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Resiliency

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Journal Theme: Resiliency

*“The act of caring
can strengthen one’s
resiliency and future
dedication.”*

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This issue of the *International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education* uses the theme of resiliency. The term suggests the ability to withstand and endure, spring back or quickly recover. Resiliency follows in the wake of a two-year global pandemic and characterizes the new normal in which we are currently learning to reside. The authors in this volume share experiences that have enabled resiliency and set the stage for further advancement in their research focus that relates to art engagement and lifelong learning. A consistent thread that runs through the articles is a concern for the wellbeing of others. The act of caring can strengthen one's resiliency and future dedication. This is the case with the Greenberg family's generosity that has made possible the Pearl and Murray Greenberg awards that recognize contributions in the field of art education.

Recently the National Art Education interest group of Lifelong Learning in Art Education awarded emerging scholar Dr. Liz Langdon with the Murray Greenberg award and Dr. Angela LaPorte with the Pearl Greenberg award. Both educators share excerpts from their award acceptance speeches in *Committee on Lifelong Learning 2022 Pearl and Murray Greenberg Awards Lectures*. Dr. Langdon writes about her involvement in politics and advocacy during her university's recent decision to redesign rather than eliminate their art education program. She recounts her experience in researching early Texas artists. She also voices appreciation for her dissertation advisors who introduce her to place and action research and intergenerational art education. Langdon concludes her award speech by acknowledging the influence that her doctoral research continues to play in her current teaching and writing endeavors.

Dr. Angela LaPorte writes that Dr. Pearl Greenberg, the namesake for the award LaPorte received, is responsible for years of inspiration. In her award speech, LaPorte points to some of her early research projects. She tells of one that included working in an institutionalized elder care facility and another with seniors from the Harlem neighborhood in New York. She also mentioned her edited book that emphasizes intergenerational research. These examples illustrate LaPorte's passion for sharing meaningful art experiences with those who typically cannot participate. LaPorte continues in this area as she serves as a professor and Director of Art Education for the University of Arkansas School of Art. While at the University of Arkansas she has expanded her research focus to disability studies and leads students in an approach she terms as inverse inclusion. LaPorte says her goal in research is to study approaches in art education that can break down stereotypes and encourage care and appreciation for others.

In *Grandma Layton: A Cinderella Story* author, Liz Langdon, explores how we can learn about each other through art. She describes a community-based art experience that connects university students, two elementary classes, and residents from a retirement community as they study selected artworks of

Elizabeth Grandma Layton from a local museum exhibition. The participants consider mental health, age, and resiliency while engaging in the creation of a colored pencil collaborative poster.

As a teaching artist and mentor, Rebecca Bourgault offers insights from her arts-based capstone course through reflections on her students' weekly journal entries, field notes, and stories. Through an intuitive inquiry approach, she shares meaningfulness in the reciprocity of learner/mentor relationships.

Linda J. Helmick shares a restorative artmaking experience for educators through Zoom during the COVID-18 pandemic. Through a blending of art therapy and art education and an aesthetic encounter with collage making, she applies a/r/tographic methods to gain a better understanding of the restorative power of art within a virtual collective community experience.

The final story in this volume is Lola's story. Through the voice of a puppet the author details the experiences of a university class that creates puppets to be used in various community contexts. Lola specifically describes the benefits associated with puppetry for an older adult dealing with dementia.

Resiliency has been characterized through each of these articles expressing the idea that we can learn from our experiences and continue to move forward. The editorial staff echoes the theme. We have learned from being in this role for the past 3 years and feel it is time to welcome a new editorial team to lead us forward with our next issue. We gratefully acknowledge you as readers and fellow participants for advocating lifelong learning in art education. We enthusiastically look forward to what lies ahead.

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Pearl and Murray Greenberg Award Lectures

*“...we must
approach each
other as people,
not as ages and
stages.”*

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Angela LaPorte
University of Arkansas

KEY WORDS

*Award
Lifelong Learning*

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Figure 1. Murray and Pearl Greenberg.

The Pearl and Murray Greenberg Awards were established through a generous gift from Ken Greenberg and his wife, Clara Gerdes, to the National Art Education Association's Committee on Lifelong Learning. The recipients of these awards focus on their contributions to the field of art education for post-secondary learners across the lifespan, including creative aging, community-based art education, and/or intergenerational arts learning. The Murray Greenberg Award specifically supports an emerging scholar (zero to four years beyond the completion of their graduate degree program thesis or dissertation) with \$1000. The Pearl Greenberg Award for Teaching and Research recognizes an artist/educator/researcher at the national level who has made distinguished contributions with \$2,500. This article includes excerpts from the 2022 acceptance speeches given during the Committee on Lifelong Learning Awards' Ceremony at the New York City National Art Education Association Convention.



Figure 2. Liz Langdon, Emerging Scholar recipient.

Murray Greenberg Emerging Scholar

As the first recipient of this award, I want to acknowledge my spouse Earl Bates, who has been my partner for the last 20 years of this adventure. In doing so, I also acknowledge Murray Greenberg, the namesake of this award, who supported Pearl

and her work. This guaranteed the opportunity to travel to NYC to carry out my duties and continue professional development. I have gotten to know a little more about Pearl Greenberg through my three years as chairperson of this group, particularly through the development of these two “Greenberg awards” and in conversations with Pam Lawton, Angela La Porte, and Ken Greenberg. Learning the history of our group through the by-laws set in the 1990s, I am amazed at how prescient they are today. I am now enabled to pursue and enact many of these same goals through the privilege of teaching in higher education, following my other lives as an art educator in various configurations: artist/parent/teacher in high school, museum, and volunteer settings. As I look ahead, I see how advocating for art programs in all age settings is growing in importance.

It was through the gift of a fellowship offer from the University of North Texas that I took the huge leap to a doctoral program. Professor Emeritus, Jack Davis, lured me to North Texas through the Priddy Leadership Program for Art Educators. It was there I learned the importance of politics and advocacy in support of art education programs and it was a lesson recently brought to life for me.

My students and colleagues at University of Kansas had been fighting our Art Education program’s closure. I am able to say today, after almost two years, that the provost has agreed to an art education program redesign rather than elimination.



Figure 3. Advocating for an art program.

The faculty senate held hearings and prior to the vote against program discontinuance, I heard faculty members repeat what I had told them of the value that our program offered to all ages of people in all walks of community life.



Figure 4. Instructional units.

My research connecting the local community to classrooms began in North Texas. There I helped prepare pre-service art educators through course work and supervision and connected with older artists in Wichita Falls as I was researching early Texas artists (defined as working 40 years prior). I found some amazing artists who were still working, as I developed place-based curriculum to contribute to *Documenting Life, Land and Culture: A Unit of Instruction Based on the Work of Early Wichita Falls Area Artists* (NTIEVA, 2011). For my dissertation I decided to research the intersection of place and age in understanding local older artists, and what art educators might learn from them.

