions.

It wasn't just the look of the room that captured me. It was the message it conveyed, silently, to me each time I shared in the space. The room itself seemed to say, "Come in. You're welcome here. Come play and explore. This is a safe place. Try some new things!" And these messages were also values that Frances herself shared with the families at the preschool. Her site reflected the feelings she wanted to create for her students and their families.

Environments such as Frances's are conducive to teaching and engaging artfully. Spaces such as hers open up and encourage imaginative and creative responding from students because they feel both safe and also valued. Carter (2007) wrote, "When teachers and parents find themselves in environments that are beautiful, soothing, full of wonder and discovery, they feel intrigued, respected, and eager to spend their days living and learning in this space" (p. 25). Furthermore, Gandini (2005) informed us that

[w]hen children live in a space, they own, feel, and find their place within it. Connections that take place between time and space happen through the rhythms of everyday life, connections to past events, and new experiences that reach toward the future. (p. 16)

Eisner (2002) described a classroom environment as a teacher:

The entire environment, to the extent that it is a means for fostering the students' development, is subject to the professional judgement of the teacher and constitutes a form of teaching ... [T]he setting itself teaches and is subject to the teacher's design choices. (p. 57)

He further stated that this environment actually creates a cognitive culture where dispositions as well as skills, abilities, and aesthetics are developed.

Children are more likely to pick up a paintbrush and mix blue and green to see what happens if they feel invited to do so. In such experimentation they are reflecting back to the teacher that his/her environment is conducive to fostering development of imagination and creativity.

Play

Just as environment is a teacher of imagination and creativity, play is a pedagogical approach that brings to life imagination and creativity. Play works to enhance language skills, build flexible and divergent thinking, and help children to make sense of the world (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2013). As there is a link between play and exploration with development of self and connection and understanding of a student's surroundings and environment, there is also a link between play and fostering creativity. What does this connection look like and why does it matter?

Lucas, my youngest son, ran at breakneck speeds along the sidewalk down the street to Kindergarten. He loved school. He loved the activities, the movement, and the social times. It was new and exciting and fun. I remember a morning he had dental surgery and needed to take a couple of painkillers and yet still, after lunch, he was determined that he wanted to spend the afternoon in his classroom.

Then Lucas started Grade 1. The teacher was new and had a particularly full room of students. The desks were smooshed tight together as there was little space in the room. The cupboards were overflowing, the walls were decorated with art, posters, pictures,

word charts, letter charts, schedules, notices, alphabets, numbers, and so on. The room felt busy and crowded. "You'll love her, Mandy. She has an art background like you," the principal said to me before the start of the school year. I was enthusiastic about this teacher, and I was excited about the year Lucas had ahead of him.

And then the stomachaches started. While Lucas is not a child to complain, he was complaining now.

"I don't like school."

"My tummy hurts."

"I want to stay home."

This was not what I had come to expect from Lucas after such an eager start to his formal education. I began asking some questions, paying more attention, and inquiring into what might be happening for Lucas.

There was very little in terms of concrete experiences that appeared to be the cause of Lucas's concern. The small and crowded space, combined with its accompanying lack of mobility and, most importantly, lack of playtime, were impacting Lucas's spirit and, therefore, his ability to engage in a positive way at school. The general sense of discomfort that was created for Lucas required deep and attentive listening on my part to figure out what was upsetting him. Eisner (1994) captured the importance for children of feeling free to play and learn:

To be able to play with ideas is to be able to feel free to throw them into new combinations, to experiment, and even to 'fail.' It is to be able to de-literalize perception so that fantasy, metaphor, and constructive foolishness may emerge. For it is through play that children eventually discover the limits of their ideas, test their own competencies, and formulate rules that eventually convert play into games. (p. 162)

For Lucas, his classroom environment did not feel good and it did not feel safe. What was missing for Lucas in Grade 1 in terms of play is defined in education as "freedom of choice, personal enjoyment and focus on the activity rather than on its outcome. These three criteria are foundational to the play process in connecting children's development with their learning" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 24). The lack of play in Lucas's program, combined with the restrictive physical

environment, conveyed value-based messages to Lucas about restricted opportunities to exercise his creativity and imagination. Finding himself in an untenable classroom context, Lucas experienced sudden-onset tummy pains.

Conclusion

Since I had never drawn a sheep, I made him one of the only two drawings I knew how to make – the one of the boa constrictor from outside.

And I was astounded to hear the little fellow answer:

“No! No! I don’t want an elephant inside a boa constrictor ...

Draw me a sheep.”... So then, impatiently, since I was in a hurry to start work on my engine, I scribbled this drawing, and added,

“This is just the crate. The sheep you want is inside.”

But I was amazed to see my young critic’s face light up.

“That’s just the kind I wanted!”

(de Saint-Exupéry, 2000, pp. 4–6)

As de Saint-Exupéry and his *Little Prince* inform us, it is altogether too easy to put a child off of taking risks that require use of his or her imagination. As my narrative of Lucas’s Grade 1 experience further demonstrates, when we put children off of such imaginative experiences, we not only rob them of rich learning but we also potentially cause harm to them and their development. It is in providing opportunities for expression, immersion, and reflection that students begin to make sense of the world and grow in confidence about their place in it. Teaching artfully guides students and models for them what such freedom of expression and enthusiasm can look like. Similarly, environment and play shape the framework for fostering such values and ideals, and create a space in which “wide-awakeness” can emerge and be nurtured.

Notes

1. Mrs. Beamer is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of this individual. All other names in this paper are real.
2. Please see: <http://www.sknac.ca/index.php?page=ArtistDetail&id=246>

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It Is All Part of the Process: Becoming Pedagogical Through Artful Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

The experiences and challenges that teacher-educators go through tend to be private and go unnoticed (Berry & Loughran, 2005). Through self-study, teacher-educators can reflect on their practices and learn from each other's practices. As a novice teacher-educator who was teaching an inquiry-based teaching science methods class with a collaborative teaching team, I explore my experience of being a teacher-educator through arts-based self-study. In this paper, I discuss how the process of artful inquiry informed my own research and teaching practices. Based on the idea of *a/r/tography*, I link my artistic, research, and teaching practices together to explore what it means to be becoming pedagogical (Gouzouasis, Irwin, Miles, & Gordon, 2013).

In this study, I share my experience as a novice teacher-educator in a collaborative teaching team through an arts-based self-study. Scholars, including Diamond and van Halen-Faber (2005), suggested that academic literature should play a role in changing the people who teach. However, as Berry and Loughran (2005) problematized, many underlying issues associated with changes and development for teacher-educators are private and go unnoticed. They suggested teacher-educators participate in self-study as “an approach . . . to critically examine their own beliefs about teacher education through challenging their existing practice in meaningful ways” (p. 187). In particular, arts-based self-study allows educators to reflect on their practices and transform their learning into the construct of *becoming pedagogical*, which connotes “a [constant] state of coming to know through embodied living inquiry whereby the learner [educator] is committed to learning

. . . with an emphasis placed upon creative flow” (Gouzouasis et al., p. 8). For this self-study, I focus on a/r/tography, an arts-based methodology that provides “the artist/teacher/researcher a way to postulate and write about the multiple positions that they embody” (Carter, 2012, p. 2). Gouzouasis and colleagues (2013) suggested that by connecting their personal experiences and society through a/r/tography, educators could experience becoming pedagogical through learning skills of observations, questioning, analysis, and interpretation. Through employing a/r/tography, I explore my beliefs about what it means to be a teacher-educator and the process of becoming pedagogical with the goal of assisting other, especially novice, teacher-educators.

In this paper, I describe my visual art-making, research, and teaching practices from September to December 2015, when I taught an inquiry-based science education method class in a collaborative teaching team. I start by exploring how our team incorporated inquiry-based teaching and how I came to this research project. Thereafter I share my stories as an artist, arts-based researcher, and teacher-educator and explain how the practices (artistic, research, teaching) inform each other.

Context: Beginning the Journey of an A/r/tographer

Today is the first day of class and my artful/teaching journey for the next 15 weeks. My emotions changed from being nervous to questioning, then to realizing “it [teaching and art-making] is all part of the process.” (First journal entry, September 16, 2015)

My teacher-educator journey started with feelings of nervousness and uncertainty. As a PhD candidate and former secondary science teacher, I was teaching a course in elementary science teaching methods with a collaboratively run teaching team. This team consisted of one course lecturer, two lab instructors (teaching assistants), and one lab technician. Through our weekly meetings, we reflected on our teaching, and planned and readjusted our teaching activities and inquiries for class discussion. As a lab instructor, I taught two-hour inquiry-based, discussion-based labs for two groups of pre-service teachers. The lab was designed to build content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge about elementary science through employing a constructivist approach to inquiry-based learning.

Windschitl, Thompson, and Braaten (2008) suggested that science education should focus on engaging “learners deeply with content and with the epistemic

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practices of authentic science” using a constructivist inquiry-based teaching approach. A constructivist perspective assumes that students must be actively involved in their learning and that concepts are not transmitted from teachers to students, but constructed by students (Bybee, 1997). This approach helps students learn science through “direct experience, consistently practicing the inquiry skills and seeking deeper understanding of science content” (Banchi & Bell, 2008, p. 29). Windschitl and Thompson (2006) suggested that teacher education should focus on developing prospective teachers’ understandings about teaching in a constructivist inquiry-based manner. It is for this reason that inquiry-based teaching was employed by our collaborative team to teach elementary pre-service teachers both pedagogical and content knowledge of science. As a teacher-educator, I see the benefits of employing inquiry-based teaching for a methods course specifically for pre-service teachers, who often lack experience with the inquiry-based approach. This approach offers a substantive, tangible model of inquiry-based teaching and learning in science as well as a place for continuous discussion about strategies and discourse moves for effective delivery of inquiry-based teaching.

Trying an inquiry-based teaching approach to build knowledge with students and being unable to predict the end result made me nervous. Before my first class, I had many questions and doubts. I asked myself: “How would employing this method influence my identity as a teacher-educator?” I wanted to delve into this question throughout the process of teaching.

Collaboratively planning and reflecting on classes with other instructors was very new to me. Berry and Loughran (2005) highlighted the culture of isolation in teaching institutions that reinforces the message that “sharing questions or concerns about teaching is not something that teacher-educators do (or should do)” (p. 169). In turn, teacher educators’ process of “learning to teach teachers is often experienced as a private struggle” (p. 169). Indeed, throughout my teaching career (at both secondary and university levels), I tackled the whole process by myself. Senior instructors and department heads provided advice, but I did all the planning, marking, and reflecting. For me, teaching was (and still is) a one-person show and in order to teach pre-service teachers, I thought I had to know the content perfectly to be the perfect teacher. Therefore, thinking of collaboratively working with pre-service teachers through inquiry-based learning and planning and reflecting on my practices with other instructors led me towards questions and anxiety, rather than comfort and certainty. What does collaborating with students and other educators really mean? How does it influence my teaching practices and my identity formation as a teacher-educator? One day, while walking around the faculty building thinking about these questions,

I saw a sign on a bulletin board: “ArtHive: come make art with artist in residence.” Without hesitation, I walked in.



Fig. 1: Art hive

The artist in residence, Maria,¹ greeted me with a big smile. There were brushes, beads, colourful paper, tools, and all sorts of beautiful raw materials ready to be transformed into art. I felt comfortable and began drawing and writing. My journey as an a/r/tographer had begun. Coincidental but apt.

Theoretical Framework: A/r/tography as Living Inquiry

A/r/tography is an arts-based research methodology that reflects the creation of meaning and identities in the liminal spaces between art-making, researching, and teaching (artist/researcher/teacher) through *living inquiry* (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2008). A/r/tography as living inquiry strongly resonates with Derry’s (2005) view of embodiment as “a way of knowing that goes beyond the intellectual, logical, and rational mode of thinking that has traditionally been defined as knowledge” (p. 35).

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Embodied encounters include “emotions, cultures, [and] physical sensations” (p. 35), the kinds of human experiences that McNiff (1998a) argued cannot be completely understood through the conventional scientific method, thus requiring “the process of aesthetic inquiry” (p. 15). This process of creative expression and interpretation allows a “hermeneutic dialectic between lived life and art: art interprets life and life interprets art” (Van Manen, 1984, p. 51). Artists give shape to their lived experience through the process of aesthetic inquiry, hence the products of art are “lived experiences transformed into transcended configuration” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 74). In this sense, I view an artist as a “person who creates things or experiences with the clear intention of making ‘art’” through their living inquiry (M. Ezcurra, personal communication, January 27, 2016). Based on this notion of embodiment and a hermeneutic dialectic between lived life and art, a/r/tography offers processes for explorations—“ways of thinking, knowing, and doing that are rooted in the arts” (Gouzouasis et al., 2013, p. 8).

There are no specific procedures or methods for a/r/tography; a/r/tographers become the “creators and innovators of their own work” (Carter, 2012, p. 43) who explore their living inquiries emanating from their artistic, research, and teaching practices in a process that is purely organic. A/r/tographical work “grows and changes and it follows its own rhythm and direction based on its own necessity” through an aesthetic embodiment (M. Ezcurra, personal communication, January 15, 2016).

The organic process of a/r/tography results in what Wiebe et al. (2007) described as *rhizomatic relations*. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained the rhizomatic relations of different processes and/or products in their practices as artists, researchers, and teachers in a/r/tography (as cited in Wiebe et al., 2007). Rhizomes make different, connected entry points into a system, growing organically in multiple directions. In this light, a/r/tographical works allow an evolution of questions and meanings through making connections to different theories, processes, and products in their living inquiry (Carter, 2012). This allows processes, research questions, and artistic and pedagogical practices to inform one another as they evolve and grow together. These connections can be brought in harmony through writing.

A/r/tography is a theoretical framework that allowed me to freely explore through my art-making, teaching, and researching processes connected to my class instruction. It also offered a place to reflect on my multiple practices, and relationships between myself and other instructors, as well as my different selves (i.e., artist, researcher, and teacher).

Methods: Arts-Based Self-Study

Based on the ideas of *a/r/tography*, I consider this work as an arts-based self-study. I employ the framework of self-study to understand the layers in the process of becoming a teacher-educator through artful inquiry. As Hamilton (2005) stated, “one of the hallmarks of self-study research is our [*a/r/tographers*] willingness to hold our work up for others to examine.... We both ‘do’ and ‘show’” (p. 59). Self-study research allowed me to openly ask questions about my teaching practice, as I choose my “own research questions about something that captures [my] attention” (Samara, 2011, p. 5). Samara (2011) reminded us that “self-study research builds on the necessity of relationships between individual and collective cognition in the professional development of teachers and the power of dialogues in building a learning community of engaged scholarship” (p. 5). Thus, I chose to have three different groups of critical friends reflecting on the three aspects of *a/r/tography*.

For the art and research aspects, the artist-in-residence, Maria, was my critical friend and spoke about my art-making process and the process of arts-based research. Before every lab session, I met with Maria to reflect on how I felt about teaching by creating visual art. I was not bound to a particular genre of visual art-making. I chose materials and techniques in “a more natural process of engagement relying on common sense decision making, intuition, and a general responsiveness of the natural flow of events and experiences”(Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 61). I let my feelings and questions about teaching emerge and evolve through the art-making process. After each session, I wrote reflections about my art-making and my teaching practices. After teaching, I wrote a post-reflection in which I linked my thoughts, experiences, and feelings about what happened in both classes as well as about what my art piece depicted.

For the teaching aspect, I had two different groups of critical friends. First, I explored the challenges and issues that arose with my collaborative teaching team. Second, I had a collaborative inquiry group consisting of six teacher-educators with different backgrounds and experiences specializing in a diversity of subjects. In this group, I focused on exploring what it means to be a teacher-educator outside of a science education context.

Through these conversations, my reflexive journals, and my art, I explored and made sense of the meaning that “circulates, moving in all directions simultaneously” (Springgay et al., 2008, p. 86).

Research Questions: Exploring Through Artful Inquiry

My first project driven by artful inquiry began very naturally and coincidentally. I dropped into Maria's art-making space with no particular research plans. The research questions weren't formed, and the method wasn't planned. I was just there to check things out, and to overcome my nervousness before classes began. The questions, methods, and data all came together naturally, which I had not experienced before as a researcher.

As the classes progressed, I felt unsure and lacked confidence about my abilities to make art and conduct arts-based research and teach pre-service teachers, making me feel lost as I tried to figure out my identity as an artist and teacher-educator while letting artful inquiry take control of the research process (Figure 2).



Fig. 2: Questions and a (lost) puzzle piece

I feel tension. Who do I feel tension with? With students? With Dawn [the instructor]? With myself? Also because of a focus on end results and outcomes, I feel like I am judged by students and the instructor. But the process is important, no? Or do I actually believe that? That it [the process] actually matters?

The feelings and questions I had before teaching today are reflected in my art-making. Small arrows going up and down around question marks... Well, do I know better than them [do I know have more knowledge than them]? Does that make me an expert? Maybe teacher-centered is not so bad after all? Wait, where does knowledge come from? Who does knowledge come from? Is knowledge built through a constructive process? Or does it come from me, the "teacher"?

Today, I am going into teaching with more questions than certainty. Maybe it is like the nature of science. You never know "for sure." With new evidence, scientific knowledge can change. Maybe with students' ideas, my way of thinking about teaching science will change. What does it mean to be a teacher-educator in a higher education setting? How does my art-making inform my teaching practice? Is it just mere meditation before class? To calm myself? Or elicit my feelings and emotions? How do they interact with each other? They are all relational but how does it transcend in practice? (Pre-teaching journal, September 23, 2015)

These questions were elicited and formed through my art-making and reflecting process. However, as time passed, I realized that as my identities changed, so did my practice. The questions also changed and evolved. For example, about 10 weeks into teaching, I realized that I was focusing more on the relations and changes created during my a/r/tographical process, rather than on what it meant to be collaborative in terms of teaching and learning. The evolution of my research question is aligned with Gouzouasis et al.'s (2013) notion of a "multidirectional view" for a/r/tography: as creative, artistic, and pedagogical inquiries often "reach out in to multiple directions before focusing on particular aspects of inquiry" (p. 3). As such, instead of focusing solely on a particular question, my research questions were formed, changed, and evolved organically through art-making.

While Eisner (1997) discussed the need to be precise and reduce ambiguity in arts-based research, Wilson (2004) asserted that, it is exactly "this ambiguity, complexity, and place of paradox that becomes . . . a place of generative possibilities" (p. 57). Therefore, I stayed in the uncomfortable liminal spaces between the identities of "[my] artist/researcher/teacher selves as a way to understand [my] own creative and pedagogical positions" (Irwin, 2004, p. 39).

Findings: Focusing on Processes of Becoming

Springgay (2004) suggested that identities are unfixed and uncertain. The artist, researcher, and teacher identities perform in relation to each other, and “bump and collide. . . . They push against each other, transgressing, shifting, and changing” (p. 74) in the liminal, undefined space that is “constantly in the process of becoming” (p. 65). In the context of becoming pedagogical, I concur with Carl Rogers’s (1961) notion of becoming as a process involving “an increasing openness to experience” (p. xx). Thus, instead of focusing on one particular research question and method, I put emphasis on the *process* of becoming pedagogical (Gouzouasis et al., 2013) by committing to the state of constantly evolving and learning through creative flow. The findings of this study represent different stages of my *process of becoming pedagogical* through arts.

Process 1: Becoming an Artist

This section showcases the art produced in the process of becoming. I focus on what each piece depicts by linking them with my written reflection, therefore allowing new patterns of meaning to emerge (Springgay et al., 2008).



Fig. 3: Flower & fruits in the sky

I started colouring what appear to be clouds, very soft yet colourful. It reflects my mood. For once, I feel calm and ready to teach today's class. (Week 3, September 30, 2015)

I was very excited to come to my art section. It has become sort of meditative. I feel no anxiety toward my class or teaching today. This is reflected in my art. Instead of focusing too much on questions, I added flowers and apples. Though the background is black-ish night, it is never one colour. Incorporating sparkles, blue, red, yellow, the sky background represents pieces coming together. It is all part of something and it is the process that makes it fun. (Week 4, October 7, 2015)



Fig. 4: In the midst of knights and Lucy the ape

I came across the Socrates story, which ends with the notion that Socrates was a real teacher though he didn't look like one and the students were not in a standard classroom. My question that emerged through this collage was: who is a teacher? Are teachers appointed to special roles, like knights? Who were the teachers amongst primitive humans? Perhaps, like the Socrates story tells us, learning can happen anywhere. As one can learn from nature, can anything in nature be a teacher? What happened to the constructivist point of view in teaching—building knowledge together with students and teachers? What are the roles of teachers in building knowledge together?

The closed paint cans represent compartmentalized knowledge in classroom teaching. As you can see above the mountain from far away, knowledge is made for students and

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delivered by teachers. The birds represent teachers. They can either deliver pre-made knowledge cans from the top of the mountains downhill to students or they can fly together and make knowledge as they travel. The tree represents the learning process. One tree has fruit; the other doesn't. Without fruit, the tree is still beautiful. Why do we focus so much on the outcome and product? The apple and the fruit? The process itself, growing, can be beautiful. The Asian child in the picture represents me. I am looking to the birds flying over the moon, as if trying to avoid the conventional way of teaching science, wanting to act based on my own beliefs, looking at the possibility that I do not have to follow the lesson plans, trying to answer the questions emerging from daily life, constructing knowledge with others. Is collaborative inquiry with my students possible?

Socrates didn't teach. He asked questions. His "search" and "desire" were taught naturally to students—a perfect example of curriculum-as-lived. Teacher as a learner through curriculum-as-lived. I totally get it now. (Week 5, October 14, 2015)



Fig. 5: Apple inside apple

I drew an apple, then used four different colours to fill the outer layer. Each colour had different brush strokes, representing different teaching pedagogies/strategies. I did a mosaic to depict different teaching philosophies. I wanted to show my tension about collaborative teaching. Though on the surface, the apple is still intact, the inner mosaic represents the tensions I feel in this collaborative inquiry and teaching process. My teacher-educator identity can be informed by others. How do I deal with

the tension emerging from the experience? Could it be positive tension? Do I need tension and negotiation to build relationships with other instructors and students?
(Week 6, October 21, 2015)

I added another layer that is threads in a circle. The circles have different textures, shapes, sizes, and starting and ending points. They are part of the process and together create another beautiful layer. . . . Though their [students'] works and thinking may not be scientifically accepted, I can see their relevance and significance. I will learn something from their work or the process of them becoming pedagogical.
(Week 7, October 28, 2015)

I added another layer of different coloured lines to depict different perspectives individuals bring and the importance of being collaborative.... With the black puzzle piece from my first piece, I filled out the empty space on the other side of the apple, which represents the tensions I feel. Because the teaching inquiry process is collaborative, I may bring tension from physical tiredness or tension I feel with students, etc. When I was finished, I was not happy. It was just not pretty. It was just too much. I am going to see what happens to my art piece next week. In the end, it is all part of the process. (Week 9, November 11, 2015)

Process 2: Becoming an Arts-Based Researcher

When the semester was over, I began to write this article. I decided to perform a thematic analysis of written reflections. Lea, Belliveau, Wager, and Beck (2011) stated that a/r/tography allows practitioners to reflect on different tensions they feel and experience during the process of art-making, research, and teaching and “critically writ[e] about these moments as they emerge” (p. 3). I believe that writing ties together my art-making, teaching, and conversations with my critical friends. Hence, I focused on written reflection as a main vehicle to find emerging themes on my process of becoming pedagogical. A few themes emerged, such as my identity as teacher vis-à-vis learner, tensions I felt during the collaborative teaching process, and my identity as an artist. However, I could not find ways to connect the themes. As rhizomes, the themes and meanings were literally all over the place. Through the lens of the multidirectional view (Gouzouasis et al., 2013; Carter, 2012), the inquiries and meanings I came across from the aesthetic encounters and teaching were widespread and evolved so much that I felt lost. I couldn’t connect the findings harmoniously through writing.

I spoke with Maria about my dilemma. She told me to refer back to my art pieces: “Do not focus too much on your written reflection. Try to find commonalities emerging from your art” (personal communication, January 16, 2016). Maria’s advice was in line with Springgay et al.’s (2008) suggestion that scholars “need to examine art ... from the perspective of unravel[ing] the implications of the work relationally. This relational understanding ... shapes the methodology of *a/r/tography*” (p. 84). Thus, I participated in “qualify[ing] qualities ... creat[ing] qualitative relationships among component qualities” (Eisner, 2008, p. 8). To Eisner (2008), the materials used in art are converted into a medium, which mediates the researcher’s observation and culminates in a form that brings the artist-researcher back to the experience and emotions the artist-self intended to disclose (p. 8).

Looking at the art pieces, I asked, what if emerging commonalities from art do not answer my inquiry? To this, Maria advised, “stay in [the] intuitive and creative process for research as well. Just like how you did when you were making art” (personal communication, January 7, 2016). Similarly, Diamond and van Halen-Faber (2005) suggested, “intuitive folding and conscious unfolding” of understandings and thoughts assert “a poetic and visual sixth sense that transforms us [researchers]” (p. 92).

Embracing the creative and intuitive process of research, as a researcher, I found myself exploring the liminal spaces between *a/r/t* by engaging in the iterative process of meaning-making through art pieces, teaching practices, literature, and conversations with my critical friends. For Carter and Irwin (2014), this is the process of living inquiry. Living inquiry as *a/r/tographical* rendering allows one to take time to “slow down [and] move towards resonance and poetic ways of being that unfold levels of intensity that can be forgotten or ignored when one rushes through life, communications, and experiences” (pp. 16–17). By taking time to think more deeply, letting artful inquiry along with creativity and intuition take control of the research process, and deeply engaging in the iterative process between *a/r/t*, I experienced that “the spaces in-between these [artist, researcher, and teacher selves] disappear, instead strengthening each identity by allowing for new directions, approaches, ideas to emerge” (p. 4). As McNiff (2008) explained, when a person stays with the creative process, the process generates the unexpected. Commonalities between art pieces came very naturally, unlike the thematic analysis I attempted with written reflection. The unexpected in the research process illuminated a new understanding of my teaching practice.

Process 3: Becoming a Teacher-Educator

I came across two major commonalities in the art pieces (Figures 2, 3, 4). They incorporated things from *nature*, such as trees and sky, and consisted of different *fragments*. Looking more closely, I attempted to “find and explore new patterns of meaning” as they emerged (Springgay et al., 2008, p. 89).

1. The organic nature of teaching: Trusting the process. Exploring the nature aspects of each piece allowed me to engage, understand, and embrace the organic nature of teaching. I drew from Ezcurra’s notion of organic—“following its own rhythms based on its necessity” (personal communication, January 15, 2016) and added that the organic nature of teaching (research and art-making) involves educators letting go. This notion of “surrender and let[ting] go of control” (Wilson, 2004, p. 28) leads us to the creative process. Letting go of control involves “trusting the process [which] is based on a belief that something valuable will emerge when we step into the unknown” (McNiff, 1998b, p. 27). Going into class every week and being unable to predict the teaching outcome was like entering unknown territory for me.

Through artful inquiry, I have started to understand and unpack this notion of “trusting the process” as well as the beauty of process, rather than outcomes in teaching. As seen in Figure 4, some trees have fruits but some don’t. However, just because some trees don’t have fruit, doesn’t mean that the tree cannot be seen as beautiful. Indeed, plants like the apple tree represent growth and vitality, and the different apple images represent teachers and education. For Diamond and van Halen-Faber (2005), “impermanence of . . . fruits (and flowers) [represents the] fragility and vulnerability that attend development” (p. 84).

While I agree, the organic process of teaching—the process of the growth of the tree and the relations the trees have with others in nature that influence the growth of the tree—must be recognized rather than focusing solely on the outcome—the fruits. This was reflected in my written reflection while working on Figure 3. I did not like the colour combination. However, I reflected,

... being process-driven is more important and now I have started to appreciate the process more than the outcome. . . . Today, students might not understand the material and the class might not go as planned, but I will enjoy the inquiry, the interaction, the challenge, and the inability to predict. (Week 4, October 7, 2015)

I have learned to let go of control in my artistic and teaching practice. This doesn’t necessarily mean letting go of control of the classroom. Rather, it represents tuning

oneself into the process, in the moments and conversations with students, and trusting the creative process in teaching practice that is illuminated from embracing the unknown. Letting go of control reflects curriculum-as-lived, which is “unplanned and unplannable” and “experienced by students and teachers as they live” (Aoki, 2000, p. 322). Letting go of control led me to experience curriculum-as-lived:

Though I felt anxious in the beginning of the first class, I noticed that anxiety was gone as I channelled more into the conversations with the students. . . . When I was going over the discourse moves I used with the students, I realized, and admitted, that I didn't use one particular discourse move. I think it was the first time I shared with my students about “my failures/mistakes” as their teacher. . . . When a teachable moment emerged in the class, I turned to pre-service teachers to explore the phenomenon together. I am becoming more comfortable being collaborative with my students in learning and constructing knowledge and experience together. (Week 6, October 21, 2015)

This was also the first time in my teaching career I let go of the pressure of being a perfect teacher and started to accept my identity as teacher vis-à-vis learner. Like trees, fruits, and birds, things in nature continue to grow. Porter (2004) stated teacher-educators need to “model lifelong learning [which] gives students reasons to learn beyond marks. We all become learners asking questions in a classroom where the primary goal is to help each other find the answers” (p. 111). Embracing my role as teacher vis-à-vis learner allows me to trust the continuous process of constructing knowledge with my students where “more meaningful connections among teachers, students, and subject matter” (p. 124) are being made. From their self-studies, Diamond and van Halen-Faber (2005) also asserted that in the research project that emerged from their teaching and artistic projects, they confirmed “once again” their identities as “a teacher-of-teachers and a learner-of-my-own-learning” (p. 92). As for me as well—if it wasn't for my artistic practice, I would never have realized the organic, letting-it-go process of teaching.

2. The fragments of identities: Re-weaving understandings. The art pieces consist of different fragments. In Figure 2, different colours used for the clouds and sky, and the contrast between the pastel colours of the fuzzy clouds and fruits and the bright vivid colours of the flowers, make one piece. Figure 3 and Figure 4 consist of different pictures and/or types of materials. Looking at different fragments across these art pieces led me to unpack my experience and relationship to collaborative teaching with other instructors.

Initially, when working in a collaborative teaching team I felt like I needed to meet the instructional goals for each lesson and be perfect—because I understood collaboration as the completion of my part for the community. Being in such a team makes your teaching public to not only students, but also other instructors. This notion of “making private public” (Pente, 2004, p. 97), which invites collaboration as well as criticism, made me uncomfortable. In the liminal spaces between me and other instructors, I felt tension, as I reflected in week 2: “Owning my class. Is it my class? Or is it Dawn’s (lecture instructor) class? Or is it “our class?”” I also discussed the personal tension I felt from reflecting on our practices together.

I found myself reluctant to listen and accept Sara’s [the other lab instructor] comments when I brought up the issues of students talking and disturbing others. . . . Sara gave me the same feedback as my other inquiry group. . . . Why? (Week 4, October 7, 2015)

As I partook in the a/r/tographical process of understanding my teaching practices, I realized that as each of my a/r/t identities were brought to “being through encounters with other beings:” it was my collaborative teaching team “that maintain[ed] both the contiguity and the distinctiveness of each pattern [of individual teaching philosophy and teaching],” yet informed each other’s practices and grew together (Springgay et al., 2008, p. 86). The tension I felt with other instructors became a new form of understanding, as seen in my final reflection:

I am grateful that I had such a wonderful teaching team from whom I learned a lot. I used to go to Sara’s class to observe if the activities work well and the flow of class discussion. I didn’t tell her what to do—because it was her class. Although we teach collaboratively, and Dawn is the course instructor, it was Sara’s class. Collaborative teaching informs each other’s progress, and the activity planning, but there are still boundaries. “Owning own’s class” is still there. (Week 12, December 2, 2015)

Albeit the contiguity between fragments in art still remain, the separate fragments make one art piece. Through reflecting and planning with others, I am re-weaving my understanding and experiences in teaching into a new form. Collaborative teaching requires letting go, trusting the unknown, and embracing the process of being “collaborative.”

Our team had diverse education backgrounds and teaching experience. To create art, I selected pieces, and assembled them aesthetically. As an artistic way of knowing, teaching is a performative way of knowing that artists and teachers select, do, and show (Hamilton, 2005). As my identity as a teacher-educator evolved,

so did other instructors' identities and philosophies. Our collaborative teaching team, as a community, was "re-imag(e)-ined as a set of circumstances [individuals] that are not fixed but are ever evolving" (Springgay et al., 2008, p. 83). We, as a teaching team, were all part of the relationships and part of the creative process—teaching—together. Just as different fragments and layers in art pieces come together as one creative product, my a/r/t identities inform each other and teacher-educators collaborate and inform each other.

McNiff (2008) outlined "talking is a way of thinking and knowing [where] important insights emerge from the flow of conversation focused on a particular experience" (p. 36). He valued the "spontaneity" of evoking different perspectives during the process of sharing, which creates a new understanding that is overshadowed when individuals attempt to collect thoughts in isolation (McNiff, 2008). As a continuously evolving community, our teaching team is part of our relations to ourselves and others and the process of becoming pedagogical together. As seen in Figure 2, "incorporating sparkles, blue, red, yellow—the sky background represents pieces coming together. It is all part of something and it is the process that makes it fun" (Week 4, October 7, 2015).

Continuing an Ongoing, Open-Ended Process

Through this arts-based self-study, I learned the relationship between artistic, research, and teaching practices. I witnessed the reciprocal process between these practices and how they inform one another. Through making connections between my practices, I explored and learned the benefits of being process-driven rather than outcome-driven, letting go in my a/r/t practices, as well as the beauty of the contiguous, evolving nature of my identities and the teaching community I am part of. I view this article as living inquiry—an "embodied engagement with the world" (Gouzouasis et al., 2013, p. 3). The lessons I learned, identities I constructed, and visual arts and written reflections produced through this study will also continue to evolve as readers comment on, and I reread, this article. The article itself is my way of engaging with the world, thus continuing to be in the process of *becoming pedagogical*. I conclude with my final reflection essay, wherein I reflect on the nature of being in a continuously evolving process of learning.

Final Tension and Ongoing Learning

Throughout this journey, my research questions have been evolving. As I looked at my journals and art again, the themes arose—yet didn't quite answer the formed research questions. The data itself generated its own findings. Questions themselves also evolved as my a/r/tographer identities evolved. I also can't seem to finish my apple inside apple piece, which I wanted to be the closing piece that would summarize my becoming pedagogical process.



Fig. 6: A messy process

When I spoke to Maria about the tension I feel about having closure, she said: “Amy you don’t have to finish the piece. It is still ongoing. It is open-ended process. It’s a reciprocal process. They feed each other—your art and writing. It is a more organic process. Writing this paper finishes the first stage of the process. Writing and getting feedback from readers will inform your artistic, research, teaching practices” (personal communication, January 15, 2016). She suggested that I try to free-write. She said, “write everything freely and see what happen, write like you make your art. Use intuition” (personal communication, January 15, 2016). This is how I am writing now. I followed my intuition and made art freely, and writing let the feelings and lessons emerge to the surface. For me, artful inquiry led to growth in artistic, writing, arts-based research and teaching, as well as understanding and creating a teaching community that I go to for reflection and growth.

It Is All Part of the Process: Becoming Pedagogical Through Artful Inquiry

A new semester has started. In my current role as an instructor of a secondary science teaching method course, I am not nervous like I was before. I understand now that it is all part of the process.

Note

1. Maria Ezcurra gave full permission to identify her by name and use direct quotations from our conversations. She reviewed the quotations before submission.

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Suicide Is Painless: An Autoethnography of Tragedy

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ABSTRACT

This autoethnographic duet is an artful inquiry about the tragedy of a beginning music teacher. A painful story about a music teacher and sexual allegations from an adolescent female, our composition blends music and story to transform understandings through creative engagement and push the boundaries to evoke visceral and emotional responses regarding suicide. Sociocultural issues draw deep reflection about wider political issues that arise for teachers who display difficulties with moral issues and misguided choices. The epiphany-epiphony (Gouzouasis, 2013) through story and music reveals the cultural irony of ideology and secrecy in professional misconduct. Unfortunately, in this circumstance, the outcome was catastrophic.

A phone call changes my being. Words heard in a slow blur. I stare in space like a catatonic actor, ruined by the news. If I don't say his name, I won't feel anything. If I don't feel anything, I can be numb. I decide to visit my colleague, and share the life changing news.

"Hi, Peter."

As usual, he's playing the guitar in his office, yet another finger style arrangement of a jazz tune.

"What's up, Karen?" he responds, as he continues to finger pick the opening bars from the refrain of the Johnny Mandel tune, "Suicide Is Painless."

"Something happened to one of our past students. I need to share his story."

“Okay, first listen to this.” For a moment, Peter plays the Bill Evans version of the same song from his massive iTunes collection.¹ He’s using it to learn the lush, intricate, harmonic progressions and chord substitutions that Evans uses in his arrangement.

“You know the song, it’s from Evan’s last set of live recordings in 1980. He died 15 days later. In the mid-1980s, an old friend, jazz writer Gene Lees, called Bill’s death ‘the longest suicide ever.’”

Karen is visibly agitated, her brow laden with a sadness that he hasn’t seen before.

“Sorry, Karen, tell me. Do I know him?” He turns the music way down, but it continues to softly play the refrain in the background.

“Yes, you do. I recall meeting him in 2004. He was 25 years old. It was a new term with new students. Always the same orientation and daily routine. Warmly, I greet each student with soothing music in the background. I monitor student moves by noticing those figuring out how to gain high marks from me. Students eager to learn: course content, tests, and instructor expectations. There are some faint, conspiratorial whispers out of range. For the next hour, I share my routine of breaking the ice like dim sum at a fancy Asian restaurant—tapas dishes of this, of that, with several doses of exotic food to entice student interests. Students engage in an icebreaker game. Their mouths move while they write on the page. Each student must gather three facts about other students, then share one fact with the cohort and explain why they’re in the teaching degree program.”

“Sure, I know your routines, Karen. What happened?”

Usually it’s Peter who’s telling long-winded stories about music and life, but this time he senses Karen’s heavy heart and the need to listen to her pour out her emotions.

“I remember when he first entered the music room, salt and pepper hair with a sporty jeans and T-shirt. He carried himself with a boyish charm. He sat and smiled and spoke in hushed tones. His listeners laughed and giggled. Snippets of conversations between students came into range, but I’d already sensed the dynamics and attitudes. No blinders. He blipped my radar by typical, Dreikurs, attention-seeking behaviour. A few wisecracks and smart remarks, but it was obvious he was cocky. As teacher, you know the kind, Peter. He talks to a young blonde female who wears shorts. Quickly, he moves and mingles with a much heavier blonde, who laughs. Probably another wisecrack. He shakes her hand and moves again.”

For a brief moment I wondered, 'What are the odds he'll chat up another female?' But I knew the answer in advance. Surely, my daughter would call him a player. Suddenly, it was time to end the activity. As I gave the hand signal, he quickly gestures he'll return to the first blonde in shorts.

"Thanks, everyone. Now, for our sharing session," I announced.

An exception to every rule extends to new pre-service students because they can be silly. Facts start to pour out and there's laughter. I laughed. They laughed. Icebreakers involve folly and humor. It's the jitter and jest of meeting new people. We get in a groove and everyone shares information about others and themselves. Next. And next. And finally, it's his turn.

"Who is this character, Karen? You're keeping me on edge."

Karen ignores Peter's plea and pushes the story forward.

"I'm in this program to cruise for chicks," he bows and everyone giggles, "and to meet a trophy wife."

A strange character, he always made smart remarks with caustic quips. He is what he is with his cool, maverick attitude. I call on him for answers in class, but he reveals minimal depth in thinking. He asks the same questions that have already been answered. Is he distracted?

As class moved forward, so far, so good, as I decided to invite him to be a research participant for my doctoral inquiry on musicians-becoming-teachers.

"Sure, I have lots to tell you," he responded.

"I think I know who this person is," Peter says with a quizzical expression. Karen continues her story, moving in and out of tenses as if she's reliving the experiences she had with this "smooth operator."

Many voice messages went unanswered, and he was indecisive about a date and time for the interview. Finally, I arrived at his apartment building and noticed several rugged and scruffy people. A fearsome looking street thug smoking a cigarette eyes my parking skills. I'd not anticipated this area requiring extra precautionary measures. So, I put the security bar on the steering wheel of my Honda Civic. He lived on the first floor of an unkempt low-rise apartment building in Mount Pleasant.

I buzz his suite number and he responds from his balcony. As I enter his apartment, it's obvious he doesn't value cleanliness. With three dirty cats, pet smell, cat pee on the carpet, and more filth, I sneeze and sneeze. Cruddy dishes litter the counters with piles in the sink. His clothes are hung on doorknobs and chairs. I sense his unease.