This became the focus of a curriculum development program, working with in-service K-12 art educators in action research inquiries of learning with local older artists. We wrote *Pride of Place: Investigating the Cultural Roots of Texoma Artists*, (INTIEVA, 2013) a curriculum guide for the Wichita Falls Museum of Art, highlighting Texas artists in the museum collection and older local artist participants who were identified, engaged with and in some cases befriended by the art educators. I thank my dissertation advisors, Dr. Nadine Kalen, for introducing me to the curriculum of place and action research, Dr. Jack Davis for introducing me to Intergenerational (IG) learning and Dr. Adetty Perez Miles for challenging me to

understand and use a theoretical perspective to focus my dissertation, completed in 2017, *Place-based and Intergenerational Art Education*.

The best part of methodology using an action research approach was direct involvement with participants. Action research is a collaborative study of learning as



Figure 5. Carol Rose, Pam Day, Jeanette Heiberger, Nancy Walkup, Audra Miller, Liz Langdon, and Claire Walker (l-r).

it takes place day by day in the context of participants' own practices (Valencia, para 1). The art educators in this group studied the infusion of place-based learning in their teaching practice through identifying and learning from local older artists and developing curriculum used in their classrooms. The illustration shows how action research encourages a continuous cycle of action and reflection.

Discovering and using a new philosophy was most difficult, but the analysis enabled me to sit and think and write, something that none of my previous roles required. Starting with Dewey (1997/1916) I discovered connections with Gilles Deleuze. Using Deleuzian theory as a way to analyze the disjunctions in my data, gave me the tools to rethink the intersections of place and age through the lens of sense, event and duration.

Translations of the French philosopher's work was not available until 1990 so there was not a lot of scholarship. Briefly, my understanding of Deleuze follows. Sense comes before words and even knowing. There is a logic to it, and in the *Logic of Sense* (1990) Deleuze argues that it is important to pay attention first to the sense of an event, to pay attention when things do not fit logically and then use that

disjunctive synthesis to analyze events from different perspectives. Events are more valuable by revisiting and reflecting upon them. The passing of time and likewise aging should not be considered as a linear construct, rather duration sees time differently. Different ages intersecting on the common plane of place, illustrated in the duration diagram is equivalent to IG learning where people come together and inhabit a plane of being in the moment, sharing experiences which can erase barriers of age.

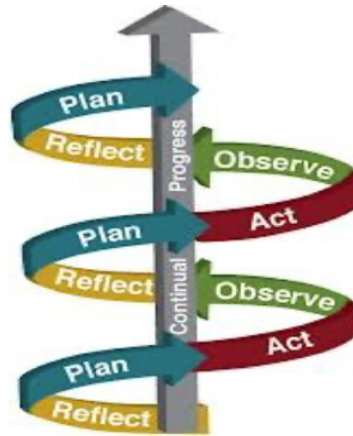


Figure 6. Action Research involves action and reflection.

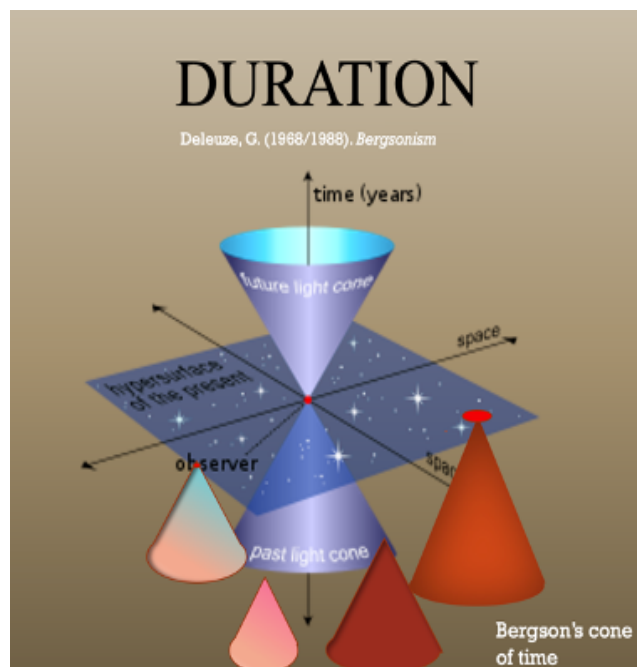


Figure 7. Duration diagram.

Each art educator selected an artist from Wichita Falls. This grounded my analysis of five older artists (ranging 59-92 years) and five art educators in Wichita Falls and is the foci of my continuing research into the intersectionality of ageism and feminism/ mentoring and feminism, and IG and place-based learning. Each has provided a focus for publication of peer reviewed articles, a book chapter and articles in NAEA News, as well as presentations and workshops. I will summarize the findings of three publications.



IG learning has the potential to reinforce ageist ideas, through the culturally produced binary of old and young, and accompanying stereotypes. In my research with older artists, I discovered that my age-based perspective clouded how I perceived and valued older artists and their work. In *Older Artists and Acknowledging Ageism* (2018) I reveal implicit age bias associated with modernist tradition in art education, which minimized the value of art production viewed as feminine. Language associated with ageism shares the descriptors of the feminine and seep into our perceptions. These images of Claire Walker engaging with Wanda Ewalt and her artwork show the same sculpture displayed at home and upside down in the subsequent museum exhibition. I questioned why this oversight was not challenged, whether the oversight was due to the artists' age or gender? This research facilitated personal growth and through critical reflection, my implicit ageism revealed itself.

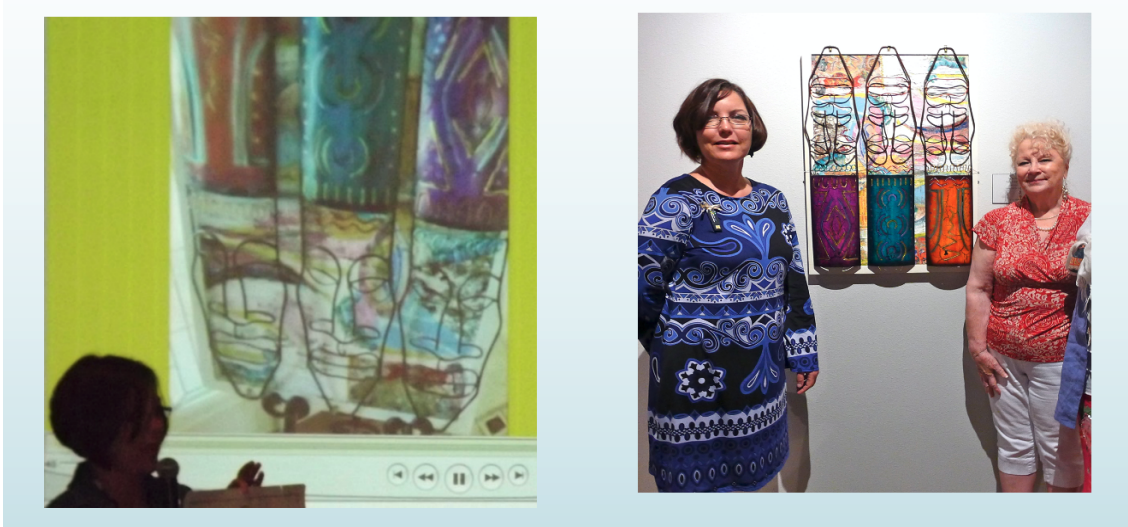


Figure 8. Creative presentations.