"Sorry, I just woke up. Have a seat."

"Where? I need to plug in my tape recorder."

"Okay, I'll find an outlet somewhere."

During the interview, he answers coyly. Our chat confirms his stunted development—he's very young, very immature, and that's confirmed by a hint of arrogance. He tells me he doesn't have many music gigs, even though he deserves them due to his high musicianship skills. He wasn't in the local musicians' union. A few bucks here and there from odd gigs. After some interviewing, he shifts my attention to several bargains in his apartment.

"For extra cash, he sells amplifiers, mikes, guitars, some synths, and turntables galore. When he says 'Aye aye and good buy,' I laugh and see his humour draws to his apartment being an offshoot of 'The Captain's,' a rotund reseller of used, pawn shop merchandise who has poorly produced, incoherent commercials on late-night television. It's not merely an apartment but a musical emporium, as he sells cut-rate wares."

"I know who this person is now, but I forget his name. He seemed to be a time waster—talked a good gig but never wanted to sit down and pull some strings with me. It seemed like he had something to say, but an attention deficit buzz always had him moving from one topic to another, never wanting to talk about music teaching and learning," Peter interjects, "and he always wanted to sell me broken amplifiers he'd found on Craig's List."

Karen pushes on with her story. She has to get it all out.

"Yeah, I know, but a question of provenance flitted through my mind. Except for disease and pandemic in his apartment, this was a musician's dream. I recall seeing the acoustic guitar that some would call a treasure. A low price here, a discount there, I know I could buy an item for cheap. It was the Captain's scruffy first mate. Clearly, he had a secret preoccupation as pawnshop owner."

"Someday, I hoped he'd have a better life. Someday, I hoped a life in teaching would resolve his financial issues. I thanked him and said I'd call to clarify the interview. He urged me to make a deal and buy something ... anything. Clearly, his enthusiasm was reserved for chicks and selling instruments, and not for school.

I left, inevitably, concluding that the interview was thin. I was so *done*. I needed to physically remove myself from the fetid chaos to detoxify from the sensory overload. Too much dirt and clutter in his apartment. It was about the worst environment possible for studying. I considered calling a biohazard crew. And even more distressingly, there was so little depth to his interview responses. That is, except for his *real* story—he couldn't hide from his identity as a filthy hoarder."

I think about him, his words, and what I want to learn from him. I think about these things as I eat, walk, work, read, shower, and answer the phone. My last thought before I sleep, my first thought when I awake, "Aye aye, Good buy."

"That guy was some character. What happened, Karen?"

"It's like a horrible dream. My mind fails to process what I was told. This kind of news is the worst kind of news. But it's no mistake." I stare. Stare, because I don't know where I'm going or what I'm doing. It seems like I was hallucinating. I'm in a horrible neighbourhood inhabited by horrible people—drug dealers and addicts, criminals, and ex-cons. There are drugs and booze in paper bags, pipes, and hard-looking people.

Today, my life is hidden beneath a cold, frozen shell. The air is black and leaves are thick. I can't see anything from nights with streams of tears. The sickness drags me into bed. Knocks me out of life. I get into the shower and turn up the heat to wash sickness and guilt and shame from my body. Watch it gather at the drain and crush it with my feet. Make it disappear.

There are remnants of bile in my mouth. A small incision in my cheek from a bite brings a taste of blood.

"Some think I'm a strong person, but I'm not when students don't do well. I recall his youthful glow when talking about 'good buys.' His pride at phoning me to say he accepted a teaching position. A few months later, he was exuberant about getting married to a beautiful elementary school teacher. I try to forget his face but can't. What had really happened?"

"You tell me, Karen, what *really* happened?"

"It's like a home movie on an endless loop. I can't stop hearing him say, 'I'm in this program to cruise for chicks.' But there must have been more to his story. Much more. I've always felt that teachers enter the profession not only to advocate their subject matter, but also the matter of life. We can be models of normalcy, of love, of trust, of happiness, of future, of friendship, of self, of sanity, of dignity, of humanity. But his life took a turn and reduces me to a lump of grief and heartache; his teaching ambitions were a smokescreen. I admit there were red flags and I never called him on it. It was all a lie. He knew what Groucho Marx meant by, 'If you can fake sincerity, the world is your oyster.' And so, Peter, there is much more to this story."

"After successfully teaching music at a local high school for a few years, a female high school student approaches the principal, accompanied by her parents. There are allegations of sexual harassment. Immediately, he was forced to take a leave of absence. Shocked faces meet shocked faces with voices becoming louder and more urgent."

I can only imagine what happened next. Half cocked, he returns home, a reminder that he is head over heels in debt. He parks in his garage and leaves the key in the ignition. Getting out of the car, he closes the garage door. He finds his music, Metallica's "Fade to Black" (Hetfield, Ulrich, Burton, & Hammett, 1984):

Life, it seems, will fade away
Drifting further every day
Getting lost within myself
Nothing matters, no one else.

I have lost the will to live
Simply nothing more to give
There is nothing more for me
Need the end to set me free.

No one but me can save myself, but it's too late
Now I can't think, think why I should even try.

Yesterday seems as though it never existed
Death greets me warm, now I will just say goodbye.

Throwing aside the many hoarded items in his garage, he finds a long hose. He connects the hose over the car exhaust pipe and turns the music louder. No cavalry in sight. No strength from his body. No wisecracks from his lips. Instead, I

hear the arpeggiated acoustic guitar and screaming electric guitar accompaniment of “Fade to Black.” There is light-headedness and confusion. Drunk and tipsy, he tries to get out of the car. But he’s tired and spent. He gets back inside the car and closes the window. Slumping in the seat, he closes his eyes while his head leans back. As the music gets louder, there are dense clouds of fumes in the garage leaking into the car.

It takes all my strength to see, to inhale it all. To accept that toxic levels of carbon monoxide can asphyxiate. And it did.

Exegesis

The notion of sharing epiphanies is an early feature of autoethnography, and was particularly developed within this genre (Bochner & Ellis 1992; Pelias, 2000; Banks & Banks, 2000; Couser, 1997; Gouzouasis & Lee, 2002; Sparkes, 2002). In other papers, Gouzouasis (2008a, 2008b) coined the term “epiphony” in reference to a realization that is evoked through sound, specifically, music. That is because the suffix, *phony* means *sound* (in Greek, φωνή), and for musicians in particular, important discoveries about the self and others (e.g., music students, peers, colleagues) are often based upon acoustic experiences. And acoustic experiences require both sound production and listening, to the self and to others, to comprehend a situation or tale and relate it to personal and other experiences (Gouzouasis & Leggo, 2016).

As an enlightened realization, an epiphany (in Greek, “epiphania”) is often spurred by an object or event that enables the individual to make an inference or develop a new, deeper understanding of a phenomenon. Some may think of an epiphany as the result of a process. But the coincidence of Peter playing an arrangement of the song, “Suicide Is Painless” (Mandel & Altman, 1970) was a harbinger of the story that Karen courageously unfolded that day in his office. We posit that music’s powerful ways of eliciting thoughts, images, and feelings (without and with lyrics) was a visceral provocation to *get the story out*. Karen’s *process* was embodied in reliving, and trying to make sense of, this tragic story of a young man who had a darkly colored, troubled past. Knowledge and wisdom are not the same, and we had neither; nor did we have the chance to speak with and offer help to our young teacher colleague. But someone could have offered hope—the hope that even though he may have committed a horrible mistake, he’d be able to reconstruct his life, someday and somehow, once the legal and personal issues had been settled.

Pelias (2000) and Banks and Banks (2000) introduced the notion of the pedagogical nature of autoethnography—that autoethnography, in and of itself, may be interpreted as pedagogy (Banks & Banks, 2000). The aim of autoethnography, especially in artistically written stories, is to convey meanings and not merely portray facts (Ellis, 2004). In a broader conceptualization, autoethnography enables us to examine the *self* and the *other* in *relation to others* in various settings. That is because a broader, nuanced understanding of the word *auto* reveals that autoethnographies are the joining of the self (i.e., the *auto*, from the Greek, αὐτό), that (in Greek, *that* is also referred to as αὐτό), him *and* her (αὐτόν, auton and αὐτή, auti), them (εαυτών, eauton), those (αὐτά, auta), they (αυτοί, auti), culture (i.e., the *ethno*, εθνο), and writing (i.e., the *graphy*, γραφή) (see Gouzouasis & Ryu, 2015; Gouzouasis & Regier, 2015). Thus, from a holistic and relational perspective, autoethnography is about and the ways we enact music, lyrics, poetry, and story as well as how we compose those artistic expressions. A multifaceted understanding of αὐτό can bring us to new understandings of the self in relation to the world around us.

Our inquiry provides complex, multidimensional, artful pathways of understanding the arts-based researcher as artist/researcher/teacher (i.e., a/r/tographer). As we learn from the autoethnographic music and story telling—through the epiphany and epiphony—and the complex relationships between them, we learn to become more reflective, we learn to compose, we learn to listen to each other, we learn trust, we learn to lead a critical life (Pelias, 2000), we learn to become reflexive (Etherington 2004, 2007), and we learn new meanings of “that” (i.e., a secondary definition of αὐτό in Greek)—*that* which it means to create anew and *that* which is meaningful to storyteller-musicians—and all arts-based researchers who are firmly rooted in the arts and a commitment to lifelong art making. As we become more open to change, professional growth, listening, trust, and arts-based praxis, and we learn to better inquire through disciplinary and interdisciplinary frames of mind and co-create new arts-based forms, we *become pedagogical* (see Gouzouasis, Irwin, Gordon, & Miles, 2013).

With *that* in mind, we know that university advisors and professors are not equipped to counsel our students, particularly when they are hiding a troubled past and present. The lyrics of the song referred to at the outset of our story tell us:

The game of life is hard to play
I'm gonna lose it anyway
The losing card I'll someday lay
So this is all I have to say.

That suicide is painless
It brings on many changes
And I can take or leave it if I please.
I try to find a way to make
All our little joys relate
Without that ever-present hate
But now I know that it's too late, and ...

A brave man once requested me
To answer questions that are key
Is it to be or not to be
And I replied 'oh why ask me?'

It is astounding that a 14-year-old boy, the son of the director (Robert Altman) of “M*A*S*H” wrote these lyrics, inspired by a faux suicide that takes place in a scene toward the end of the film. While somber and somewhat macabre, that movie scene had a happy ending. In real life, we are not equipped with answers, and neither are most professionals in the psychiatric field. If at all, we're fortunate to get a happy ending. While we, and health professionals, may hypothesize “why” people try to take their lives—and there are six “popular” reasons (Lickerman, 2012; i.e., the person is depressed, is psychotic, is impulsive, is crying out for help, has a philosophical desire to die, has made a mistake)—we never get to ask the person who has taken his or her life, “Why did you do it?” We can only hypothesize; we can only try to place ourselves in that person's shoes. Obviously, the accusation of sexual harassment was too much for the young man to bear as he saw that all that he'd collected—a house, a great job, a beautiful wife, his seemingly valuable belongings—vanish before his eyes in the flash of a brief, life-changing meeting with a school administrator.

We offer this story as provocation to help us be more aware of, and consider, that much more goes on in the lives of pre-service teachers than we may be aware. We know of many artists who have taken their lives over the centuries. We are aware of the ways that artists and arts teachers deeply feel and express themselves through their media. We call for the ABER community to think of ways that our artistic sensibilities and sensitivities can be used to find ways to help those who may be in trouble to help themselves, and to find ways that their artful souls can heal and reach out for support from like-minded peers—artist-researcher-teachers.

Note

1. See the references (below) for the original recording information. The recording may also be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZDRk6HQ_ao

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A Poem Can: Poetic Encounters

Carl Leggo, University of British Columbia

ABSTRACT

All my adult life I have been a language and literacy educator in school and university classrooms. And for most of my adult life I have also been a poet. I read and write poetry; I teach poetry; I write about teaching poetry and about why poetry is important for living creatively in the world. In my poems I seek to remain open to possibilities for living poetically. I seek to see with the eyes of the heart and to hear with the ears of the heart. In a sequence of poems, citations, and ruminations, I ponder the significance of poetry.

What I felt when I wrote my first, clumsy poem was that the words were creating a world, not describing a pre-existing one. (Orr, 2002a, pp. 143–144)

What would happen if
all the poets in all the world
suddenly disappeared,
grew silent, lost their voices?

 live in language, and language lives in me. I am awash in language, espoused and exposed in language. While others are seeking election, or building towers, or seeking cures for diseases, or overseeing fast-food franchises, or inventing apps we cannot live without, I read, write, and teach poetry. I have enjoyed the immense privilege of pursuing an academic career at the University of British Columbia for more than a quarter century. UBC letterhead declares that the university is “a place of mind,” and, without doubt, it is. I am proud to be a professor in this internationally renowned “place of mind,” but I still wonder what might unfold if the university boldly pronounced

itself “a place of mindfulness.” I choose, deliberately and imaginatively, to live mindfully in the “place of mind.” UBC also has a longstanding Latin motto: *Tuum Est*, or “it is up to you.” I like this motto because it reminds me that I am daily making creative decisions about how I choose to live artfully, poetically, spiritually, intellectually, and heartfully.

Heaney (1995) writes:

I had already begun a journey into the wideness of the world. This in turn became a journey into the wideness of language, a journey where each point of arrival—whether in one’s poetry or one’s life—turned out to be a stepping stone rather than a destination... (p. 11)

Like Heaney I know how journeying in the wideness of the world entails “a journey into the wideness of language.” I have been reading and writing poetry for decades. I am never sure that I understand very much or that I have much to say, but I am compelled to promote poetry. Why is a poem significant? Do we really need poems, or is that just a poet’s hope for endorsement and response? What can a poem do? Like Dawn (2013) in her moving memoir, *How Poetry Saved My Life*, I hold fast to the creative energy of poetry for helping us live with hope and wellness in the world. Dawn asks, “What does it mean to be given the rare and privileged opportunity to have a voice? To me, it means possibility and responsibility” (p. 13). As I ruminate on this “possibility and responsibility,” I consider four ways I can complete the sentence stem: A poem can....

1. A poem can heal.

under a moon, almost full,
I am learning to listen
for cherry blossoms
like a new alphabet
for calling out love

I have known much brokenness in my life. I wear the wounds and scars of many decisions, disappointments, desires, debts, and dreams. I turned to poetry as a young man whose life seemed to be swirling out of control. I was tangled in one crisis after another. I wrote in a journal, seeking some explanation or narration for the chaos that simultaneously sapped my energy like a heavy cloud or tossed me about like a scarecrow in a whirlwind. As I wrote in my journal, I slowly learned that writing poetry can be healing. Orr (2002b) promotes the “enormous transformative

power" (p. 6) of poetry and story-making because they help us "to live" (p. 21). In all my writing, I am seeking ways to live with wellness. I heartily agree with Neilsen Glenn (2011) that, "poetry is the grace we can find in the everyday" (p. 117). All my life I have been searching. I am just never sure if I know what I am searching for. Like Gide (1970), "all through my life I have never sought to know myself; that is to say I have never sought myself" (p. 197). I search, but I am not searching "to know myself." I search in order to live, to become, to explore possibilities in a kind of creative wanderlust. I am engaged in "the perpetual and elusive process of becoming" (p. 197). Poetry is my companion on the journey.

Thirteen Meditations in the Dentist's Chair

1

in the liminal space of February
I take stock like a shopkeeper:
 go to the dentist
 buy tires for the CRV
 remember colleagues
 who might need prayer

2

beginning the day
with a root canal
 reminds me
 how much
 I love life

3

there are
 many kinds of love
and I have been blessed
 to know some,
 likely far more
 than many
but long love
 lasting love
love shaped on a last
 is the love
I thank God for
 daily

4

we join God
 in prayer
not because we need
to remind God
or persuade God
or cajole God
like an inattentive parent
checking Facebook
but because God
invites us to enter
the divine energy
of endless creation

5

sitting in Dr. Carter's chair
I pray for friends:
 Harry is dying in Maple Ridge
 Regina is living with cancer
 William is dying in North Van
 Doris is living with cancer

6

Carrie claims nothing means
 anything anymore
but doesn't everything mean
 something, perhaps
we have forgotten how to be

7

what if my prayers are
 foolish and futile,
offered into the stratosphere
 like an expulsion of air?

what if there is no God?

8

prayer is a way of breathing
oxygen spirit pneuma

prayer is a way of leaning into
the world, refusing to surrender

9

I don't know what prayer is
but in the moments of each day
something won't let me go,
something tantalizing,
desire's constant goad

10

perhaps prayer is a message
tapped in Morse code
on the stone walls of our cells

11

at a conference in San Francisco
with thousands of other educators
one colleague said, I am
suspicious of anyone
who talks about hope

12

would I stop praying
even if somebody
proved definitively God
doesn't exist?

13

on this gray wet day in Lent
while the world rotates
with slow heavy rhythms,
I offer a brief prayer
as I remember you fondly,
often, a hallowed haunting

2. A poem can teach us.

may our teaching
sing with the vital voices
of poets in love, longing
for the possibilities
of words for translating
each day's demands

It is a marvellous privilege to be a teacher—to engage daily with others in reading and writing, talking and listening, making and interpreting. I am now a Facebook friend with former students I taught in the 1970s. They were 12 or 13 years old when I first met them in our grade seven classroom. I was 22. From the stories they post on Facebook, I know that their stories have been at least as complicated and tangled as mine. I wonder what we learned together. I remember the copious worksheets and notes on the blackboard and lists of rules, definitions, and facts. I was always seeking to control the curriculum, the classroom, the commotion, the chaos. Gide (1970) reminds me that, “we are deceived by words, for language imposes on us more logic than often exists in life; and that the most precious part of ourselves is that which remains unformulated” (p. 197). I needed more poetry when I began teaching. Poetry is not wedded (or welded) to logic. While poetry can certainly avail of the rhetorical purposes and processes of logical thinking and discourse, poetry thrives on imagery, music, intuition, imagination, indirection, and silence. Poetry works with form in order to challenge formula and formulaic uses of language.

Heavy Work

In your poetry language is doing the heavy work.
(anonymous reviewer)

a

deciding what to leave
in heavy work

b

belonging longing to be

c

instead of being in opposition
I want to be in apposition

d

there is no prize in surprize

e

what happened happened

f

fun fundament fundamentalism

forgets the fundament of fun

g

untangling the knot in monotony metonymy

h

how are you? well you?

well I think

not sure? not really

not really? a real knot

i

my calling is to love words

in their mystery

j

a poem is wild with longing

the longing for light

and night

k

I want to live

in the world

like a word

that lives love

l

angry with acronyms: IT, clRcle, FGPS FSC

acrimonious acronyms arousing arachnophobia

m

morning mourning moaning Monday moaning

n

aesthetic

writing life into meaning

an/aesthetic

writing meaning into life

o

if I write on this page without ink,
am I writing? can I think without ink?

p

I carry my working class baggage

like a turtle shell

Sisyphus' rock

a hoarder's U-Haul

q

I have wrapped myself in a quilt of guilt

r

consumed, but not defined

by regrets still

leaning into each day's hope

s

it was a dark and stormy

morning all the difference

t

is life a run-on sentence?

u

when I receive a speeding ticket,

I include it in my CV as a citation

v

my daily planner fills up faster
than a Newfoundland backyard
in a November snowstorm

w

delusions of both
gravity and levity

x

after his wife Ruth died, a neighbour said,
he is now ruthless

y

yearning for learning
yearning for you your yearning
learning with yearning

z

deciding what to leave
 out heavy work

3. A poem can show us the way.

poetry is fired
in the alchemy
of the alphabet
where letters know
our stories steeped
in autumn's hope

I grew up in Newfoundland where winter is typically long, where the wind can stir up a snowstorm without warning. I have often leaned into winter storms, seeking my way in the wind-whipped snow that renders everything white and formless. I have been lost in snowstorms. I have been lost in many stories, too. On countless occasions, I have not been able to see the beginning of my day's journey, and I have certainly not been able to see any destination I might be hoping for, any destination waiting for me. Poetry is a companion on the way. Poetry accompanies me on the journey of

being and becoming. Parini (2008) notes that, “the truth of poetry is symbolic truth, in that it cannot be verified by conventional means. It differs massively from scientific or philosophical truth, both of which make truth claims that lie outside the boundaries of poetry” (p. 100). To engage with poetry is to live in the heart’s way, to acknowledge the truthfulness of emotion and experience as significant teachers. We read and write poetry because poetry weaves language in texts that speak to us and move us and tantalize us. But, as Parini claims, “the poem is also a labyrinth. One makes a journey through the poem, from beginning to end, moving within the space of the work, its boundaries, tracking its labyrinth or pattern” (pp. 100–101). Like each living day, we seek the way in a labyrinth. Poetry can show us the way.

Fragments or Fractals

like a line of poetry
seeking its apt shape
on the page, may you
follow the light
of poetry calling you

+

does everything have a voice,
singing a song we need to hear?

+

semantic semiotic symbolic somatic

+

like you can’t put new wine
in old wine skins, new ways of
knowing need new kinds of writing

+

what is the *con* in context?

+

is the glamour in grammar
a magical evocation
of hopeful possibilities?

+

what is the etymology of nincompoop?

+

beginning a new cliché:
love makes the world go Mobius

+

found poem
(did it know it was lost?)

+

a poem is porous
but not poor

+

what is the *syn* in syntax?

+

he lost his story
and with it, his way

+

since my life is a collection
of short stories I will
begin a new draft

+

the root of truth is play

+

what is the middle of a muddle?

+

fund (past tense of fun)

+

love is indefinable, and hence poets
are always seeking to define it

+

what do you hear when
you listen to a flower?

4. A poem can linger.

the early evening light
in my neighbour's cedar
invites me to be still

When I moved to the University of British Columbia in 1990, I moved into an office in Ponderosa Annex E, and during 25 years, I gathered many books and memories. Recently, I packed up the remnants of my old UBC office and moved to a new location in a new building where I am beginning new stories. The new building is called Ponderosa Commons. My UBC offices have always been located near a gigantic Ponderosa pine. My Department Head saw me looking out my new office window, attending to the Ponderosa pine that animates my new view, and he wondered if a poem might be coming soon. Of course!

Pondering the Ponderosa Pine

*My work is rooted in silence.
It grows out of deep beds
of contemplation, where words,
which are living things,
can form and re-form
into new wholes.
(Jeanette Winterson)*

for more than twenty-five years you have greeted me
on treks to Scarfe for meetings and more meetings,
or seeking coffee, the high-octane fuel of scholars,
or sitting in your shade, sipping coffee, pondering
if I really need to attend another meeting

I will not render you a metaphor
in this poem
I will not anthropomorphize you
like a Disney cartoon
I will not sentimentalize your saga of survival
from weather, pests, and chainsaws
I will not pretend hermeneutically
I know your essence

I will not claim I can name
your existence in

post-structuralist
post-materialist
post-human
post-modern
post-feminist
post-colonialist

discourses, enough posts to build a fence around Ben Cartwright's Ponderosa

your wildness cannot be contained in my poem
any more than I can hold the moon's fullness in a pail

ever green, ever rooted, ever patient,
ever willing to teach us if we are willing to learn

teach us to remember we are guests
on an ancient land with countless stories

teach us to walk tenderly with one another,
filled with memories and hopes for others, too

teach us to know this place of mind
is also a place of mindfulness

in these last years I have at UBC
I will loiter often with you, and even if
I write fewer poems or papers, I might
yet learn to live like a scholar who knows
learning always begins with lingering

we no longer dwell in an annex
like an appendix or supplement

we will not pine for the Ponderosa Annexes
as we settle into the Ponderosa Commons

let us now dance an Argentinian tango
with light and shadow, with the rhythms
of the seasons, with the ebb and flow
of students and colleagues as we compose
new stories with the alphabet's possibilities,
new stories rooted in memory and imagination

In/conclusion

I heartily agree with Orr (2002b) that, "an awareness of the disorderly and chaotic world we inhabit is a fundamental aspect of being human" (p. 16). Poetry is both a part of that awareness and a significant epistemological and ontological way to engage with inhabiting a "chaotic world" in words so we can be and become human.

In ways I understand only a little,
poetry fills me with hope for each day's journey.
May we continue our searching for
new possibilities for living well together.
Let our scholarship sing in new voices,
call out with enthusiasm for the possibilities
of loving poetry and living poetically.

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Creating Spaces for Arts-Informed Responses in Teacher Education Programs

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ABSTRACT

We address the benefits and challenges of using an arts-informed response in an undergraduate teacher education course from the perspective of a teacher and two students. Feminist pedagogies provide the theoretical lens through which our experiences are analyzed. From the teacher's perspective, this arts-informed approach modeled to pre-service teachers how they could use arts-informed inquiry in their future classrooms, to engage in conscious raising about inequality, while meeting different learning styles in their classrooms. From the students' perspective, it was surprising to be invited to do an arts-informed reading response. Acceptance depended on the perception of risk. Our conclusion is that more space should be created for arts-informed approaches in undergraduate teacher education programs.

Elementary school curricula often contain detailed specifications for the teaching of literary, visual, and performing arts, yet undergraduate students enrolled in teacher education programs tend to be surprised when they are asked to engage in arts-informed inquiry in their course work. We posit that pre-service teachers can benefit from teaching strategies that illustrate and model how to incorporate the arts across the curriculum. Our paper explores the incorporation of an arts-informed reading response in an undergraduate course designed to teach pre-service teachers about global education and social justice. We highlight what the arts helped the teacher and students to “see” differently, as well as the reasons why (even if students are trained in visual or performing arts), they may still choose to do the

traditional essay-type response to a reading. We conclude with a critical discussion on the arts and accessibility, and offer suggestions for research and teaching.

The benefit that the arts bring to teaching and learning in the school curriculum is well documented. Incorporating literary, visual, and performing arts in the school curriculum is thought to be beneficial to students, improving their mental health, self-confidence, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Art in the curriculum encourages risk taking because students use their creativity. Moreover, it encourages diversity and promotes multiculturalism in schools (Roeger & Kim, 2013). Among the implications for the teaching profession, Gulatt (2008) argues that the arts promote the role of teachers as facilitators of learning, and not dispensers of knowledge. Integrating arts into the curriculum uses knowledge in authentic ways, instead of simply reproducing knowledge (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). Maxine Greene argued that the arts allow for conscious awakening and questioning of taken-for-granted myths. Thus, when the arts inform the school curriculum, teaching and learning can, in the words of Paulo Freire (2005), “provoke learner consciousness” to challenge the status quo and imagine a different world.

Efland (1990) explained that historically, access to arts instruction was shaped by social class and gender. For instance, working-class women could study decorative arts, while fine arts instruction was reserved for men. Today, teaching of literary, performing, and visual arts is one of the focal points of elementary and high school curricula. In elementary schools there is the expectation, based on the curricula, that students will have the opportunity to engage in cross-curricular integrated learning. This is stipulated in both the Ontario curriculum and the Quebec Education Program. The curriculum is expected to provide students with integrated learning opportunities where they draw on the arts to gain or present insights into their other subject areas. The Ontario curriculum promotes “learning through the arts,” and states,

Various aspects of the arts can also be used to illuminate other aspects of the school curriculum or to help develop students’ skills in other subjects. For example, teachers may have students demonstrate their learning in other subjects by using artistic modes of expression. Through integration of the arts with other subjects, students can also develop broader abilities – for example, communication skills. (Ontario Ministry of Education, *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8, The Arts*, p. 6)

The Quebec Education Program dedicates a section that specifies the ways that cross-curricular competencies should be developed in the schools. All teachers are expected to help students to develop their artistic skills by incorporating the arts in their specific subject areas.

Creating Spaces for Arts-Informed Responses in Teacher Education Programs

The emphasis on integrating or infusing the arts across the curriculum generally occurs before tertiary level schooling. However, there appears to be burgeoning interest in the idea of integrating arts into the curriculum in higher education. Van der Veen (2012) provided an example of incorporating arts in college physics to reduce barriers to the language of physics. He suggested that having college students draw their understanding of a journal article or concept in physics was a powerful way of assessing students' prior knowledge and attitudes toward science. Izmirli and Baird (2002) provided a model for integrating arts and technology in college. They reported that the combination gave students greater appreciation for the aesthetics in computer science projects, and made computer science more attractive to the students who perceived themselves to be artistic. Although these authors did not locate their work with the movement advocating arts in Science, Technology, Engineering ARTs and Math, (STEAM), the goal of STEAM applies to their approaches. The goal of incorporating the arts into science is to foster and enhance creativity as well as the risk taking needed to advance the application of science to solve problems innovatively (Root-Bernstein, 2008).

In the field of teacher education, arts-based inquiry is used as a form of qualitative research to improve the development of teacher research (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). Less has been written about the experience of incorporating the arts across curricula in undergraduate teacher education courses. Furthermore, existing research shows that efforts to use arts in teacher education programs were not always well received by students. Hirsch (2010) found that student teachers were resistant to the incorporation of arts in their social studies curriculum. She reported that the students felt it was a "waste of time, demeaning and silly" (p. 323). Our paper is located within the field of inquiry of using arts in teaching in higher education, but outside traditional literary, visual, and performing arts classes. We aim to explore the benefits and challenges associated with incorporating the arts into university curriculum in a course designed to teach about social justice. Our work contributes to the scholarship on incorporating the arts across teacher education programs. The paper presents the perspectives of a teacher and two students (a vocalist and a musician).

Teacher's Perspectives on Arts-Informed Approaches

I (Lerona) had taken a graduate course in arts-informed inquiry and I had come to appreciate the benefits of the arts in research. For instance, I explored found poetry as a research tool. *Found poetry* is poetry that is created when words in narratives,

popular texts, or even existing poetry are transformed to the poetic form by altering for example, the spacing, and line breaks. The resulting poem can represent what would otherwise go unnoticed (Butler-Kisber, 2002, 2010). During this graduate course, I also explored collages, photovoice, readers' theatre, and other forms of arts-based inquiry. I had come to understand what Maxine Greene (2001) meant when she talked about the meanings that may be released because of an encounter with art, and that the arts are "modes of sense-making" (p. 41). For example, Greene explained that poetry is created by writers who are moved to make metaphors after exploring the phenomenological world and selecting the parts that have potential meaning to them.

My experience with the arts began before university. From childhood to early adulthood, I was dancer trained in modern and folk dance. As a choreographer and performer, I knew intimately that dance could be used to tell stories from multiple perspectives. My prior experience as a performer and my work with arts-informed research gave me the impetus to integrate arts-informed approaches in undergraduate teaching. The response from students was generally negative in the first course in which I introduced an arts-informed project. In their anonymous online evaluations, students expressed the view that the arts-informed project was "silly" and that they simply "made up things." I did not abandon the idea of arts-informed coursework. Instead, I reduced the percentage of their final grade allocated to the arts-informed assignments. I no longer assigned arts-informed projects as a mandatory component of coursework.

Course Description and Assignment

The course that we discuss is part of a bachelor of education degree, but it can be taken as an elective by students outside the Faculty of Education in a university in eastern Canada. The title of the course is "Global Education and Social Justice." One of the objectives of the course is to have students question the ways that they may be complicit in perpetuating injustice and oppression through their consumption habits (food, clothing, and recreation, as in tourist visits). The students were expected to make connections between local and global patterns of injustice.

To achieve these objectives, students were expected to consider how theories of production might explain the role and possible "benefit" of capitalism in society, and how a profit motive could contribute to income inequality and wealth disparity. A Marxist perspective on capitalism was presented as one way of understanding the

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process of production and the persistent dominance of capitalist, neoliberal ideologies in global markets. Two documentary films and various readings were used to prompt discussion on these ideas.

The documentary, *The Price of Sugar* (Haney & Grunebaum, 2007), exposed the contradictions of the Dominican Republic, which is a popular tourist destination for Canadians. On one hand, the island has a well-developed tourism product, and markets itself as tropical paradise. On the other hand, the film documented the violations of human rights that the Haitian farm workers endure while working on the sugar plantations in the Dominican Republic. The documentary film entitled *The Toxins Return* (Altemeier, 2009) traced the movement of dangerous toxins in the clothing and fashion industry through India, Hong Kong, and across Europe to fashion outlets in Germany. The film highlighted the absence of regulatory framework and the harmful effect of these chemicals on the respiratory and nervous system of German employees in the clothing merchandising industry. Indian farmers in debt who worked in cotton fields and in factories dying fabrics black developed various forms of debilitating cancers. These working conditions were contrasted with the glamorous images of stylish fashion models on the runways.

In order to begin to link global to local context, the students read *Chapter 2: Context*, from the text “Fight Back: Work Place Justice for Immigrants” (Choudhry, Hanley, Jordan, Shragge, & Stiegman 2009, pp. 15–32). This chapter described and explained why newly arrived immigrants to Montreal have the highest risk of living in poverty. It also outlined the history of institutional racism in Canadian immigration policies, such as the Chinese Head Tax. Later, I assigned *Chapter 5: Justice for Farm Workers* (pp. 57–73) and asked students to critically respond to the reading, identifying three themes. I gave students the choice to do an arts-informed response or the traditional reading response. I told the students that their arts-informed response could be in the form of a poem, a short story, a sketch, a comic, or any other form of their choice. One of my aims was to illustrate to students how the arts could be incorporated into the classes, such as social studies or history, because this incorporation is a requirement of elementary and high school curricula. I hoped that through the creative process students would use their imagination. I view imagination as the capacity to perceive alternative realities that could stimulate empathy through the use of metaphors (Greene, 2001). I aimed for students to have what Greene referred to as an aesthetic experience through the creation of their arts-informed response and through which they may “see” something new.

I scheduled one class period of 105 minutes for students to respond to the reading. I aimed to provide structure to the task so that it could fit within what I perceived students would feel was the expected discursive practices of a university class assignment. These practices include a time constrained, structured, partially closed-ended assignment to be completed in a classroom, with corresponding detailed assessment rubrics. The main reading and the different evaluation rubrics for both the traditional and the arts-informed responses were available prior to the date of the class assignment. However, students were not confined to responding to one reading. If students were absent with a valid reason, they were allowed to do the arts-informed response as a take-home assignment. I asked them to upload their responses to the secured university online learning platform or submit a hard copy. I built on the students' responses to plan for subsequent classes, instead of lecturing on the injustices associated with globalized production. Since students had assigned classroom time to respond to the reading, I anticipated informed critical discussions and avid participation in subsequent classes on this topic.

Student Response to Arts-Informed Reading Response

I taught the course twice and assigned the arts-informed reading both times. The number of students who opted to do the arts-informed response this time was slightly higher (1%) than the previous year. Over the two years, on average 30% of students opted for the arts-informed response. The students' responses ranged from short stories, journal entries, satirical pieces, poems, and lyrics for songs, comics, sketches, and collages. Students' responses were emotive and captured the spirit of the struggles of the farm workers employed in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program in Quebec described in the assigned reading. The racialized nature of the exploitation was noted. Several students referred to the brown or dark skin of these workers in their poems.

The first year that I taught the course, I received an email from a student who thanked me for giving him the chance to be creative and expressing how unexpected it was for him to be asked to be creative in a university course. He expressed the desire to have this opportunity in other university courses. This theme of surprise when being asked to be creative is present again as both co-authors expressed similar sentiments.

Perspective From Student Who Chose the Arts-Informed Assignment Response

I (Tobias) was surprised to be offered an arts-informed response in a university class. From its first mention my mind started churning through ideas on how I could artistically respond to the themes of the course readings. As a musician and having studied music academically, I had many options and felt confident to experiment.

We were to respond to varied material, a text on migrant workers, and a video documentary on the clothing industry entitled, *The Toxins Return*. I felt that the audio component of the documentary was the perfect material to experiment with Music Concrete, an experimental technique of musical composition that uses recorded sounds, or samples, as raw material. The principle uses samples to produce an aural montage, a soundscape. While viewing the documentary I kept note of the timing of phrases, single words, and sounds that drew an emotional response. Using a free digital audio manipulating program, I cut out these phrases and words and organized them into themes—and from this I created three montages. To complete the soundscape I separated these montages with samples I created with the flute to contrast and highlight the themes of the original documentary. My response was possible because I had the skill, technology, and time to create and produce a finished work.



[Click here to listen to Tobias's art-informed audio response](#)

An arts-informed response is a brave way for students to emotionally respond to concepts and ideas we present as educators, however, there are limits that must be considered. Students who have little artistic experience may feel limited to create work and feel afraid to have their work assessed. As educators we can combat these feelings by modeling different forms of artistic responses to guide students in the creation of their responses. Having students collaborate supports those who feel lost in the art making and opens discussion. Educators must combat their own fears and inadequacies to find their students' diverse talents. As a musician I will learn from my visual artists, poets, videographers, and vice versa. Time must be allowed for ideas to distill into effective creations and experimentation must be valued. There are many ways to explore, to respond to content other than the traditional essay, and I challenge my colleagues to go out of their comfort zones, away from what is expected, and take risks—the results will be surprising and refreshing for them and their students.

Perspective From Student Who Did Not Choose the Arts-Informed Response

Although I (Asia) am a music student majoring in jazz voice, when presented with the opportunity to do an arts-informed response in one of my university courses, I ultimately decided not to, opting instead to complete an in-class essay on the given material. Initially, I thought the assignment seemed like a fun and interesting alternative to the traditional essay, as incorporating creative aspects into subjects that aren't inherently artistic, and are more based in reading and critical thinking, was something I was interested in exploring. I considered putting together some sort of original song that incorporated all the themes we were to discuss, but upon further reflection the task began to seem dauntingly vague. The possibilities available for me to choose from were endless, somewhat overwhelmingly so. I began to worry that if I were to go that route I would perhaps misinterpret some aspect of the assignment, or that my symbolic presentation of themes through music wouldn't be something one could assess objectively, and my grade would suffer because of it.

Another significant factor was the massive amount of time that would need to be allocated towards creating an arts-informed response. To compose and record a song takes a significant amount of time (for me at least), a luxury I didn't have. It was a much faster and simpler process to outline the points I wanted to make at home, and write the essay in class. Yet, another contributing factor was that I had never experimented with any type of complex digital remixing before, and a graded assignment did not seem like the place for experimentation. Essays, however, are asked of students frequently, and to write one has become a routine that most university-level students are comfortable with completing and presenting for a mark. The fourth and final factor that solidified my decision to not complete an arts-informed response is that to compose a song would have been a much more vulnerable exercise, and if what I presented was not well received, it would be difficult not to take the mark personally.

Looking back, I now realize I could have done an arts-informed response to the reading. The majority of my reasons for not wanting to do an arts-informed response were routed in self-doubt, but excluding the shortage of time, there were no debilitating reasons that prevented the completion of an arts-informed response, and it would have been a very rewarding and enjoyable assignment. From a purely objective standpoint, I absolutely had the resources to complete an arts-informed response, and after seeing examples of what an arts-informed response can look like from other music students in the course, the task seemed less intimidating and more of a fun alternative. When given an opportunity at a later date to incorporate a musical perspective into a presentation,

I began to regret not choosing to pursue the arts-informed response when I had the chance to earlier in the semester.

Lessons From Our Experiences With the Arts-Informed Response

From the perspective of the teacher, the arts-informed music piece submitted by (Tobias) was challenging especially because his expertise in music was clearly illustrated in his submission. It was also the first time over the four-year period that I taught and assigned arts-informed projects that I had received a musical submission. Was I, Lerona, capable of an “informed listening?” (Greene, 2001, p. 51) to the flute, the pitch, its rhythm, and melody? Paulo Freire’s (2005) discussion on reading of a text is instructive here. In instances when a text is more challenging than anticipated, Freire says readers should not be immobilized by fear of not understanding, nor should they abandon their pursuit of comprehension (Freire, 2005). Considering this musical piece as a text, while I felt some apprehension, I focused on the interpretation of the themes which I heard and the abstract that accompanied the piece. I heard the themes related to debt, helplessness, and collusion of power. Greene suggests that the arts could be used to learn mathematics, to read, or to understand history (Greene, 2001). I aimed to encourage students to represent the meanings that they found in the reading using their artistic expertise and the task was accomplished.

My initial apprehension can be examined using the lens of feminist pedagogies. Feminist pedagogies are marked by the non-hierarchical relationships among teachers and students (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009). My role as the teacher is not to be an expert holder of knowledge, but a facilitator of the development and exchange of ideas. The goal of incorporating the arts across the curriculum is congruent with this tenet of non-hierarchical teaching and learning in feminist pedagogy. By incorporating the arts-informed response to the reading, I allowed students to be experts, even if it meant that the limits to my expertise and associated authority could be tested.