In the article *Artists as Mentors: A Mid-Career Art Educator Rekindles Her Artist Self* (2019) Carol Rose, the art educator, Mary Stephens, artist, demonstrated artist mentoring is professional development for art educators and is an effective way to build knowledge and confidence. This IG relationship promoted deep learning through mentorship. It is an invaluable form of professional development for art educators because it offers affective learning. This IG mentorship between educator and artist extended adult education by inspiring creative presentations of self-reflection, and theory development. For female art educators, co-equal IG



Mary Stephens



Oz by Mary Stephens



Carol Rose

Figure 9. Stephens' and Rose's mentorship.

mentorship is important because it builds an appreciation of the needs and assets of each participant. It encourages relationships which are important to psychosocial health and development. I advocate for art educators and late-stage artists to work together in sharing stories and time together for valuable professional development.

Not all IG relationships between educator and artist are reciprocal. A third analysis from this action research found a disjointed dialog between the young art educator Audra Miller and Ralph Stearns, a self-proclaimed “older artist”. In *Disjointed Dialog Intergenerational Learning and Place-based Art Education* (in press), I describe Stearns’ status in the community as a mature, self-referential character widely recognized for his murals around town, but not every IG relationship benefits all participants equally.



Audra Miller and artist, Ralph Stearns



Fourth Grade Poster



Stearn's Mural in Wichita Falls, TX and the author.

Figure 10. Miller's and Stearns' mentorship.

Place-based learning for Audra and her students was enhanced, but reciprocal IG learning was complicated by gender in the research relationship between the younger female and older male artist. IG relationships add depth to learning about community and local place, with social benefits for elementary students and teacher, but can be challenged by bias in adult IG learning. Because females dominate the field of education, considering the gender of older artists is an important consideration. The perceived social needs of an older male artist may not encourage co-equal learning.

As I continue to study these issues, my research goals have evolved. These are the major understandings I have established:

- Complementary needs and assets of age difference factor into IG learning success. Facilitators of IG and place-based learning put relationship building in the fore, with shared experiences a primary goal to create situations where participants can function on a co-equal basis.
- Cooperative action research ensures reciprocal learning for participants, a key component to IG learning. Participants should look to discover at least three commonalities of experience within IG learning.
- Shared relationship to local place or common culture is significant and discovering a personal connection to someone else's life experience may create empathy, which can impact both participants and reverberate beyond the initial shared experience.

In these ways each participant, younger and older, is given the opportunity to share in an uncommon experience of intergenerational learning.



Figure 11. Teaching and Loving Art in Kansas student generated website.

After landing a position at KU I felt closer to home, and ready to make new connections. To learn about local culture, I asked my students to research local artists to have the benefit of gaining a different perspective about local place and its history. I then created this website for an ongoing learning resource teachingandlovingartinkansas.weebly.com.

During this research I discovered iconic artist Elizabeth “Grandma” Layton who is a recognized local artist, having lived 20 miles away. I published an article in NAEA News (2018) stating “Art educators can challenge ageism by connecting with someone from a different generation, and like Layton, explore outside your comfort

zone”, because Layton had stepped outside her zone to learn blind contour line drawing at the age of 68. Layton’s images challenge the idea of the sweet old lady, an ageist stereotype. Through her daily self-portrait drawings, Layton used the wrinkles of her face, drawn with expressive blind contour lines, to tell her stories and reveal both her public and inner lives. Layton’s drawings provided the springboard for student engagement with ideas of aging, ageism and mental health in the Cinderella project found in this Vol 5 publication of *IJLLAE*.

I will continue to build on the foundation of my dissertation research to bring different aged communities together through engagement with art and in recognition of art’s power to create community and knowledge.

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Dr. Pearl Greenberg Award Recipient Angela LaPorte



Figure 1. Angela LaPorte.

Before sharing my work, I would like to recognize and thank Clara Gerdes and Ken Greenberg, son of Dr. Pearl Greenberg, for their generous contribution to the Committee on Lifelong Learning to continue to honor Pearl's vision for equitable access to meaningful art education "from womb to tomb." I also want to thank the awards' committee and those who wrote letters of support. It is an honor to receive this award in remembrance of Dr. Greenberg, who has been an inspiration for my work in lifelong learning for over 30 years. My first introduction to her research (Greenberg, 1987) began through conversations with my professor and mentor at Arizona State University, Dr. Mary Stokrocki, while pursuing my Master's degree in art education. Soon after, I was privileged to meet Pearl at an NAEA convention in the early 1990s. Her work in the field inspired my thesis research, "A Microethnographic Study of an Art Class for the Institutionalized Elderly" (LaPorte, 1994), the site of an art class at a residential care facility for older adults that I co-taught with Dr. Bernard Young. One thing that I discovered at that point in time was the enthusiasm that the participants shared, always waiting at the door of the art room for our arrival. Outside of what I learned about approaches to teaching art to students with varying abilities, histories, and interests, it reaffirmed my passion for bringing meaningful art experiences to those who rarely had them.

My dissertation at Penn State, “An Ethnographic Study of an Intergenerational Community Art Program in Harlem, NYC” (La Porte, 1998), moved



Figure 2. Harlem neighborhood research.

into a new direction. I worked with an intergenerational arts program in NYC’s Lower East Harlem, funded by a number of different social service organizations in the city that involved seniors from within the Harlem neighborhood and teenagers from the same location and across the city.



Figure 3. Sharing oral histories.

One component of the program involved the sharing and collecting of oral histories. I walked with teams of teenagers to meet with seniors at their apartments in the Lower East Harlem area to socialize and gather and share life stories. As a way to engage both generations, I asked the teenagers to generate some questions to ask the seniors about different periods in their lives and often prompted them through artworks from historical periods of which the seniors might be familiar. A couple of

artworks that I chose were Palmer Hayden's "Midsummer Night in Harlem" and Horace Pippin's "Saturday Night Bath." There was also an art making experience at the local senior center as well as a social service component where the teens would call the seniors or assist with grocery shopping.



Figure 4. Sharing personal history.

My participant observation study data in the form of conversations, observations, interviews, and journals collected over a period of seven months revealed that the program not only provided exchanges of personal history and culture, but that intergenerational relationships developed, age-related stereotypes diminished, and participants felt empowered through the process (La Porte, 2000, 2002, 2011).



Figure 5. NAEA convention.

I then moved into my first teaching position in higher education at the University of Arkansas in 1998 where I continued my work while reestablishing an art education program as a one-person faculty. In 2004, my intergenerational research led me to edit a book published by NAEA, “Community Connections. Intergenerational Links in Art Education” (La Porte, 2004). Last year’s awardee, Pamela Harris Lawton, contributed a chapter to this book (Lawton, 2004). Dr. Greenberg wrote the book’s preface (Greenberg, 2015).

Soon after publishing the book, I presented its content at the NAEA convention in Boston, where I was accompanied by my daughter, Maria, when she was 3-months-old (La Porte, 2005). Murray Greenberg graciously documented the event that ended up being featured in the next “NAEA News.” I soon took on more active roles within the Committee on Lifelong Learning, serving as chair from 2005 to 2009 and editor designer of the group’s conference proceedings from 2007 to 2009. Besides presenting with Dr. Greenberg at three NAEA Convention sessions: “Aging Monologues” in 2004 (Greenberg, et al., 2004) and 2006 (Greenberg, et al., 2006), and “What is Lifelong Learning” in 2008 (Barret, et al., 2008) to bring attention to the importance of art education for aging populations, I have remained an active member of LLL over the years and now serve as associate editor of our journal.



Figure 6. Aging Monologues.

While at the University of Arkansas, I’ve expanded my research focus to disability studies and intergenerational experiences for my preservice art teachers who claimed to lack knowledge and preparation to teach disabled students. I responded by developing a special topics course that I continue to teach “Inclusive Art Pedagogy,” an intergenerational community-based art program for disabled adults.



Figure 7. Disability Studies.

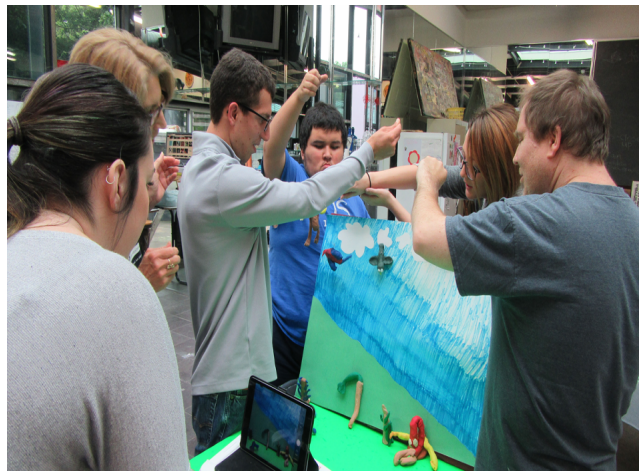


Figure 8. Inverse Inclusion.

The class begins with my students learning alongside the community participants as I teach or co-teach lessons. Then, my students develop their own art curriculum based on a big idea, rotate into teaching or teacher's assistant positions, while at the same time, reading and reflecting on class experiences within each role. They also share the work of a contemporary disabled artist. At the end of the semester my students and the community participants collaboratively plan, curate, and hang their exhibition. I named this approach, *inverse inclusion* (La Porte, 2015, 2020), where university students rotate roles as student, teacher, and teacher's assistant to experience multiple perspectives during a community-based service-learning inclusion class. Most of my students' time is spent in the student role to allow for more reciprocal relationships to develop besides the hierarchical teacher positioning.

I begin the class by introducing a lesson myself or with a co-facilitator. I once asked one of our Lifelong Learning member, Susan Whiteland, to join me in teaching “Fantastical Stories through Claymation” and published in the journal, *Art Education* (La Porte & Whiteland, 2017).

Another year, I collaborated with Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art on a garden themed unit with inspirational conversations and experiences at the museum (La Porte, 2019). In the end, I try to involve all participants in planning the gallery exhibition. In the future, I would like to co-teach with one of the disabled adults from the community organization.



Figure 9. Hope.

Over the years teaching this course, I was amazed by one of the community participants, Hope, that inspired me to write a chapter for an upcoming book to be published by NAEA, by editors who are members of our LLL Group, Melanie Davenport and Marjorie Manifold. This experience reaffirmed that teachers can stagnate growth based on their biases, or promote growth expanding upon student interests. The first time I met Hope, I was told to give her a box of crayons and paper to allow her to sit in the corner to repeatedly draw and color her dogs over and over again. Instead, I asked students to engage with her, and encourage her to expand upon the dog theme. When a student teacher asked small groups from the class to build a community model from recycled materials, Hope constructed a fenced-in area from popsicle sticks for her dogs and made them of cotton wrapped with pipe cleaners.



Figure 10. Community model.



Figure 11. Visual sequencing.

Her illustrated book was the most impressive, with pages of visual sequencing, in which she created a story with representations of ducks, a girl, mountains, houses, and trees. When asked to share with the class, Hope enthusiastically ran to the front of the room.

Whether it be a matter of disability, age, or race/ethnicity, I believe that teacher bias impacts art education experiences. The goal of my research is to study approaches to art education that can break down stereotypes and biases that people from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and/or ages have about each other through positive experiences in art education, coming together to appreciate unique differences and a shared humanity.

I would like to conclude with a quote that Pearl wrote from the preface of my book.

We can talk together, we can draw together, we can sing together, and we can think and exchange ideas together as equals, but we must approach each other as people, not as ages and stages. Yet, we cannot discount that the age cohorts we experience as we grow have very strong, long-lasting, and valid meanings in our lives. (Greenberg, 2004, p. vii)

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Grandma Layton: A Cinderella Story

“Through discussing Layton’s images and engaging in completing one section of her drawing for a community artwork, both older and younger people were brought together through heightened awareness of the other.”

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Sierra McCloskey
Katie Rice
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ABSTRACT

The students and professor used arts-informed research (AIR) in the practice of community-based art education bringing together community members separated by age and distance. They analyzed how Elizabeth “Grandma” Layton’s art addressed issues of ageing and mental health and directed participant engagement in coloring a line drawing replica. This postcard coloring project was adapted for fifth-grade art classes and residents of a retirement community. In AIR the choice of art activity, medium presentation and participants are related to the project’s success. The analysis is through the lens of place-based education and intergenerational (IG) learning.