Feminist pedagogies are concerned with creating access for all students to be welcomed, and with bringing in voices that are marginalized in mainstream discourses. While there was a slight increase in the percentage of students choosing the arts-informed response (30-31%), more than two-thirds of the class did not do the arts-informed response. Reflecting critically, I asked myself why I continued to dedicate time and space to art in my classroom, when the majority of the students did not

choose the option. Was I aiming to bring marginalized practices into mainstream? The response to my question is twofold:

Firstly, I do not believe that all forms of literary, visual, and performing arts are marginalized. Access to arts education is not equally distributed throughout schools, despite the extensive descriptions and specifications in the curriculum documentation on the provincial level. Many children did not have opportunities for sustained artistic or creative development. Progress in most areas of art often requires family involvement and resources. Delissio (2014), in a blog “STEAM for Institutions of Higher Education,” noted that students with formal artistic training were better at producing work that was both creative and correctly captured the scientific concepts. Could emphasis on arts-informed teaching and learning tacitly create conditions that privileged students who have had prior artistic access that allowed the mastery of their specific form of art?

Secondly, the present structure of schooling at the elementary and high school level often emphasizes testing, standards, or competencies and education productivity where “achievement is triumphed over inquiry” (Eisner, 2005, p. 207). These aspects of teaching likely impact what is valued in teacher education. Student teachers may not appreciate how the use of literary, visual, or performing arts in their undergraduate course work would help their future students “succeed,” and therefore consider teaching with the arts as “silly.”

Teaching approaches that draw on all students’ strengths is important. Howard Gardner’s well-known theory of multiple intelligence supports the view that teachers should match their method of instruction and assessment to the needs of their students. Using the arts-informed approach to reading responses is simply one tool in a teacher’s tool kit, and does not negate exploration of other ways to tap into the different learning styles of the classroom. Unfortunately, as Gardner (2010) pointed out:

In younger grades arts education is relatively abundant...Children paint, draw, and model clay, and they sing participate in rhythm bands, or, less often play and instrument, dance or tell stories.... In middle school arts education declines in frequency... by high school specialist handle instruction and only a minority of students participate. (Langworth & Gardner, 2010, p. 235)

Sufficient use is not made of the arts across the curriculum in higher education.

Both Eisner (2005) and Gardener (2010) strongly advocate that the processes involved in thinking through the arts—that of critical inquiry—are valuable for student

satisfaction and learning. Ultimately, our hope for incorporating the arts across the curriculum is that we as educators can inspire what Eisner referred to as the vitality and emotions associated with the arts, which is transferable outside of schooling. We hope that what we teach, “students will want to pursue voluntarily after the artificial incentives so ubiquitous in our schools is long forgotten” (Eisner, 2005, p. 207). Tobias’s experience serves as an example because he used his arts-informed response created for this class in a radio documentary.

Arts Should Not Be a Surprise in Teacher Education Programs

During the class discussions, students reported that they had no idea that people worked under such harsh conditions to produce items that are part of their daily life. They certainly had not associated Canada and Quebec with such inhumane working conditions that restricted workers’ movements, access to unemployment insurance, and healthcare as discussed in Choudry et al. (2009). Tobias’s arts-informed response, like that of many other arts-informed responses, helped me to see that I needed to refocus my class discussion on the possibility for change even within oppressive situations. Workers were being oppressed in global production chains, and this notion was clearly depicted in their arts-informed responses. However, justice cannot be attained without hope. In subsequent lessons I discussed instances where workers, students, and ordinary citizens lobbied to make changes and fight situations of injustice. I believe that the arts-informed responses allowed me as teacher to see succinctly what the students took away from reading. The arts-informed response was useful pedagogically.

We recommend that arts-informed responses to readings and journal articles continue to be used as an option in undergraduate teacher education programs. Teacher educators may provide a range of examples to encourage students to participate and minimize the level of risk that students perceive to be associated with the arts informed-responses. Teacher educators using arts-informed teaching strategies could collaborate and develop resources to strengthen their knowledge of aesthetics in various arts disciplines. Arts-informed inquiry is widely accepted in education research. However, more detailed research on the use of arts across curricula in higher education is needed if the incorporation of the arts is to gain acceptance as a meaningful pedagogical approach to teaching and learning in undergraduate teacher education programs. Teacher educators’ incorporation of the arts in teaching practice should not be a surprise.

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Tobias Moisey holds an MMus from the Rimsky-Korsakov Saint Petersburg State Conservatory, Russia, in Flute Performance, and a BMus from the University of Victoria, Canada, with a specialization in Music Education. Tobias is currently studying at the McGill Faculty of Education. As an active board member of the Bulkley Valley Concert Association, which presents concerts in Rural Northern British Columbia, and a representative of the Music Education Undergraduate Student Association of McGill, Tobias's interest in education brings together music performances with community development and identity exploration. Tobias is the host of CICK Smithers Community Radio's popular art music program, *Culture Shock*.



Valuing Creative Engagement: Transforming Assessment Practices for the Arts

Shannon Lim and Kathy Sanford

ABSTRACT

Two educators explore issues related to arts-based education and assessment. Our students are being short-changed, we believe, when they are not given opportunities to appreciate the arts, to value the richness they bring to our lives and an understanding of the world. We believe that education needs to rebalance the ways in which children spend their time, how they are assessed, and what is valued. We also believe that deepening our understanding and awareness of how we value and assess the arts will deepen and strengthen the way we understand and value all types of knowledge and interactions in the world.

It is June. It is June in a year in which our district has imposed a new system for assessment and communicating student learning that should ideally still be in pilot project mode, and June in a school year where summer weather seems to have started in April or May... I look around and see a lot of mixed emotions. Excitement for the summer holidays, the great successes of student achievement over the year, the transition of our grade 8s to high school in the fall and general passion for the profession. Confusion over what needs to be done before year end, how and where are we recording student achievement, what next year might look like and how on earth we are going to keep students engaged in school activities when report cards need to be submitted on June 15th. Fatigue from long days, extra hours, parent meetings, student discipline, reporting on learning, the heat, year-end activities, and much more. Joy as students wrap up a year and reminisce about great experiences. Sadness and loss as some colleagues move to other schools, retire, or are not hired back due to staffing procedures. I even feel a little bit lucky as I watch other people pack up their rooms in preparation to move spaces, as I hide

out in my art room, a space that feels calm, quiet, and secure. To say there is a lot happening in schools during the month of June is an understatement. June is certainly more hectic and busy than December.

As we entered discussion around final assessments and what this would look like at middle school in our district this year, I began to question and critique my own practices in my classroom. This year I taught art to all the grade 6, 7, and 8 students in our school. In conjunction with the district expectations and requirements for “exploration assessment” and “communication of student learning,” I ended the year feeling as though there was much room for improvement. There was a disconnect between the district expectation and what I was doing with my students in the final art expo. It all felt ineffective to me as a whole. There are parts of the new system that are ideal for certain subject areas, and also for year-long continuous communication with parents, however, in my opinion, as a middle years teacher of an “exploratory” subject (art) it is not suitable or supportive of our curricular areas. For the majority of the year we sent standard exploration rubrics home in paper format, which were never documented at a district level. So, for all those students there is no record of their achievement for the year. At this point I do not have an opinion on whether or not this is important at the middle school level, but in consideration of the time, energy, and outcomes, I feel like the system failed. Maybe I failed. I asked for guidance, looked for support, and kept being told: “we will get to expository classes later,” “we haven’t got that in the online system yet,” “just make sure you get the rubrics out”... In the end, the most valuable piece for me in the art room is students creating, trying new outlets, being open to the arts. How do I measure this?

In discussion with other teachers of exploratory subjects it appears we are all feeling the same way. The rubrics we used were generalized—they mentioned nothing about the elements of art. They do not speak to individuals. Overall, the assessment practices this school year left us feeling undervalued, and if this is how we are feeling as educators, I can only assume our students recognized this as well. I could go on about the problems or concerns I have, but rather, I would like to look at what I can do differently in the future, and plan for next year. I am searching for change, ideas, and positive possibilities for better approaches to assessing my students’ progress and development. As I clean up the art room I realize I do not want piles of student creations left behind, I want them to share what they are doing as they make it. I realize that just because teachers in the past have used portfolios, which were always left in the room as a means of assessment for student artwork, this does not mean that I am tied to the system. Students should be able to share their creativity, display their work at school and home, and we can look at other ways of visually documenting their achievements. At the end of this school year I find myself looking for change, creative communication, and clear objectives when it comes to assessment practices in the art exploration area.

Valuing Creative Engagement: Transforming Assessment Practices for the Arts

It was this reflection of S's practice that caused further discussions between her, a classroom teacher, and K, a university instructor—both interested in exploring ways to value the art in all children's lives, examine ways in which we value (or not) arts-based learning, and determine appropriate assessment practices for art and all creative engagement. We began an exploration into the recognition and utilization of art and visual media as critical elements of learning for today's children and youth, but still not being seen as valuable or valued aspects of children's learning experiences in our schooling system. And through our journey we have recognized that not only is this discussion pertinent to assessment in art, but can also be extrapolated, we think, to all forms of student learning. In this paper we will talk about the importance of the arts in childrens' and youths' lives, how our current understanding and practices of assessment are not adequate for supporting learning, and finally, we will share examples of ways to better assess and value students' works of art, both in process and final "product."

Arts have consistently been undervalued in our competitive, content-focused, neoliberal world, driven by notions of entrepreneurship and capitalism. This has impacted our interest in and acknowledgement of visual forms of expression more broadly, which have often been limited to a cursory nod and bland platitudes, as S's beginning story suggests. The power of the arts, and visual media more specifically, to make meaning, to engage learners, to share understandings and to enrich our experiences, have been overlooked in a system driven by literacy (i.e., reading print text) and numeracy. And while we would suggest that assessment has overall been disconnected from learning, this is most evident in the arts. Freedman and Stuhr (2004) have:

argued for a transformation of art education in response to changing conditions in the contemporary world where the visual arts, including popular arts and contemporary fine art, are an increasingly important part of the larger visual culture that surrounds and shapes our daily lives. (p. 815)

This affirms S's value as an art educator, and reaffirms the importance of what students experience in the art room, but also causes her to reflect upon how to align what happens with instruction in the arts in connection to current assessment practices implemented in schools. The lack of attention to the arts and visual modes of learning and communicating has resulted in less focus on development of meaningful and robust assessment practices in these areas. Freedman and Stuhr note,

If the intention of education is to prepare students for personal fulfillment and to constructively contribute to society, then art education must deal with newly emerging ideas, problems, and possibilities that go beyond the constraints of learning offered by a discipline-based curriculum and standardized forms of assessment. (p. 816)

However, while Ross (1986) claims that examination in the arts is both “impracticable and undesirable” (p. 124), Eisner (1974) suggests that it would be educationally irresponsible for teachers not to assess students’ artwork and that “as teachers we are concerned not simply with bringing about change, but with bringing about desirable change” (p. 13) in students’ work. In education, with many pressures and demands, recognizing the bigger picture or importance of student experiences, artistic and beyond, to their connection in the world and their future is often or easily forgotten. Stepping back and identifying what really matters or counts is essential. Recognizing an integral relationship between assessment and curriculum, where both must be of high quality, is essential for meaningful art-based experiences.

Importance of Arts

The value of engaging meaningfully in understanding, creating, and assessing art cannot be overstated. Art has a unique way of connecting us to our inner selves, to our younger selves, and to our future selves in powerful ways. Freedman and Stuhr (2004) comment,

Visual culture is a mode of experience that connects people through many and varied mediators. The variety and complexity of the experience are dependent on the possibility of a *range of quality* related to form, none of which should be inherently excluded from the investigation, analysis, and critique enabled by art education. Even concepts and objects previously considered fairly stable are in flux. Truth has shifted from an epistemological to an ontological issue: That is, it becomes less about what we know than who we are. Time has lost its neat linearity, space appears to expand and contract, and boundaries of various sorts have become blurred. Perhaps most important, postmodern visual culture makes imperative a connectedness that undermines knowledge as traditionally taught in school. It involves interactions among people, cultures, forms of representation, and professional disciplines. (p. 819)

Valuing Creative Engagement: Transforming Assessment Practices for the Arts

Learning is both individual and social. It is about people, exploration, communication, and interaction. We are all unique in our learning journey, suggesting that assessment practices should be adaptable and allowed to meet those needs well. It is about who we are, the materials used, the experience lived. Of course, there are expectations and standards that need to be recognized within the context, however it must also be recognized that the world around us is changing and we ourselves are not fixed. Freedman and Stuhr (2004) suggest that students' art experience "is essential to teaching and learning about visual culture because it (a) is a process of creative/critical inquiry, (b) helps students understand the complexities of visual culture, and (c) connects and empowers people" (p. 825).

Importance of Assessment

If students' artwork is not shared, discussed, acknowledged, and displayed, there is little interaction and engagement that is essential to art. Not only should art be created, but it also needs to be discussed with students during and after the creation process—not just after the work has been completed, but also during the process, valuing the thinking and skills used in the creation, as well as challenges encountered along the way. "Learning to make art," Barrett (2004) comments, "does not necessarily transfer to appreciating or enjoying art." She continues:

Learning to make art does not necessarily transfer to learning to infer meaning in art, especially art made by artists other than oneself. Therefore, learning to talk thoughtfully about art is especially valuable, perhaps more valuable than learning to make art. Learning to interpret meanings of works of art is more valuable than learning to judge their value. An artwork that is not interpreted is reduced to a mere object. (p. 87)

How do we resist seeing students' art as "mere object"? If work is not shared, discussed, displayed, and taken in, there is no interaction and engagement that is essential to appreciation and understanding of art. This suggests the important role assessment has to play in shaping and strengthening the learning as art is created, assessment that is supportive, encouraging, and informative. Reconceptualizing assessment as a moment of learning allows teachers to see it in terms of authentic artistic processes such as setting goals, assessing one's own work, and revising—processes that are inherent in any creative endeavor that involves rehearsal and redoing (Zessoules & Gardner, 1991). Teachers must turn

their attention to more clearly articulating their expectations for their students and help them to reach those expectations and understand the goals they are setting with the teacher. As Andrade, Hefferen, and Palma (2014) noted, “Classroom assessment is a hot topic in K-12 education because of compelling evidence that assessment in the form of feedback is a powerful teaching and learning tool” (p. 34). As conceptions of curriculum and assessment are being reshaped across Canada, we are focusing more clearly on alternative forms of assessment practices, including assessment that involves students in their own learning, opening up conversations with students around making art, learning, and creating. Communication is essential. Andrade et al. (2014) suggests that students benefit from three simple things: “(1) An understanding of the targets or goals for their learning; (2) knowledge of the gap between those goals and their current state; and (3) knowing how to close the gap through relearning and revision” (p. 34). If students are involved in their own learning they are connected, accountable, and able to move forward. Learning is far more meaningful when targets or goals are set.

Assessing Art: What and How Are We Assessing?

What are we assessing? According to Lauchlan (2012), the goals for assessment should be clarified first, before anything else is established and the learning process has begun. He also goes on to remind us of the importance of keeping our goals to support the teaching and learning process at the forefront of our thoughts when designing assessment plans. This is essential to effective planning, keeping assessment *for* learning at the forefront, rather than summatively evaluating student work, that is, assessment *of* their learning (Earl, 2003)—having to sift through student work after they have completed it, trying to decipher and interpret what is valuable and worth reporting on, what they know and still need to work on. A checklist of questions, shared with students, is beneficial for reminding teachers and students of the role that assessment plays in learning throughout the process. Some questions that might be asked by teachers include:

- Why is the assessment happening?
- What is the end goal for the assessment?
- How will it be shared or communicated? And with whom?
- What kind of information is necessary?
- What is the long-term impact of the assessment or connection to other areas in the curriculum?
- In what ways will this assessment guide or inform the student’s future learning?
- How does the assessment impact the teaching and learning process?

Valuing Creative Engagement: Transforming Assessment Practices for the Arts

Teachers say that they do not assess students simply to assign a letter grade and have them move on to the next task, unit, or assignment. They say that assessment is continuous, ongoing, and reflective and always focused on the learner. Yet, often when it comes down to the practicality of it all, it would appear that we fall back on traditional practices and paper trails. After examining the types of assessment practices evident in K-12 art education today, it is difficult to see how these practices align with goals and intents set by the curriculum or the teachers themselves. Feedback is a valuable aspect of learning in the arts, but clearer understanding of what that should look like, sound like, and feel like needs to be better developed. However, as Eisner and Day (2008) comment, the field of visual art education is in a bind—on one hand assessment is critical in a climate where educational policies mandate testing of students in all subject areas; on the other, art education values outcomes that are not simply definable or measured, but rather those that are imaginative, diverse, and interesting in many different ways where this is no single criterion that adequately represent students' learning.

Connecting what students are learning to bigger ideas is essential. Moving beyond simply creating a painting for color theory, for example, to exploring social, cultural, and environmental connections can be far more engaging. Allowing for open interpretation, choice, and various responses is key.

Procedures should be user friendly; art tasks should be stimulating and relate to bigger ideas and should have multiple solutions; art programs should be congruent in content and aims; and content should address a variety of sensory and cognitive modes. (Brewer, 2008, p. 64)

Students and their parents might value art more highly if they consider its power: "teaching and learning about visual culture because it (a) is a process of creative/critical inquiry, (b) helps students understand the complexities of visual culture, and (c) connects and empowers people" (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004, p. 825). Taking time to communicate these ideas to students would heighten their awareness of art's importance in developing skills, attitudes, and understandings important for life.

Returning to Zessoules and Gardner's (1991) call to reconceptualize assessment as a moment of learning, teachers need to consider how to think about assessment as an aspect of the learning process and to match their practices with their beliefs about learning. How we assess is as important as what we assess. Classes get rushed. Time is at a premium. However, teachers need to take time to build assessment into the process of learning, to work expectations, communication, reflection, and goal setting into the flow of art making. Otherwise it has the potential to become creating

without meaning, without purpose. However, assessment is not always neat or linear. Willis (2014) suggests that

in assessment, there should be no prescribed point of entry or linear procedure. The individual should enter the assessment labyrinth holistically from any relevant portal. The point of entry is not as important as the multiple referential reflections. The process should reflect the elaborate nature of art assessment and allow flexibility to meet the needs of the image, person, and environment. (p. 150)

Willis' suggestion is completely contrary to the forms of assessment generally utilized in schools today, linear, top-down, and controlled rather than fluid, holistic and an enjoyable part of the learning journey. And while this approach contrasts with current assessment practices in art education and elsewhere, it is an important consideration. Brewer's (2008) comment reaffirms the idea that assessment in art is complex and needs to be different to what currently exists: "The idea of how to credibly assess learning in visual art is elusive and confusing. All art teachers do some sort of assessment, but like art making itself, very few do it the same way or with much consensus" (p. 63). Andrade and colleagues (2014) note that there are "myriad ways in which assessment can not only measure and document student learning but also – and more importantly – actually promote learning" (p. 36). Teachers' expertise needs to be considered in determining assessment practices, and select those most appropriate for their students, their context, and the goals/expectations set for each activity. This, then, requires teachers to use assessment approaches that value learning processes, give time, ensure that focused and meaningful feedback is provided, and that students are invested in their art.

Formative assessment is intended to have subsequent, positive effect on a child's learning through the use of feedback and consultation. There has been increasing recognition that assessment should be used to support learning, rather than merely reporting on a child's current, or past achievement (summative assessment). (Laughlan, 2012, p. 96)

As noted earlier, dialogue and communication with students are important to encouraging and supporting their ongoing learning about art—promoting and fostering ongoing learning as students discuss their work, share, rework, and complete.

How We Use Assessment in Art

Involving students in their own learning as they create art is empowering and encouraging of future art-making. As students learn to use art-specific vocabulary and terminology, and as they practice providing meaningful responses to their peers, they learn to assess their own work, recognizing technique, form, media most appropriate for their intents and goals. As Hattie and Timperley (2007) comment,

The ways and manner in which individuals interpret feedback information is the key to developing positive and valuable concepts of self-efficacy about learning, which in turns leads to further learning. Teachers need to view feedback from the perspective of the individuals engaged in the learning and become proactive in providing information addressing the three feedback questions and developing ways for students to ask these questions of themselves. Students, too often, view feedback as the responsibility of someone else, usually teachers, whose job it is to provide feedback information by deciding for the students how well they are going, what the goals are, and what to do next. (p. 101)

As students become more capable of assessing their own work, they will likely be more invested in continuing to improve. They will be able to make connections between art and their own lives, other aspects of their learning (e.g., science, language arts, math, drama, music, to name a few). “Most important, students know how and when to seek and receive feedback from others” (p. 94). Students need to learn to communicate and connect with people. Whether they need support, are looking for answers to their questions, or just want to share their learning, the more open to learning and the people involved in the journey, the more likely they are to value and find success in their art.

Shifting Classroom Assessment Practices

So that we can broaden our conception of what makes meaningful and significant learning, including art as a meaningful ways of expressing and sharing in order to become holistic learners and people, we now offer several ways of engaging with students in their assessment of their arts-based learning.

Using prompts to stimulate discussion about art. Students need guidance to develop their own formative assessment skills. Their views can be directed and shaped so that they take each work of art seriously and learn more informed appreciation and attention to diverse art forms. Barrett (2004) suggests developing prompts that encourage students to talk about their work. For example, she asks, “Let’s see what

we can say about this work.” or “Who would like to get us started?” and then “Who can add to that thought?” (pp. 88–90). In more specific terms, students can be asked to describe works of art: “What do you see?” “Who can add to that?” and from there, “How do you feel when you see that picture?” “What has the artist done to make you feel that way?” “What in the painting/drawing has you feeling that way?” “How do the specific shapes affect the meaning of the painting?” Students can also be asked interpretation prompts, “What is that about?” “What does it mean?” “How do I know?” “What might it mean to the artist?” “How might my experience of this work change my life?” Barrett also suggests prompts about art theory, such as “Why is that art?” All of these prompts encourage students to value the art as meaningful and important, considering art as a valid way of expressing and understanding aspects of the world and their place in it. By developing these specific question prompts, a multiplicity of voices is encouraged, engaging everyone in the discussion. Hearing each other’s responses provides immediate and specific feedback about their own and others’ work, and develops deeper understanding and valuing of art. Barrett (2004) believes that “when one understands a work, one will likely judge it to be good and also end up enjoying it, which is a highly desirable affective outcome” (p. 92).

Immediate Reflection of Accomplishments: Critique Board

Discussions and feedback in class with individual students can be some of the most meaningful form of assessment for our learners. Communication that happens in the moment is real, to the point, and says more than a comment offered a day, a week, or months later. The more opportunities created for check-ins and face-to-face interactions with students and their parents, the better. When looking at art-specific assessment, one model is to have more frequent and open critique discussions about individual assignments, display student work more often, and have students share specifics about their work. Creating a “critique board,” or common area focused on temporarily displaying artwork in the art room, would help with this and demonstrate to students that this is what artists do: they share their successes and works in progress; they go back and improve on things. Classroom teachers can allow time for discussion, encourage students to share their work, self-assess, look at strategies and techniques to improve their work, alter or change their creations. Full critique sessions might take place one day every two weeks where students put up current assignments, display, discuss and document their progress.

Along with the idea of instant assessment of student artwork that encourages forms of collaborative assessment, students can interview each other about their work, create rubrics, and use more than “complete/incomplete” or just checking it off on

a list of things that are “done.” Using rubrics specific to the arts—created with students, with descriptive language related to the current assignment—would be more meaningful. The ongoing nature of instant assessment provides specific and descriptive feedback to be used in their future learning, rather than merely as a form of judgment and ranking.

Create a Rationale for Learning Linked to Assessment in the Classroom

By having a rationale evident in the classroom that states why it is important to be doing what they are doing, teachers can refer back to it repeatedly when considering assessment practices. When questioning what, why, and for whom they are assessing, these guiding principles will help keep assessment practices focused, meaningful, and to the point. An example for the art room might look something like this:

The importance of experiencing and learning the visual arts

In the art room students will combine skills and creative thinking to design and make products that are visually appealing, they will demonstrate the elements of art and principles of design, and express themselves in unique ways. Students will learn to use a variety of materials, be responsible for the maintenance and presentation of the art room space, and respect the right for others to be experiencing and learning the arts as well. They will learn to think creatively, apply it to real life situations, solve problems, and work collaboratively.

By working in a creative space students will experience a range of opportunities, respond with their own ideas to assignments, meet and exceed challenging expectations, and be responsible for their learning journey. They will consider aesthetics, technical problems, cultural, social and emotional influences, as well as environmental concerns. As their learning progresses they will evaluate themselves, be open and accepting of feedback, collaborate with peers and be an integral part of their learning communication. Through their experiences in art, students will gain confidence in their creativity, their technical skills, and apply their creative thinking and expertise to future learning goals and projects. (Based on a passage from Pollitt, 2012)

Long-term portfolio development. Students can develop portfolios of their artwork early in their lives and have these continue throughout their schooling. While this is not a new idea, it is one that has great potential for students who are focusing their learning in specific curricular areas. It would be a powerful learning experience for students to curate their own art show through pieces picked from their middle and

high school years (or earlier perhaps). Students could be starting portfolios of their best or favourite pieces early on in their educational journeys, and documenting them digitally, adding several times throughout the year, including photos and descriptions. Digital documentation and curation would add new dimensions to students' artistic skills and appreciation for diverse media. A long-term portfolio would also foster collegiality and collaboration between teachers as well, as the student moves from one grade to another. It would help set standards and expectations across the spectrum of years for ways of documenting student artwork. By allowing this continuity teachers would also be improving the entire art experience, validating and giving importance to the arts as a whole, creating a strong community of teachers validating the arts, and creating rigorous meaningful ways of assessing development in the arts.

Creating a general assessment outline. A curriculum-specific outline could be present in the classroom at all times. Students could become familiar with the outline and any artworks or tools that are regularly used. Ongoing reference to this outline would reinforce a deeper understanding of the role that assessment plays in learning about art and specific elements expected for successful learning. It would also reinforce the importance of regular self-assessment. This visible outline would further remind teachers of the goals and expectations in each of their art assignments. This tool would act as a reminder for students to have appropriate tools on hand, to keep track of feedback, and to use guiding points for conversation. The more consistent, familiar, and fluid the process, the greater likelihood that students will respect and value their art creation and learning, enabling them to grow as increasingly proficient and independent learners.

Examples of two possible outlines are shared below, demonstrating the positive formation of reflective elements of the outline. These elements could become increasingly specific as students become more sophisticated artists and art critics.

Table 1***General Areas of Understanding***

GENERAL AREAS OF UNDERSTANDING	YES	NO	COMMENT
Vocabulary: I am using correct vocabulary to discuss my work.			
Reflectiveness: I am pausing to reflect upon my discussion.			
Nature of responses: I am answering or discussing with meaning rather than guessing.			
Exploration: I searched for ways to add more meaning to my work and I looked for alternate solutions.			
Communication: I communicated my work in a clear and coherent manner. I understand the principles of art I am applying.			

Table 2***General Areas for Learning***

GENERAL AREAS FOR LEARNING	YES	NO	COMMENT
Collaboration: I seek help, and am willing to become involved in collaborating with other students.			
Concentration: I am able to focus and remain concentrated on my artwork.			
Flexibility: I am flexible in my use of strategies when I am working in the art room.			
Motivation: I am keen to be successful.			
Vitality and awareness: I respond positively in class, and come energetic and alert.			

These two examples have five areas to consider, but even these might be too many. Teachers could prioritize different areas at different times. More details could be added and focused on specific tasks and materials in the art room or other classroom settings. As common arts-based language is used and valued, students will begin to focus their energy on these areas; these general headings are areas that will enable students to be successful and fluent in arts processes.

Table 3
Helpful Checklist

AREAS THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR OUR LEARNING:	STRATEGIES WE WILL TRY OUT IN THE ART ROOM:	HOW WE WILL KNOW IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL:

Video taping students in the classroom throughout the course. Filming students can be used as an effective tool for self-assessment. By watching themselves on video, students are able to determine changes that could be made to ways in which they use tools, space, and time. Sharing the video with others can help promote creativity and encourage students to take responsibility for their work. As students tend to do more of the things at which they are most successful, watching themselves will help fine-tune their practices.

Public sharing of student work. Encouraging students to take work home once finished, sharing it with family and friends, promotes art as a valued and valuable form of representing knowledge in the classroom and the school. Public displays in the school, in prominent locations, enable students to learn skills of curation and effective ways of displaying artwork in the school. When students make their art accessible to the public, it validates and authenticates both them and art as a significant form of learning and representing.

Conclusion

Returning to S's story, we recognize the challenges faced by students and teachers of art in valuing art as an integral aspect of their learning. Reinvigorating creative and critical engagement with their visual creations is essential for holistic learning and learners. Our students are being short-changed when they are not given opportunities to appreciate the arts, to value the richness they bring to our lives and understanding of the world. We believe that education needs to rebalance the ways in which children spend their time, how they are assessed, and what is valued. We also believe that deepening our understanding and awareness of how we value and assess the arts will deepen and strengthen the way we understand and value all types of knowledge and interactions in the world. We leave the reader with S's final words, gaining hope and stamina through this exploration to continue defending the need for the arts in all students' lives.

My question is, what do our students take away from all this? We give feedback, we write comments, we collaborate on self-assessment, and we communicate on student learning in many other ways. Teachers end up with lists, copies, data entries, notes, folders and all sorts of findings. But what do students really take away from it all? How are we affecting their learning for the future with assessment done today? What are they going to remember about their learning in a year, two, or five? What will they look back and appreciate in 20 years? I don't know the answer. It is in constant change, and we are always adapting to circumstance, technology, and change. I question this because I feel like the answer, or part of the answer, will help guide good, effective, and meaningful assessment practices. Not only assessment in art, but also across the curriculum areas. What is lasting about what we are doing with regards to assessment? What meaning and purpose does it all have?

I consider positive relationships and communication to be of utmost importance in the classroom. In connection to feedback, and the power of words, these thoughts together have the potential to be really influential in a learner's experience. As a teacher, I can see that we need to have a connection with our students for feedback to be valued or for rubrics to be useful. The descriptors in our rubrics need to be co-created with the voice of students alongside the teacher. This reinforces the value and relevance of our assessment. "Thinking of individuals as crystals with many facets may capture the complexity of assessing the visual arts" (Willis, 2014, p.149). This image captures the uniqueness and individuality that is connected with assessment, especially in the arts. There is so much personal interpretation related to creativity and expression, so many layers, facets, and dimensions. The crystal is something that stands alone, but also touches everything it comes into contact with, both reflecting and absorbing at the same time.

Slowly I am gathering alternative options for assessment, keeping in mind and questioning the value and meaning of it all. I am searching for assessment with purpose for students and educators.

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Shannon Lim currently teaches and creates art in the very same school and classroom where she spent her days as a middle school learner many years ago. She works with her students in a variety of mediums, allows for hands-on learning experiences, and believes in the positive benefits of creative engagement of students. Shannon feels fortunate to build upon her community roots and connections, fostering positive relationships with her students, and takes pride in igniting the curious spark and creative energy of young adults. She has a degree in Graphic Design (NSCAD), Bachelors of Education (VIU), and a Masters in Curricular Studies (UVIC).



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The Art & Science Project: Constructing Knowledge Through Creative Assessments

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ABSTRACT

In the last few years, the use of creative assessments has been shown to be effective in addressing students' different learning styles and nurturing their personal and academic growth. This article presents the framework for the activities and assessments of the Art & Science Project,¹ which is designed to engage learners by using visual arts to portray scientific concepts. The project's goal is to promote cross-disciplinary integration and a deeper understanding of the crucial role of models in science. The history of the project and the technologies used to support a creative environment are described.

While I did not experience difficulties as a student, frustration and dissatisfaction were pervasive during my high school years as a result of instructional strategies that were disengaged from life experiences and assessments that did not contribute to developing, inciting, or sustaining intellectual curiosity. The assumption that the transmission of factual knowledge was the most important thing happening in the classroom hindered the school experience and failed to spark curiosity and passion for learning. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) underlines that becoming dissatisfied with knowledge and rejecting it triggers the creative process. In retrospect, my unfulfilling experiences as a student catalyzed my interest in establishing relationships among disciplines and constructing meaning about the world.

In this article, I offer readers a description of my journey to become a chemistry teacher who explores art as a tool for learning in college science courses in Quebec.

The next section recalls my first interactions with creative assessments in a culturally different school environment, in Brazil. I then explain the role of professional development in my adjusting to teaching in Quebec. This is followed by a summary of my first attempts to incorporate creative assignments to enhance learning with a Liberal Arts cohort. A description of the technologies that are used to support a creative environment is given, followed by curriculum adjustments needed to incorporate art into the science classroom. I also review the literature to give theoretical foundations for this instructional strategy. This paper concludes with an explanation of the assessment and a brief analysis of students' responses to it.

Teaching Outside the Box: The Early Years

Chemistry has been my favorite subject since my first introductory high school course. Sparked by this interest, I studied the discipline for 14 years before becoming a full-time certified teacher. During this period, I completed a B.S. and an M.S. in Chemistry, a teaching certificate, and a Ph.D. in Inorganic Photochemistry from the University of São Paulo in Brazil. These academic degrees provided material to achieve disciplinary literacy (Carney & Indrisano, 2013) that includes the content knowledge, general-pedagogical knowledge, and curricular knowledge in chemistry. Since the beginning of my teaching career, I have been exposed to innovative and creative approaches that had a profound effect in shaping my pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 2013), which served as the foundation for the Art & Science Project.

Teaching high school chemistry in the 1990s at the Colégio Vera Cruz in São Paulo became a watershed event in my teaching practice. An environment rich in appropriate stimuli, the school developed a pedagogical approach based on teaching for understanding within and across disciplines to empower students to grow intellectually throughout their lives. The administration promoted the use of multidisciplinary projects to make learning dynamic and meaningful. For example, *Palimpsest* was a project in which students were asked to look at cities as something having diverse layers or aspects that usually remain hidden beneath the surface. In the first phase of the project, students explored the landscape of the school's neighborhood to illustrate its urban development from a historical point of view. Later, the project focused on the city of Rio de Janeiro during the 19th century, a period in which the city was the nation's capital. Excerpts of novels, essays, official documents, and paintings of the period were used to contextualize and integrate the different disciplines—history, geography, literature, and the visual arts. The topics were complementary and created

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a mosaic that was analyzed through a multidisciplinary perspective. The group took a field trip to Rio de Janeiro in search of the 19th-century layers of its modern palimpsest—governmental buildings, historical houses, commercial centers, and the old port. After the trip, students watched movies based on literary works of that period, which gave them the opportunity to experience 19th-century novels through the lenses of 20th-century cinema. The pre-readings, field trip, and post-activities created a continuum that helped students develop a sense of seeing cities as palimpsests.

In another multidisciplinary project that involved literature and the visual arts, twelfth graders developed performances that included both visual and performing arts to portray the characteristics of avant-garde art movements—Impressionism, Fauvism, Dadaism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism—and their connections to the literary styles of the period. By attending students' presentations, I began to understand the potential of creative assessments that involve visual arts to promote the integration and consolidation of knowledge. Students create meaning through symbolic visual representations linked to their cultural heritage, while developing new perceptions of visual forms (Hickman & Eglinton, 2015). These innovative projects were inspiring, and witnessing their execution provided me a glimpse of the inherent complexity of curriculum integration and the necessity of investing time, energy, and intellectual effort on the part of all teachers involved.

In 1997, the successful landing of the roving probe Pathfinder on the surface of Mars made the headlines in the media (Raeburn, 1998) and inspired my first attempt to incite students' imaginations in science using astronomy as a unifying center. With the intrinsic limitations of the pre-Internet era, I began to search for learning activities to visually engage students with astronomy. A mobile planetarium was set up in the school's gymnasium to offer a series of presentations that covered Newton's law of gravitation (Feynman, 1995) and the genesis of the chemical elements in stars (Chown, 2001; Hartquist & Williams, 1995) with the goal of triggering fruitful discussions among students and teachers. This activity created awareness of fundamental underlying principles such as gravity, conservation of energy (Smil, 1999), and the important concept that the same chemical elements that exist on Earth (Cox, 1995) also make up all matter in the universe (Hudson, 2006) and serve as building blocks for all living organisms (Schrödinger, 1992; Williams & Silva, 1996).

Taking into account the level of intellectual development of our high school students, we designed lessons that illustrate how the concepts in chemistry, physics, and biology guide the understanding of the world. The construction of science literacy had the goal of integrating disciplinary knowledge to serve as foundation for a multidisciplinary,

creative science project. For example, I introduced unusual chemical compounds that had been detected in interstellar space (Shaw, 2006) to bring awareness that the structures and reactions of chemical substances given in textbooks are based on their reactivity patterns on or near the Earth's surface (Wayne, 1991). However, those patterns can change remarkably under the very different conditions of temperature, pressure, and electromagnetic radiation that are found in space (Hudson, 2006), an idea that is not emphasized in introductory chemistry courses.

In 2000, I immigrated to Canada before the group developed the project further. Although I was not involved again with a multidisciplinary science project for another decade, my expectations and beliefs about teaching and learning were forever changed by interacting with peers in such an electrifying social environment that recognized the importance of fostering imagination and creativity.

Teaching College in Canada: Professional Development and Inspiration

Since both the format and cultural background of the CEGEP system in Quebec are quite different from those of the educational system in Brazil, my first years at Vanier College were spent adjusting to my new teaching environment. With the goal of bringing new perspectives to my practice, I started the University of Sherbrooke's Performa Master Teacher Program, an M.Ed. program that is tailored to the needs of college teachers. Its courses provide contact with the groundbreaking ideas of Lev Vygotsky, Kieran Egan, Ken Robinson, Paulo Freire, Elliot Eisner, Seymour Papert, and Eric Mazur, among others. The Performa program was truly inspiring and showed me that developing ideas for innovative, less conventional approaches to teaching requires genuine effort and hard work. In the course, *Constructing Knowledge Across the Disciplines*, we analyzed both the conceptual framework and the challenges of interdisciplinarity. This course offered me the opportunity to reflect on my early multidisciplinary experiences in Brazil, seeing them against the backdrop of the extensive literature in the field. I was able to understand the theoretical underpinnings that made my experience at Colégio Vera Cruz so rewarding for both students and teachers. Understanding the conceptual framework of interdisciplinarity gave me the incentive to explore it in a course that I teach at Vanier College. The next section recounts the first attempts at putting the knowledge gained in the Performa program into practice.

Science Meets Liberal Arts

In 2009, I started teaching *History and Methodology of Science*, a mandatory fourth-semester course for Liberal Arts students. Sparking students' interest in science is a challenge when they have an insufficient background from high school and a disdain of mathematical formulas and calculations. Despite these shortcomings, the majority of Liberal Arts students have good writing skills and possess curious, inquiring minds. In the last semester of their program, their knowledge of history, philosophy, and culture is definitely above what can be expected from an average college student.

Traditional teacher-centered approaches that are employed at the college level are usually based on the need for conformity and standardization, and they tend to treat learning as a series of steps to be mastered. Since such approaches are not well suited to Liberal Arts students, I had to search for alternatives to deliver the course content. My main objective was to provide learning experiences to nurture the students' personal and academic growth in ways for them to develop creative minds and become critical thinkers. I found inspiration to accomplish these goals in Ken Robinson's (2006, 2010) TED Talks about creativity and Kieran Egan's (2005, 2007, 2008) books on the importance of imagination in fostering learning.

Believing in the importance of constructing knowledge across the disciplines, I envisioned links between the students' previous knowledge in philosophy, history, and art with the content of the science course. For example, students were invited to establish links between the groundbreaking works of Sigmund Freud, Pablo Picasso, and Albert Einstein in the early 20th century. Freud's theories about the crucial role of the unconscious in determining human behaviour placed emotions and sensations as more important than rational thought. During the same period, Picasso began experimenting with deconstructing forms to portray the world away from classical, realistic descriptions. In 1905, Einstein proposed the wave-particle duality of light to explain the photoelectric effect as part of a counterrevolution in science that challenged the objectivity of classical Newtonian mechanics. Students were intrigued by the connections between science and art, and they started seeing science differently, as part of a complex web that links aspects of art and philosophy to the political and economic realities of a given historical period.

Becoming aware of the immense potential of creativity and imagination to enhance learning and transfer knowledge, I combined the ideas of Robinson (2006, 2009, 2010, 2011) and Egan (2005, 2007, 2008) with the multidisciplinary project that integrated art and literature at Colégio Vera Cruz to propose a big assignment in which students

used visual arts to portray some of the scientific concepts that we studied in the course. Overall, the results with the first cohort were below my expectations due to the lack of proper communication with students to explain the scope and purpose of the assignment. Bransford, Brown, and Pellegrino (2000) point out the necessity of providing enough time for students to process information and seek feedback about their progress. According to these authors, transfer can be enhanced by teaching a topic in multiple contexts, which includes giving examples that demonstrate the wide application of what is being taught. I was also inspired by the intensive process that Picasso underwent while drawing the preliminary sketches for *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, his 1907 early creative breakthrough (Gardner, 1993). I realized that students need more time to digest their own ideas as part of a constant dialogue with the teacher outside the classroom—a goal that can be accomplished with the use of technology. The next section covers the technologies that support the Art & Science Project.

Creating a Draft Through Google Docs

Providing enough time to reflect, share perspectives, and exchange ideas is crucial when planning instructional strategies for creative assignments. In order to provide feedback on students' drafts, I used Google Docs as a platform for asynchronous dialogues. We discussed the scientific concepts that caught their attention and how they could portray these ideas using visual arts. Once they had chosen the science component of their artwork, an art teacher could give them feedback on the materials, colors, and techniques they could use. Mimicking Picasso's creative process that had been previously analyzed in class, a student would draw a rough sketch, upload it to Google Docs, and discuss it with both teachers. The exchange of ideas gave them encouragement and boosted their confidence. The quality of the artworks improved substantially as a result of timely feedback. Google Docs was found to be a good platform on which to develop the drafts of the artwork. Perfecting the draft is a milestone that forces students to become actively engaged during the initial phase of the multi-week project. It also provides a necessary channel of communication between the teachers and each student prior to tackling the artwork itself.

After handing in the final version of their artwork and presenting it to their peers, students wrote a self-reflective learning journal in which they assessed their own artwork based on a rubric that had been provided. They were required to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of their work as well as how they would do it differently if they had the chance. In a project of this scope, the process is as important as the product.

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Teaching science through art resonated well with the Liberal Arts cohort. This experience was so personally enriching that I decided to bring this cross-fertilization to science students the following year. Although the format of the assignment was maintained, I had to adapt the creative activities that are assessed with the main competencies of the science courses. This new framework is discussed in the next section.

Theoretical Foundations for the Project

The main difficulty in learning chemistry lies in the fact that there are three distinct types of representations (Gilbert & Treagust, 2009). The first type is the phenomenological, which encompasses the representation of material properties either observed in everyday contexts or measured in laboratory settings. The second type deals with the models used to explain all of these observed phenomena. These models are highly abstract and involve sub-microscopic entities such as molecules, atoms, ions, and radicals (Floriano, Reiners, Markic, & Avitabile, 2009). The third type is the symbolic type, which includes the representations of chemical transformations through chemical equations, the structural formulas of chemical compounds, their spatial arrangement, as well as all the symbols and conventions displayed in figures, diagrams, and charts (Eilam & Gilbert, 2014, Frankel & DePace, 2012).

A coherent and sophisticated conceptual understanding of the discipline that enables students to select the appropriate model in each context is an important competency in college chemistry courses. In terms of the stage of the intellectual development (Baxter-Magolda, 1992), the majority of incoming CEGEP students have a dualistic view of knowledge in which something is either right or wrong. In high school, science was learned by memorizing a collection of facts and procedures of increasing complexity, without any sort of reflection about the ways of knowing. Within this framework, science is presented as a field where objective reality is supreme. This approach to learning leads to knowledge fragmentation in which subsequent chunks are constantly replaced by new sets of “absolute truths,” which reiterates the dualism that characterizes the first stages of intellectual development. Although it is true that the vast majority of high school students tend to conceptualize knowledge in a dualistic view, it is noteworthy to mention that traditional ways of teaching not only emphasize this belief, but also prevent the necessary self-reflection to challenge them. It is hard for students to change their initial beliefs in an environment where conformity, standardization, and rigor in knowledge generation are the most

important cultural values. However, to understand the relationships between the three types of representations that are used in chemistry, this dualistic view must be constantly challenged by emphasizing the high-level abstractions of the models and their apparently inconsistent representations (Taber, 2009), such as the wave-particle duality and the various atomic models. It is commonplace to teach science as if finding a reasonable solution for a practical problem is its ultimate goal. It is crucial to instill in students, especially in their early stages of schooling, the idea that there are intrinsic limitations in scientific models, and we must continually evaluate the legitimacy of working with those models.

College students struggle with the idea that knowledge is neither fixed nor universal, but is instead constructed within a specific context. Artistic expression has the potential to help science students understand that the concept of absolute truth is neither scientifically nor epistemologically justified. Using art to foster imagination and promote learning has been historically considered a fundamental characteristic in the cognitive life of both pre-school and primary school children (Halpine, 2004; Heid, 2008; Paige & Whitney, 2008). Some attempts to implement similar approaches in higher education (Furlan, Kitson, & Andes, 2007; Halpine, 2008; Lunn & Noble, 2008) have shown to be effective by influencing the motivation components, which are ultimately related to student involvement in learning and academic achievement. The inclusion of an art project in college science courses is an innovation that not only took into account the Quebec ministerial requirements, but also fulfills the need for coherence between instruction, curriculum, and assessment (Fink, 2003; Weimer, 2002; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). By expressing their conceptual understanding using art and imagination, students can enhance their cognitive capacity by seeing things other than in the way they are formally represented. Art can become a unifying center in the curriculum to enrich students' cultural development by contextualizing scientific concepts within historical and philosophical frameworks (Efland, 2002).

The teaching of chemistry tends to overemphasize the symbolic representations at the expense of neglecting the construction of the concepts in a meaningful way (Cracolice, 2005; Krajcik, Slotta, McNeill, & Reiser, 2008). Students commonly mistake the ideas for the symbols used to represent them: Being able to read the symbols has no direct correlation with understanding the concepts they represent (Floriano et al., 2009). There is a strong tendency to teach through dogma, mechanically solving problems, and rote memorization of pieces of information that are not integrated in students' previous knowledge. As a consequence, students tend to compartmentalize information into tidy, demarcated packets, which compromises their conceptual understanding, curriculum integration, and construction of knowledge.

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The works of the Belgian painter René Magritte can be useful illustrations of the notion of symbolic representation. His paintings frequently portray juxtaposed ordinary objects displayed in unconventional, unexpected contexts that bring viewers new interpretations that are somewhat disruptive to consider. His iconic masterpiece, *The Treachery of Images* (1929), depicts a pipe with the disclaimer, “This is not a pipe,” which implies that it is an image of a pipe. In *The Human Condition* (1934), the painting within the painting perfectly captures the scene behind it, which is paradoxical because the image can never equal reality. Students are invited to associate the idea of these paintings to the fact that all atomic models studied in the course are only representations of an atom and not the atom itself. It might look obvious to an expert, but the realization helps students understand the high level of abstraction of chemical models and give them an appreciation for the images, symbols, and conventions used in the field. As outlined by Frankel and DePace (2012), “visual representations are critical components of science research. Images engage us in ways that words cannot” (p. 3).

The assignment given to science students in the Art & Science Project requires them to choose a theme of interest in chemistry and to create a visual representation of it that portrays some of the nine core ideas in the field (Atkins, 2010; Talanquer, 2016), namely the atomic nature of matter, chemical bonds, periodic properties, molecular shape, intermolecular forces, types of chemical reactions, energy conservation, entropy, and barriers to reactions. By exploring these “big ideas” and the ways they interconnect, students can acquire deeper conceptual change by crossing *threshold concepts* (Meyer & Land, 2003; Talanquer, 2015), which are transformative, integrated, irreversible, and troublesome concepts that expand the disciplinary boundaries and the ways of thinking in a discipline.

The concept map shown in Figure 1 outlines the nine big ideas covered in the three main chemistry courses that are offered in the CEGEP system: General Chemistry (Chem-NYA), Chemistry of Solutions (Chem-NYB), and Organic Chemistry I (Chem-HTJ). It also shows how these big ideas interconnect and are linked to more complex concepts, such as the relationship between structure and reactivity and the role of both thermodynamic and kinetic parameters in chemical reactions. Exposing college students to this sophisticated, integrative view challenges the misconceptions they bring from high school by offering an expert view of chemistry.

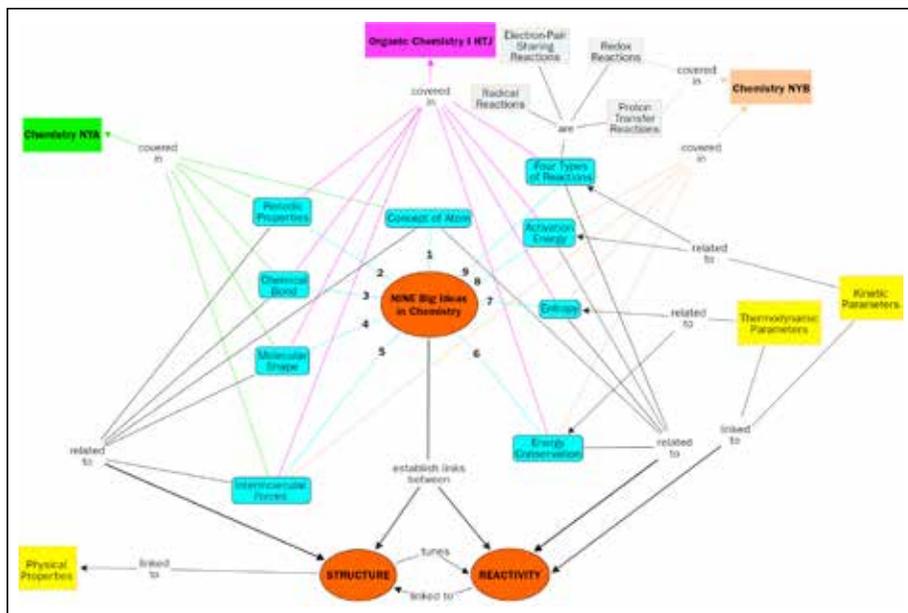


Fig. 1: Concept map of the nine “big ideas” in chemistry proposed by Peter Atkins that are covered in General Chemistry (NYA), Chemistry of Solutions (NYB), and Organic Chemistry I (HTJ). These ideas are an integral part of the artwork created by science students.

The artwork assignment addresses relevant features from social constructivism (del Rio & Álvarez, 2007) and constructionism. Constructionism shares constructivism’s connotation of learning as “building knowledge structures” irrespective of the circumstances of the learning. It then adds “the idea that this happens especially felicitously in a context where the learner is consciously engaged in constructing a public entity, whether it’s a sand castle on the beach or a theory of the universe” (Papert & Harel, 1991, p. 1). In the Art & Science project, learning occurs through a process of discovery that is mediated by social interactions between peers and teachers in a stimulating environment. As long as the scientific ideas portrayed are consistent with the views currently held by the scientific community, students have the final word on the themes and artistic choices they choose for their artwork. This freedom reinforces a sense of ownership and the value of learning by connecting the artwork with their own lives, passions, and interests (Grohman & Szmids, 2013; Ritchhart, 2015) while encouraging them to self-reflect (Bruner, 1986). Based on such a personal outlook, this activity has the potential to engage students cognitively at higher levels of abstraction by enhancing their engagement and their ability to transfer knowledge across disciplines in school, as well as from school to both home and the workplace.

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Students are encouraged to choose a topic of interest and a medium that best suits their artistic skills. For example, Figure 2 depicts an arts-and-crafts piece that portrays the evolution of atomic models—the most fundamental threshold concept in chemistry (Atkins, 2010; Feynman, 1995; Park & Light, 2009; Pullman, 1998).

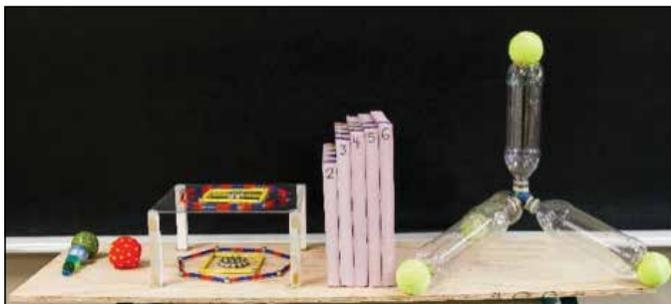


Fig. 2: An artistic representation of the evolution of atomic models

Other students opt to create a cartoon-like painting like the one shown in Figure 3, which addresses the wave-particle duality of electrons and the weirdness of quantum theory (Gamow, 1993; Rae, 1994). The artwork depicted in Figure 4 uses a combination of photography, digital manipulation of images, painting, and collage to illustrate the handedness of chemical structures and the enantioselectivity in the natural world—a fundamental concept in organic chemistry (Ball, 1994). The following section gives an explanation of the assessment and a brief analysis of students' work.



Fig. 3: *Let's go quantum!* portrays the weirdness of wave-particle duality



Fig. 4: *Alice through the looking glass* explores species that cannot be superimposed on their mirror images

Assessing Students' Work

Assessments in the form of projects that require intensive reflection over an extended period provide opportunities for critical feedback and revision through a process in which students refine and reconstruct their ideas. During the four-week project, students use creativity and lateral thinking to produce an artwork that captures the big ideas in chemistry. This activity takes place outside the classroom, but with almost-daily asynchronous communication through Google Docs to get feedback from teachers.

Assessing their learning involves multiple components: a draft of the artwork, the artwork itself, a presentation to their peers, and a self-evaluation. The process is individualized and empowers students to pursue their own interests, make their choices, and create something unique. In the draft documented in Google Docs, student and teacher discuss how the big ideas can be incorporated into the chosen theme and how to then translate these ideas into symbolic visual representations that can be decoded by viewers. The role of the teacher is to be a resource that provides constant support and guidance upon request, but does not interfere with students' choices. During the draft phase, misconceptions that students might have can be identified and challenged in ways that would not be possible in traditional pedagogies. After four weeks, the length of the Google Docs is typically about six pages, but it has varied from two to 25 pages depending on student involvement, interest, engagement, and time available to dedicate to such a labor-intensive task.

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After the completion of the work and its presentation to peers, students write a rationale that explains the meaning of the symbolic representations in their visual creation. The rationale is expected to have enough complexity to show the connections among, at least, five big ideas in chemistry.

The self-evaluation is based on a rubric that is made available in the first week of the activity. The criteria include the ability to make connections, student engagement during the process of creation, the originality, creativity, and complexity of the artwork, as well as the quality of the written rationale. Students also write a short self-reflection about how their views changed during the course when compared to previous chemistry courses. Emphasis is placed not only on the final product, but especially on the process that involves active engagement, trial and error, and higher-order cognitive levels of thinking that are important at the college level where students' intellectual maturity has not yet reached its peak.

As observed in any type of assessment, student achievement varies considerably depending on the level of engagement and interest. Since the first cohort in 2010, this activity has helped many students acquire noticeable gains in conceptual understanding, which became evident through the analysis of their drafts, rationales, and self-evaluations. Due to the prevalence of traditional teacher-centered approaches in the majority of science courses in CEGEPs, there is still resistance from many students to engage in active-learning activities, which are perceived as being excessively time-consuming. Since this assessment differs significantly from the reality in which tests, quizzes, and lab reports are the norm, students sometimes feel stressed and resentful. My experience has shown that it is crucial to convince them of the pedagogical value of the activity to have an impact on the way they reconceptualize the role of mental models in science.

Conclusion

Traditional forms of assessment emphasize control, discipline, and selection in a culture in which assessments are mostly seen by students as negative, stressful, final high-stakes tasks that rarely enhance learning. Within the framework of this project, the paradigm shifts towards a formative assessment that encompasses extensive feedback, goal transparency (i.e., students know how the artwork will be evaluated and the assessment's relevance to their learning the course material), and intrinsic motivation for learning since it can potentially bring joy to the learning process.

The proposed activity can be characterized as being student centered, and promoting both cooperation over competition, plus quality over quantity of learning, all common features of constructivist pedagogies.

Although still incipient, the development of a curriculum to foster imagination and creativity in the teaching of science has become a noticeable trend in the current literature (Egan, 2005, 2007; Jackson, Oliver, Shaw, & Wisdom, 2006), not only to attract students to science programs, but also to fulfill the market's constant demand for innovation and originality.

Compared to the traditional instructional strategy—the pervasive lecture/drill/practice—used in science courses, this activity embodies a remarkable shift in philosophy of teaching, curriculum design, and pedagogy. Students are asked to assume a more active role in their learning process by constructing meaning through a high-level cognitive activity. There is also an incentive to think creatively, an uncommon characteristic in traditional approaches.

By conducting this project, I truly believe that creativity and imagination should be stimulated and rewarded at the college level. I no longer think that success in teaching means getting the whole group of students to converge on a uniform, standard orthodox approach. Instead of an emphasis on indoctrination and homogenization, I believe, now more than ever, that we should encourage students to question the value and limitations of what is being taught. I truly believe that the joy of learning is to be found along the journey, rather than at the destination. Embracing creativity and imagination as structuring activities in higher education requires a shift in thinking to a new culture of learning in which the environment plays a major role, privileging play, questioning, and self-reflection. Within this paradigm, learning occurs as a result of synergy that takes into account stakeholders and their relationship with knowledge construction in a mutually reinforcing way. The goal is to take the interdisciplinary world around us and make it part of our experience, thus re-creating it.

The potential of such pedagogical approaches is promising and deserves to be further analyzed. As stated by Eisner (2002):

Inviting students to use their imagination means inviting them to see things other than the way they are. And, of course, this is what scientists and artists do; they perceive what is, but imagine what might be, and then use their knowledge, their technical skills, and their sensibilities to pursue what they have imagined. (p. 199)

Note

1. The Art & Science website (www.artandchemistry.ca) was created to showcase the achievements of this project. Students find there a repository of links to professional artists, museums, art galleries, and TED talks related to the assignment. The most relevant feature of the website is the Student Galleries, which display artworks and rationales from students in previous Liberal Arts and Science cohorts. The website is also a means of validation for the students' work by highlighting their immense creative potential and the process by which science students see art—and liberal arts students see science—differently.

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Addressing “Who Are You as a Scholarly Professional?” Through Artful and Creative Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This work offers examples and discussion of the work of participants in a graduate-level education course where creative engagement and meaningful learning through artful inquiry were pursued in addressing the question, “Who are you as a scholarly professional?” We provide a brief description of the nature of coursework, followed by descriptions of participants’ work, and the authors’ experiences as graduate student and instructor in creating a Visual Journal and conducting the experience, respectively. There is a discussion of the motivations, challenges, and outcomes experienced by the authors as they seek to create meaningful and transformative learning experiences for themselves and others.

In talking of learning that is transformational or deeply meaningful, Mezirow (1997) described a process where there is change in an individual’s “*frame of reference* ... associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world” (p. 5, emphasis in original); a change that is inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of human experience. For educators this is a desirable and elusive goal as they plan for the development of such understanding. Schlechty (2002) suggests, “engaged students see meaning in what they are doing ... When students are ... engaged, the distinction between ends and means become blurred” (p. 10). This blurring of ends and means shows, as Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) outlined, that engagement is a complex, multi-faceted meta-construct that involves behavioural, emotional, and cognitive aspects. With such engagement creativity is always at play, for both learner and instructor, who further develop their knowledge and understanding.

This work offers examples and discussion of the challenges and experiences in a capstone course for course-based Master's students, where we believe creative engagement and meaningful learning through artful inquiry were realized. We believe this experience is one where participants have the opportunity to go beyond conditioned or typical responses and involves expanding participants' frames of reference and in doing so, they are creatively engaged in an artful inquiry. To gain some perspective on this experience we offer a brief description of the nature of coursework. We provide some description of participants' work as examples of creative engagement through artful inquiry, and we provide information and discussion relating to what transpired for each of us as scholarly professional and instructor. We conclude by outlining what we believe are factors, both emergent and explanatory, that are entangled with an artful and creative graduate-level experience.

The Nature of the Learning Experience

Later in this work Heather will detail her experience and efforts in creating a Visual Journal as one example of artful inquiry through creative engagement. First, however, we will provide a course description and some examples of participants' work to provide a sense of the creativity, artfulness, and diversity involved in those efforts.

Typically, those enrolled in this course are experienced teachers, usually mid-career, who for various reasons have foregone a thesis or project route and require this final course as a synthesis or "capstone" to their Master's experience.

Initial versions of the course envisioned people participating in online discussion forums and in-class discussions. Individuals were to deliver a presentation based on a "final" paper and engage in a final oral examination. Through these activities, participants were to analyze their work and effort in previous master's courses, read additional articles as required, and arrive at a final synthesis of understanding of their Master's experience. Each of these was to be assessed by the instructor using a standard set of assessment measures.

These activities have remained possible course paths. However, over several course iterations a more eclectic, creative, and wide-ranging process of engagement has emerged, guided by a singular question: "Who are you as a scholarly professional?" In the context of this paper, course participants wrestle with and address this question over the 13-week course using their previous master's course experience as a crucial

part of that meaning making. Participants are invited and encouraged to develop or employ skills, technologies, and mediums new to them or to reengage those that might have fallen out of use over time. Repeatedly emphasized are that participant’s experience of meaning making is as much about the process as the product that emerged from their efforts. The students are invited to create a portfolio, paper, performance, play... anything employing the resources, abilities, and skills they decide to employ or develop. Emphasized as well is the celebratory experience of learning, and the opportunity to push personal boundaries in addressing the essential question. The use of metaphor as a guide for framing understanding is encouraged, as well as acknowledging and acting upon the reality that our professional and personal lives are influencing each other continuously. At its core, this course concerns people addressing their experience: past, present, and future.

There is a temptation perhaps to classify participants’ efforts as more or less traditional in the context of a graduate course. We leave to the reader such determinations. However, we remain intrigued by the efforts of participants who choose to push boundaries in both the process and the products. Some responses to this course are indeed traditional in format, which is not to downplay them, for they are full of meaning, have utility for the participant and, in meeting the course requirements, are what the scholarly professional chose. These are equally encouraged.

The range of works produced have included such processes and products as musical composition and performance, video production (i.e., autobiography, interviews), photo essays, poetry and art galleries, electronic portfolios using applications such as Mahara™, oil paintings, academic papers, character portraits (pencil sketch and story), PowerPoint© presentations, sculpture, banquet as metaphor and lived experience, creating board games and puzzles, Prezi™ and Wordle™ presentations, 3D models, letters to significant others, yoga session, crafted artefacts (i.e., medicine wheel, beaded moccasins) and scrapbooking. Other participants have produced professional development packages, dossiers, research posters, and websites and engaged in digital storytelling. Typically, participants have shared with each other a verbal accounting of and a reflection on their efforts, whether this was during the scheduled end-of-course sharing days, or in another agreed upon venue, such as the college’s Celebration of Research Conference.

One intriguing outcome involved a participant employing oil painting as a process of reflection. Janeen (a pseudonym) decided to renew her lifelong passion for oil painting. She re-created the painting by the French artist Paul Gauguin entitled, “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?” This famous painting addresses

the fundamental human condition through three scenes depicting Tahitian people in various stages of life and repose. Janeen reinterpreted this famous image through her artistic endeavour to develop an understanding of herself as a scholarly professional. In her painting she inserted a variety of quotations and ideas from her personal, professional, and academic experience. Interestingly enough, Gauguin relates that the white bird he painted accompanying an aging woman near death represents the futility of words to represent the reality of humanity. This message is perhaps a shared belief that even in the academic world to begin to understand one's self and roles we must go beyond what words alone can convey.

A Participant's Experience

To provide further insight into the experience of addressing oneself as a scholarly professional, Heather shares her experience of artful inquiry in the following section:

I was a graduate student while also working at the university as a seconded teacher. I had left my rural Saskatchewan primary classroom teaching position of almost 20 years to move to Saskatoon as an instructor in the teacher education program. My work there included teaching courses and supervising pre-service teachers during their internship. It was challenging, demanding, and ultimately rewarding work that provided for me the impetus to examine my own beliefs about education as well as the experiences that had led me to those beliefs. After three years in this rich learning environment, I walked into my final capstone course curious about the expectations. I was cautiously ready for this new challenge.

The capstone course did not impose the parameters of my previous graduate classes. I described the course outline to the art instructor next door to my office and she immediately suggested that I try a Visual Journal. Intrigued, I accompanied her to her studio where she gave me a few books for inspiration. Having decided to go for it, I went over to the campus bookstore to buy a sketchbook, markers, paints, pencil crayons, and glue. I gave myself the freedom to fill the initial pages of my Visual Journal with "Where did I come from?" and in so doing, I embedded the entire process in my childhood and early professional life. It became increasingly important to me to own this representation of learning. I found the work deeply personal. The capstone had given me a learning opportunity that would ultimately be for no one else, really, but for me (see Figure 1).

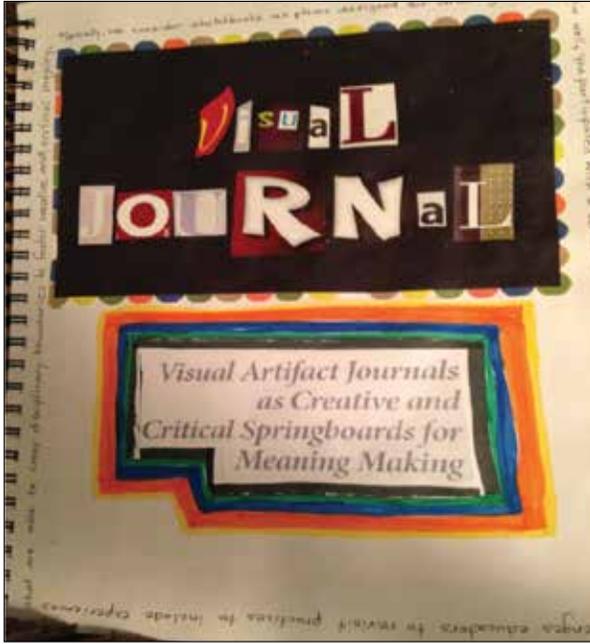


Fig. 1: A visual journal

The Visual Journal became an invitation to slow down and to grapple with the ideas that I had encountered in each one of my previous classes. I spent a lot of time just sitting and wondering. The big comfy chair in my office, which visitors often plunked into for a quick chat, and which I later used in the “Celebration of Learning” installation, became a symbol of pushing away from the experts and tentatively moving toward my own ways of knowing. For me, that chair was an integral part of the capstone process.

My attempts at visually representing intellectual understanding became addicting, non-linear, spiral, divergent, and satisfying. The process was a new experience which I found liberating. At times it made me laugh! I didn’t need to get anything “just right.” What I needed was to let the images emerge from inside of me, to recognize the pictures in my imagination as I reviewed my previous Master’s work in the context of my personal and professional life. I found myself hanging on to the part of each image that was uniquely mine, often accompanied with a touch of emotion or the hint of a childhood memory lingering in my mind. Instead of filtering these personal connections and meanings out of the project, I was teasing them into view, trying to capture them from a perspective that was intimately ME. I was synthesizing my learning visually and for some reason that brought with it an expanded understanding beyond the verbal, linear, or rational.

I decided to intersperse my reflections with “The Story of Jumping Mouse: A Native American Legend,” retold and illustrated by John Steptoe. This was done mostly because, as the time for me to leave my students, my school, my town had loomed closer and closer, my students had begun to see me in every book that we read. It seemed that having me leave them for my new work in the city was far more significant than them leaving me for the next grade down the hall. As I thought about the past three years, my students’ voices were still with me, sending me along on my own perilous journey saying, “Keep your hope alive, Ms. Baergen. Keep your hope alive.” I found their belief in me both comforting and a wee bit daunting.

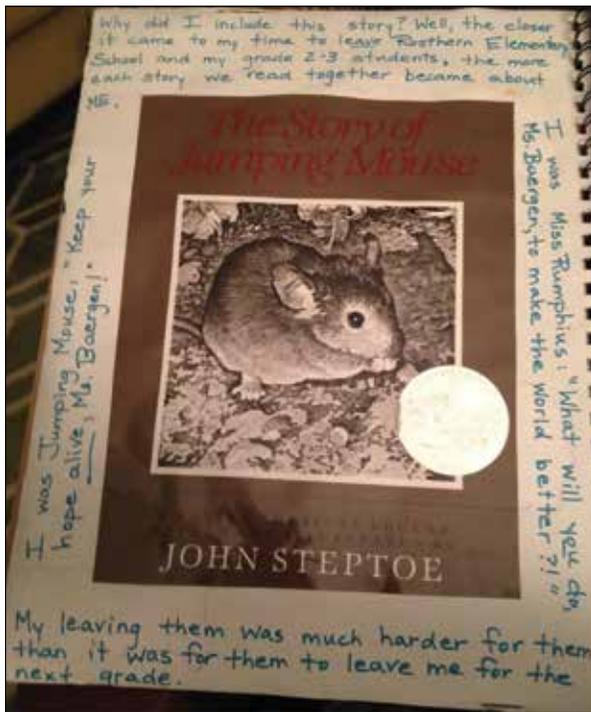


Fig. 2. *The story of jumping mouse: Using analogy for reflection*

Thinking about my thinking, asking why particular ideas stood out for me while others did not, wondering how all of the pieces fit together...this is what I mulled over as I attempted to create a visual representation for each of my grad classes. I decided to keep track of the time I spent working on the project. I knew how to manage my time when responding *textually* to my grad classes, but I had no idea how long this would take as I responded *visually*. As it turned out, it took a lot more time to respond visually,

but I perceived it to be much less. And instead of surging to the finish line and being relieved to be “done,” I was almost unable to pronounce it complete because there was always something more to think about.

When I had worked my way through all of my classes, I began to wonder about the “Now what?” part of my degree. Who was I now as a result of all of these classes? I gave this question lots of time to evolve. Part of this evolution was clarified during a wonderful conversation with another faculty member who specializes in early childhood education. She did not doubt for one second that this was my thesis and that it was worthy of being called research. She helped me to value the Visual Journal as my exploration of what it meant for me to be a teacher in the past, present, and future.

I found this process of artful inquiry powerful and resonant for two reasons. First, I was able to move out of a “productive” mode into a more “receptive” one. This shift was symbolized by the big comfy chair. The capstone course was an invitation to sit and wonder. I spent an unprecedented amount of time reading over old class notes and letting my mind wander, noticing what voices were important to me, following where they might lead, and asking why this might be so; why did I pause at the moments that I did? As each image emerged onto the page before me, I felt as though I was seeing myself in a new way, a way that made room for both me and the authors who had opened doors for me saying, “Come on in; you will like it here.”

Second, I did not feel compelled to begin with the ideas of the “other.” I always started with me, in spite of the muddle, in spite of uncertainty or a lack of clarity and conviction. This project invited me to wander into the labyrinth of my own tentative beliefs as a result of being exposed to so many ideas over the past three years. In creating a Visual Journal, I was collecting, sorting, sifting, and ultimately making decisions as to what to keep at the end of this process. I learned to anchor myself in my own background knowledge and my unique connections to create a deeply personal statement about who I am as a scholar.

Visual Journaling: A Rigorous Process?

Sharing the Visual Journal was a mixed experience for me. On one hand, I was awkwardly shy about the “primary school” feel to the final product. It seemed less worthy, less “cutting edge,” less scholarly than the on-line and artistic products of my classmates. However, it would not be honest to stop there. I was also delighted and

curious to see what people would see in this hands-on-cut-and-paste-and-smelly-marked scrapbook. I wondered how this work would be received by my peers and professors. I had come to believe deeply in this way of learning, this step away from the Internet and into my own early learning as a child and more recently as a teacher of noisy, messy, unpredictable, and wonderful primary-aged children. It felt like a challenge thrown into academia from the murky depths of my past experiences.

I signed up to share my work at the upcoming Celebration of Research. As I read the description of the event, I had to take a deep breath and decide if I really wanted to be quite that vulnerable. The description read, "The Celebration of Research and Scholarship is the College's opportunity to showcase the rich, diverse, and high quality work of our graduate and undergraduate students." I was not at all convinced that my work would be welcomed as rich, diverse, or high quality. At the same time, I evangelically believed that it was exactly that! The call for proposals invited "all students regardless of where they are in their program to submit one of the following: a research poster, an oral presentation, a panel presentation, or a roundtable of work-in-progress." It went on to describe what each of these submissions should include. Help?! My project just didn't fit any category...Worse still, my "Mode of Presentation" was a Scrap Book, big comfy chair, and an antique end table with markers and a lamp...?! I submitted my title and held my breath: "Who am I as a scholarly professional? Representation through Visual Journaling."

Feeling like I had somehow snuck past the planning committee, I stood back at the Celebration of Research Event and chuckled to see how many people walked right past my "art installation" version of research. They didn't seem to recognize it as part of the celebration at all. Of those who did stop to have a look, a few sat down and smiled as they flipped through the Visual Journal although, sadly, nobody tried out the markers.

On the way home from the Celebration of Research I was suddenly able to answer the question, "Who am I as a scholar?" I was happy to realize that I ask questions. I am a questioner. I am a wanderer, a collector of images and experiences and stories, a grappler and an experimenter. I do not need answers so much as I need questions. That is who I am.

An Instructor’s Experience

My experience as a university professor began when I was offered employment as a science educator and began teaching undergraduate methodology courses in science teaching and learning. Previous to this I taught mostly sciences in secondary schools. This change of profession occurred after many years in secondary schools, teaching subjects such as science, biology, chemistry, mathematics, and computer science, all of which typically assess and evaluate students’ work in often linear, prescriptive, and formatted ways. However, even earlier in my career I was uncomfortable with the notion of teacher as the sole or predominant “holder” and dispenser of knowledge and expertise, with teacher as sole judge of worthiness, and with the lack of opportunity for students to be creatively engaged in making sense of the world and in representing or sharing what they understood. I agreed teachers should possess significant knowledge and expertise and share this regularly, and that some types of knowledge are best dealt with in certain forms and standards, but I was always interested in the meaningfulness of the experience and knowledge for the learner.

My discomfort became acute when tasked with the capstone course. How was I to evaluate the work of participants? How was I to help them have a meaningful experience? Should I mandate particular formats and inclusions, for example, the development of a dossier noting their work in each course, papers read, articles produced, what was learned from each course and top it off with a final paper? This is not an unworthy approach, yet each person’s experience, despite sharing some common courses, instructors, and experiences, would ultimately be very distinct, diverse, and unique. How much should I prescribe and what liberties should I allow given the general nature of participants as seasoned professionals, with their diverse experiences, who most often would continue in their profession? Considering their experience as part of a life path, not only an academic path or a professional path, but also one that existed alongside and interwoven with more personal experience, my hope was for people to truly make the experience meaningful for themselves and for their lives and not exist entirely in academic solitude; a criticism heard often enough concerning universities. For me, education should be something you do and less something that is being done to you; and so questions of what is involved in being educated, who has power and control, the direction of learning, what is demanded as evidence of learning, and how roles play out come forward for consideration. There is not room to deal with each of these considerations in depth here, but I will provide some insight into my thinking as an instructor wrestling with such tensions in trying to be an activator in creatively engaging participants in an artful inquiry into who they are as scholarly professionals.

Thoughts and Action: Process and Products

There was an evolution in my practice and thinking as I attempted to create a meaningful learning experience for participants. The development of the single question concerning being a scholarly professional emerged from discussions of participants in early courses. Hoping to better guide decisions about course structure and outcomes and to focus the efforts of participants, I settled on this singular outcome. The intent was to focus attention on a specific outcome while broadening and supporting approaches that participants undertook to understand, represent, and share their knowledge. From initially using dossiers, final paper, and electronic portfolios as the main “vehicles” for both process and as product, I began to widen the possibilities, to also include poster work, performances, and play. When conversing with participants I referred to these as the “P’s”, paper, poster, portfolio, presentation, performance, and play. Each of the “P’s” contained within them a variety of possibilities (i.e., video production as part of an electronic portfolio, musical performance, etc.). The “P’s” often overlapped depending on how participants addressed the question. What was important was not delimiting, but liberating participants in their considerations of what was possible, what they might achieve and how it would serve them.

While trying to create opportunities I struggled with concerns for rigor, consistency and fairness. I wrestled with urges to demand students produce an outcome that I might desire, something “normal” in the context of graduate school, while still having this product serve them in achieving their ends for their purposes. In seeking and supporting more diversity in process and product, my thoughts on evaluation had to change and accommodate the wide range of process and products that participants realized. Letting go of my tendencies to consider the written word as the necessary form and the measure of worth, I realized the need to value the process of reflection and crafting in their own right. These processes, unseen to me but surely happening, needed to be acknowledged, respected, honored and given value.

The value of process was emphasized with participants in part by emphasizing the “P’s” and emphasizing that the processes of creativity were as important as the product, that in fact the process is a product and is to be equally valued, not just given lip service. This was especially true for those who chose to perform or provide more artistic products in addressing the scholarly professional question. This emphasis on process fit with supporting and encouraging participants to push their boundaries by trying new and different modes of investigation, reflection, meaning making, and sharing.

However, attending to the process, trying to determine its values, when one is not involved directly in the process, poses a challenge; a final product may be indicative of the process, but not be a reliable indicator of the quality and effort put into the process. This is especially so when individuals attempt something new, where they learn much, but the final product is not realized in the fashion they intended. To mitigate such concerns, participants reported to each other in online forums, and face-to-face in the learning community as well as providing me with short “progress” reports that I requested, as well as direct conversation. These seemed to aid people in progression and provide a level of comfort for participants and myself.

One of the inevitable responsibilities of an instructor in such university course work is to judge and evaluate the quality of that work. Given my desire for participants to risk and explore possibilities, to push boundaries for making sense of their Master’s experience and how they understood that experience, concerns about rigor and evaluation soon emerged. Participants come with a wealth of knowledge developed through unique and contextualized experiences, and so subscribing to a singular rubric for evaluation, if too specific and restricting, might work against the creative engagement and artistry participants were encouraged to realize. Compounding this situation was the typically high level of emotional effort and involvement participants experience in the process of making sense of their Master’s experience while contextualizing that experience in the broader context of their lives.

Given these challenges I attempted to resolve the tension by de-emphasizing marks, emphasizing the need for learning to be meaningful, that each person’s process and product was unique, that there was no singular “correct” path in response to the question of being a scholarly professional, and that process was equally as important as the final sharing product. This meant, for example, moving from a purely instructor-determined evaluation to a more or less negotiated mark employing participant’s input using three frames of reference—their current efforts in comparison to their past efforts, their efforts in comparison to that of their peers, and finally a consideration of their effort given their current life situation—and moving from position as the “expert” to being a participant in a group of “experts” (experienced, successful teachers from a variety of contexts, with multiple graduate courses completed) where our group knowledge and insight was superior to any individual.

The artful inquiry into my own practice in offering participants the opportunity to fully and creatively engage themselves emerged in several ways. This included:

- Rethinking, negotiating, and reconfiguring the power and control dynamics in the course so as to engage graduate students as peers and professionals while renaming and addressing participants not as graduate students, but as scholarly professionals (i.e., be the change you wish to see);
- Moving from strictly focusing on textual and philosophical analysis and representation in relating the reality of participants' lives, personal and professional, and so allowing emotive aspects to be acknowledged and acted upon;
- Scheduling the course into a blended learning environment (on-line and in class) with fewer in-class sessions (providing time for participants to think and work on their own, and interact with other colleagues on-line);
- Broadening the possibilities for how participants came to understand, represent, and share their work through emphasizing the diverse possibilities open to them (i.e., paper, poster, portfolio, presentation, performance, and play);
- Shifting from a more instructor controlled to shared control where the learning community came together, set their terms for engagement, both personally and as a group (my role shifted more to acting as confidante and guide, rather than as judge);
- Responsibility for assessment shifting from instructor centred to one of the learning community and the individual where each person reported his or her progress, challenges, struggles, and successes to the learning community;
- Final evaluative determinations remained the instructor's responsibility, though participants' self-assessment usually stood as the final evaluation (only if participant's self-assessment seemed ill fitting would there be further conversations with the scholarly professional);
- Acknowledging and relying on the scholarly professionals' group knowledge and expertise as more diverse and generative than an instructor's knowledge alone;
- De-apprenticing experienced educators from their apprenticeship in assessment and evaluation by questioning their thinking, experiences, and expectations concerning typical demonstrations of academic excellence, while using the

university’s standards as guides to craft new approaches, and expecting excellence;

- Emphasizing that inquiry is more than a linear, predetermined process; that inquiry is a creative process informed by need, motivation, past experience and personal and societal urgings, and finally and perhaps most importantly;
- Framing the learning experience as a celebration of meaning making interweaving personal, academic, and professional understanding.