KEYWORDS

arts-informed research; community-based art education; Elizabeth Layton; intergenerational learning; place-based learning

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What can we learn about each other through art? This is one of the questions we pursued in our Art in Community course at University of Kansas as we planned ways to connect the community to artworks exhibited in *Healing, Knowing, and Seeing the Body*, an exhibition at the Spencer Museum of Art in Spring 2021, when the Covid pandemic was still impactful in community settings. Our group, consisting of the course professor and undergraduate art education students, selected the artworks of Elizabeth “Grandma” Layton on display and in the museum’s collection to reflect on global key issues of mental health, age and resiliency, and to engage the museum visitors in artmaking to be shared via mailed postcard with those isolated in a retirement community. The professor asked the class to plan an activity built on the framework of community-based art education (CBAE), to bridge those in an isolating retirement residence to greater community. Designed first for social distancing, through an iteration of the plan, we were able to connect multi-age communities through the art of Elizabeth Layton and colored pencils.

Literature Review

CBAE is engaged pedagogy and andragogy, with a socially conscious perspective that is creative, collaborative and enables arts-informed research (AIR) (Lawton et al., 2019). Andragogy is the self-directed learning inherent in teaching adult learners. AIR methodology guided our work. It includes engagement with artwork to define themes and answer questions and acts as both data collection method and presentation (Blaikie, 2014). The museum exhibition theme and Elizabeth Layton’s art in particular directed the focus of the research. In presenting this research, the text and the art are inexorably linked, because Layton’s art and the community art that was created in response, is expressive and explicit of the themes and findings discussed (Blaikie, 2014). The postcard sections, colored by participants in response to prompts, contributed to a community interpretation of her artwork, and demonstrated an acceptance of sharing with, and learning from different aged-groups, children and older citizens. The visual art elements offered therapeutic relief as well.

The benefit of visual art therapy (VAT) for ageing populations has been well documented. In a systematic review and meta-analysis of literature documenting the benefits of VAT to ageing populations. Masika et al. (2020) declare it effective to prevent or manage dementia, as well as improve cognitive functioning. They found that activities of greater cognitive benefit involved a higher level of creativity and optimized the use of essential components including art education, reminiscence, art processing, cognitive evaluation, art crafts/modelling, and socialization (Masika et al., 2020). Although cognitive benefits were not the goal of our project, but rather mood enhancement and community awareness, this project included aspects of all of these essential components.

The materials used in the art production also informed this research. Layton used blind contour drawing for her self-portraits and figurative drawings, a higher-level drawing skill that is developed through practice, as well as, color pencils for coloring the line drawings. Coloring a reproduction of her drawing with colored pencils was chosen to create the collaborative artwork within the classroom and community settings. In the past, the hobbyist activity of coloring pages was a disputed form of art therapy (Malchiodi, 2015). The therapeutic role of adult coloring books is disputed as more a “feel-good” experience than

an authentic creative expression, and not art therapy because it is lacking in a relational aspect (Malchiodi, 2015). But recent research has shown adult coloring lowers symptoms of depression and anxiety (Flett, et al., 2017; Holt et al., 2019) and was preferred as a low cognitive demand activity for generating greater states of flow (Holt et al., 2019), even preferred over expressive drawing activities (Forkosh & Drake, 2017). The benefits of coloring pages to children in the classroom is still in dispute, and the coloring worksheet may be the bane of art educators who strive to offer students more creative options and confidence in drawing skills (Gibbons, 2022) yet the CBAE goals of social awareness and building community through art education was the overarching goal of this project.

The professor guided the students to consider Layton's artwork as a site for place-based pedagogy and intergenerational (IG) learning because it challenges ageism and gerontophobia, the fear of getting older. Place-based education is defined as meaningful learning that is rooted in place, where students are more active, motivated and tend to remember more (Kemp, 2006). IG programming is a social vehicle that creates purposeful and ongoing exchanges of resources and learning among older and younger generations which aims to enrich IG relations (Cumming-Potvin & MacCallum, 2010; Kaplan et al., 2002). Activity theory expands the intergenerational relationship to include the activity that is part of the relationship (Vanderven, 2004). Activity theory is a relationship between how people interact, what they do, the tools and objects that mediate these interactions, and the contexts that situate both (Vanderven, 2004).

Various engagements with artmaking have been shown to challenge ageism and gerontophobia in intergenerational settings (Rubin et al., 2015). The arts-based program used by Rubin et al. indicated not only the improvement of college students' attitudes toward older adults but also the improvement of students' attitudes toward their own aging. IG activities between college students and residents of retirement communities that promote engaging conversations are preferred (Aguilera-Hermida et al., 2020). Additionally, IG pairings of college students and older adults in creative situations demonstrate the positive effects of interactions in IG pairings. IG pairings of participants in a creative block building exercise showed those positive characteristic behaviors of each generation were affected when working together (Tabuchi & Miura, 2018). In Tabuchi and Miura (2018) older adults offered more new proposals when in IG groupings, showing that younger adults adjusted older adults' overly cautious behavior, and older adults encouraged youth's creativity.

Participants

The participants were approximately 25 members of a local residential retirement community, two fifth-grade art classes from different school districts, and members of our group. College students met with groups individually at their respective locations. The college students were invited to observe in the elementary art rooms with a seasoned art educator, and then teach a lesson. The professor had arranged for the students to present during "coffee talk" at the retirement community to teach about the art of Elizabeth Layton, and to ask for participation in the creation of a community artwork.

Materials

The key material in this AIR is Layton's artwork. AIR incorporates both research and creation and the choice of her art is significant because it offers "the authenticity of lived experience" (Blaikie, 2015, p.239). We selected Cinderella (Layton,1986) and gained access through the museum to appropriate and respectfully recreate the image for a communal artmaking project. We chose this work in anticipation that many people would draw connections to the major league baseball team symbol crowning Glen's head (Figure #1).



Figure 1. Layton, E. (1986). Cinderella. [lithograph]. Spencer Museum of Art.

Layton's art is important to this IG project because she began to develop her artist skill at age 68. After attending a college art course and learning blind contour drawing, she practiced daily until her death, with her husband Glen and herself as subjects. She was born in 1909 and lived in Wellsville, Kansas, not far from our location. She fought manic depression (bipolar disorder) for 35 years and did not find a cure until she found her love for art. In her art she would show all of the hardships of aging including visual markers of age like dark spots, wrinkles, double chins, and other imperfections. She also showed herself involved with many other social issues like women's rights, AIDS, capital punishment, hunger, homelessness, and racial prejudice. Layton's artwork is significant locally and globally, is in museum collections across the US, and has been exhibited world-wide. Her work dealt with life and death issues of depression, self-healing and aging. These issues were particularly timely and intense because of the ravaging physical, psychological and social toll Covid 19 had taken on all ages but particularly the elderly around the world in the past year. Figure 2 shows a study of hands and the artist's face, drawn from life, from

looking in the small circular mirror depicted in the upper left quadrant, and possibly from memory, where Layton holds a pencil in her right hand (Braun, 2021).