Concluding Thoughts

We suggest the opportunity offered participants in this experience for creatively and artfully engaging in inquiry is entangled with several other factors crucial to meaningful or transformative learning. What emerged in this learning context was a high degree of ownership, perhaps triggered by the significant latitude provided for all participants to address their unique situations, challenges, hopes, and tensions. While more typical approaches were welcome in responding to “Who are you as a scholarly professional?”, many took the opportunity to attempt new methods of representation that inevitably led to a fulsome reflection on their experience. Perhaps this was because what was being represented, the representation and meaning making that occurred, was a continual process that both invited and forced the learner to fully engage in making sense (Hoban & Nielsen, 2010). Having a substantial sense of ownership for process and product while addressing the question of being a scholarly professional and completing their final master’s, people appeared to be less concerned with graded outcomes and more concerned with producing something meaningful and helpful to themselves, while meeting course demands, but also positioning them for their future pathways, personal and professional. This high level of ownership in structuring their response spawned genuine and often very inspirational work. The strong sense of ownership seemed to inspire participants to relax their concerns in terms of fulfilling course requirements, attaining a grade, and completing their degree. In this mix of ownership and inspiration, commitment to their work often appeared to deepen. This was evident in the class discussions and in personal discussions where students would report regularly about losing track of time, or having time speed by, as they worked. The outcome for some regularly saw them exceed what they expected to experience in time and effort if their self-assessment and peer assessments are to be trusted.

Participants developed trust in their ability to attain the challenging goals set for themselves and in the judgment of their colleagues. The attentiveness of the learning community to each other is key in developing such trust. Such trust is crucial if participants are going to challenge the boundaries they normally work within in an academic setting. This trust emerged through the group conversations, sharing circles, and on-line forum sharing. People better understood what they were doing in comparison to what others were attempting, were advised to avoid certain paths or at least to be aware of what would be demanded of them in pursuing a particular process and product. The development of trust through the sharing of experience allowed for participants to take risks they might not initially have felt comfortable considering. This was especially poignant when considerations and discussion of academic rigor came to the forefront. However, questioning the norm of graduate-level teaching and learning, and what is considered normal and how people would negotiate this, inevitably resolved itself for each participant through the discussions and personal sharing among participants. While not always or entirely the case, most people got past their discomfort of operating out of what might be considered the norm for process and product in a graduate-level course, and if not undertaking more boundary-pushing work themselves, supported that of their peers.

As the work of Heather and other participants suggests, creative engagement is a daring inquiry into who people are as scholarly professionals that requires a safe and welcoming learning context where the most deeply felt urges for creativity and sharing can come forward. Such engagement is an opportunity where risk and boundary pushing in making meaning and understanding oneself is supported and encouraged; where the personal, the emotional, the intellectual are purposefully connected, and where the process of inquiry, reflection, and understanding have value in themselves equal to that of any final product. Investigating who you are as a scholarly professional not only involves addressing academic concerns, but also deeply personal ones. In this way such engagement requires opportunities for creative meaning making and sharing for each human being.

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Heather Baergen taught primary school for 15 years in rural Saskatchewan until she was seconded from her school division to the University of Saskatchewan where she worked with pre-service teachers while continuing to complete her Masters of Education. During this time she was surprised that her reflections about education consistently drifted back to her childhood and to her early years as a teacher, providing glimpses of the undeniable connections reaching forward in time to her present beliefs as an educator. Upon her return to the elementary classroom, she has worked hard to remain true to these connections.



Close Reading and Movement: A Lesson on Student Engagement and the Four Cs

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ABSTRACT

Close reading is a reading instruction strategy. The author combined movement with close reading to engage fourth-grade students in meaning-making of new academic vocabulary words. Through the experience, students assessed new and multiple meanings of words and participated in collaborative, academic discussions of vocabulary words using human sculptures. Findings from the lesson suggest: an increase in student interest in vocabulary development when combined with movement, an instructional method that made sense to students, and a nonthreatening way to engage English learners in text-dependent inquiries. Future investigations may explore the lesson's feasibility with students in the middle and secondary grades.

In the United States of America, individual states are adopting and beginning to implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). CCSS is the latest endeavor in standards-based education in the U.S. The CCSS outlines academic standards that all students should know and be able to do by specific grade levels. The standards were created to ensure students' college and career readiness regardless as to where they lived in the U.S., specifically in terms of English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics.

Throughout CCSS, especially in ELA, lessons are centered on the Four Cs: critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity (National Education Association, n.d.). The Four Cs are underscored throughout the curriculum, including in reading instruction where students are expected to analyze complex texts.

The marriage of the arts and instruction has fascinated me for a long time, especially in regard to student engagement. Much research (Belliveau, 2006; Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999; Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012; Rodesiler, 2009; Smithrim & Uptis, 2005) in the arts is centered on student engagement.

For reading instruction, strategies such as close reading help students develop deeper meaning of words while using evidence from a given text to support student responses. Many researchers (Brown & Kappes, 2012; Dalton, 2013; Serafini, 2013; Roskos & Neuman, 2014) describe close reading as text analysis where rereading of the text is expected. Serafini (2013) suggested that prior to CCSS, teachers were more focused on students' personal responses to a reading instead of challenging students to analyze and understand more complex texts. Reading strategies like close reading serve a valuable purpose, but may leave some students that are struggling readers or simply disengaged in reading instruction with little motivation to read, especially if the given text is either too difficult to independently read or on a topic that does not interest the student (Malloy, Marinak, Gambrell, & Mazzoni, 2013). Student engagement in reading instruction, therefore, is a crucial element in developing literate learners.

This article describes a strategy that engages all students in reading instruction; specifically close reading with a heavy emphasis on the Four Cs of CCSS. First, I share background information on my early experiences with meaningful learning and student engagement. Next, I share some literature on the relationship between student engagement, movement, and reading. I then describe using movement as an instructional strategy. I close the article with lessons I learned from using movement in reading instruction with my students.

My intent is to explain an instructional strategy that can help students engage in collaborative academic discussions across the curriculum stemming from close reading. I define academic discussions as conversations that include the targeted academic vocabulary of a lesson. I used this strategy in my fourth grade classroom and in multiple workshops for aspiring and experienced educators. It is my hope that educators will use this strategy in their classroom to help make subject matter more meaningful for their students and themselves, across the curriculum; subsequently, enriching academic discussions in the classroom for the entire community of learners.

Background

My earliest memory of meaning-making in my own learning was at the age of four. As a hyper four-year-old, my parents were concerned that I would not do well in kindergarten because I could not sit long enough to listen to directions. This is the age when I started learning how to play the piano. The deliberate practice and sheer focus required to play the piano was sure to test my attentiveness and the patience of my teacher. My experiences in learning to play the piano did not start with sitting at the piano, they started on the floor. My piano teacher had colored carpet squares on the ground and I would jump to different squares that held certain musical meaning. Jumping to different colored carpet squares translated to fingers jumping across the piano's keyboard. Within weeks of jumping on the carpet squares, I was sitting at the piano making music. My parents were happy I was able to follow directions and were impressed that I could sit and focus for longer than a couple of seconds.

An Engaging Instructional Strategy

I teach students from a variety of backgrounds and ages. At the elementary school level, I engaged fourth-grade students in deep academic discussions on social justice. With adult learners, I facilitate academic discussions on curriculum design. My aim remains the same: engage my students with instructional strategies that require deeper critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. The creation of meaningful learning experiences that engage students in their learning continues to be the heartbeat of my work. The use of movement as a strategy for collaborative academic discussions in reading is a different way than I was taught in formal education, but it is very similar to my early experiences learning to play the piano.

An Instructional Strategy Grounded in the Arts and the Four Cs

There is a growing interest in the arts and its importance to a complete education (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 2011). In December of 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and affirmed the inclusion of the arts in

a well-rounded education in the United States of America (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). The arts, defined as music, dance, theater, and the visual arts, are argued to elicit student engagement in other subject areas like reading and language development (Brouillette & Jennings, 2010). Furthermore, research findings (Brouillette & Jennings, 2010; Heath & Wolf, 2005; Montgomerie & Ferguson, 1999) stressed the positive relationship arts instruction had on English learners. The investment in arts in schools through legislation and practice underscores the commitment and desire for meaning-making and innovation in today's classroom settings.

Studio habits formed in the visual arts setting have transferrable skills in today's CCSS classrooms. Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan (2007) outlined eight studio habits. Two of these habits, "engage and persist" and "stretch and explore," underpin the essence of CCSS in terms of creativity and critical thinking, which are parts of the Four Cs of CCSS (National Education Association, n.d.). According to Hetland et al. (2007) "engage and persist" suggests that students need to be involved and connected with their work while also realizing that it takes sustained focus to complete an assignment or project. In other words, teachers need to facilitate lessons that are "deeply engaging" (Hetland et al., 2007, p. 42). "Stretch and explore," on the other hand, encourages students to take risks, view mistakes as learning opportunities, and be creative through experimentation (Hetland et al., 2007).

Although Hetland and colleagues (2007) discussed studio habits in relation to the visual arts studio, connections with the habits are noted in other art areas. Music instruction, for instance, encourages students to embrace improvisation. Within improvisation, musicians may "blue" notes or bend sounds in pursuit of experimentation or creative expression. Dewey described this as "flexible purposing" (as cited in Eisner, 2002, p. 77) where the implementation of an idea may lead to unexpected effects or outcomes than what were originally considered. In today's classrooms, instructional strategies that foster "flexible purposing" like the arts do will provide students with the well-rounded education all students need and deserve.

Movement and Close Reading as an Instructional Strategy Together

The use of movement to engage students in their learning is not a new idea; however, the use of movement to engage students in close reading may be a new or novel area for teachers to consider. My idea for using movement to engage students

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in close reading, specifically during English language development instructional time, is based on Boal's (2002) work of *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Boal (2002) stressed the importance of audience engagement to ensure audience understanding of the creative work. Peebles (2007) explained rhythm walks as a way to engage struggling students in practicing reading fluency. I, therefore, blended these two ideas together to create human sculptures with my fourth grade English language development students. Since using this lesson with my fourth grade students, I have used it in workshop presentations with other educators.

First, it is important to define human sculptures as this is central for my lesson. I describe human sculptures to students of any age as a statue. In my fourth grade classroom, I asked the students to describe a trophy to me. After several students explained a clear image of a trophy, I shared with them that the top of the trophy, where there is a statue of some sort (e.g., a sculpture of a person kicking a soccer ball or something similar), is what I meant by a human sculpture. In small groups, students created one human sculpture as a team where each student was a part of the sculpture.

Spending time with the students to discuss and explore sculptures as an art form in balance with the other curriculum (e.g., English language development) is grounded in Brewer and Brown's (2009) work in content integrity. Brewer and Brown (2009) suggest that content areas must be given equal weight in lessons, instead of one content area holding the academic worth of another content area in higher regard. For example, a lesson that includes music and social studies content should teach each content area with integrity and not have one content area (e.g., music) be value-added for the other content area (e.g., social studies).

Table 1 illustrates the steps of the lesson in its entirety. In the table, the roles are indicated of the teacher and student in each step of the lesson. Table 1 also includes the Four C connection and literacy skill addressed throughout the lesson. It is my hope that this table helps other educators see the connection between CCSS and reading instruction and be able to re-create the learning experience with their students. I used the vocabulary words that were in the story of the day from the school site's adopted language arts curriculum.

Table 1

Steps of the Lesson, Roles of the Teacher and Student, Four C Connection, and Literacy Skill

STEP	ROLE OF TEACHER	ROLE OF STUDENT	FOUR C CONNECTION	LITERACY SKILL
1	Select Text.			
2	Write Vocabulary Word on Board.			
3	Point to and Say Aloud Vocabulary Word.	Repeats Vocabulary Word After Teacher.	Communication	Phonics, Oral Language Development
4	Explain Human Sculpture.	Give Examples of a Sculpture.	Communication	
5	Assign Small Groups Vocabulary Word.	In a Small Group, Create a Human Sculpture of the Assigned Vocabulary Word.	Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Critical Thinking	Prediction
6	Read Aloud Text.	Form Human Sculpture When the Teacher Reads Aloud the Small Group's Assigned Vocabulary Word.	Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking	
7	Monitor Student Groups.	Analyze Word Meaning in Small Group and Edit Human Sculpture of Given Word Based on Evidence From the Text.	Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Critical Thinking	Semantics, Text Analysis
8	Second Read Aloud of Text.	Form Revised Human Sculpture When the Teacher Reads Aloud the Small Group's Assigned Vocabulary Word.	Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking	

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STEP	ROLE OF TEACHER	ROLE OF STUDENT	FOUR C CONNECTION	LITERACY SKILL
9	Third Read Aloud of Text With Faster Pace Than Second Read Aloud.	Form Human Sculpture When the Teacher Reads Aloud the Small Group's Assigned Vocabulary Word.	Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking	
10	Time Students for 60 Seconds as They Read Aloud.	Students Read Aloud the Given Text as Quickly as They Can in 60 Seconds.	Communication	Reading Fluency
11	Assign Small Groups Additional Vocabulary Words From the Text.	In a Small Group, Create a Human Sculpture for Each of the Assigned Vocabulary Words.	Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Critical Thinking	
12	Repeat Steps 6-10.	Repeat Steps 6-10.	Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, Critical Thinking	Semantics, Reading Fluency

At the introductory stage of the new vocabulary words, students discuss the words and make a human sculpture based on what their group predicts each word means. As students use their group prediction to create a human sculpture, students take risks of sharing their predicted word meaning. Providing students space in a safe environment to share their human sculpture of a new vocabulary word encourages students to stretch and explore (Hetland et al., 2007) word meaning with their peers. As anticipated in close reading lessons, the selected text is reread at least three times, but the students continue to analyze the meaning of the vocabulary words throughout each reading with a sustained focus (i.e., engaged and persist) on better understanding the meaning of a new vocabulary word. As indicated in Table 1, Step 7, students analyze their human sculpture using evidence from the text. Student groups may revise their human sculptures based on their new understandings from their academic discussions and the text. The revision process connects students with the studio habit of “engage and persist” as it requires students to focus their attention on understanding the meaning of a specific vocabulary word throughout a given assignment: the human sculpture. It is during the collaborative group time that academic discussions develop in a holistic way, without my prompting. Students engage in discussing the meaning of their group’s vocabulary word and how to best depict their word in a human sculpture.

Lessons Learned

I learned three lessons from my experiences. First, although I introduced the instructional strategy to the students, their excitement in collaboration made the lesson successful. Student grouping, for example, was initially planned with four students in each group. Students quickly asked to have additional students in their group. As the lesson progressed, the group sizes increased and the number of groups, therefore, decreased. In the end, instead of having eight groups of four students in each group, I had two groups of 16 students in each group.

The second lesson I learned from the experience is that students asked to repeat the lesson when asked to learn new vocabulary words. Their suggestion underscored two salient points for me. Although the lesson was not a novel approach to deeper learning, it was an instructional strategy that made sense to the students. It also made learning meaningful to them.

Lastly, I learned that the instructional strategy encouraged students to make predictions about unfamiliar vocabulary words in a way that emphasized creativity and deemphasized one correct answer. This learning was particularly important in my fourth grade classroom where the majority of the students were English language learners. Similarly, the possibility of multiple meanings for words led to deeper discussions and other text-dependent inquiries. The end result was a classroom full of students, fully engaged in collaborative academic discussions across the curriculum.

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Exploring Methodological Inventiveness Through Collective Artful Self-Study Research

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ABSTRACT

We are teacher educators working in South Africa and the United States. Collectively we explored and extended our understanding of methodological inventiveness in self-study research through an artful process we have named “virtual polyvocal research jamming.” We make explicit our extemporaneous, dialogic process, showing how we imagined and played with artful research practices: rich pictures, poetry, oral performance, and dance. Through collective analysis of our process and products, we share our learning about methodological inventiveness, highlighting how finding imaginative ways to express and make sense of insights can deepen and extend shared reflection, analysis, and communication in educational inquiry.

Setting the Scene

The aim of self-study research is to improve professional practice and contribute to the scholarship of professional learning and development (Berry, 2014). In the early 1990s, teacher educators whose work was largely based in previous forms of practitioner inquiry began to develop self-study research methodology, enabling them to: gain a better understanding of the intersections of their personal learning histories, cultures, and professional practices; develop self-understanding personally and professionally by examining their practice with colleagues; and consider how to reframe and improve professional practice

(Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Loughran, 1996; Russell & Korthagen, 1995). For self-study researchers, transforming understanding begins with the self, yet necessitates interaction with others to enrich and extend individual perspectives (LaBoskey, 2004). While some form of collaboration is essential in all self-study research, in collective self-study the collaborative dimension becomes a focus of the research (Davey & Ham, 2009).

Self-study research requires both self-confidence and vulnerability as it confronts scholars on a personal level and triggers a heightened awareness of “the messiness, uncertainties, complexities, and elisions” (Samaras et al., 2014, p. 3) of professional practice. The self-study research process is embedded with both opportunities and risks, “countering professional development ‘fixes’” (Latta & Buck, 2007, p. 190) through documenting lived engagement with theory and practice. Discerning the impact of self-study research on students, colleagues, programs, and policy-making, “questioning the *so what* of self-study” (Loughran, 2010, p. 225) is at the forefront of the work of self-study researchers.

Increasingly, scholars across a range of academic and professional disciplines are engaging in self-study research (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015; Samaras et al., 2014; Coia & Taylor, 2014). Self-study of professional practice thus continues to be reconceptualized, reconfigured, and reinvigorated in significant ways in response to diverse contexts and changing professional learning and development needs (Garbett & Ovens, 2014). Accordingly, there is no single or prescribed self-study research method. The appropriate methods are those that inform the inquiry, with methodological inventiveness becoming increasingly characteristic of self-study research (Whitehead, 2004). Methodological inventiveness involves creative engagement to stimulate alternative, often artful, and transdisciplinary methods that contribute to generative ways of knowing, with wider implications for social change (Dadds & Hart, 2001). In this article, we narrate how we—four teacher educators with diverse disciplinary backgrounds who work in four very different universities in South Africa and the United States—conducted collective artful self-study research to explore methodological inventiveness, combining varied methods and explanatory lenses to co-create a virtual bricolage (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014; Samaras et al., 2015; Badley, 2014) through nomadic jamming (Coia & Taylor, 2014). Our research questioned what it means to enact creative engagement, both collectively and individually, in order to discover, develop, and better understand innovative possibilities within our practices as self-study researchers. Our initial guiding question was, “What has methodological inventiveness in self-study looked like for us individually and collectively?” As we found ourselves “jamming into the unpredictable” (Coia & Taylor, 2014, p. 157), inviting the uncertain, listening to each other’s individual experiences, and then taking cues from

each other, a second guiding question emerged for us: “What is the process of virtual polyvocal research jamming in self-study?”

We begin this article by sharing our collaborative backgrounds, providing a historical context to our study. We then describe our collective self-study research process, detailing how we conceived and put into practice artful research practices. These are illustrated through examples of products from our exploration. Next, through an analysis of our process and products, we share what we have learned about methodological inventiveness. We conclude with our insights about the significance of this collaborative artful endeavour, highlighting possible implications and inspirations that our creative engagement might evoke for others.

Our Collaborative Backgrounds

We brought to our collective inquiry a rich history of self-study research conducted in duos. Kathleen and Anastasia are teacher educators involved in leading transdisciplinary self-study learning communities in their respective home countries of South Africa and the United States and with individuals who work in various disciplines inside and outside of teacher education. These related experiences brought them together in 2012 when they began to dialogue, chiefly through digital technologies, about facilitating transdisciplinary self-study learning communities with students and university faculty. They enacted a virtual bricolage self-study method using dialogic tools to generate, analyze, and represent data for their collaborative, arts-based self-study (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014). This initial collaboration led to the development of an edited book focusing on polyvocality—dialogic encounters with diverse ways of seeing and knowing—in professional learning through self-study research (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015).

Lesley and Monica have been working collaboratively for 15 years, during which time they have employed co/autoethnography (Coia & Taylor, 2009), a methodology they developed and use to explore the deep connections between their practice, social identities, and histories. Co/autoethnography integrates the autobiographical characteristics of self-narrative within a dialogic context of collaborative researchers working together to extend and deepen reflection. In their work, Lesley and Monica compose stories drawn from their own past and present lived experiences as teacher educators, “jamming into the unpredictable” (Coia & Taylor, 2014, p. 157) as they “write into each other’s lives” (Taylor & Coia, 2006, p. 61).

A Collective Artful Self-Study Research Process

Collective self-study research offered us, as a newly formed quartet, a supportive space for a polyvocal exploration of methodological inventiveness. Individual contributions enhanced each other's learning as well as that of the group, making possible the co-creation of new knowledge (East, Fitzgerald, & Heston, 2009). We adapted a poststructural feminist stance that allowed us to consciously work against being "routinized, static and predictable" and to "interrogate the enabling limits of [our] own practices, not to junk them but to shake them up" (Lather, 2006, p. 1). Destabilizing categories and provoking uncertainties (Britzman, 1993) freed us to consider deeper implications of creative engagement in and through self-study research.

Our understandings were reshaped over four months through online dialogue, via the virtual communication tools of email, Skype, and Dropbox. In this way, we extended and integrated our previous work on virtual bricolage, self-study (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014; Samaras et al., 2015) and co/autoethnographic research jamming (Coia & Taylor, 2014).

The following transcription of an initial email conversation about how we might begin to explore methodological inventiveness shows our collective deliberation about the use of rich pictures, a form of visual brainstorming through drawing detailed pictures that can produce new ways of looking at an issue from multiple perspectives (Checkland, 2000). While rich pictures were developed for use in soft systems methodology (Checkland, 2000), they have also been used as a self-reflective research practice by Campbell Williams (1999), who drew a series of rich pictures to examine the progression of his teaching of a university business computing course over several years.

On May 28, 2015, Kathleen wrote to Lesley, Lesley, and Anastasia:

A visual research practice might work well for us to visualise our changing use of self-study through place, space and time. One possibility might be rich pictures. . . . I haven't used rich pictures as a self-study research practice before--but I'm always keen to try something new. . . .

Lesley replied:

I . . . looked at the rich pictures site that Kathleen sent us (exciting). . . . I am not at all sure how this would work but it might be possible to map the terrain (history and present) and then layer on our experiences, lines of exploration and institutional involvement. This would provide rich context and a form of argumentation. . . . As you can see, I am thinking aloud. I am not sure how visual argumentation works, but this is definitely an idea I am interested in pursuing.

Monica added:

I absolutely love the idea of the rich picture analysis. What a fantastic way to map—it almost feels like Deleuzian mapping [Deleuze & Guattari, 1987] . . . or rhizomatics [Strom & Martin, 2013] . . . to me Mapping seems like the perfect method when we talk about place, space, and time too. Excited to talk more about this! I wonder what digital space we could use to co-construct these maps!

And Anastasia concluded:

Wow! We're off so easily and I agree. It will be useful to map a terrain and us in it. . . . we will go backwards and forwards. Let's start there then.

After further discussion, we decided that each of us would draw by hand a rich picture to map our personal experiences of creative engagement in self-study research. We then scanned and emailed our rich pictures to each other (for instance, Figure 1). We had a Skype call in which we explained our pictures and discussed the experience of drawing and viewing each other's pictures. We audio-recorded and typed notes on this conversation, and uploaded these files into a shared Dropbox folder.

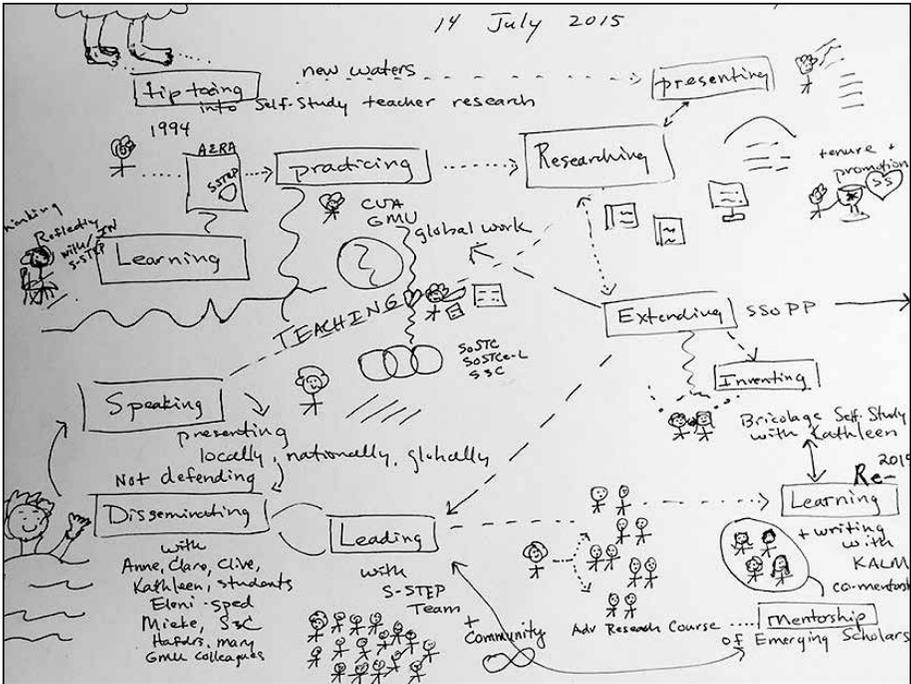


Fig 1: A rich picture drawn by Anastasia

Next, we each created a composite rich picture, in which we examined the contiguity of our meaning making through cutting and pasting together pieces from the four rich pictures. The composite rich picture was not a technique that we had read about or seen used; it was an innovative idea that developed through our virtual dialogue. We discovered that our composite pictures made visible the connections we found between our individual experiences to a collective one (for example, Figure 2). This process echoed the fundamental tenet of co/autoethnography: It allowed us to write into each others' lives (Taylor & Coia, 2009) and create something new that collectively represented us as individuals as well as a group.

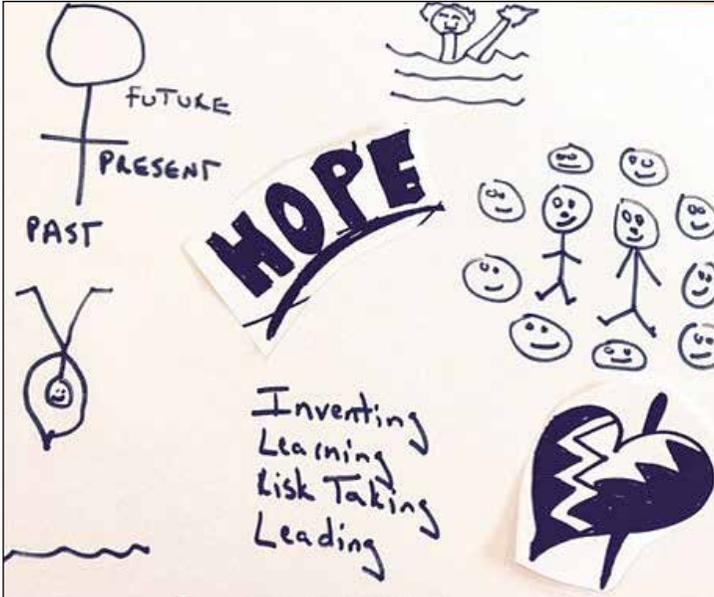


Fig. 2: A composite rich picture created by Monica

Further methodological inventiveness emerged. While working on her composite picture, Kathleen listened again to the audio recording of our Skype conversation. She was moved to create a found poem using words and phrases from our rich pictures and conversation as material for the poem, combining these in new ways with the intention of offering a holistic representation of our polyvocal dialogue (Butler-Kisber, 2002). She then emailed her composite picture and poem to the group and offered it for thought and extension. She wrote: “Here is my composite image and also a composite poem (I couldn’t resist a poem after listening again to the audio of our poetic conversation...) . . .” (Email communication, June 15, 2015).

Gifts of This Moving Self-Study Stream

A composite found poem

Tiptoeing into new waters
I set off on a long walk through the woods
Looking for ways in which change can happen

Diving into the deep
Falling in love
It could be dangerous...

Changing my lens
Bringing in indigenous knowledge
Using the arts to understand my self
Writing into each other's lives
Changes the dynamic of what we do
We found it liberating
Finding a home
Believing that change is possible
Fully immersed
The questions are bigger
A healing process for wounded hearts
What can be learned from that pain?
An optimistic endeavour
Re-remembering
Re-vitalising
It's not over
I'm not sure what's next
There's an element of the unknown...

Monica, drawing from her composite rich picture, as well as Kathleen's poem, then composed her own poem using words from the original rich pictures (see Figure 3). Inspired by the found poem and the general collective feeling of openness, she wrote a rhythmic poem that required a performance. As she composed it, she realized that it was an embodied expression that needed to be heard, rather than just read. She wrote the poem down and sent it to the group, but also performed and audio-recorded it, sharing the oral performance via Dropbox. Moving from Kathleen's found poem to her own performed poem involved what Siegel (1995) calls "transmediation" or "the act of translating meaning from one sign system to another" (p. 455). Being able to create a connection between different artistic modes is an effective demonstration of her reflective and generative process. She attached the following note to her audio-recorded poem: "Hello All: Attached is an audio recording of the found poem I created from our pictures--will send you the text and collage next. Inspired by all of you to try different mediums!" (Email communication, June 16, 2015).

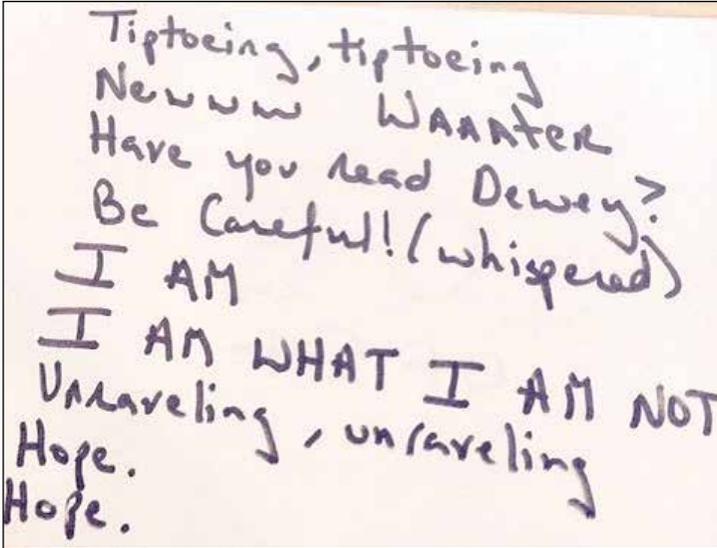


Fig. 3: Monica's poem: *Tentatively jamming*

In this trustful context, Anastasia was inspired to move in an improvisational manner to Kathleen's poetry and Monica's audio-taped choral reading. Anastasia e-mailed:

You have each inspired me to move into expressing our collective rich pictures . . . through dance . . . I have to try it I thought . . . I can get out of my text dependency for sure when I dance it. I danced it twice to whatever was playing and I open it with Monica's poem; See if you can find your voices in my expressions. (Email communication, June 17, 2015) (See Figure 4).

Anastasia shared a video via Dropbox of her improvised dance sequence, building upon and extending in a new way the evolving group dialogue. Lussier-Ley (2010) has described this kind of embodied self-study research as "dancing in the spaces in between what I know and what I am discovering" (p. 212). There were no directions, rules, or plans for the representation of Anastasia's data except to move to better understand the data and be part of something unique to academics; she was expressing her understanding of data by embodying it to build on, and contribute to, our collective data.



Fig. 4: A screenshot from the video of Anastasia's improvised dance sequence

Understanding Methodological Inventiveness as Virtual Polyvocal Research Jamming

Collective analysis of the data emerged through an open-ended Skype discussion about the composite pictures and the multiple artful responses. Again, we audio-recorded the conversation and typed meeting notes. In this conversation, we identified the “big ideas” about methodological inventiveness in self-study research that materialized as we “read” and responded to our collection of artful portrayals: the initial rich pictures; the composite pictures; the poems; and the dance sequence. We stepped back and listened and observed again—this time more to the generative process of building on each other’s creativity and being inspired by each other and to the “so what and for whom” of our collective work. The irrelevant, or not pertinent, was shed in a barely perceptible “unravelling” (Figure 3, *Tentatively Jamming*, line 7) motion only visible when we reviewed the data. Building on key concepts from the earlier research that we had conducted as pairs, we named what was now taking place in our quartet as *virtual polyvocal research jamming*—an artful self-study research method (see also Pithouse-Morgan, Coia, Taylor, & Samaras, forthcoming).

Our emergent, dialogic meaning making of the series of rich pictures and audios, the dance video, and the notes taken during (and immediately following) our online meetings revealed four major elements of our enacting creative engagement in self-study:

(Re)knowing in a Trusted Community

Our work, which is representative rather than idiosyncratic, demonstrates how educational understanding grows through supportive listening and collective contributions: “Writing into each other’s lives / Changes the dynamic of what we do” (*Gifts of this Moving Self-Study Stream*, lines 10–11). Knowledge is consciously co-created through a focus on the positive generation of openness to ideas. This collaboration allowed the generation of composite pictures, poems, oral performance, and dance, and other co-reflections that, we surmise, would not be available outside a trusting and trustworthy community. Our quartet rapidly became such a community and the virtual “creativity enabling space” (Sprague & Parsons, 2012, p. 400) that took shape through our online interactions provided opportunities for inventive modes of expression through which we “experienced new depths and subtleties” (Peter Mann Pictures, 2015) of seeing, feeling, and thinking.

Reciprocal Vulnerability

Our research revealed a contagious courage to engage with unfamiliar, artful tools. Although we had not worked together as a quartet before, we willingly made ourselves vulnerable by “diving” (*Gifts of this Moving Self-Study Stream*, line 4) into “Newww Waaater” (Figure 3, *Tentatively Jamming*, line 2), resulting in the production of meaningful work. As we looked back at what we produced, the ways in which we made ourselves vulnerable to each other were palpable, but also in need of some reflection. Part of the reason for our ability to fall so quickly into this shared openness could be the nature of the wider self-study research community, which is known for embracing candid discussions of self and its relation to practice, often through artful means (Weber, 2014; Weber & Mitchell, 2004). There was also a deep measure of respect between the authors, each of whom is practiced in collaborative research, which helped propel us into a positive vulnerability. This enabled us to explore in a productive way aspects of our work that could not be reached by other more conventional research methods. Gulla (2014) highlights this as the “value of the willingness to channel one’s vulnerability through the conduit of creativity” (p. 143).

Shared Improvisation

We found that methodological inventiveness is about standing back and listening for resonance and connection: “I AM / I AM WHAT I AM NOT” (Figure 3, *Tentatively Jamming*, lines 5–6). As with musical improvisation or jamming, it is about what you add when working with others (Harris, 2011). This is possible because of an often “unspoken communication” (Coia & Taylor, 2014) that involves active listening to one another, thus “allowing creativity to flow” (Harris, 2001) through space and time, across states and continents. It also occurs when each participant’s contribution is honoured. It is “an optimistic endeavour” (*Gifts of this Moving Self-Study Stream*, line 19) that involves openness to the unpredictable and a faith that shared improvisation will produce something new that offers insight. Improvisation is a seductive theme, but requires much in terms of relevant knowledge of the art form on which the improvisation riffs. Our improvisation as a quartet drew not only on our collective knowledge of self-study and its characteristic methodological inventiveness, but also on our earlier paired explorations of artful research practices such as co/autoethnography (Taylor & Coia, 2009), improvised dialogue (Coia & Taylor, 2014), and collective poetic inquiry (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014; Samaras et al., 2015).

Methodological Innovation as Joyful Wonder

Our artful portrayals expressed a sense of joyful wonder and pleasure at stretching and challenging ourselves and gaining new insights: “We found it liberating / Re-vitalising” (*Gifts of this Moving Self-Study Stream*, lines 12, 21). We eagerly looked for and quickly responded to each other’s emails as if to capture a moment in time for each of us. The enjoyment of working together, of managing tensions between self and community, is characteristic of collective self-study research (Davey & Ham, 2009). Our rich pictures are a metaphor for how our practice is individuated and deeply connected. Anastasia’s improvisational dance pictured above (Figure 4) reflects our joy in lifting ourselves beyond the courses often run in research that just dig deeper and straighter as they plough along the same furrows. Being able to see and enjoy the new patterns formed when we look up together at what has emerged from our virtual polyvocal research jamming is an important result of our collective artful inquiry.

Moving Into the Unknown

Our collaborative inquiry was enlivened by an optimistic commitment to trying out artful ways of doing, understanding, and representing that push the boundaries of learning and knowing within and beyond the genre of self-study research. Our “animating, embodying [adventure]” (Badley, 2015, p. 717) of creative engagement was not “innovation for the sake of innovation” (Mitchell, 2016, p. 181). Its purpose was to deepen and extend our shared reflection, analysis, and communication. We have come to see how finding imaginative ways to express and make sense of our insights together can allow these to develop, while simultaneously inviting responses from each other. Through collective artful self-study, we learned that creative engagement can enter into the research process in unanticipated ways; these are ways that might be overlooked if we are not paying careful attention or are not open to surprises. We see such openness to extemporaneity as adding to the methodological characteristics and guideposts that have been offered by the self-study scholarly community (for example, LaBoskey, 2004; Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011). A dynamic interplay between convention and spontaneity can offer vital impetus and orientation for artful inquiry. Our work aligned with a view of creativity in teaching, learning, and researching as “refreshing and . . . extending knowledge, and that this refreshment is inhibited if we are compelled to work within overly constraining expectations—of ourselves and of others” (Katz, 2015, p. 19). Our virtual polyvocal research jamming is a microcosm of how we discover artful methods to advance scholarship and practice when we extend outwards from “the shoulds” of research method to the extemporaneity of “why not?”

The visual artist Sargy Mann (Peter Mann Pictures, 2015) has described how the human capacity for artistic expression and perception has developed over time because of methodological inventiveness in various art forms. Likewise, educational understanding evolves when we dare to imagine and enact innovative possibilities for “a new vision of learning places as creativity enabling spaces” (Sprague & Parsons, 2012, p. 400). This can happen when we, in dialogue with others, experience our selves, our practice, and our contexts as fluid and full of possibility. Enhanced awareness of the shifting nature of our selves and our knowing can heighten our consciousness that some change for the better is almost always within reach. When hope and optimism are supported by experiential wisdom gained through shared creative engagement, we can confidently make a qualitative difference in our work with students and colleagues, and more broadly at the level of programs and policy. Virtual polyvocal research jamming offers us the priceless gifts of collective intuition, spontaneity, and improvisation. We take these with us, and offer them to our students, colleagues, and readers, as we move into the unknown.

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The Glow of Unwork? Issues of Portrayal in Arts-Related Research

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we argue that arts-related research provides greater or diverse opportunities to represent and portray data differently and suggest that these ways are underutilized. For example, for many researchers legitimacy comes through the use of participants' voices in the form of quotations. However, we argue that this stance towards plausibility and legitimacy is problematic and needs to be reconsidered in terms of understanding differences in types of portrayal, recognizing how researchers position themselves in relation to portrayal, and understanding decision-making in relation to portrayal.

Portrayal is often seen as an issue that is relatively straightforward by qualitative researchers, and invariably refers to putting the findings of the study together with excerpts from participants and usually, but not always, some interpretation. In this paper, we suggest that portrayal in arts-related research is often undervalued and seen as “unwork” (Galloway, 2012). Portrayal tends to be seen as the means by which the researcher has chosen to position people and their perspectives, and it is imbued with a sense of not only positioning, but also a contextual painting of a person in a particular way. Yet, there is an array of issues and challenges about what portrayal can or might mean in arts-related research. We suggest that there needs to be new perspectives about portrayal and concept, and ideas are provided that offer a different view. Three key recommendations are made:

- Portrayal should be reconceptualised as four overlapping concepts: mustering, folding, cartography, and portrayal. Adopting such an approach will enable audiences, researchers, and other stakeholders to critique the assumptions that researchers on tour bring to portrayal and encourage reflexivity.
- Researchers on tour should highlight the temporal, mutable, and shifting nature of portrayed research findings, emphasizing the need for continued and varied research to inform understanding.
- There is a significant need for greater insight into the influence of portrayal, as well as the difference between representation and portrayal. Future studies should prioritize this, and ensure that portrayal is considered and critiqued from the outset.

Background

Portrayal of research findings has often been seen as unproblematic, yet authors such as St. Pierre (2008, 2009) and Butler-Kisber (2002, 2008, 2010) indicate it is invariably much more troublesome than most researchers acknowledge. We suggest that there is often friction between the interfaces or boundaries among interpretation, representation, and portrayal. Galloway (2012) argues that it is difficult to see friction at the interfaces, since, for the most part, they are designed to be invisible. Thus, work done at an interface renders the interface invisible, in order to make it work effectively. It then appears that no work has or is taking place, and thus the interfaces cast what he calls, “the glow of unwork” (p. 25). Perhaps, when undertaking educational work in arts-related research, we need to give greater attention to what is occurring at the interfaces, particularly between representation and portrayal. There is a need to recognize that students and young people centre their lives on networked publics—spaces that are created, structured, and restructured around networked technologies and that these are further sets of fractioned fractures and swirling interfaces that affect representation and portrayal of findings. Thus, we need to explore what is privileged and what is missing, to examine what has been created and crafted, and to recognize how frictions and fractures at these interfaces can improve our understandings and make us better, braver researchers. Portrayal is defined here as the contextual painting of a person or data set in a particular way. However, many research studies use the terms “representation” and “portrayal” interchangeably. For example:

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- Representation tends to refer to the way in which a researcher provides warranted accounts of data collected. Thus, the main way the term representation is used is in the sense of a proxy, the researcher is (re)presenting the views of the participants. This is often seen or presented by the researcher as being unproblematic. Yet researchers need to acknowledge and voice that the research account they are providing does in fact reflect their own stance and position. We suggest that often personal stances and accounts are missing from research data and this is seen most often when undertaking qualitative research synthesis (Savin-Baden & Major, 2010).
- Portrayal invariably is seen as the means by which the researcher has chosen to position people and their perspectives. Portrayal tends to be imbued with a sense of not only positioning, but also a contextual painting of a person in a particular way.

Those who do use “portrayal” invariably are referring to media (mis)representation of particular groups: women, Muslims, black youth. We argue that research portrayal, and particularly qualitative research portrayal, should centre not only on how something is restated, but also how they are depicted by researchers. Thus, what is central to portrayal is in-depth interpretation, which involves examining the subtext and exploring what is being argued for by those in the study by interpreting, for example, metaphors, metonymy, and oppositional talk. There is no sense of quick coding and analysis in this process, but rather as St. Pierre (2009) has argued:

I believe we have burdened the voices of our participants with too much evidentiary weight. I suggest we put voice in its place as one data source among many from which we produce evidence to warrant our claims and focus for a time on other data we use to think about our projects that we’ve been ignoring for decades. (p. 221)

Jackson and Mazzei (2011) suggest that in the analytical process, the researcher and the researched are both subject to change, as is the audience or viewer, so that as the research data are transformed and offer something else, something new is made available: a new portrayal of the phenomena. This stance places portrayal as somehow less static and acknowledges the importance of the interaction between researcher and participants. Portrayal then needs to be seen as a process, rather than an ending, as Butler-Kisber (2002) suggests: “A portrayal presents the essence of a phenomenon at a certain time while retaining the signature of the creator. Artful portrayals mediate understanding, our own and that of others” (p. 238).

Yet, the spaces in which research data is portrayed, are also important. Lefebvre (1991) has suggested that social space might be seen as comprising a conceptual triad of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. Spatial practice represents the way in which space is produced and reproduced in particular locations and social formations and we suggest it has strong links with portrayal. The work of Harrison (2013) is a useful example of a moving portrayal of space. In the excerpt below, he discusses how he created a circus tent as a means of representation, performance, and portrayal:

As an Artist-in-Residence in a Toronto District School Board high school I began my research. This involved setting up an open door studio through which students could come and go ongoing through the process of the research. An autoethnographic, arts informed project was begun in which I would explore the narratives of my own life as a lens into growing up gay in rural Ontario in the 1960s and 1970s. The dissemination of the findings was achieved through painting on the walls of a small circus or freak show tent. Images on the outside of the tent were appropriated from Ringling and Barnum Bailey's circus and freak show advertisements and historical photographs (Jando et al, 2008) intertwined with self-portrait images of the more negative ways I am imagined as a gay man. On the inside walls of the tent autoethnographic images were painted which explore the formative years of my life and how I imagined myself. The painted freak show tent is the dissertation. An artist's catalogue was created documenting the studio, the research conducted to produce the narratives, the creation of the tent and the tent itself. It became the document that with the tent itself could be defended to conclude my doctoral research, for it both documented and contextualized the cultural artifact (Lyman & Kale, 1998) of the tent.

What is significant about Harrison's work is that the work is used to enhance understanding, and to reach multiple audiences. The interfaces of representation and portrayal interrupt ideas of data presentations as well as use media to make research findings accessible to a variety of people.

Concepts of Portrayal

However, whilst space is a significant consideration, the processes involved in "portrayal creation" are also important. We suggest that portrayal can be delineated as four overlapping concepts—Folding, Mustering, Cartography, and Assemblage:

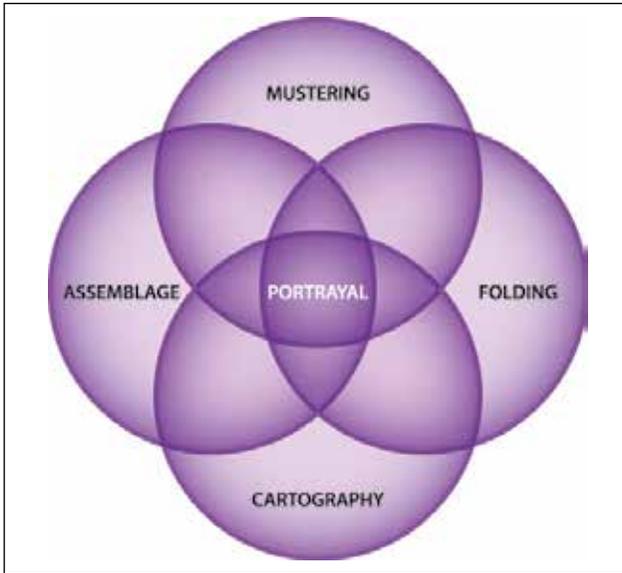


Fig. 1: Concepts of portrayal

Mustering

Mustering is a term often used to gather troops for battle and this has resonance here, in that researchers gather themselves, gird their thoughts and ideas, and begin the portrayal process. Mustering then is the part of the portrayal process where data are brought together and decisions are made about how they will be used in the act of portrayal. It involves making decisions about voice, colour, text, what is to be included, and how to account for what is to be. There is a sense of living and working with order and chaos simultaneously. What emerges is an appreciation that what was once frayed meaning becomes a holistic depiction which is both fragile and portrayed. This mustering is influenced to a degree by the folding process.

Folding

The notion of folding (Deleuze, 1993) disrupts the idea of data being portrayed as straightforward and one-dimensional. The idea of a fold helps us to see portrayal as a means of being and becoming part of the data and its endings. Folding allows for a multiplicity of portrayal whilst helping readers see some kind of sense in the findings, as well as possible continuities and labyrinths with other research:

Thus a continuous labyrinth is not a line dissolving into independent points, as flowing sand might dissolve into grains, but resembles a sheet of paper divided into infinite folds or separated into bending movements, each one determined by the consistent or conspiring surrounding . . . A fold is always folded within a fold, like a cavern in a cavern. The unit of matter, the smallest element of the labyrinth, is the fold, not the point which is never a part, but a simple extremity of the line. (p. 6)

Folding means there is disruption between the idea of an inside and an outside so that inside and outside are both inside and outside; to reiterate: “a fold is always fold within a fold” (p. 6). Thus, there is recognition by the researcher that data, findings, and interpretations are neither stable, nor do they offer a singular view. In the context of portrayal, using the concept of folding imbues the portrayal of findings with the idea that there are necessary complexities and complexities are necessary. What is seen and portrayed is not distinct or fixed, but is complex, disrupting, changing, and fluid.

Cartography

Cartography is defined as the study and practice of making maps. The process and action involved in cartography has similarities with the ways data are managed and especially portrayed in qualitative research, in that cartographers must make decisions about how to portray geographical data. The changes in technology have meant that cartography has a role both in the creation of physical maps and in the graphical presentation of geospatial information about the environment and people. For de Certeau (1984), maps are static and fixed, used by us to denote representations of how we live; tours, on the other hand, portray how we live, how we move about within the spaces in which we live. Yet, we maintain that the digital age has resulted in a merger of maps and tours as portrayed by de Certeau. We suggest instead that, at a number of different levels researchers are cartographers on tour who collect, co-construct, represent, and then portray data—sometimes in ways that are troublesome and messy, and at other times that are tidy, manageable, and managed.

Assemblage

This notion of portrayal is the idea that data are collected and constructed from different sources and points in time in order to assemble relatively whole (rather than partial) depictions of participants and their lives, contexts, and stories. Assemblage then is not some kind of snapshot, something that is cut from data and re-created from data. Rather, assemblage is the creation of a holistic description of the research and the people involved as possible. Assemblage includes the assembling of words,

pictures, reflections from theorists, friends, tweets, and ideas. Portrayal in this sense is the bringing together of all the influences that have an impact on the researcher as they saw, interpreted, and created the portrayal of the findings of the study.

Portrayal of Data in Arts-Related Research

In order to portray data from arts-related research, researchers muster themselves to consider what it is they wish to portray, acknowledging that data are folded. Further, they also need to acknowledge that in choosing to portray data means also choosing to exclude data, even if that portrayal of data is an assemblage from multiple sources. This process, from a “researcher on tour,” can be likened to the creation of a liquid map. Researchers on tour take with them their subtextual assumptions and inferences, often presenting the illusion of a reflexive stance whilst portraying findings as static and immutable. It is that illusion we wish to challenge.

The issue of data portrayal in the digital domain has gained increasing traction in recent years. For example, the AHRC-funded Seeing Data Project is currently examining public responses to data visualisations and especially the effectiveness of “big data” visualizations. Whilst there are many different forms of data visualizations, the company, Daden, UK has created Datascape that provides an easy-to-use immersive 3D environment in which you can visualize and interact with data from almost any source. Datascape is designed to maximize human analysis by optimizing the display of data, whether structured or unstructured, enabling a wide variety of viewpoints to be taken from both inside and outside the data. Another example can be seen in the Seeing Data project. Seeing Data is a research project that aims to understand how people make sense of data visualizations. There is more and more data around us, and data are increasingly used to explain our social world. One of the main ways that people get access to data (big and small) is through visualizations, like those on the pages of a website. Visualizations are visual representations of data. They are used to help people make sense of data or to allow people to explore data. They take the form of graphs, charts, and other more complex or less familiar diagrams.

Visualizations appear in newspapers, on television (especially in documentaries and news programs), and on the Internet in social media like Facebook. What we don't know is how people make sense of visualizations. How do we interact with them? How do we interpret them? Do they help us make sense of data? Do different people interact with visualizations in different ways? What messages do we take

away from visualizations? On the Seeing Data project we have been exploring these questions and finding out what skills people need to help them to make sense of visualizations. (Seeing Data Project, 2016)

These visualisations, as Yau (2013) has suggested, are not just tools to present data, but also entirely new visual mediums. Such visualisations, “offer the means to see data as a material able to exist at many different levels of granularity with different levels of depth and resolution” (Thrift, 2014, p. 8). Studies in the field of education have paid particular attention to visualizing “big data” and learning analytics data, and portraying it in a manner that is most helpful to students (Duval, 2011; Olmos & Corrin, 2012), although less attention has been paid to the ways in which data is portrayed in public research findings. Techniques such as Wordles, social network diagrams, tag clouds, tweets portrayed using Storify, and infographics are also popularized across the sector, and it therefore seems likely that mobile social media tools which convey connections across individuals and groups might increasingly be used to portray arts-related research data. Cochrane (2015), for example, has argued for the use of mobile social media tools such as TAGSExplorer in collaborative research and thus, potentially, data portrayal.

Such tools still require researchers to consider the four concepts of portrayal, however. For example, social network diagrams can portray connections across and within groups, but do not account for the quality or content of those connections—if this is important to the data, how can this best be portrayed to be considered equally important by the audience? Similarly, Wordle has been found to be useful for analysis, but lacking context essential for interpretation and portrayal (McNaught & Lam, 2010). Storify is a tool that is used to curate Twitter conversations, but requires its users to make decisions about which tweets to use, which to exclude, and how to present networked conversations—in essence, to muster themselves and their data. Where digital portrayal is different, however, is in its vast potential to allow audiences to interact with data. Digital portrayals of data such as the OECD Better Life Index (OECD, 2015) can be personalized for the audience, challenging the notion that data is static and immovable, and highlighting the mutable, folded, and situated nature of research findings.

Recommendations

We suggest that in order for portrayal to be acknowledged as key in the understanding of arts-related research findings, the following recommendations should be considered:

1. Portrayal should be reconceptualized as four overlapping concepts: mustering, folding, cartography, and portrayal. Adopting such an approach will enable audiences, researchers, and other stakeholders to critique the assumptions that researchers on tour bring to portrayal and encourage reflexivity.
2. Researchers on tour should highlight the temporal, mutable, and shifting nature of portrayed research findings, emphasizing the need for continued and varied research to inform understanding.
3. There is a significant need for greater insight into the influence of portrayal, as well as the difference between representation and portrayal. Future studies should prioritize this, and ensure that portrayal is considered and critiqued from the outset.

Conclusion

Whilst portrayal in arts-related research is often seen as “unwork,” we suggest the need for more candid forms of portrayal; forms in which researchers cannot hide behind the subtext of their own agendas, comfort zones, and biases. By using mustering, folding, cartography, and assemblage, the portrayal of our research findings may be more unconformable and messy, but possibly more honest. Representation and portrayal are processes and practices that tend to leave behind trails of earlier versions. Most of these are hidden in the dustbins of our homes and computers, and ignored as no longer valuable, even if they have been central to the mustering and assemblages of our findings. If we are to be researchers who wish to present plausible accounts of our findings, we need to examine these trails, particularly exploring what has been cast aside or missed. At the same time, researchers need to be aware of the importance of the interfaces between interpretation of data and the ways they are subsequently (over)managed, represented, and portrayed.

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Arts-Informed Narrative Inquiry: Crossing Boundaries of Research and Teaching-Learning

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ABSTRACT

Creative engagement accesses profound knowing and understanding that is not reachable by words alone. Situated in Connelly and Clandinin's Narrative Inquiry, we use creative self-expression in teaching-learning, research, and practice. We examine artful approaches used in research with students and nurses in mental health, and in our classrooms. Through such artful inquiry we push the boundaries of what it means to co-create knowledge. Our students, future caregivers, learn how knowing has both epistemological and ontological dimensions. In our experience, it is embodied knowing that has the greatest potential for making connections with those in our care.

 **Our** research approach, using the arts, is informed by our research methodology of Narrative Inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2006), Dewey's (1938) philosophy that experience is education, and our own respective research programs (Lindsay, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011; Lindsay & Smith, 2003; Schwind, 2003, 2008, 2014, 2016). Foregrounding the way we reconstruct experience through the arts to access tacit knowing (Polanyi, 1966/2009; Schwind, 2003), we call our method Arts-Informed Narrative Inquiry (AINI) (Lindsay & Schwind, 2014a, 2015; Schwind, Lindsay, Coffey, Morrison, & Mildon, 2014). The purpose of this article is to describe and to reflect upon the creative self-expression approaches we use, thereby showing how artful inquiry matters to research-informed nursing education. To illustrate how we use AINI to co-construct and expand knowledge in healthcare education and practice, we first present an exemplar of a two-phase inquiry into

person-centred care in mental health practice. Next, we examine artful inquiry practices in teaching-learning such that students are encouraged to be creatively engaged to transform their understanding and thus be intellectually responsible, asking for “the meaning of what they learn, in the sense of what difference it makes to the rest of their beliefs and actions” (Dewey, 1933/1998, p. 33). Through such artful inquiry we push the boundaries of what it means to co-create knowledge. Our students, future caregivers, learn how knowing has epistemological as well as ontological dimensions, both of which are necessary to provide person-centred care, which also includes the caregiver. However, in our experience, it is embodied knowing that has the greatest potential to bring forth the connection with those in our care.

Research Process

Challenging the boundaries of what is commonly understood as *patient-centred* care in nursing (RNAO, 2015), as narrative inquirers, we wondered how students and practicing nurses in mental health conceptualize and enact *person-centred* care. In phase one of the inquiry (Schwind et al., 2014), we met with third-year undergraduate nursing students and nurses together for four half-day sessions. During our time together we engaged in creative activities and reflective dialogue that included the creation of a lifeline, metaphoric reflection, construction of a collage, and co-creation of art to music. Out of this research we created a resource website (Lindsay & Schwind, 2014b), which students, practitioners, and educators around the world, who want to increase self-awareness and deepen personal knowing, can access to engage in creative self-expression activities, individually or in small groups, at their convenience. Subsequently, in phase two of our inquiry (Lindsay & Schwind, 2015), we explored person-centred care with nurses in mental health who were implementing a new relationship-based delivery model of care on two pilot units. During this inquiry phase, we met in person with the participants for three sessions (1, 3, and 5), and two independent online sessions (2 and 4), using our website. At this time we also added another creative activity: mindful movement and mandalas.

As the purpose of this article is to describe and reflect upon the artful inquiry we use, we examine below each of the above-identified activities:

Lifeline

As an introductory step into the creative process, we invite participants during the first session to begin to turn their gaze inwards and to reflect on their life experiences. We provide the participants with large pieces of paper and crayons with the following instructions: *Draw your lifeline and identify, significant to you, life experiences. Note the personal events below the line, and professional events above the line.* The reason we specify the personal events to be noted below the line is rooted in the philosophical view of the Narrative Inquiry approach. Namely, who we are as persons is who we are as professionals (Lindsay, 2008). In other words, our personal life experiences, which began before our professional roles, inform our professional lives. Polanyi's (1958/1974) thinking aligns with our own view on the significance of personal knowing within professional contexts. He writes, "into every act of knowing there enters a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known, and that this co-efficient is no mere imperfection, but a vital component of his knowledge" (p. viii). However, as the lifeline progresses, we find the reciprocity between our personal and professional lives strengthens, where they become mutually informing. Following the drawing activity, we ask the participants to write stories about their significant life events in the journals provided.

The lifeline is an exercise we originally engaged in as graduate students to enter into our own inquiry through reflection on our life experiences, exploring narrative patterns that play out in the present moment (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). This intentional reflection on experience is informed by Dewey's (1938) notion that, "without some reconstruction, some remaking" (p. 64) of our life experiences there is no intellectual evolution. By making meaning of emerging narrative patterns, we deepen our personal knowing (Carper, 1978) and so create opportunity for more informed choices for future actions. We bring this knowing forward into our teaching-learning and research.

We find that participants engaging in creative self-expression are often reticent and may quickly shy away if any judgment is perceived. Thus, we inform them that there are no right or wrong ways of doing this or other creative activities throughout the inquiry process, and that whatever they create is right for them at that moment. We caringly repeat this statement throughout each of the sessions we are with our participants, and in the classroom with our students.

Another significant part of our creative work is that each activity is followed by individual reflection on what was meaningful to them and what, if anything, they learned through the process. This is usually followed by an invitation to share the creative activity and reflection with another person in the group. As participants

become more comfortable with one another, we invite a group reflective dialogue, stipulating to share only what participants feel comfortable sharing.

Metaphoric Reflection

Following the lifeline activity, at a subsequent session, we invite the participants to engage in metaphoric reflection, which is part of a multi-step creative self-expression activity, namely the Narrative Reflective Process (Schwind, 2008, 2014, 2016), often used in other teaching-learning-research and professional development contexts (Schwind, Cameron, Franks, Graham, & Robinson, 2012; Schwind, Fredericks, Metersky, & Gaudite Porzuczek, 2015; Schwind, Santa Mina, Metersky, & Patterson, 2015). Metaphoric reflection is done individually, with progressive sharing and dialogue with group members. We invite the participants to choose a metaphor that best represents for them a particular phenomenon and then to draw it. In this exemplar we focus on *person-centred care*. Creative engagement, such as metaphor and drawing, surface parts of us not reachable by words alone (Schwind, 2003). Through drawing we begin to discern relationships by the way we situate lines in space (Bennett, 2010), and so deepen the understanding of how the chosen metaphor reveals personal knowing. Such artful expression ought to “expand perception, inspire focused participatory dialogue, [all the while] considering the question, *Does the metaphor make felt qualitative meaning more accessible?*” (Faulkner, 2009, p. 89).

In this particular exercise, we are often met with self-conscious comments from the participants about not being “artists.” We continue to gently reassure the participants that whatever they draw is right for them. Following the drawing and the sharing, we invite the participants to have their metaphor write them a letter. This too is often met with puzzled looks and chuckles. However, after further elaboration on the request, participants are directed to a table filled with varied design stationery, and to choose one they want for their letter. A quiet energy then fills the space, as everyone enters into their own creation. Below is an example of one such letter:

Dear Self (from the chosen metaphor *computer*),
I am here to provide answers to your questions.
The answers may not be easier to access, but it is there; do not give up.
I’ll provide more than one perspective for you to choose the best suitable answer for your questions.
You can take me anywhere, just do not forget my charger.
You can ask me anything, I will not judge.
In order for me to help you, you have to help me as well, keep me updated.

Not only do I provide information, I store things too.
These things will only be released when you tell me to.
I do not sleep, I note but do not follow time.
Be delicate and I will last forever.
Remember everyone makes mistakes, it is all about how you learn. (February 9, 2013)

In the same session, and following the metaphoric reflection, participants are invited to review the earlier creative activities, the lifeline (their stories of their life events), any reflective writing on their experiences of engaging in creative activities, and the metaphor letter. As they read and re-read these pieces of writing and re-look at the images, participants are asked to highlight what is meaningful to them, such as words, repeating phrases, and any other significant aspects of the images. Using these words they create a poem that speaks to how they conceptualize person-centred care. Such a poetic creation has been referred to in literature as “found poetry” (Bhattacharaya, 2008; Butler-Kisber, 2002; Prendergast, 2006), and serves to distil the essence of one’s experience, revealing the author’s values, hopes, and dreams.

People are intricate layers of thought and feelings
Acknowledgement of this is important to these beings
Change, need and loss are life’s continuous cost
Personalized care to help transition
Restores ability, growth, and adaptation
Change to the positive
Precedes endless possibilities. (February 9, 2013)

Collage

In session three we expand reflection and explicitly include the environment within which participants live, study, and work. This creative activity requires moving from inside of self (personal values and beliefs, accessed through metaphoric reflection and poem writing) and moving outward to consider the context within which they experience the phenomenon being explored. This activity, which involves social and extroverted aspects of human behavior, also requires rumination. Each participant is given a large poster paper, and the table in the centre of the room is covered with all sorts of collage-making materials (Fig. 1). This activity is usually filled with a soft hum of thinking out loud, as well as energetic exclamations at catching sight of a neighbor’s creation. As a form of visual inquiry, “collage evokes embodied responses, and uses the juxtaposition of fragments and the presence of ambiguity to engage the viewer in multiple avenues of interpretation” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 102).



Fig. 1: Collage supplies

One participant created a poster that for her represents what it means to be person-centred within her environment (Fig. 2). This participant has come to realize through our time together that person-centred care also includes the caregiver, and that means taking care of herself. On the collage, she situates herself on the border, observing different ways (healthy nutrition, self-care, spirituality, fun with friends) that she does or could do to take care of herself so that she could be more present with those in her care.



Fig. 2: Collage—What it means to be person-centred

Co-Creating Art With Music

For our last session we offer a co-creative art activity (Mantas, 2007; Mantas & Di Rezze, 2011). By this time in the process the participants are feeling comfortable and safe with one another. This is important, as this co-creative activity calls upon collaboration and trust of group members with one another. Participants are asked to write a question on the focus of the inquiry that they would like to shed more light on for themselves.

Jasna recalls her own experience when she was first introduced to this activity in a workshop conducted by her colleague Kathy Mantas:

As soon as we had our respective questions/ideas written down, Kathy instructed us to turn the paper over, not to share the written notation with anyone, and to listen and move the crayons to the music that she had started to play.

I allowed the music to enter my body and to move the crayons as it did so. As I was settling into drawing the answer to my question, Kathy asked each of us to move one space to the right and to continue listening to the music and drawing. That surprised me, and I experienced a twinge of anxiety that my started drawing would be 'messed up' by someone else who doesn't know what I was looking for. This very brief hiccup disappeared quickly and I once again gave myself over to the music and the drawings as I encountered them. The process moved us around the rectangle of tables, eventually returning me to my own drawing to find it filled in by nine other strange hands. (Schwind & Mantas, 2012, pp. 11–12)

For one of our participants, the co-created art piece called for the whole group to consider the possibilities of the meaning of the squiggly lines on her paper (Fig. 3). Bennett (2010) observes, "Because the marks are abstract, they can be full of feeling and discernment, and certainly mystery. Both the artist and the viewer create meaning as they look at the marks and allow their own feelings to surface" (p. 27). The owner of the co-created art piece felt safe to think out loud and to ask group members to help her make sense of the co-created art. Group members shared what they were thinking when they were drawing on that sheet of paper, without knowing her question or initial intentions. Possibilities of being at crossroads, being in the centre of the action, surmounting challenges, and despite wanting to be caring, being enclosed within the frame of the system, were some observations her peers offered. Although her peers' input is valuable, the originator of the art piece needs to consider the offerings and explore them through reflection within her own value system, and in light of her question.



Fig. 3 Co-created art piece

Mindful Walking and Mandala

In the phase two of our person-centred care inquiry, we added another creative activity, mindful walking and mandala. We were inspired to include a mindfulness activity after having attended an educational retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk who is passionate about introducing mindfulness into education (An Exploration of Mindfulness in Education, August 11-16, 2013 at Brock University, St. Catharines, Canada). In the second phase of the inquiry, this activity became the second-to-last session, and it was done independently, following instructions on our newly created website.

In this activity participants are invited to find a spot at home where they can quiet their mind. When they are ready, they are asked to walk mindfully, noticing their breath in the moment, and feeling how their feet greet the earth. They are asked to do this in a safe place and for as long as they feel comfortable. Upon their return from mindful walking, we suggest participants engage in mindfully colouring a mandala, their own creation or a pre-drawn one (Fig. 4).

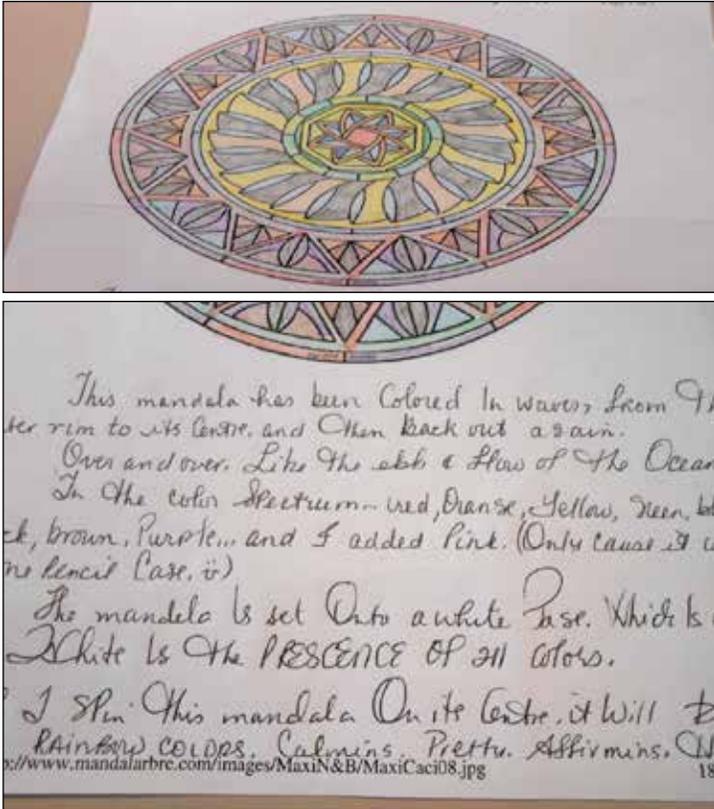


Fig. 4: Mandala with description

Following these activities our participants reflected on their experiences, expressing increased attunement with sounds of nature and peacefulness; one person expressed impatience with prolonged attention on walking. As with each creative activity, we allowed time in the in-person meeting sessions to talk about the experiences, including challenges and “aha” moments, as connected to enacting person-centred care.

Artful Activities in Our Classrooms

When teaching-learning is understood as an inquiry process, as we do, then we accept the narrative turn (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) that has occurred across disciplines: namely, “acknowledging the subjective, relational, contextual and constitutive nature of inquiry” (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 64), using words instead of numbers, focusing on the particular and creating knowledge through multiple ways of knowing that moves beyond the textual boundaries. We understand students as having narrative histories

that shape their encounters with each other, with us, and with course materials. "It becomes clear that both the heart (through artistic expression) and mind (through theoretical and analytic deliberation) must be stimulated" (Bergum & Godkin, 2008, p. 606). In order to surface such perspectives, we use research-informed creative activities in our respective classes. We offer examples of how we do this:

Jasna. Creative self-expression is an integral component, not only in my research but also in my work with students. For example, I engage my senior undergraduate nursing students in a Narrative Reflective Process (Schwind, 2008) in order to help them deepen self-awareness and strengthen their personal knowing of who they are as future caregivers. To set a more peaceful and co-operative environment, I start each class with a brief mindful breathing activity (Hahn, 1987/2005; Hassed & Chambers, 2014; Smalley & Winston, 2010), and end each class with a short loving-kindness meditation (Salzberg, 1995). As we are together for two semesters, in the fall we begin with ourselves, focusing on the personal life. This means students write stories of their most memorable life experiences, they re-read the stories looking for narrative patterns, and then choose a metaphor that best represents for them their life. Metaphoric reflection follows as described above. In the winter semester, we focus on their professional role by using the metaphor, *self-as-instrument of care* (Schwind et al., 2012, Schwind, 2016). Towards the end of the term students reflect on the two chosen metaphors, life and professional, and consider how they are similar and different from one another, not only in representation of the images, but also in depiction of chosen colours and themes. At this stage the students are comfortable enough with each other to ponder the possibilities through reflective dialogue. Through such creative engagement students expand and deepen their personal knowing of who they are and what they bring into each interaction with each other and with those in their care.

Gail. I use experiential/creative activities to ensure students are growing in awareness of their assumptions, values, and beliefs as foundational to their worldview and to their actions. This grounds theoretical courses and makes the material relatable for students. Reflection (on and critique) of these fundamental life tenets are skills important to nursing practice and life-changing for the students. I read excerpts from literature about topics relevant to the course, often fiction, and ask students to write responsively about their thoughts, feelings, embodied sensations, and connections to their experiences (Longo & Lindsay, 2011). Becoming aware of how they pay attention, what stands out for them, what comes easily, or is more challenging, is all information about how they are as persons. In another activity, I ask half the student group to leave the room and instruct the remaining students to play the role of interviewees who only respond to what is asked of them. I meet briefly with the out-of-the room group to

ask them to interview their partner about what it is like to be at university in nursing school. The interview takes less than five minutes. I then ask the interviewers to come out of the room again and review with them the principles of being present, focused, with an intention for relationship. They then continue the interview. We then discuss what all of them noticed about the two interviews and what happened. This experiential immersion shows them how it feels to create a purposeful caring relationship and the value of including self-awareness in their construction of nursing identity (Lindsay, Kell, Ouellette, & Westall, 2010). These activities are processes that are congruent with the course learning outcomes and teach students to reconstruct their experience for learning.

How Artful Inquiry Matters to Research-Informed Nursing Education

As narrative inquirers, we move between teaching-learning, inquiry, and practice as mutually informing and as an ontological stance. Being committed to artful inquiry leads us to start our courses with creative experiential activities before reviewing received theoretical content. We believe that this grounds students in their experiences, relates the course material to what is known, and encourages them to become aware of their thinking processes, witnessing themselves as learners taking up new material. Students are given opportunities to artfully inquire into their experiences and academic resources to be in a position of awareness, generate new options, and discern consequences for actions taken. As students experience how it matters to be listened to attentively, to have a witness, to hear themselves work through an issue aloud, they can empathize with people in their care who face static routines and acontextual practices of many organizations. Bringing together personal, ethical, and aesthetic knowing (Carper, 1978; Chinn & Kramer, 2008), students build narrative competence, which Corbally and Grant (2016) define as “a finessed, ethically-charged respect for human lived and storied experience” (p. 7). These authors are concerned with how “the dominant narratives of institutional psychiatry trap users in stories told about them that neither accord with their lived experiences nor are respectful to those experiences” (p. 8). As our co-participants told us, there is the system as given, the history of “how we’ve always done it,” the team expectations, and then there are personal values, professional intentions, and self-definition of what matters in nursing care. We want students and nurses to be aware of the difference and to make choices about how to be in a relationship and what actions to take with others who need care. Students and nurses told us that by engaging in artful activities their reflection on practice was enhanced through the tangible manifestation of their thinking. For example, one participant commented, “Now I am reflecting before a situation and afterwards, thinking of everything as a whole and my role in it”; another person observed, “We are all sharing with each other and so bettering each other.”

We invite students to experience themselves as experts of their own lives with authorship of their story as a way to illuminate how this could be significant for people in their care. We consistently surface meta-cognition by asking questions such as: *Why are we doing that and doing it in this way? How does this teaching-learning activity mirror patient care situations? What is coming into my awareness in response to this situation? How does my autobiography inform my professional role? How does the humanity I share with others connect us in a place of vulnerability? How does any of this change how I am as a nurse?*

In keeping with the evaluative criteria of AINI, our work is transferable to different groups of teachers, learners, practitioners, and researchers. "It is through rigorous and reflective practice that theoretical knowledge and lived experiences can be embodied, made meaningful and thus contribute to the generation of new understandings" (Barbour, 2011, p. 86). Likewise, our hope is that students transfer artful inquiry from their education to their professional practice to be even more than intellectually responsible—to be artfully transformative. Thus, the next steps to exploration of artful inquiry would be to engage novice practitioners who were (as students) exposed to creative educational approaches, such as we describe above, to learn how these are lived out in their clinical environments.

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Constructing Pre-Service Teacher Identities Through Processes of Parallax

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an arts-integrated process for teacher educators to engage their students in critical thinking, meaning-making, and knowledge construction in order to enable pre-service teachers to analyze metanarratives that inform their teacher identities. The research team used the Parallaxic Praxis research model to frame its art-making investigations in a practice-based research process. The three researchers each created an artefact as part of their individual inquiry of the data set, comprising 90 material cloaks created by pre-service teachers, to enter into dialogue addressing the prevailing metanarratives expressed by the pre-service teacher participants.

Pre-service teacher (PST) self-identity, which underpins and drives the construction of teaching philosophies and practice, is arguably one of the most essential components for PSTs to investigate in their teacher preparation programs. High numbers of new teachers continue to leave the teaching profession in Canada (Clandinin et al., 2012; Clark & Antonelli, 2009; Gambhir, Broad, Evans, & Gaskell, 2008), echoing ongoing concern with attrition rates in the United States (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Liu & Ramsay, 2008; NCES, 2011). Many teachers who leave the profession in the early years do so partially because their teacher education programs lack “systematic efforts to provide pre-service teachers with a realistic understanding of teachers’ emotional experiences and developmental stages” (Hong, 2010, p. 1540). We “acknowledge that the teacher-identity is continually shaping and morphing with experience” (Sameshima, 2007b, p. 6); however, in practice, some teachers remain locked in preconceived idealistic notions

of the K-12 environment (Cheng, Chan, Tang, & Cheng, 2009) that are unchallenged until these PSTs enter the profession. This research seeks to better understand PSTs' conceptions of their teacher identities and to offer teacher educators a process for enabling thought-provoking, critical, and dialogic discussions on teacher identity development in their programs.

This paper presents an arts-engaged process for teacher educators to move beyond reflection-writing assignments and discussion methods with their students to processes of critical thinking, meaning-making, and knowledge construction in order to enable PSTs to relook at the metanarratives that inform the development of their personal teacher identities. Understanding personal narratives, often built on established metanarratives, can enable PSTs to construct more meaningful professional identities and, in turn, reduce teacher attrition (see Izadinia, 2013, pp. 695–696). This paper presents the first phase of analysis from one of three sites involved in a multi-site research project spanning three Canadian universities.

The research team of three artist-researchers used the Parallaxic Praxis research model (Sameshima & Vandermause, 2008) to frame their art-making investigations in a practice-based research process. The three researchers each created an artefact as part of their individual inquiry of the data set, comprising 90 material cloaks (see Figure 1) created by pre-service teachers. Similarly, White and Lemieux (2015), co-researchers at one of the other project sites, use the creation of artefacts, in their case "identity-boxes," to examine pre-service teacher identity and the teaching self.



Fig. 1: Clockwise from top left: Cloaks by "Grace", "Chloe," and "Olivia"

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The Parallaxic Praxis model involves the translation of data into artistic mediums that are used by the research team to provoke collaborative engagement, knowledge production, and further questionings. These artefacts are also used to generate discussions with participants and broader audiences. The range of modal translations can include numeric data presented in the form of a graph; or interview transcripts rendered through translations of poetry and photographs (Sameshima, Vandermause, Chalmers, & Gabriel, 2009); or music, graphic experiments, and watercolour paintings (Maarhuis, Sameshima, & Chalykoff, 2014).

As a collaborative research model, parallaxic praxis encourages *critical thinking* in order to “understand core, underlying truths, not simply that superficial truth that may be most obviously visible” (hooks, 2010, p. 9). These translative practices resulting in artefacts can offer concrete means to better challenge and understand how preconceived, clichéd notions of teacher identity affect pre-service teachers’ ongoing professional identity formation. We provide a process, called *Ekphrastic Catechization*, for engaging pre-service teachers in dialogue to move beyond the constructed clichés.

PST Teacher Identity Development

Much research has been done which reveals a naiveté in PSTs’ expectations for their future roles. The use of reflection, art, and metaphor have consistently revealed a disconnect between what PSTs envision their future roles to be and what their future roles will actually be. This disconnect may be setting PSTs up for unnecessary negative experiences early in their careers due to unrealistic expectations. The 90 PST participants in this study consistently presented idealistic images on their cloaks and in their reflection writings of their future roles as teachers. The data in our study revealed a variety of utopian narratives focused on establishing classroom families and communities; being beholders of inspiration and encouragement to their students; and caring for each student as an individual. While these goals are wholesome, prior research purports that unrealistic expectations by new teachers may negatively affect their decision to stay in the profession (Barnes et al., 2007; Hong, 2010; Liu & Ramsey, 2008; Schafer, 2013); how they teach; and how successful they become as teachers (Carlyle & Woods, 2002; Cheng et al., 2009; Head, 1992; Hong, 2010).

Developing a professional identity is an ongoing process as identities are constantly navigated through interactions, in context, and over time (Gee, 2000, see p. 99). Geijsel and Meijers (2005) contend that teacher identity formation is informed by

“interpretations [emphasis in original] of concepts as they exist in the culturally constructed worlds in which the person participates” (p. 425). Further, identity formation involves an emotional element as meanings are developed through relationship with culture and events. “Identity construction is seen to be a circular learning process, in which experiences and self-concept are related through using concepts and endowing them with personal sense” (p. 425). To further explain this connection, Geijssel and Meijers found that “concepts and meanings that are available . . . but cannot be related to experiences and thus are not given a personal sense, will not become a part of the identity configuration” (p. 425). Thus, although many teacher education programs may already include identity development programming, unless teacher educators are able to encourage PSTs’ personal connections to teaching philosophies, little change will occur.

Previous research has identified links between teacher identity and attrition (Hong, 2010) and a lack of a connection between PST teacher identity and the actual demands of the profession (Beltman, Glass, Dinham, Chalk, & Nguyen, 2015; Buchanan, 2015; Geisel & Meijers, 2005; Hong, 2010; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). Hong’s (2010) US study involving 84 teacher and PST participants identified a naiveté and idealism associated with PST professional identities. Similarly, a Canadian study that asked PSTs to explain their teacher identity through metaphor, demonstrated a marked difference between the metaphors used by PSTs and those used after participants had begun teaching (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). The metaphors employed by PSTs “focused on supporting future students, nurturing, protecting and helping them find their way” (p. 765) whereas the metaphors used after entering the teaching profession focused heavily on personal survival and meeting the challenges in the classroom. Building on previous research (Eren & Tekinarslan, 2013; Northcote & Featherstone, 2006; Pinnegar, Mangelson, Reed, & Groves, 2011; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011), Buchanan (2015) explored the use of metaphors to further understand the shift in identities from PSTs to practising teachers and how this shift affects the profession and teacher attrition. The metaphors in Buchanan’s study were consistent with previous studies of PSTs as the majority of PST participants created metaphors that were “positive and optimistic” (p. 44). Buchanan also found that PSTs presented “inflated views of the control a teacher exercises” (p. 44) demonstrating a naïve or uninformed vision of themselves as future teachers. This idyllic outlook is problematic as it increases the likelihood they will “be confronted with the reality of little control and, at times, even hostility and resistance from a source they might not suspect” (p. 44).

Studies of PSTs’ identity development have foregrounded the use of activities that involve reflection “as a way of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and

teaching practices stabilized in early stages of a teacher's career" (Izadinia, 2013, p. 697). Art-making and reflection have been used as effective processes for self-exploration in teacher identity development (Boulton-Funke, 2014; Sinner, Wicks, & Rak, 2015; Weber & Mitchell, 1996; White & Lemieux, 2015). Beltman and collaborators (2015) studied 125 pre-service teachers at a university in Australia. Participants were asked to draw a picture based on the question: *What kind of teacher do you hope to become?* The drawings overwhelmingly presented positive expectations for their future identities as teachers. The PSTs' "drawings indicated a confidence in their capacity to become the teacher and to do the work of teaching in an engaging and caring manner. Much of what is relevant to teaching, however, was not addressed" (p. 238). A Canadian study in Quebec with 64 university students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs in education explored their professional identities through drawing and written reflection (Weber & Mitchell, 1996). Students were instructed to draw an image of a teacher and write a reflection based on their drawings, which they then presented to their classmates. "In reflecting and commenting on the pictures, they became aware of the incredible power that past experience and stereotypes seemed to have on them." (p. 307). The researchers affirmed that this process provided space for students to "articulate previously unexamined ambivalences and tensions around their identity and work as teachers" (p. 306).