Figure 2. Layton, E. (1984). Untitled, August 1984. [colored pencil]. Spencer Museum of Art.

The students contributed their technical skill to recreate Layton's Cinderella as a simple line drawing using computer software to scale and reproduce it and divide into 36 postcards which could be given out to participants from the community. Figure 3 shows a section that was further divided into 9 postcards and numbered on back. Colored pencils were selected as the medium for coloring the line drawing. Additionally, images of other Layton's artworks were used to teach about Layton's life and art and encourage discussion.

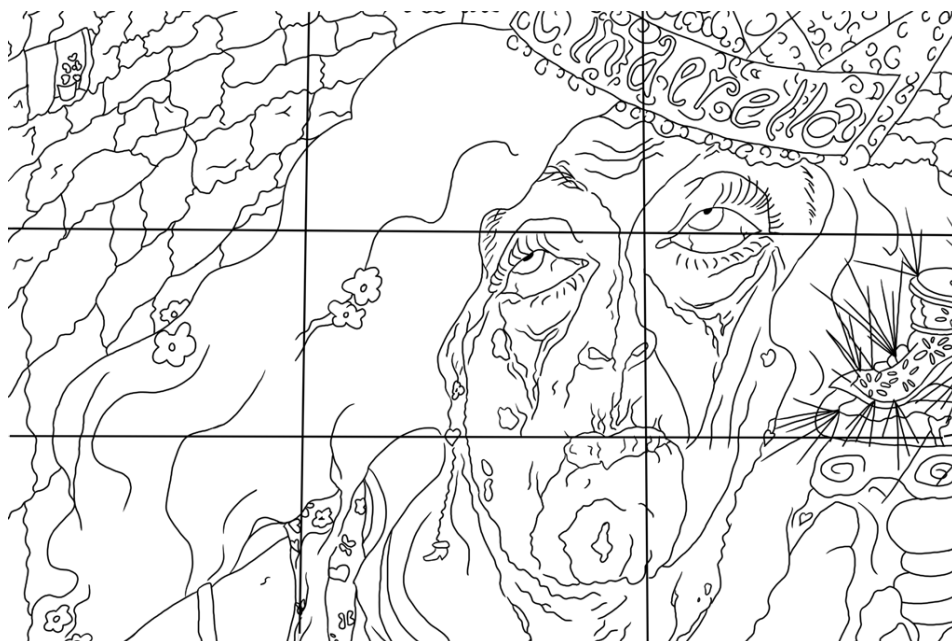


Figure 3. Section of student's line illustration featuring Layton's Cinderella.

Procedure

College students taught lessons at two different schools' art rooms. They showed a presentation about Elizabeth Layton using images of her art to lead discussions about the artist's practice, age, mental health and local place. They explained to 5th grade students they would be part of a community project to recreate Cinderella in a colorful poster, by contributing their coloring to the cryptic design on their postcards (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Elementary students coloring.

In one classroom the art teacher created a video tutorial, coloring one of the cards to demonstrate good techniques and to demonstrate expectations for the finished product. Many students did not have time to finish, which created space for the retirement center participants to finish the cards and reconstruct the interpreted artwork. At the retirement community, the college students presented Elizabeth Layton's story and artwork and the children's unfinished postcards. This created the opportunity for the retired residents to participate in artmaking to color their own or finish coloring a student's card, and almost all did. A few residents were hesitant to participate, and those who did not, engaged instead in conversation.

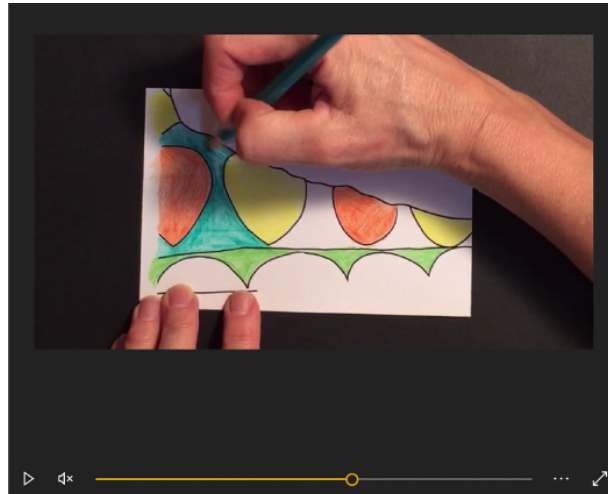


Figure 5. Video produced by a supervising art teacher demonstrating color pencil techniques.



Figure 6. Retirement community members coloring.

After all the postcards were finished and collected, a member of the community joined us in assembling the colorful postcards together and redrawing the key contour lines in black marker to make the image stand out (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Retirement community member finishing with black outlines.

Discussion and Analysis

The data collected for this AIR includes both the creation, documentation and presentation of the community artwork seen in figure 8 and our reflections from engagement with participants in dialogue with Layton's artwork. Like the blackened contour lines defining the figures in *Cinderella Redux*, the themes in Layton's artwork outline many topics surrounding aging and mental health, including depression and institutional care of the elderly. Conversations between professor, college students, children, and senior residents within the discursive space of Elizabeth Layton's work, brought understanding from multiple age perspectives. The following sections demonstrate how some important pedagogical understandings evolved.

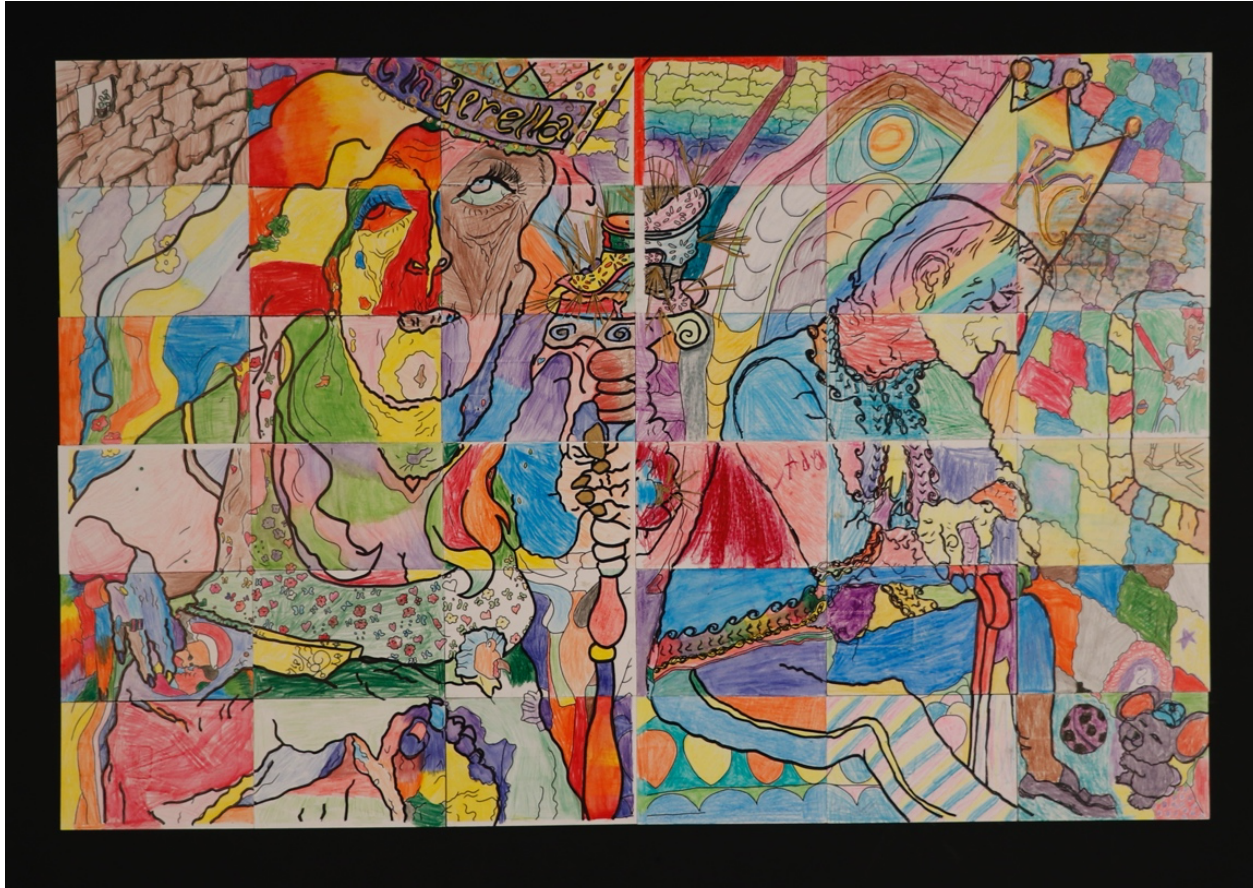


Figure 8. Finished poster: Cinderella Redux, after Elizabeth Layton's Cinderella.

Place-based Education

Place is a powerful connector in IG learning (Langdon, 2017). Each group shared an enthusiastic response to *Cinderella* because a local connection is drawn from the image. Children at the elementary schools recognized the major league baseball team's symbol immediately and upon looking further, recognized the team outside the castle window. People in the retirement community recognized Layton herself. Some of them even knew her or her family personally, so we were able to connect through our shared knowledge. As professor and pre-service art educators, we experienced that the commonality of local place is a powerful connector that engages participants across ages. It allows individuals to make connections with a home base of familiarity. People can have an 'ah-ha' moment of realizing they live close to an artist and that they may have grown up in similar circumstances.

IG Learning and Ageist Stereotypes

IG learning was based on Vanderven (2004) activity theory and was facilitated in this research both in person and remotely. Through discussing Layton's images and engaging in completing one section of her drawing for a community artwork, both older and younger people were brought together through heightened awareness of the other. The young were asked to consider ageist stereotypes and the older were asked to recognize art as a unifying communal exchange with youth. Layton's art challenges ageist stereotypes as she centers herself in every drawing as an active participant in a thoughtful and often critical social stance. The professor noted how Layton draws every fold and

wrinkle in her skin to capture the beauty of her age. Her drawings show honest and sometimes humorous portrayal of normal situations as well as those that are courageous and fearful, in other words a full range of human experience. The following discussion points were shared by the pre-service students regarding three drawings shared and discussed with fifth-grade students and retired community members.

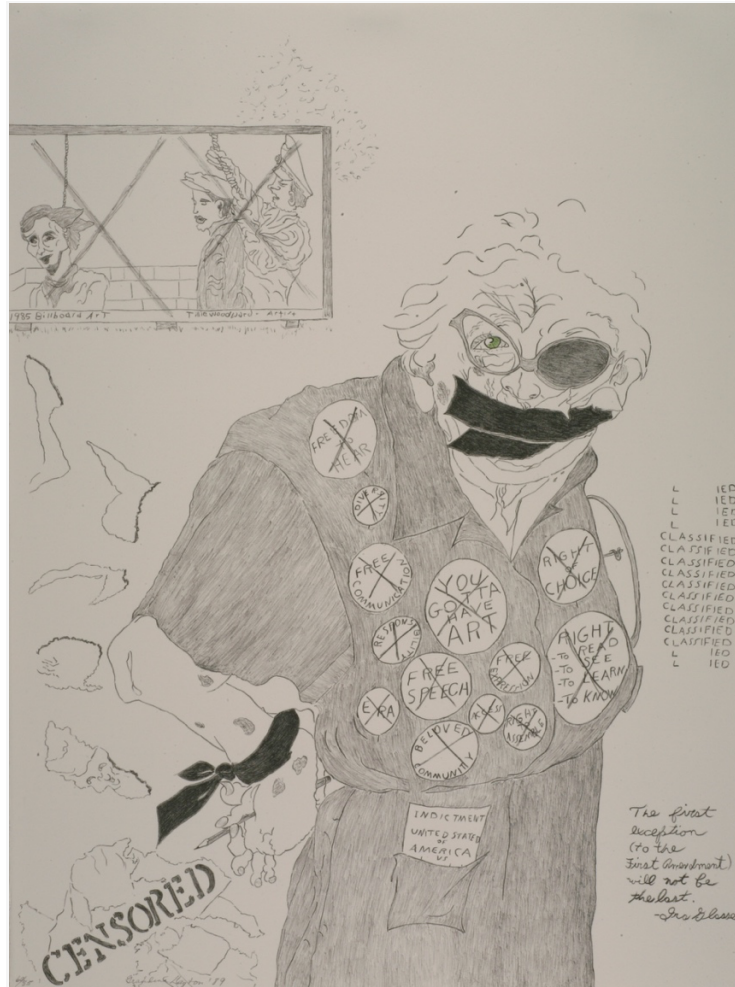


Figure 9. Layton, E. (1986). *Censored*. [lithograph, hand coloring]. Spencer Museum of Art.

College students chose *Censored* (Figure 9) to demonstrate how Layton challenged social issues and noted these aspects in discussions with students.