Methodology

Parallaxic Praxis Research Model

The Parallaxic Praxis model (see Figure 2) was developed by an interdisciplinary research team (Sameshima & Vandermause, 2008) and has since been used in various ways to provoke dialogic discussions on a diverse range of topics including interpersonal violence (Maarhuis & Sameshima, 2013); assistive technology (Marino, Sameshima, & Beecher, 2009); teacher education (Sameshima, 2009), Aboriginal mental health care (Saunders, 2015), and empowering older persons (Neumiller, Corbett, Gates, & Vandermause, 2015).

Parallaxic Praxis is a research model for conducting collaborative arts-integrated research that furthers understanding and provokes new questions, never settling on a conclusion, rather opening up the dialogue for unbounded, spiralling inquiry (Saunders, 2015).

The concept of *parallax* comes from astronomy and “is the apparent change of location of an object against a background due to a change in observer position or perspective shift” (Sameshima, 2007a, p. 293). As a collaborative method, parallax helps to understand how an object will look different depending on the vantage point or line of sight of the viewer. In effect, different people will see different things based upon where they stand, and therefore, researchers from different fields will interpret the same data differently, not only through the words they use, but also through the discourse of their fields, and varying funds of knowledge. Additionally, using artistic renderings, or *modal translations* (text to art, numbers to graphs, etc.), creates energetic space for multiple interpretations, which “affords the audience to think more critically about the content from a personal meaning-making perspective” (Sameshima et al., 2009, p. 10). These functional artefacts, in that they are artworks imbued with meaning or created for the sake of generating meaning, can be created in any artistic medium—including narratives or stories, performance, poetry, and visual arts—and are intended to be used to provoke dialogue. Eisner (2008) explained that “something that mediates the researchers’ observations and culminates in a form that provides the analogous structure” (p. 7) can be the avenue to articulating the unsaid.

In the process of creation, questions will arise which begin an inertial movement toward knowledge generation. As well, in bringing together the artist-researchers’ created artefacts, not only can the juxtaposition of artefacts offer provocative spaces of exchange between mode and meaning, and challenge normativity inherent in social constructs, but also “systems of analysis and interactions in the hybrid nexus spaces can be discussed” (Sameshima et al., 2009, p. 10).

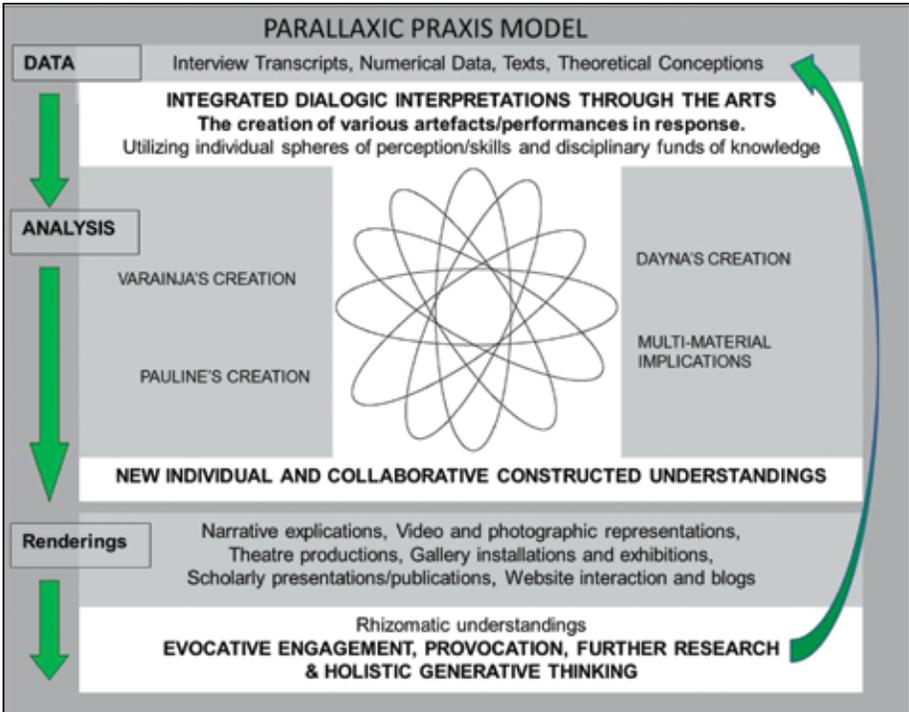


Fig. 2: Parallaxic praxis framework

Ekphrastic Catechizations

Parallaxic praxis research uses *ekphrastic catechizations*, or questioning within specific themes, to guide analytic processes of the data visualizations. “Ekphrasis is a rhetorical device where one medium tries to re-create an object’s essence and form in another medium in the hopes of relating more directly with the audience.” (Maarhuis, Sameshima, & Chalykoff, 2014, np). To catechize is to question systematically. In this framework, *catechizations* are used to direct conversations when looking at collections of artefacts in order to move the dialogue forward and to further inspire questions from investigators and audiences. For example, instead of only describing “what” each artefact is, the seven catechization categories interrogate how the artefacts work together and what they do as artefacts of analysis. The ekphrastic catechizations are *mimesis*, *poiesis*, *palimpsest*, *intertextuality*, *antiphona*, *sortes*, and *aporia*. Importantly, the catechizations offer a means for researchers to theorize and discuss the artefacts constructed from the original data.

Mimesis “is the relational, ecstatic re-presentation” of a previous work. In this model, mimesis is the act of translating data in order to relate it to a larger audience.

“Mimetic works are not static copies or an imitation but rather ecstatic formations that unfold ontologically, fluidly, temporally, and referentially” (Maarhuis et al., 2014, np). In the context of this research, the research team created mimetic art works to reveal the participant metanarratives to audiences. The researcher-generated artefacts are “active and dialectical” (Lotz, 2012, p. 93) and contribute to clarification of ideas. A possible question in this category in relation to the artefacts could be: *How have we rendered similar metanarratives in our three artefacts?*

Poiesis is an event in parallaxic praxis research when the mimetic work comes to life through interpretation, dialogue, bearing witness, or reflection. The mimetic work provides the opportunity for an interaction, an event, for the researcher(s), participants, and audiences to respond to the work of art as it is “recreated every time it is aesthetically experienced” (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 113). A question used here may be: *What similarities and differences do we notice today between the three artworks?*

A **palimpsest** is used to describe something that has been reused or altered but still bears visible traces of its earlier form. In parallaxic praxis the mimetic work is already a palimpsest, presenting new ideas built on older ones in a new form. The artefact is the dialogic in physical form, reaching back and reciprocally changing meaning of the data and the artefact through the interchange of creation and construction (see Bakhtin, 1981). The PSTs’ cloaks and reflection writings are the original texts that form the basis for the research team’s mimetic works to create new understandings and provide opportunity for poiesis. Palimpsest provides the depth and layers to allow both the participant and the researcher to be present at once. Ensuring the participant perspectives are present is “critical in an arts-based text” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 134). The relationship between the multiple layers creates an ongoing dialogue where the artworks are viewed by different audiences, in different contexts, and at different times. The questions used here could be: *What inspired you to use that particular material? In what way does your artefact echo or trace the data?*

Intertextuality adds breadth to interpretations by creating a relationship between the various texts—the mimetic works and participant data—and meaning is derived from seeing or unpacking the researcher-generated artworks in reference to each other and in reference to the participant-generated artwork. The question here could be: *How do the three artefacts work in combination to teach us something anew?*

Antiphona expands on the concept of intertextuality in parallaxic praxis. Antiphona is a harmony, “a versicle or sentence sung by one choir in response to another” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016). Each researcher created a separate response

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to the participant-generated artworks and writings. Once these pieces were created, we brought them together to create dialogue between the pieces and the meaning infused in them individually and as a collective. The choral response allows for a fuller resounding response to our inquiry question. Here, a question could be: *In what ways do the materials we used and the responses we made echo one another?*

Sorites refers to the collaborative process of analysis in parallaxic praxis research. The combination of researcher, participant, and audience interpretation

is an act of *cumulation* or a heaping of pertinent phenomenal elements, language, and interpretations before one crosses a decision line or threshold that may be indistinct but, in the final analysis, is recognized as a process that answers research questions. (Maarhuis et al., 2014, np)

The practice of sorites in research interpretation is therefore contextually bound and “requires acceptance by and interaction with the audience as well as participants and the community of those who have a stake in the particular cultural phenomena” (np). A question we might ask here is: *What specific quotes pushed us to integrate the phenomenon into our final rendering?*

Aporia means “an impasse or puzzlement” and philosophically is a “puzzle or a seemingly insoluble impasse in an inquiry, often arising as a result of equally plausible yet inconsistent premises. . . . the state of being perplexed or at a loss” (Collins English Dictionary, 2011). “To embrace *aporia*, the researcher, viewer, and participant must sit in the dissonance of simultaneous and seemingly contradictory life circumstances that do not fit into familiar cultural narratives and ‘truths’ (Dewey, 1934/2005; Spivak, 2013).” (Maarhuis et al., 2014, np). Our question here could be: *How do the artefacts play with or against one another?*

By using the catechizations to guide discussion, researchers can intentionally attempt to approach the artefacts from original, revelatory, and more critical perspectives.

Method

Members of the research team each created an artefact to re-present the combined essence of 90 PSTs’ material cloaks. All the researchers familiarized themselves with the previously collected PST data (material cloaks and written reflection pieces) in ATLAS ti,

a qualitative analysis program. The researchers also worked together in analyzing the data and discussed prevailing themes, connections, and issues that stood out in the PST data. Concurrently, the researchers worked independently on creating their artefact. With the belief that “it is through the making, both in the midst of construction and in reflection, that new understandings and knowledge are acknowledged” (Sameshima, 2007b, p. 5), the researcher-generated artefacts then became points of dialogue for analyzing PST identity development.

Participants

This analysis draws on previously collected data from 90 PSTs from a teacher education program at a university in the United States. Student composition in the teacher education program was predominantly female and the participant sample reflected this. PSTs were recruited from three sections of a mandatory course called K-8 Arts Integration. Participants voluntarily provided written consent for their course assignment to be used as research. University ethics approval was granted to carry out this project at the data collection site, as well as the current researchers’ university, and all ethical protocols were followed in the use, processing, and dissemination of findings in this study.

Data

As part of their course, students were instructed to create a material representation of their developing teacher identity in the form of a cloak that was then presented to their respective classes. Students used a myriad of materials including photographs of family and friends, patterned prints, iron-on transfers, paints, and markers (see Figure 1). To accompany their cloaks and their presentations, the students were required to write a reflection paper describing their process and learning. The cloaks were photographed, capturing as much detail as possible, and then digitized. The reflection writings were submitted electronically. To process the data, participants were assigned pseudonyms. All images and reflection writings were de-identified before being entered into ATLAS.ti.

Researcher-Created Artefacts

The following section shares individual reflections on the three artist-researcher-created artefacts.

Tranquility by Dayna Slingerland



Fig 3: Artist and model: Dayna Slingerland (2016). *Tranquility*. Wool needle felting and wet felting

The material and aesthetic composition of my piece was inspired by the encouraging air within the PSTs' writing. I wanted to create a piece that would be pleasing to wear by using a wool blanket and merino fleece for a feeling, soft to the touch as well as warm to the body. This piece covers and comforts as do the PSTs' idealistic visions for student learning. One participant described, "It is essential that my classroom be a warm and inviting place, one that both my students and myself feel comfortable in so that in turn, we will all be able to work better" (Alexa). Another participant explained, "I truly value each student's uniqueness, and that I would hope that they can respect one another for their differences so my classroom will be a warm, positive, nonjudgmental place for them to learn and grow" (Laura).

While working on the finer details of the cloak, I integrated materials and patterns to reflect a deeper complexity. The felted spiralling and climbing lines that cover the piece remain separated and broken apart from one another. I felted on lace and yarn that twisted and tangled together. I wondered while reading the teacher identity reflections if the students had given consideration to the complexities of personal identities as well as teaching identities. Student teaching identities are based on knowledge of teaching rather than direct experience. Because students "have outsider as opposed to insider knowledge, they expect to teach as they were taught and they are largely unprepared for the realities of teaching in today's classroom" (Beattie, 1997, p. 115). I wanted the

art piece to speak to the comfort and feelings of security in this outsider knowledge. A participant noted:

All of us either want to replicate a teaching style that impacted us so strongly from our past, or improve the classroom experience because of a bad teacher they once had. Either way, all of our past experiences in education have shaped who we are and why we want to become teachers. (Jasmine)

While reading through the PST reflections, I considered the challenges of engaging in self-reflection and how this skill might affect the process of creating an identity. Lauren wrote: "I have never really reflected on my experiences that have shaped my teaching identity. I really enjoyed thinking of past memories that have inspired me to become a teacher." Additionally, another participant described a reflective process, "The part of this experience that I found most valuable was taking the time to process and reflect on what was truly important to me and to my students" (Alicia). In authentic inquiry:

individuals must choose to pursue their own questions and to engage in the issues. For those who do, it is entirely possible for them to come to see and understand themselves in new ways, to liberate themselves from old and binding visions of themselves, and to imagine themselves as professionals who can create emancipatory, transformative settings and experiences for the students they teach. (Beattie, 1997, p. 124)

I wanted my artefact to speak to being comforted in the "known." Difficulties in possessing a critical consciousness in self-reflection may stem from "the fact that many prospective teachers do not clearly understand what constitutes self-reflection, or how to do it. They confuse reflection with describing issues, ideas, and events" (Gay & Neftali Kirkland, 2003, p. 182). My art piece shows a comforting, safe, warm ideal, yet the fibres tear away at the seams and the complexity is revealed upon closer examination. Each layer in this piece is bound to the one beneath through the needle-felting technique. I question the depth to which PTSs are bound to the ideal representation—are the idealisms a protective layer, or are they helping to build foundations for creating an identity that has yet to take on form?

Entwined Storying by Varainja Stock



Fig. 4. Artist: Varainja Stock (2016). *Entwined storying* (Canvas, twine, and mixed media. Model: Mina Stock)

Thomas King (2003) stated: “the truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (p. 2). The importance of storying King explained, is that the stories that we tell ourselves, that we are told, and those that make up and construct our lives “can control our lives” (p. 9), “so you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told” (p. 10). I was struck by the stories that the PSTs shared about their lives and how these stories had influenced their teacher identities. For some, these identities were embodied in popular cultural icons such as Disney characters and superheroes. One participant wrote:

If you get to know me, you know I love Disney, children’s books, and playing games. I am all about being able to have fun and be creative. I put Tinkerbell on my cloak to symbolize this. I am a child at heart. I want my students to know that and know I understand them and have been where they are. I also want to be able to identify with my students and through my ability to see through a child’s eyes allows me to do so. (Layla)

Another participant stated, “Disney is a theme that means a lot to me, and I hope that I can incorporate that within my classroom and my cloak I believe helped me show this” (Amari).

For *Entwined Storying* I worked with canvas, storybook images, gesso, twine, and white glue. I began with images from *The New Basic Readers: The New Friends and Neighbours* (1952) (see Figure 5), a collection of stories for teaching reading. I then found second-hand Disney children's books including: *Peter Pan*, *My Very First Winnie the Pooh*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. I wanted the images from the storybooks to appear faded and worn away, present but not obvious, so that the observer needs to look closely. I used a method of reverse image transfer—first painting a section of the canvas with gesso and then placing the paper image-side-down against the gesso to dry. Once dry, the back of the paper was gently removed by dampening it with a wet paintbrush and rolling the paper off with my finger.

There were two sides to many of the participant cloaks. Some students chose to represent their personal lives on the inside and their professional lives on the outside, while in their reflection writings they acknowledged that the two were separate, yet connected. A participant stated, "I also learned that I cannot separate my family from my teacher identity, but I don't think that I should have to. I want my students to view me as another person, one who makes mistakes, learns every day, and has a family" (Erin). The personal and professional were connected and entangled. I created twine balls that rest against the body, keeping the cloak separate from, but connected to the body in some places, distorting the appearance of the figure underneath as the outward appearance is an imperfect translation of the collection of life experiences and stories that make up the individual.

I wanted my cloak to be rough, stiff in some places, and be reminiscent of fantastical/otherworldly images. Many of the participants recognized that their teacher identity was an unfinished piece that they would continue to develop throughout their lives, especially in the first few years of teaching. This realization often happened in the process of making their cloaks: "A lot of time doing this cloak is reflection time and my fears of not knowing the curriculum or making a few mistakes, my first few years, seem so contrary to what actually matters in the end" (Lindsay).

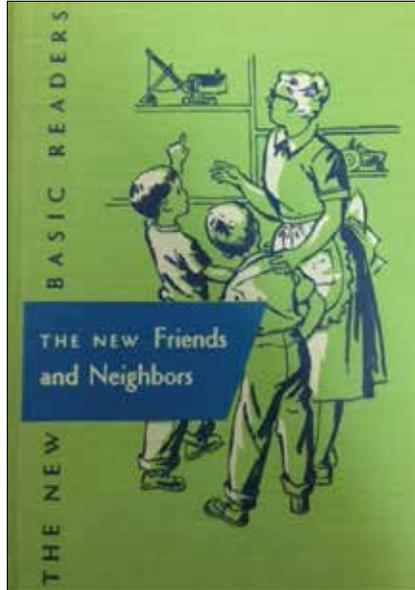


Fig. 5: Scanned cover of *The New Basic Readers: The New Friends and Neighbours*

***The Amway Apple* by Pauline Sameshima**



Fig. 6: Artist: Pauline Sameshima (2016). *Amway Apple*. Cassette tape over a polypropylene film armature. Model: Cameo Sameshima

I wanted to play with the apple cliché through iconoclastic use of materials. Cassandra sums it up shingly with “all teachers love apples.” Many students referred to the apple as a symbol for teaching, tradition, respect, the future, connection to the love of Mac technology products, love of teaching, and more. *Amway Apple* was made by knitting and crocheting cassette tape into a covering for an armature in the shape of an apple. The covering is based on a pattern of a cocktail dress. When stretched around the apple and tucked in at the base, the design looks completely transformed. This play with the cocktail dress becoming unrecognizable reflects the disparity between the human form (self) and the expected teacher form (apple). The front has a tightly knitted stitch allowing very little of the armature to be seen. The sides and the back are more exposed. Similarly, the PSTs’ constructions of what is public (the face of the identity) received much more energy and consideration than the inside or private side of the cloak.

I chose to use Amway motivational training cassettes from the 1990s specifically for their messages. Amway (American Way) is a direct selling / multi-level marketing company which sells home and personal care products and is the 30th largest private company in America (Forbes, 2015). Many of the training tapes are heartfully told motivational stories—narratives of woe ending in financial freedom. The tapes exemplify the perpetuation of the American dream, Disney character jubilation, and superhero unselfishness that surfaced in the PSTs’ visions of their future careers. Amelia noted, “I chose this material because it reflects my excitement and my bright future in my teaching career” and Avery declared, “I want my students to know that I love and support each and every one of them.” Rebecca wrote, “I have wanted to be a teacher my whole life and this has greatly impacted my decisions throughout my schooling. This is something that defines who I am as a person.” These beautiful narratives of fairy tale-like desire are driven by innocent intentions, goodness, and cultural metanarratives. In a parallel stream, these comments by an Amway sales rep, remind us how these dreams can play out once PSTs start teaching. He says, the Amway tapes “get you in [a] frame of mind that you need to feed on the materials in order to survive.” The rep felt that “the barrage of motivation aids put him ‘in a performance trap’ where he obsessed about achieving, but felt mired in failure” (Morrill & Stancill, 1995).

The armature (structural form) and leaf are made of polypropylene film packing tape. I intentionally used tape to echo bandaging practices. There are many ways of learning how to teach and most programs include practicum training, or immersion in the field. This “baptism by fire” can be likened to “cut and bandage.” Once assigned a class, teachers are generally completely alone with their students. Whether beneficial or detrimental, numerous layers of bandaging form a solid structure.

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The protective nature of the cliché apple shields the PST but, without armholes, PSTs have little autonomy.

The notions of mothering and care particularly stood out to me. Amanda stated: “I plan on taking care of them and nurturing their growth and learning. If they don’t have a loving, safe place to go home to, they will always feel safe and taken care of in school.” Amanda wrote about respect and kindness, “something a mother would also teach.” Crystal reminisced,

In those small towns everyone cared and loved . . . everyone else. The neighbors looked after neighbors and would bring a casserole or a cake over if someone was sick or needed some help. Someone was always there to care for you and you felt so welcomed. I want my classroom to be a community and I want my students to care for each other as much as I care for them.

These protective notions, and also intentions of care as expressed by many other participants, point to constructions of teacher identity based on the *Florence Nightingale Model* of teacher as nurse, healer, caregiver, and conduit of curriculum prescriptions (Sameshima, 2007b). An October 11, 2015 blog in *theguardian*, an online Teacher Network, offers an anonymous student’s post aptly titled, “Show us that you care: A student’s view on what makes a perfect teacher.” For PSTs and non-PSTs it appears, care is the defining characteristic of good teaching. Aligning and concurring strongly with the 2015 research on PSTs by Beltman and colleagues, the PSTs in our study also focus predominantly on care and love with very limited reflection on specific pedagogical strategies, teaching theories, or the actual performance of teaching. As an elementary classroom teacher for 17 years, I do agree that there are nostalgic familial-like moments re-created in the classroom; however, these moments are integrally embedded within a larger pedagogic sequence which does not appear to be considered by the PSTs.

Discussion

Resembling the processes of the creation of a text, art production also considers both critical reflection and meanings made by others. According to Sullivan (2005), artistic thinking embodies “an ongoing dialogue between, within, and around the artist, artwork, viewer and context, where each has a role in co-constructing meaning” (p. 9). After working individually on our material cloaks, the research team came together

to engage in creating a dialogue generated from our artistic renderings (poiesis). This dialogue becomes an accumulation of our individual analyses to bring attention to shared meaning, places of tension, and of divergence in interpretation and experience.

The Disney Phenomena

All three artefacts highlighted idealized expectations. The PSTs' cloaks and reflection writings enacted powerful entanglements with Disney narratives and the American dream. This participant shares her values:

The front left flap of my cloak has the American flag as its background. This is because I love our country and the freedom each individual has. I believe that the foundation of our government and its structure has influenced how I see life and others. . . . My goal is for my students to collaborate with each other and myself as valued pieces to our classroom. I think our founding fathers are wonderful role models of this. They stood up for what they thought, fought for it, and then collaborated together to create a democracy for all people. (Hailey)

While this data was collected at a US university, concerns around attrition rates, disillusionment, and teacher identity offer many commonalities across North American and Australian research. In Canada, we are certainly not immune from Disney, superhero, and American Hollywood tropes.

The "living the dream" trope is illustrated in the nostalgic images from the 1950s reader that Varainja used to create her artefact. We wondered how these tropes affect people's identities, notions of happiness, and expectations about life. In reality, the naïve hopefulness and images of peaceful, safe classroom spaces are in direct opposition to the American dream now fuelled by financialism, greed, and competition (see Haiven & Khasnabish, 2014; Hess, 2011), resulting in high levels of stress (Pope, Brown, & Miles, 2015). Challenging PSTs to interrogate metanarratives that drive their self-identities and teaching philosophies will play a critical role in the development of pedagogical practices grounded in current educational contexts.

Becoming

We noted that the PSTs' teacher identities were informed by their experiences as students, and recollections of "good" teachers from a student perspective. They relied on their experiences as students to inform their professional identities, posing a challenge to teacher educators wishing to help PSTs develop a professional identity.

Is it possible to create an identity before living that identity? Varainja's cloak offered a path into this discussion. The storybook images on *Entwined Storying* are "veiled" or blurred through the transfer process, and the twine entanglements are visible yet shrouded by the canvas covering. Pauline's apple armature too, offers a screened view into the PST body. The process of becoming and taking on a new identity is complex. How might PSTs merge who they are, into who they are becoming, when who they are becoming is an unknown? Dayna kept parts of her artefact unembellished, "I was keeping them open as a way of thinking about students absorbing and being susceptible, and thinking of being open to developing an identity that might not totally be their own, and might be one that's been observed."

The Private and the Public

Participants expressed a tension between their personal and professional identities. For example, one student created a cloak with a double layer; the hidden, inner layer displayed a large cross that was kept from view by another layer of material. Through our discussion it was revealed how each of us had intentionally or inadvertently expressed the relationship between the private and the professional, each expressing different levels of comfort while still emulating ideas from the PST data. Varainja used the tangled balls of twine to hide the shape of the body underneath the cloak. Even while trying to hide our personal selves, the artefacts evidenced revelations in unexpected ways. We discussed the difference between hiding who you are, and enacting a professional identity. Dayna identified a rawness in the PST cloaks exercise, noting that each piece she added to her felted cloak helped cover up the nakedness underneath by being wrapped in a warm, soft, and safe cloak. Pauline's piece predominantly hides the wearer's form, encasing the wearer in a cellophane bubble. This obscuration creates safety as it keeps the individual distanced from her role as a teacher and from the judgment of the students. Pauline's artefact reflects the idea of the PST protected and dependent inside the idealized, iconic apple image of the teacher. Clichés in general have been used as a protective shield or to quell concerns (Lifton, 1989; Arendt, 1978), an explanatory shortcut (dictionary.com, 2016), or even to justify action (Arendt, 1963). The iconic teacher identity has become cliché.

The extent of control we can exercise was a prominent point in our discussion. Debating what we can actually control, what we believe we are controlling, and how this need to control our outward appearance can hamper our development as teachers. For new teachers this distance can create unnecessary issues with feelings of inadequacy and unwillingness to reach out to colleagues for support. In support of the safety of the cliché, the Amway Apple was reportedly very comfortable to

wear, and without armholes the artwork carries the expectations of being cared for, and feelings of warmth encased in a cocoon, waiting to be birthed.

Moving Forward

Carl Leggo (2008) recommended “we need to know our stories before we can attend to the stories of others with respect and care” (p. 92). As artist-researchers, this research process has given us a better understanding of not only the constructions of PST identities, but also our own negotiated identities. This paper offers some examples of the rich discussion generated from making artefacts to represent developing teaching philosophies as a method for moving PSTs beyond naïve and clichéd notions of teacher identity. The artefact offers a new lens to discuss and deconstruct inchoate topics with aspiring teachers. With artefacts in hand, the use of the Parallaxic Praxis model, and guided by the Ekphrastic Catechization process, new spaces of investigation into teacher identity formation are possible.

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Dayna Slingerland is a graduate from the Masters of Education program at Lakehead University. Her artistic experience includes creating art using natural, locally sourced materials, as well as engaging with textiles. Currently working in the realms of teacher, artist and researcher she honors the importance of play, process, and community within her artistic practice.



Discovering My Left Hand: Conducting Language Arts Research in Nigeria

Alexander Essien Timothy, University of Calabar

ABSTRACT

Having been nurtured in the counting culture in Nigeria, my discovery of qualitative research methodology was as novel and subversive as using my left hand, which is considered a taboo in many Nigerian homes. This paper relates my initial attempt to deploy a qualitative methodology, especially art as a research tool, in investigating why Nigerian senior secondary school students and teachers hated Oral English. That study provided a canvas for the exhibition of art in my inquiry.

 live and teach in Calabar, Cross River State, in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Calabar was formerly in the defunct Biafra Republic. I lost one brother in the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970. I lived in a refugee camp where, daily, children died, even my kid brother. My village lost more than three quarters of her citizens. After the civil war, some communities had no inhabitants. They had all died in the civil war. So, I was familiar with numbers and quantities. All my life, numbers and enumeration had dominated.

Nigeria was a British colony until 1960. Colonization bequeathed to Nigeria three key phenomena. First, it amalgamated culturally and linguistically diverse people into one geopolitical entity christened Nigeria after the adventurous River Niger that transverses several countries before washing into the Atlantic Ocean. Second, colonization gave us the English language, not only as the language of instruction, but also of communication in all sectors of the economy; a language of access to knowledge and opportunities, a language of governance and economic transactions, a language of social interaction

and power brokerage, and as a language of unity. Above all, English has become a language for gaining global citizenship (British Council, 2011).

Third, colonization left Nigeria with a British-inherited system of education that extolled positivist thinking and quantitative reckonings. The complete rule of quantitative methodology (positivist measurement) is not only rooted in colonialism, but also in three decades of military rule. Thus, it was nurtured by a system that left room for neither alternative nor choice.

Fortunately, democracy and globalization have ushered in an increase in the free flow of information and the dissolution of intellectual borders. There is, therefore, a real threat to positivist hegemony. And my discovery of the left hand represents such a threat.

Currently, the resistance to post-positivist epistemologies, therefore, seem to arise, primarily, from ignorance, or more precisely, from unfamiliarity with qualitative methodologies and ethos. It is neither “politics” nor “PR” as Finlay (n. d.) would suggest. My experience and that of some of my colleagues who were initiated into this new way of inquiry is that we usually have an uphill task trying to convince some local editors that our work is indeed “empirical.” Thus, the resistance is likely to wane as knowledge and practice of qualitative research increase.

The Encounter

I first encountered qualitative research in February 2013, soon after I was appointed a lecturer in one of the universities in Southeastern Nigeria. I had previously been a teacher of English at the secondary level for 24 years. The only research tools I knew and could use were the quantitative ones. When I discovered qualitative research through a Fulbright scholar from the United States of America who served in my university, I not only discovered a new research paradigm, but I also discovered myself and reclaimed my arts and those of my participants. I became subversive. I began to query the legitimacy of statistical dictatorship. A poem declared my insurgency:

The Faceless Percentages

Of the faceless percentages, the grotesque “half”s
and the point twos and two thirds of the vanquished by AIDS,
is a baby, my sister’s only baby, that once sweetened their home

but later broke their hearts and that sad home.

In that sterile statistic is my sister, whose daughter's bones now
refuse consolation for an avoidable grave,
my sister who now has a label, another christening
PLWHA, who has lost a name, a face, a home, a marriage
and her first joy and dearest grief.

In that barren number is my brother, my elder brother, tender, loving, gentle
preacher

who died preaching the fear of HIV, afraid his parishioners would find out,
colluding with a brother, that's me, afraid his wife would find out, too.

And a physician, true dear friend, afraid his colleagues would think he too
belongs to the number.

Oh yes, my brother's daughter, years before he himself succumbed to AIDS
and became just a digit.

Now she is a number in the valley of bones

Qualitative research taught me reflection. I never knew my thoughts could be data. I remember, one day, while sharing a thought with the Fulbright Scholar who introduced me to qualitative research, she asked, "Have you written it down?"

In perplexity, I asked, "Written what?"

"What you've just told me, of course!" A grin tugged the sides of her mouth.

"What...what for? Why? I said I was just thinking..." I stammered in confusion.

"It's your data. Your thoughts...when you ruminate and reflect on your actions and others' or on data you have collected, conversations you had, memories they trigger, write them down."

This was new. Before now, I had always been taught that data was what one got from others through surveys and interviews. Thoughts as data? Well, that was really strange. I knew that the researcher was expected to keep aloof from the research. Every intrusion of self was considered injurious to data collection and capable of contaminating the result. In my training, researchers made efforts to desensitize the research participants from even being aware that they were involved in a research study. The reliability and validity of findings would depend on how unobtrusive you were.

What I was hearing now was that you have to tell your participants up front what your intentions are and even share with them your comments and your reflections about their responses. This demanded a new way of thinking as well as a new way of engaging and accounting. I found beauty in this research culture, in the openness and respect that would characterize the relationship between the researcher and the participant. The participant is no longer a mere research subject, but a partner who can share not only in the research process, but also in the product. Even the forms in which research may be conducted and reported are malleable enough to accommodate a wide aesthetic spectrum. I discovered that participants might respond not only by merely ticking some confined spaces in a survey, but also by writing prose or poetry or songs; they could talk or draw or take photographs, or even use sculpture (Deacon, 2000). This is science finding expression in art, and art basking in science. This is liberty.

Left Hand as Taboo

It is a taboo in all parts of Nigeria to offer your left hand to anyone, even your enemy. Children who are born left-handed embarrass their parents greatly. Parents go to great pains and put their children at greater pains to make their left-handed children right-handed. When libation is poured to the ancestors, it is done with the right hand, but when it is offered to the wicked ones, the left hand is used. The left hand is considered cursed. But why does the left hand fascinate me?

Discovering My Left Hand

Imagine
you were born in a community
where everyone is so right-handed
that whenever *hand* is mentioned,
one thinks only of the *right* hand.

Imagine
that one day someone shows you your left hand
and teaches you to use it.
If you embrace that knowledge,
members of your community
view you and your knowledge
with suspicion,
alarm and disdain.
What options would you have?

You can jettison the troublesome left-handedness and revert to your familiar, accepted right-handedness; or you can ignore the cynicism, labour to be skillful in your newfound left-handedness and hope that your skill might eventually attract interest if not sympathy and acceptance.

Deploying My Left Hand: A Study of Oral English Teaching in Nigeria

This new understanding had to be tested. This new way of thinking had to be applied. So, I decided to deploy my left hand in a research concern I had planned to conduct in the familiar quantitative way. It was an examination of students' and teachers' attitudes towards Oral English.

Oral English is one of the components of The English Language Curriculum for Senior Secondary Schools published by the Nigerian Educational Research Development Council (NERDC). The components are:

- (1) Vocabulary Development
- (2) Oracy Skills (comprising Spoken English, and Listening for Comprehension)
- (3) Literacy Skills (comprising Reading for Comprehension and Effective Study, and Writing for Effective Communication)
- (4) English Grammatical Structures

The major national examination bodies (West African Examination Council [WAEC] and National Examination Council [NECO]), whose syllabuses inform the actual interpretation and teaching of the components, examine these components. English-language text publishers derive contents from the national curriculum and pattern their books to closely address the examinations.

Although Nigeria's English Language Curriculum proposes both productive and receptive skills, teachers and textbook writers gravitate towards examination requirements. A case in point is the Senior English Project for Senior Secondary Schools (Grant, Olagogke, Nnamonu, & Jowitt, 2011), Book 3. It includes the following items under Listening and Speaking:

symbols, word stress, debate, vowels /ə/, /l /, /i: /; rhyme, listening to an argument, the vowel, stress in compound words, listening to main points, consonant clusters, pronouncing the letter a, listening to a play, sentence stress, emphatic or contrastive stress; intonation, dialogue, listening to a poem for paraphrase, etc.

However, in practice or implementation, speech is tactically eliminated. In the practice test section, there is no practice on intonation or any aspect of listening or speaking (Grant et al., 2011).

It is not surprising that since the examination bodies have shifted from the assessment of oral production and receptive skills to the test of the recognition of sound symbols, rhymed words, syllabic and emphatic stress, teachers would align their English lessons with what the examinations test.

The English Language examination is in three parts, called “papers.” Paper 3 is a multiple-choice test called “Test of Orals” (Oracy Skills). It consists of 60 questions. The examination is purely multiple-choice and computer-based and is compulsory for admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Oral English as tested by examination bodies in Nigeria is a test of consonants, consonant clusters, vowels, diphthongs, word rhymes, emphatic or contrastive stress, and syllabic stress. It is strictly a test of the grapheme, rather than the phonemes of the English language. It is a test of a textual appreciation of an oral phenomenon.

Although English is the official language in Nigeria and features prominently in all facets of life, students’ performance in the English Language examinations has continued to be less than desirable. Olatunji (2012) writes of “the mass failure in English Language that has become endemic among Nigerian students at all levels of education” (p. 269). For example, in 2014, NECO reported that only 52% of the candidates scored Credit (50-64 percent) and above in English Language. Since a credit in English Language is a prerequisite for admission into universities and other tertiary institutions, poor performance in English can thwart students’ dreams of furthering their education (Osisanwo, 2005). Awonusi (2010) refers to “a calamitous failure rate in School Certificate English examination every year with the oral component playing a significant part” (p. 44). In other words, poor performance in English language is inseparable from the poor performance in Oral English. Mbah and Ayegba (2012) describe students’ performance in Oral English as “very poor.”

As one who has taught English language at the secondary school level for over 20 years and participated as an assistant examiner for one of the examination bodies

in Nigeria, I could identify with “very poor” as a description of the general situation. However, the circumstances of my students were a little different.

To explain, let me start with a confession. I was not taught Oral English in secondary school (1976-1983). At the time, Oral English was separate from English Language and, therefore, optional. I further confess that although my first degree is in Education/English, I was never taught Oral English as an undergraduate. Fortunately, when the West African Examination Council (WAEC) decided to make Oral English a component of the English Language examination, I was offered the opportunity to attend workshops for prospective examiners. Those were my first formal training sessions in Oral English, and they ignited in me a passion for Oral English—a passion not only to learn, but also to teach.

Many of my students shared my passion. They would come to me with their discoveries about how a particular word was pronounced differently from the way we regularly did, and I would check the dictionary and confirm that that was right. One of my students gave me a set of Professor Gimson’s Oral English cassettes along with a companion book, which became our practice material during and after class. I organized debates and plays in the school and had many speech drills to prepare the students for the examination, which, at that time, was speech-based. We were actually using oral English, engaging with English speech in a variety of ways, and I witnessed my students’ growth in competence and enthusiasm.

My next appointment was at a teacher training college where spoken English, both production and receptive skills, were taught and examined. These classes gave me added opportunity to do what I enjoyed doing and to witness the transformation of my students’ speech. Besides, I had resources (audiotapes) that the students and other English Language teachers found most useful.

When I left the teacher training college and joined the services of a private secondary school three years later, the WAEC had stopped the Spoken English examination and introduced textual “oral” English. However, I continued to teach speech, actual production of oral English, while also teaching for the examination. By this time, my students sometimes considered the lessons in speech funny, and sometimes timewasting. Timewasting, because, I believe, they knew it was not what they were going to be tested on. But since I coordinated debate and drama in the school, often our debate and drama sessions became avenues for us to learn and use correct pronunciation, syllabic stress, and intonation. My students often did well on the examinations. I won the Board of Governors prize, which was given to teachers if more than 80 percent of their students achieved “Credit and above.”

Looking at Poor Performance in Oral English

Performance in English has continued to deteriorate in Nigeria. In 2013, the success rate at the West African Senior Schools Certificate Examination (WASSCE) dropped to 36.57%, and 31.28% in 2014 (Ogundele, Olanipekun, & Aina, 2014). One of the reasons suggested for the poor performance of students is lack of interest (Oyinloye & Ajayi, 2011).

Since the WAEC Chief Examiners Report (2013) showed that students performed differently in the various components of English tested, I wanted to find out which components students liked and why they preferred those components. I thought such knowledge could help teachers to know how to make all components likeable, thereby improving students' performance. I obtained permission from the principal and teachers as well as the students' consent. Moreover, I assured them of anonymity.

I conducted my first interview with students in their final year in secondary school. Teachers were not originally part of the sample, but while interviewing the students, it became apparent that I needed to talk with the English Language teachers too.

My First Question

What aspect of English language do you like most?

I didn't know how to isolate and interview them one after the other. As soon as I attempted to recruit one, another volunteered and would call a friend. So I spoke with small groups of students, recording our dialogue on my cell phone. They shocked me. Instead of docilely responding to the question I asked, they said that I should ask them instead what aspect they *disliked*. Perhaps it was my inexperience, but I gave in to their request to talk about what aspect of English they hated the most. I was excited that qualitative research had given even my participants a voice. And when I asked what aspect of English they most disliked, almost unanimously, they said that they didn't like Oral English.

Why?

Oral English is often taught late—usually in the senior secondary school. It is an examination requirement mainly at the senior secondary school level. One of the participants, Vicky, said she was not taught Oral English until she was in SS2 (equivalent to Grade 11). Thus, after about 10 years of formal education, students are introduced to “another English.”

In addition, the discrepancy between the English alphabet and phonetic symbols baffles them. After about six years of primary education and possibly three years of lower secondary, students are confronted by a new “alphabet,” where /j/ is not the sound for jell, but for yell. For instance, Marble complains, “The phonetic symbols are different from the familiar letters a, e, i, o, u.” Another student, Adie, is very direct: “It’s annoying because most especially the vowel sounds are not even English Language.”

I don’t like oral English;
It’s really annoying –
too much of pronunciation;
all that uuuu,
all that ahhhh,
it’s really noisy
(Found poem from Adie’s interview, March 2013)

Mr. Ngasse, teacher of English at Senior Secondary Three, tried to explain why students may find oral English uninteresting and difficult: “...perhaps the exposure they had to oral English was limited ... because their teachers at the lower secondary were not very competent in teaching that aspect of the language.” Another teacher, Tessy, concurred, “For Oral English, students in junior class are not taught how to pronounce words.” In essence, the students see Oral English as a new English.

New English

This new English is no *fun*
which teacher says is pronounced *fan*.

But soon becomes *bat*
(only in the class).

And when teacher swears
that *ewe* is now *you*,
we wink at one another
knowing that this too shall pass.

Just let the bell ring
and *mother* shall be *moda*
and *father*, *fada*.

Even teacher will agree.
Just let the bell ring!

The participants often find oral English mysterious. From my interview with Val and Wenda:

- Val: Then the part of English I HATE is em... I don't really like is syllabification or something. Is there something like that?
- Me: Syllabic stress?
- Val: Yeah, yeah, syllabic pattern, Oh my gosh! Yeah, I don't really like that 'cause I'm not really good at it. I don't really understand how it goes, how, what you have to do, yeah, I don't really like that...
- Wenda: I really have a problem with English. When I speak the English, it's easier than when you see so many vowel sounds that are different from the vowels themselves a, e, i, o, u, and then you're sort of confused how to pronounce it...
- Me: Is it that the symbols are different from the letters?
- Wenda: Yes, the symbols that are used to represent it and sometimes like you have the inverted e and you're not sure how you're supposed to pronounce it. And at times even as much as you cram, when you get to exam hall, you're thinking, "how is this pronounced?"

Would this conversation have been possible if I had given the students a survey? Could there have been a dialogue, a narrative, and a story? Coming from a story-telling tradition, where even my 17-year-old daughter still craves folktales about Tortoise, I find some recreation (I'm afraid this sounds very unscholarly) in the conversations my participants and I have. My participants also seem to enjoy this form of research, perhaps for its novelty. For the first time, my participants become human. They are recognized, their opinions respected and even sought, and their perspectives valued. These relational qualities are much more in tune with Nigerian ways of being in community.

School-Only Pedagogy

Language education that centres on examination only is likely to create a gulf between what happens in school and in real life. What children learn in class is often left behind. The language they encounter outside the class and at home is usually different from the one they are taught in class. Even students' out-of-class speech indicates that there is a dissonance between what they learn in class and what they experience outside the class—even from their teachers of English. Sam, one of the respondents, confesses:

I was not taught earlier on in primary and secondary school. We only speak English in the school arena. Once we leave the environ, we go back to our Nigerian language. We don't speak English regularly. The teacher didn't show us that the English was very important. We only studied English because it is necessary in school. Even when our parents are speaking with us, they speak in Igbo. Even our teachers when they see you outside the class they don't even make any attempt to speak English with you; they speak the local language with you.

From such voices, I constructed the following poem:

Another English

Here we go again!
I thought I had mastered my abc
Teacher is perplexed
so am I
Who wouldn't be?
Seeing our faces riddled with confusion
creasing our teacher's brows
aging him in his youth?
It takes just a class frustrated
by the letter e,
now *prostrate* on its back
and the letter j not spelling jet but yet,
and teacher screams, tongue in cheek,
that star is not star but starrrr
And *come* is spelt with an inverted v.
Oh perplexity cannot spell difficulty!

Killing the Dance

One reason that participants offered for their dislike of oral English was that it was not, after all, about speaking, but about writing. And this has to do with the nature of the Oral English examination. Baturay, Sancar Tokmak, Dogusoy, and Daloglu (2011) maintain that:

Oral assessment is often carried out to look for students' ability to produce words and phrases by evaluating students' fulfilment of a variety of tasks such as asking and answering questions about themselves, doing role-plays, making up mini dialogues... or talking about given themes.... (p. 60)

Although this is what I had enjoyed doing with my own students, this is not the usual case in Nigeria. Awonusi (2010) very aptly describes “the replacement of a production test with a perception test” and a test of “practical pronunciation through writing, an odd device of testing a primary communication process through a secondary communication process” (p. 44). I call this phenomenon “Killing the dance”:

Killing the Dance

The drums thump
fiery rhythms course through my blood
calling Iwali,* Queen Dancer of Bekwarra!
supple maiden... gentle ripple like the waves...
Drums gyrate in nimble timbre, beckon...
dexterous cadences coax the limbs, implore...
Charmed, my feet quiver with the tremor of the drums
and sweep to the arena
as custodians of the drums announce:
There shall be no dance.

* Iwali is an institution in Bekwarra in Cross River State, Nigeria, where a virgin is secluded and trained in dancing and culinary arts, kept trim and beautiful for seven years. She is called *Iwali* the queen dancer. The crowning moment of her seclusion and preparation is the dance. Her parents, guardians, and tutors look forward to the day she will exhibit her beauty and her carefully rehearsed dance steps, which not only entertains, but also ritually cleanses. It's suicidal for the custodians of the drums to say, “there shall be no dance!” In a similar context, a popular Juju musician from western Nigeria sings in Yoruba, “Igba n ba jo lonilu gbelu,” “Just as I’m about to start dancing, the rhythm is withdrawn” (Ebenezer Obey’). Such sentiments convey, I believe, what the examination bodies do to the students, who learn oral English, but have no opportunity to actually use it in the exam.



Fig. 1: Killing the dance²

What's the Use?

A very important reason why participants had an aversion to oral English was its seeming lack of utility. To most of the respondents, Oral English didn't seem to have any practical value beyond the English exam. Itham and Mabel wished they were taught public speaking instead. According to Mabel, public speaking "is more useful to us than Oral English which is only for exam." Students, it would appear, are unable to see any link between the Oral English component of English Language and real-life communication.

Of what use is the diphthong
When it makes you lose your tongue?
Who cares for weird vowels
that simply turn your bowels
or phony shorthand
that can't really stand
when the tyres meet the road
and you carry the load
of remembering which
consonants spells which

or which syllable bears the stress
and which you need suppress?

Some Love It So

Some students actually love Oral English. One of the participants, Reda, said Oral English would help her pronounce words correctly. Iso sees Oral English as being useful in learning the spelling of words and in using the dictionary. Of all my students, Baba was the most passionate about Oral English. For him, English, particularly Oral English, was very useful for self-discovery, social interaction, and metacognition. The following found poem is from Baba's interview transcript:

English I love

Hah! (Exhales - in relief (?))
to me English is for me
English is English
is an interesting
that I would really like to go into it,
that I'll really like to scrutinise more.
'cause I believe
it's really interesting – the English subject,
the English language,
oral English,
everything about English;
I really love it,
I really ...
English makes me love language,

I really love it.
When you go deep into English
like to have more idea about others
when you interpret it
...translate it with your own language,
you... you..., you have more...
you have more ideas...
you have more...
you have more...
You have more, you

...you...you...you...you...
your brain will grow wilder,
you'll have wilder thinking
about...about...about
how to relate
how to talk,
maybe, in public
...or a... conversation
with... with people,
people who you feel
when you talk with them...,
there are people
who when I talk with them,
probably, my English ...
English teachers,
when I talk with them,
I'm very conscious about my English.
So I don't want to fall...
I don't want to...
I don't like to mess up.

It seems Baba is excited, *not* by the way oral English it is taught and examined, but by the ways he can use it in conversation and in thought.

Teachers' Nightmare Too

When I found out that the components students hated was Oral English, I needed to find out teachers' attitudes towards the different components of English. My reasoning was that if teachers dislike any topic or aspect of the English language syllabus for whatever reason, they may avoid teaching it or teach it without enthusiasm. As a corollary, students may not develop high interest in any topic or component of English that the teacher approaches with apathy; and, lacking interest, their performance is likely to be poor. Attitudes to a subject can determine the quality of teachers' teaching (Olatunji, 2012; Lope & Bagheri, 2011). Therefore, I decided to also find out from teachers the aspects of English they didn't like.

At this point, I must admit that with quantitative research I wouldn't have thought about doing a follow-up in the same study. Such iteration now seems the most natural thing to do. Thus, I think qualitative research works like an oil rig.

Before the oil rig
monstrous machines tug with the Iroko,
flip the mahogany and upturn the palms
the shrubs wilt and pumpkins shrivel...
armoured caterpillars roar against the mangroves
metal worms chew the grass to sand
but in all that vast waste
no smell of oil....
until the qualitative drill
bores the earth
just a tiny patch
the drill plunges
relentless into
abysmal
depths
and
there
strikes
oil

Quantitative research clears the bush, while qualitative research probes the depths.

Initially, when I asked the teachers which aspects of English they didn't like, unanimously, they said, "none." But when, as a follow-up, I later sent a text message to ask them which aspects they thought teachers of English generally found most challenging to teach, each of them texted back, "Oral English." Their earlier response is understandable because it is not advantageous for teachers to admit a weakness to someone else. As one who had taught English language in secondary schools for about two decades, I cannot feign ignorance of the phobia some English teachers in Nigeria have when it comes to teaching Oral English. The following poem captures such phobia:

Teacher in a Well

Our teacher dreads our class.
This we know.
Once he crosses our threshold
the smile is erased from his face:
English is a serious business,

so we throw him a lifeline,
Gooooood morrrrning Ser!

He writes on the board
the new alphabet;
We adjust in our seats.
Aluta continua...

He prays we won't ask him a question;
We pray, too.

But when we would know why *cough*
wouldn't rhyme with *rough*
and *though* doesn't agree with *tough*
Teacher finds himself in a well

Well...well...well...em...well,
do you understand?

We exchange glances.
Pained by our addled gapes,
teacher prays for the bell...
we pray, too.

Well...you see....

Well ...in fact...

Well, we understand
that the English of this class is different
different from the English of our playground
different from the English in the church
different from the English at home!
THAT we understand,
though we don't understand WHY.
In benign conspiracy,
we reply, *jess Serr!*

The Elixir: Let's Dance

It is apparent that Oral English in Nigeria is bereft of the speech component. The examination organizations do not test the speech component of Oral English, so teachers are likely to align their teaching with examination requirements. To reverse the trend, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) should reintroduce the true oral spoken English examination. Don't cease the beat when the dancers are ready to dance.

While examination bodies may hesitate to reintroduce speech in Oral English, teachers can still expose students early on to speech in news broadcasts, oral reading, debate, drama, films, songs, poetry, and so forth. The best driving training is not limited to a four-year course on driving theory. No pilot flies a plane just by reading about how to fly a plane. Similarly, in speech, we learn to speak by speaking. The way forward is to teach speech.

Quantitative Interference in Qualitative Research: A Personal Reflection

As a new practitioner of qualitative research, my quantitative roots still intrude into my research. I was born into a world ruled by numbers. My mother wasn't very happy when I was born male. She had had two stillbirths, all girls before my elder brother came. She expected the next to be a girl (She says they grow faster, mature early, and are stronger at carrying younger siblings). I couldn't start school as early as I would have wished. My hands would not touch my ears across my rather big head.

When my hands refused to grow long enough to touch my ears, my mother played the number card. She told the headmaster that I could count 1 to 10—and in English too!

"Let's hear him," The headmaster's eyes lit.

"One..." I began the counting that has refused to end.

Since then, counting and quantifying have dominated my life and academics. I didn't have an alternative until after 49 years of counting when a Fulbright scholar in my university revealed qualitative research. Initially, it seemed preposterous. How could one engage in an empirical research without counting? Nevertheless, with excitement for this new possibility of freedom from numbers, I ran out to gather qualitative data. But the first question that struck me was: How *many*?

I noticed that after transcribing the interviews, I would query, "Is this sample enough?" I'd count the number of persons I had interviewed. Not enough! I'd fly out to seek more participants to interview. Then, when I was overwhelmed by the *number*, I'd just dump everything and backslide to a *counting* regime. I'd then design or adapt a quantifiable questionnaire and hire assistants to help administer it. I would code the

values into numbers; feed them into my computers. Then SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Voilà! I have results, numbers, tables, charts, and graphs!

I seem unable to resist the quantitative “devil” that whispers a familiar path. It feeds on my every hesitation on the qualitative path. It seduces me into the well-worn quantitative footpaths and throws me into the comfort of the quantitative embrace. I find myself counting. I count the number of keywords. I tabulate and find the percentage of occurrence of themes. I count the types of verbs. I count the number of metaphors used by a participant. All the while, a voice mocks, “Still counting, Son!”

Then the voice taunts, “Give it up, man. You’re born to count. Don’t delude yourself. Nobody wants to know that students performed excellently in English. They want to know how many students scored 80 and above!”

Moreover, my ridiculously small sample can’t stand the count of my faculty assessment panel. Even they seek a number. How many publications? How many local journals? How many international? How many workshops? How many years since your last promotion? Local and regional journals sneer at the “non-generalizability” of my findings on account of the sample size. Everyone seeks a number. In my university, typical of universities in West Africa, the association of quantification with empirical research effectively hampers the qualitative dance.

Is QR an alternative or a deviant form of research? Is it a protest research model, a rebellion against statistical tyranny? Am I attracted to the deviant element? Is it the sweet lure of rebellion or the intoxicating breath of democracy? (Journal, 16/6/2014)

With respect to language arts in particular, qualitative inquiry provides the space to leap and spin, the space to crouch and wriggle, the space to hop and bounce, the space to merge with the drums and dissolve in the dance. It offers an effective tool to peel off layers of meaning and allows access to empirical depths that may be inaccessible by quantitative methods alone. It allows for a research experience that includes communal engagement, a traditional Nigerian value, in which both teachers and students participate. In the post-colonial era, as we continue to experiment with democracy in Nigeria and strive to create an educational system that works towards that end, qualitative research beckons for attention, seeking more intellectual space and broader use. Let the dance continue.

Notes

1. Please see: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebenezer_Obey
2. Ademola Francis Sanda provided the sketch that appears in Figure 1. Ademola is a junior colleague who is also my dear friend. He was excited to see me use poetry in reporting my research, and when I explained to him the dance analogy, he told me about the Yoruba musician, Ebenezer Obey. He gave me the Yoruba lyric and translated the meaning in English. Then I discussed with him that I'd love a drawing of a dance scene showing drummers and dancers. I picked up a pen and gave him a quick sketch of what I wanted. He understood immediately. In less than an hour, with his pencil and crayons, he produced the piece. Using my cell phone, I took photographs of the dancers, the drummer, and the entire piece.

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The Teacher as Silenced Superhero

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ABSTRACT

In this essay I argue that social ideals create an imaginary that inspires self-discipline in beliefs, thinking, and practices in order to achieve social-utopian hopes that the world will improve in particular ways. As such, social ideals limit human agency in general, and, for teachers in particular, there is limited terrain in which they have the right to speak. As a substitute for their right to speak, I argue, teachers are given the token social status of superhero, a fantasy consistent with neoliberal styles of thought. Following Pinar's notion of art-as-event, I propose that deep engagement in the arts might be a means of restoring agency and voice to teachers; I argue that art troubles the strong socialization motif in education and creates intellectual room for the development of genuinely educational moments in schooling.

Referring to teachers generally and to a social imaginary that makes heroes of them, Block (2014) posits a representative teacher who is “constrained to be silent, though she must speak” (p. 31). Having studied teacher voice and agency (Wiebe & Gard, in press; Wiebe & MacDonald, 2014; Wiebe & MacDonald, 2013), particularly in relation to the workload and worklife conditions of teachers on Prince Edward Island (MacDonald, Wiebe, Goslin, Doiron, & MacDonald, 2010), I can attest to the irony of teachers holding inside themselves an urgent imperative to speak, but being prevented from doing so. Locating my work in both the arts and curriculum studies, I consider the phenomenon of a speaking subject one of my chief concerns, particularly given the present that puts such a possibility at risk.

Later in his paper, Block (2014) reveals what he believes to be an underlying cause of what silences teachers—we make heroes of them. His description of the social imaginary convening heroic status on teachers is apt:

In the eyes of society I have become in some odd way rendered superhumanly responsible for the current and future state of the whole country, at least. I have learned that this is my state because the description and directive appears daily in the newspapers. They—the politicians and pundits—say that my effort should result in a recovered world, a redeemed world. They say, my work should be such as to raise the dead. (p. 35)

While it seems like an act of support to make heroes of our teachers, it is a fantasy that forecloses on their ability to speak. Idealism creates projections and expectations that limit the range of possible human activity. Pinar (2010) explains, “Even a lovely objective is an objective nonetheless, which commits one to acting toward its realization, i.e., instrumentally. This is where things get ugly, as we must reduce the present to its function in achieving the planned future” (p. 3). With a picture of what could be better, the ideal marginalizes any activity that is not a function of attaining it, reducing the experience of life to an instrumental do-this-to-achieve-that. Idealism diminishes the value of the present, and, by extension, the human being’s value in speaking. Writ large, when social institutions pursue ideals, engage in development practices to achieve them, and ensure progress through regulations and measurements, you can be sure that expressions of difference, whether verbal or communicated in some other way, will be unwelcome enough to require discipline.

Social Discipline, Subjectivity, and Technologies of the Self

Social discipline need not be formal and most often functions as part of the habits and routines that are normalized as part of institutional life. To explain how prevailing understandings can be natively situated in languages, practices, and shared beliefs, Nicholas Ng-A-Fook (2014) has recently taken up Taylor’s (1989) notion of the social imaginary, making the connection to Canadian curriculum studies through Pinar’s (2008) re-invigoration of the phrase *common countenance*. “Such common countenance,” Ng-A-Fook says, “can create blinders” (p. 103) for those working in education. Panayotidis, Towers, Lund, and Smits (2015) refer to this commonness as “a taken-for-grantedness” one they endeavor to struggle against in the hope that “things can be other than they are” (p. 37). Digging deeper, they note that the difficulty is one of imagination since the challenge before them is “to articulate possibilities that do not yet exist” (p. 41). Indeed, in Taylor’s (1989, 2004) notion of the social imaginary, there are normative patterns of ideation and generalization that, as styles of thought,

represent a cultural tendency to reason in particular ways. Just as a person born into a language will think in that language and will choose ideas that have already been pre-formed in that language, so a social imaginary has its own internal coherence, and, as with language, there will be a psychological effect in individuals of their being in control, employing culturally embedded concepts as a means of reasoning towards their own ends. As I note elsewhere,

while identifiable as concepts or ideals for a particular place and time, these symbols are not fixed and universal but are driven by personal desires and social-utopian hopes for the world to improve in particular ways. As with all ideals, *what* is is a fantasy, the ideal being an empty signifier. (Wiebe, in press)

Social discipline, that which makes one subject to the imaginaries of the day, is predominantly psychological, a commitment that can appear to be morally compelling in its support of community, common sense, and shared beliefs. Subjectivity is formed in the public realm, says Pinar (2010). "It very much matters with what and with whom one becomes [a subject]" (p. 3).

In *The Birth of Biopolitics*, published in English in 2008, Foucault details the emergence of a contemporary social imaginary, a neoliberal style of thought that, as with other social imaginaries, makes individuals complicit in their own subjectivity. Introducing the concept of *homo oeconomicus*, Foucault (2008) argues that distinct from Marx's bourgeois subject is a new entrepreneurial subject who cannot escape the forces of the market economy, since all human activity is defined instrumentally as economic. The distinction is an important one. While Marx's bourgeois subject was a consumer citizen who experienced alienation because of the corporate re-appropriation of human values, what is new is that *homo oeconomicus* has a self-reasoning that is market-based. Just as the strategies of regulation, marketization, and globalization of economic exchange produce a perception of protecting freedoms, so these same strategies, when applied socially and psychologically, are perceived commonly to be choices people make to further their own interests. The subject, says Foucault, will be an "entrepreneur of himself" (p. 226); principles of market regulation will be self-imposed as technologies of the self. Important to note is the neoliberal construal of personal freedom as an individual's free choice (to exchange goods and services), as well as a conflation of personal freedom with market freedom. Whereas classical liberalism equated economic activity with *doing business*, neoliberalism defines *all* human activity as economic. Tracing this distinction to Mises, Gane (2014) is particularly helpful, noting that for the neoliberal subject, "All action is economizing with the means available for the realization of attainable ends.

The fundamental law of action is the economic principle. Every action is under its sway” (p. 8). When economic activity is no longer exclusive to the transaction of goods and services, economic reasoning is not limited to marketplace application but extends to “domains of behaviour or conduct” (Foucault, 2008, p. 268). *Homo oeconomicus* is a subject who, in pursuing self-improvement in relation to a social ideal, converts human effort into activities of enterprise and production, enacting a self-discipline in order to achieve particular ends. In this way, neoliberal subjects, such as *homo oeconomicus*, participate actively and eagerly in their own subjectivity.

If we apply the concept of *homo oeconomicus* to education, we would expect to find the normalized habits and routines of teachers having underlying economic justifications. Further, a biopolitics of education would mean that a teacher’s disciplining of self would apply in pedagogic activity and professional development to the extent that the meaning of an experience would be interpreted only in relation to economically determined institutional goals. The ideal teacher in the neoliberal imaginary would understand teaching as advancing the economic prospects of the next generation, narrowing pedagogic activity to only those means that would achieve the ideal. Williamson’s (2013) extensive analysis of curricula in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Canada suggests that this is indeed the case. He explains how the influence and combination of psychology and computer science on education has created a phenomenon of CompPsy, the shaping of students into “workers for the competitive pressures of economic globalization” (p. 89). What is of concern to Williamson is how what appears to be “personal choice, personal projects, and self-enterprise” (p. 88) is really little more than “self-entrepreneurial behavior... [of] the globalized cultural expression of a set of Silicon Valley cyber libertarian values” (p. 89). CompPsy is the application of a neoliberal social imaginary to education in order to have teachers prepare students to become the neoliberal subjects Foucault identified as *homo oeconomicus*. The ideal graduates are, in Williamson’s (2013) words,

Portfolio people who think and act in terms of their résumé, and who define their own personal projects in entrepreneurial terms as businesses or enterprises... [they are] flexible, interactive, and constructivist learners able to continue learning and adapting, based on constant reflexive self-analysis, right through the life cycle. (p. 96)

While Williamson titles his book, *The Future of Curriculum*, there is also something historical here—a reductive and instrumental application of curriculum. The reductive and instrumental tendencies of the Tyler Rationale (1949) for planning instruction are particularly illustrative of the predominant metaphor of schooling as a business.

From lesson plans to policy, and everything in between, what is referred to as curriculum is almost without exception the preplanned document that selects and organizes learner experiences to meet objectives that can be assessed. More than 60 years later, the normative effects of the Tyler Rationale still hinder efforts that promote difference, ambiguity, and doubt. The effect is silence. Lest there be teachers who might otherwise speak, we make heroes of them, conferring on them iconic projections of a social fantasy that cannot endure deviations from the normative ideal.

To summarize the argument so far, in the first part of this essay I have argued that even lovely objectives limit the range of human agency as the planned future forecloses on the present possibility of speaking. Functioning in the social imaginary as desirable, social ideals necessarily create a taken-for-grantedness that inspires self-discipline in beliefs, thinking, and practices in order to achieve social-utopian hopes for the world to improve in particular ways. Following the work of Foucault (2008) and Williamson (2013), I have shown that a prevailing social imaginary in education today is neoliberalism, a style of thought that conflates personal freedom with market freedom, defining all human activity as economic. Pursuing self-improvement in relation to a social ideal, teachers and students are thus commended for converting human effort into activities of enterprise and production. Those who discipline themselves in such ways embody the ideal, and I concluded the first section with the claim that the cost of this superhero effect in education is the teacher as a speaking subject. In the remainder of this essay I propose that art, as event, might be a means of restoring voice and agency for teachers. Oriented by Dewey's (1916) definition of education as "the reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (p. 76), I argue that as an event art troubles the strong socialization motif in education and creates intellectual room for genuinely educational moments in schooling.

Art as Event and Agency Through Self-Shattering

What is educational about education? It is a question of import and urgency, one that Kent den Heyer (2015) has recently asked in response to socialization being the "dominant vision of education today" (p. 3). Following Badiou, den Heyer (2015) proposes "education as event" (p. 3), an "ontological orientation" (p. 19) to education that recognizes how the uniqueness and irreplaceability of each human being can be enacted in a "freedom of subjectification" (p. 10). For den Heyer (2015) this is "the freedom to not only learn a subject, but to become a subject" (p. 8). Pinar (2010)

provides an extended discussion of what this might look like, and in a close reading of Maxine Greene's (2001) 20 years of lectures at the Lincoln Institute for the Arts in Education, proposes that aesthetic experiences can be "events" of "emancipatory reaggregation" (p. 3). Following Greene (2001), Pinar (2010) notes that the key is "experiencing arts from the inside" since in "undergoing such experience [one] can also break free of one's socially determined location, one's subject position" (p. 2). Understanding art-as-event, he explains, "engender[s] subjective and social reconstruction" (p. 2); in such events the "intensification of experience implies self-shattering insofar as the boundaries of the self dissolve into the aesthetic experience that extricates us from submersion in the banal" (p. 2). If the cost of the superhero effect on education is the teacher's silence, then the price to be paid to regain a sense of agency is self-shattering. The trouble, if I'm reading the contemporary educational landscape accurately, is a persistent social imaginary that the ends (agency, voice) can be achieved through less drastic means. But poststructural theorists have cautioned us not to suppose too easily that we are acting freely and autonomously against a social imaginary.

When we are advancing the case for an education that enhances student agency, it is important not to gloss over the poststructuralist concern of how the power of discourse subjects the self; for teachers this means understanding schooling as part of the cultural hegemony that normalizes dominant modes of thinking and being. In Wittgenstein's (1963) eyes this is precisely the aim of philosophy—to bring to awareness the assumptions behind life's daily activity, to illuminate the ideology underneath language, to show the interplay of function and meaning in language, what he called "language games" (p. 98). Cochran-Smith (2001) writes that in order to "alter the life chances of children," educators must explicitly and deliberately challenge the common practices that are "deeply embedded in systems of schooling and in society" (p. 3). Speaking to Greene's influence on curriculum studies, Miller (2010) says that teachers' "constant obligation [is] to choose to struggle toward [what Greene calls] *wide-awakeness*" (p. 128). Like Freire (1973), Miller (2010) understands agency as coming to consciousness, and that consciousness is vital to "combatting the curriculum problem" (p. 128) of teaching without understanding the assumptions behind what is being taught.

Regarding agency, two commonplace assumptions in education that are not given enough critique are individual autonomy and knowledge neutrality. In the former assumption, the individual is presumed to be born with the faculties of reason and autonomy, and what follows is the second assumption, that with proper procedure the reasoned individual can make knowledge claims that are without bias.

Biesta (2007) traces these assumptions back to Kant's universal and ahistorical individual. Following Kant, many have assumed "absolute self-knowledge rather than mere interpretation" (Hurst, 2002, p. 259). As Hurst poignantly explains, Kant "trapped himself into positing a self-consciousness that inhabited a vantage point outside the constitutive activity of consciousness" (p. 259). As Wong notes (2009), "Education characterize[s] ideal students as rational and in control of their thinking and actions. The good student is often described as intentional, cognitive, metacognitive, critical, and reflective.... [This] tradition is deeply rooted in...the story of Western civilization" (p. 192). Because the story of human reason and human autonomy has been so widely embraced, what have followed have been educational endeavors—such as the still influential Tyler Rationale (1949)—that have not accounted for the constitutive activity of consciousness, or the power of discourse and its power relations to constrain consciousness. Not accounting for the former is to create curriculum without attention to difference and diversity, and not accounting for the latter is to create curriculum without attention to privilege and power. In short, since the human subject is not a closed system that can access reason independently for its purposes, how are we to understand agency?

To question the assumptions of human reason and autonomy is a marker of poststructuralist concerns in education. Familiarly referred to as the linguistic turn, with increased skepticism of the human capacity for non-referential reason and autonomy, what has dissolved is faith in how a subject can come to ontological or epistemological knowledge. Hurst (2008) explains it this way: "What happens to metaphysical thinking when the realization dawns that a final cure for the madness of doubting... is not yet found" (p. 113). And more fundamentally, what are we left with when even the capacity by which truth might be found cannot survive "the incursion of language into thinking" (p. 113). Beginning with Wittgenstein's notion of the impossibility of private language, Saussure (1974) argues that the human self cannot autonomously select the best words to convey preconceived ideas (i.e., based on a capacity to reason), but that the self is able only to conceive of ideas because of the language that precedes such a self. The self is thus born into—or constituted in—language, and in using language, remains subject to it, that is, becomes a subject since language always remains in excess of the self. This social operation of language is a feature of what is called discourse; when one extends Saussurian logic to the self, what disappears is one's autonomy, the pre-existence of a self who uses language to suit individual purpose, since language disciplines the self into the social norms that language conveys implicitly.

This being the human condition, the first instance of agency is becoming conscious of one's condition. This is no simple task for if, as Hurst (2008) notes, "[T]here can be no presence or consciousness outside of language which serves as a privileged or ultimate point of reference for the sign 'I'" (p. 121), then the question becomes under what conditions might it be possible to recognize one's condition and struggle against it. In addressing the thorny problem of agency, the disciplines have varied in their approaches as to how the self is constituted from its subjectivity as a subject. Huebner (1966) offers a useful, if sexist, summary.

Release from the confinement of existing language, or more appropriately, transcendence of existing patterns of speech is available through several channels. The theologian would argue that the vicious circle is broken or transcended only by grace, mediated through the openness and reciprocity available through prayer. The aesthete would argue that literature, specifically poetry, enables lowly man [sic] to break out of his [sic] verbal prison and achieve a "victory over language." The scientist would point to his [sic] success with observation, classification, hypothesis formation, and experimentation as a way of breaking through language barriers. (p. 8)

In emphasizing a few phrases from Huebner (1966), we can see that education for agency ought to involve breaking the vicious cycle, or breaking out of prison, or breaking through barriers. Considering its overt social regulation, schooling is rarely a transformative process during which the self breaks through. Given the structural position teachers have in schools, it is quite difficult for them to act against their regulatory role. Cochran-Smith (2001) writes that teachers need to "teach against the grain" (p. 3), and yet the fear of doing so is very real. Even when teachers begin to recognize the strong regulatory protocols of schooling and show desire to work against them (Joseph, 2007), the fear of rocking the boat is directly tied to employability (Wiebe & Macdonald, 2013), a legitimate concern that Cochran-Smith (2001) acknowledges, saying that teachers who teach with the grain are likely to be more in demand. Recalling Huebner, because the cycle is vicious, teachers who contribute to student agency will be the exception, rather than the rule. It is at this very point of impossibility, of exceptionality, that an education for student agency might become possible. As noted above, the critical question for such an education is: "Under what conditions might it be possible for one to become conscious of not having agency, but then struggle to gain it?" I believe those conditions are immanent to a teacher's self-shattering via art, or the experience of art-as-event.

Reviewing Huebner's influence on curriculum, particularly his direct connection to schools, Apple (2010) writes, "The study of curriculum was meant to be not simply 'academic.' It was meant to help us build something" (p. 99). Huebner's (1968) emphasis on building something applies not just to the social world, but also to the self. When it comes to agency, questions of self and the social world belong together. Applied to the student-self, building something is not singularly an investment in the student's socioeconomic benefit, but a construction process that has value to the self's development as a human being.

Developmental self-theories recognize that the self is not fully formed at birth. Understanding self-development as a social process, both Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1951) contend that who we become in the world develops in relation to those others whom we perceive to be in our world. Heidegger (1927/1961), similarly, theorized that in addition to self-formation being a social phenomenon, *DaSein* (his word for the self as a-being-in-the-world), shares time and space with others, and as a consequence of this shared reality, *DaSein*, unlike natural objects, experiences time as moving forward. The embodied human self shares physical space in the world with others, but more than that, *DaSein* is not static. Because we feel time passing, our experience of self is oriented to the world chronologically; we easily look forward and back, compiling a history of *who* we are and *who* we could be. In everyday language it is something of an error to think of ourselves as human beings since this misnomer suggests full development or formation. More accurate would be to think of ourselves as human becomings, ever reaching, but always not yet becoming what we can already imagine.

Recalling Freud's concept of *Nachtraglichkeit* (afterwardsness), Summers (2012) notes that in addition to being situated in time, human beings construe meaning onto the past and the present in relation to the future; the past comes to be reinterpreted from our vantage point on the future. The process is as continuous as our movement into the future. Each tomorrow becomes a yesterday, and tomorrow's tomorrow (and the many tomorrows hence) will come to influence how I categorize and recount the events and circumstances that make up my experience of today.

At the nexus of *DaSein* and *Nachtraglichkeit* is the potential of art-as-event. For education to enact this ontological orientation, imaginative work is required. Panayotidis et al. (2015) express that it is a "struggle to articulate possibilities that do not yet exist, where assumed truths and conceptual structures fail to grasp what we experience" (p. 41). Following Rorty's notion of strong poetry, they argue that such struggles are efforts of *poiesis*, or art-making, producing representations of meaning

“never used before” (p. 41, emphasis added). This struggle arises from the fact that human subjects will construct the possibility of the future based on the empirical reality they see, and this limits them. What they cannot imagine is not just impossible, but outside the limits of their awareness. For subjects to think beyond the immediacy of empirical perceptions in an everyday educational event, such that even their motives and unconscious feelings are elucidated, is the dilemma of the necessary and impossible task of teaching, of discerning the world of the other in such a way that self-shattering is an agentic process.

The recognition of new ways of being for the subject is a much more subtle process than the commonly advocated pedagogy of caring for a student. A pedagogy of care, while necessary for building a trusting relationship, is not sufficient for attenuating the historical patterns of thinking that operate as immovable truths to constrain what is possible and not possible in a subject’s reality. Deconstructing the façade of truth is the process toward what Freire (1973) called *conscientization*, though there have been some historical differences in the naming. Putting the constitutive onus of consciousness more on the student, Pinar and Grumet (1976) have called this process *currere*. Greene (1973) saw possibilities of *wide awakesness* happening when it was the teacher’s seeing that mattered: in *seeing as strangers* teachers were more likely able to see differently from the realities that constrain thought. Later Greene (1995) emphasized the role of imagination in this process. Huebner (1999) called it a transcendent process; Block (2004) a process of prayer; updating earlier work, Pinar (2006) likened it to *bildung*,¹ and then later to the development of character (2012). Given the slippery nature of language, attempts at clarity and certainty have been synoptic strategies in curriculum, and yet, as Schubert (2010) insightfully points out, every synoptic strategy creates expansion and the need for additional and ongoing expository text.

In addition to the cultural and structural constraints implied in the concept of discourse, the teacher has students who have disempowering and/or limiting patterns of thinking and ways of being, whether from family history, life circumstances, or previous experiences of education. Born into language and culture, students (and teachers) experience additionally formative events that restrict agency, even arrest it. Rather than risking emotional investment in aspirations and becoming genuinely engaged in learning, an easier route for the student-self is compliance learning. This is what Freire (1973) called the banking model of education in which deposits are made into a student’s mind irrespective of meaning, purpose, or personal growth. Compliance learning is not so much deliberate resistance to the personal growth that learning ought to require, but, rather, more of the learned cultural pattern that fosters the belief that learning can happen without growth. Compliance learning

is still learning, but, like a cancerous cell, it simply attacks healthier kinds of learning that advance student agency. Such learning is similar to conflict-avoidance strategies that are a self's ineffective means of genuinely trying to maintain a relationship in that it, too, deteriorates and becomes simply a matter of compliance when both students and teachers are able to satisfy systemic requirements even while avoiding the necessary tensions that come with personal investment, long-term commitment, or daily engagement.

Where there is compliance learning, a passionate engagement in the arts can sometimes shatter what has become solidified. Through art is the possibility of "reflective engagement" and "subjective reconstruction" (Pinar, 2010, p. 5). Regardless of discipline, and prompted by the passionate curiosities that advance the disciplines, art-as-event involves imagining the world other than it is. Through art-as-event the subject experiences difference from the normative effects of schooling that create compliance.

Dewey (1902) located education not just within the student's experiences, but also within the student's physical being. For Schubert (2010), from the embodied relationship of student and curriculum, we learn "what is worth needing, doing, being, becoming, overcoming, sharing, contributing, wondering, and more" (p. 21). Critical to this process is the teacher's ability to perceive and appreciate what is not yet visible, including seeing past opposition, defensiveness, and compliance. Following Pinar (2010), I emphasize art-as-event because a curriculum that flows from this does not impose a specific agenda, but is an open-ended exploration in which students feel a personal connection to their learning. Bringing his clinical experience at the Feinberg School of Medicine to bear on Heidegger's rendering of *ekstatic* (the possibility of encountering other beings), Summers (2012), points out that "[the] dispositional affects, desires, and passions that emerge when defenses give way provide clues to unformed possibilities that can become ways of being if perceived as such" (p. 236). What is striking in Summers' wording is the similarity to Freire's (1998) description of authentic dialogue among teachers and learners in a culture circle. Akin to "defenses giving way" (p. 236), Freire speaks of the necessity of students becoming the knowledge producers (to the same degree of legitimacy as the teachers), and only insofar as there is this shifting (and sharing) of roles can students become "thinking subjects" (p. 89) and find meaning in their learning. Freire's thinking subject is one who becomes conscious of the normative structures in culture, and who—no longer a compliant learner—then takes action. Like Summers, Freire sees this, potentially, as a new way of being, or, in Pinar's (2010) terms, an "emancipatory reaggregation" (p. 3).

Central to the ongoing myth of human autonomy and reason, agency is too often assumed. Contemporary competencies-based curriculum guides, for example, uncritically presume agency with their primary focus being the selection, scope, and sequence of outcomes. With only token reference to difference and diversity, it is a homogenous student who is presumed, and who will, no doubt, achieve the outcomes through good teaching and, sometimes optional on the student's part, hard work.² Completely unaccounted for are the normative effects of schooling.

Teaching for student agency means acknowledging the normative effects of schooling so that students can come to understand more about the reality of their day-to-day lives. There is a productive tension here, one where agency can seem impossible, and yet is made possible by a teacher's refusal to foreclose on a student's potential. At the threshold of im/possible agency, teachers and students might acknowledge both the constraining force of discourse on the self, and despite that condition, still strive for a kind of interaction that is empowering. According to Ayers (2010),

[i]f society cannot be changed under any circumstances, if there is nothing to be done, not even small and humble gestures toward something better, well, that about ends all conversation. Our sense of agency shrinks, our choices diminish. What more is there to say? But if a fairer, saner, and more just social order is both desirable and possible, that is, if some of us can join one another to imagine and build a participatory movement for justice, a public space for the enactment of democratic dreams, our field opens slightly. (p. 8)

Education that is person-centred and socially empowering is not a new idea. Dewey (1938/1997) put the student's experience at the heart of education. While not new, prioritizing the student in times of global expansion can seem nostalgic, naïve, or even sentimental. In times of neoliberal policy-making, it can often seem as though there is a crisis in education. The creation of crisis enables a strict focus on core curriculum, often packaged as 21st century skills; these being the only way to return to economic prosperity. We know that the popular socio-economic imagination has direct influence on the actions and decisions of day-to-day life in the classroom (Weis & Fine, 2012), and we know that the contemporary preference for prioritizing education as a future-oriented endeavour leads to rhetoric such as *investment* and *returns* where the return on the investment of public education occurs when students gain significant employment and become taxpayers. The trouble with this approach to education is a curriculum that predefines the world students will enter: as a result, students and teachers become valuable only in relation to their outcome demonstration,

that is, their *return on investment*. Those with minimal returns are routed out of the system by its own regulatory safeguards. At the micro level, while there might be school spirit and collegiality for some, an instrumental educational philosophy cannot help but dehumanize the participants.

As I argue with Morrison-Robinson, focusing education on employment leaves schools and society vulnerable “to an unbalanced neo-liberal capitalization of being human” (Wiebe & Morrison-Robinson, 2013, p. 6). This unbalanced imagination of an always better self (meant to compete with others from elsewhere) forecloses on the process of becoming human. Through aesthetic experiences, how the self imagines its potential can be freed from the cultural norms that subjugate it, particularly those norms that gain their power from the employment motif. Having agency depends on being able to imagine differently, on having an alternative vision to that prescribed by social norms. Given these dark times, it is entirely possible that teachers regularly align with this norming process, choosing the comfort and fantasy of being society’s superheroes.

Notes

1. See Pinar (2006) for an extended discussion of *Bildung* in Europe and North America.
2. This illogical position is unfortunately gaining traction with the tight coupling of teaching and learning, so much so that the political message seems to construe teaching as a necessary and sufficient cause of learning. This position is probably best exemplified in the populist call to pay teachers according to students’ results. In Canada, Clifton’s (2013) specious literature review, funded by the Fraser Institute, has recently received press in the *Globe and Mail* (see Alphonso, 2013).

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