- This image shows Layton bound and gagged so she can no longer draw.
- Her principles have been crossed out which are shown as buttons on her clothing.
- There is a pile of this woman’s drawings torn up and censored.
- The text states, “The first exception to the First Amendment will not be the last”.

Many people can connect to the statements being shown by this work. Fifth-grade students made connections to censorship in media and their own parents’ boundaries.



Figure 10. Layton, E. (1981). *Fear*, August, 1981. [colored pencil]. Spencer Museum of Art.

College students chose *Fear* because it addresses mental health (Figure 10). The drawing is littered with things we may associate with mental health, like an empty pill bottle and a padlocked door. The elementary students may not read the significance of everything but could understand the general fear in Layton's face as she pictured herself locked in her room and hiding in a closet. The strong narrative constructs a scene of isolation, fear and loneliness with one bright spot seen in a squirrel on the windowsill. Layton lost her son in 1979 and struggled with mental health until she began a drawing practice. For those of us who do experience mental health issues, she is relatable, while other drawings offer a more hopeful perspective.



Figure 11. Layton, E. (1979). Raggedy Ann and Andy on a shelf. [colored pencil on paper]. Spencer Museum of Art.

Ageing

The professor selected *Raggedy Ann and Andy on a Shelf* from the exhibition (Figure 11) because it directly addresses issues of aging through personifying Layton and Glen as rag dolls set on a glass shelf. On either end of the rainbow are metal handgrips and below are two hospital beds and a commode. Layton said the glass shelf was positioned in front of a window to symbolize lack of privacy in institutions of care and the outdoors appears as a great distance in one-point perspective which does not seem to lead to anywhere (Braun, 2021). This image critiques how aging and accompanying loss of abilities leads to infantilizing adults, which negates their dignity. By using Elizabeth Layton's artwork, issues of aging were directly discussed. For instance, in one elementary classroom, students gasped when informed that Elizabeth Layton started her art career at age 68. Some students mentioned that was their grandparents' age, and giggled with surprise when they were told their grandparents could still become an artist—it's not too late.

Art Education Pedagogy Through AIR

In looking to respond to our original question, what can we learn about each other through art, beyond looking and discussing the art we extend pedagogy to artmaking processes. As students of art education, we were amazed by Layton's honest portrayals in blind contour

drawing. A pre-service student noted that even though at first some found it quirky, viewer's eyes are drawn to her work, to follow the linework, to see an image appear and find meaning in it. Both participant groups were amazed that she drew without looking at her paper. The art education students realized contour drawing lessons would be a perfect follow-up lesson in the future, with the work of Elizabeth Layton.

We found coloring is a simple way to freely engage with visual stimuli in a social setting and it proved to be a positive communal activity. This research demonstrates that coloring is a skill that demands awareness and practice. The two different age groups were similar in terms of their physical capabilities. The students' hands would get tired as they colored the postcard, and they would have to take breaks. They also struggled being able to color in the whole space in a timely manner and the same happened with members of the retirement community. One woman told us that she had a hard time coloring with the colored pencils, and she would try to use crayons next time so her hands would not hurt so much.

The art education students in our group experienced the difference between pedagogy and andragogy. Teaching good coloring techniques to elementary students was a craft-based pedagogy and encouraging older participants to try something different is a key aspect of andragogy. Differences were found in expectations. The older participants seemed to care more about coloring accurately whereas the elementary school students wanted their card to look unique. The members of the retirement community worked to be more precise and filled the spaces completely. Some did not approve of the elementary school students' color choices and techniques, while others found it endearing.

Older participants enjoyed considering what the younger children had created with their coloring. College students noticed both groups tried to guess what imagery their postcard contained, which let us to see that this coloring activity had creative potential as it engendered imaginative looking. In one instance a retired community member found Santa Claus and an elf in the card she was completing (Figure 12). In these ways, coloring the cards collectively is both a creative expression and relational, and meets Malchiodi's (2015) standard for coloring as art therapy.



Fig. #12. Colored postcard design can be seen as Santa Claus and an elf.

Implications

Future iterations of this project could bring the older and younger participants together for a coloring session, if not in-person, at least virtually in a zoom classroom environment and if coloring postcards asynchronously, as in this lesson, they could be introduced to each other beforehand. This could extend findings of Tabuchi and Miura (2018) where older people exhibit goal-oriented behaviors and younger groups exhibit greater experimentation, while, within intergenerational groups, the older participants act as both directional control as well as encourage innovation among younger participants.

Intergenerational and Place-based Learning

The IG and place-based aspects were essential to learning. All groups enjoyed learning about others in a different generation, contributing to something bigger than themselves and learning about an artist that addressed issues common to them, with a local connection and global impact. College students addressed ideas with an anti-ageist perspective and expanded expectations for lifelong learning in teaching about Layton. The limitations we place on persons because of age are widespread. All age students were amazed that Elizabeth Layton was 68 when she started her art career. The children thought that you had to be in college or even out of college to become an artist. This opened their eyes to the possibilities of them following their dreams and college students relayed similar amazement when telling classmates, family, friends and other adults about Elizabeth Layton and her artwork.

Talking about Layton easily led the older residents to share their connection to other artists, or to those who knew Layton's relatives, as well as stories of their own personal experiences in Kansas. A few were eager to tell us stories relating to art or show us their own artwork. Resident participants encouraged us to continue to engage community members and the success of this project inspires us to continue to work to connect more community members in the future.

Community Art Through Coloring

Overall, we learned that when initiating a community art project, simple is good. College students found elementary students were excited to be a part of something bigger, as they engaged in coloring their cards to create the community artwork. Both groups were eager to participate in our project, maybe because coloring is not considered a demanding task. This research concludes that to disparage coloring as an irrelevant art education activity is ableist. Groups coloring together toward an end goal has positive aspects for classroom use, encouraging hard work and empathy for others. We have shown that it can engender creative involvements for those with some limited capabilities and create relationships through shared efforts. This research suggests coloring was therapeutic in the elementary classroom and in the retirement community as participants worked toward a common goal of contributing to a community artwork. Our project included aspects that Masika et al. (2020) identified as essential to successful visual art therapy: reminiscence, art processing, cognitive evaluation, art craft, and socialization.

Our *Cinderella Redux* is artifact and visual presentation of complex data showing the importance of visual art-informed research– AIR, and the multi-faceted learning that takes place in CBAE. *Cinderella* is art that challenges ageist stereotypes and champions the voices of the aging. Awareness of ageism, feminism, and power results from discussions of Layton’s artwork. We have shown that Elizabeth Layton is metaphorically the Cinderella of artists, bound by issues of age and mental health, Layton’s work carries the weight of many social issues in her telling self-portraits, yet she is not widely recognized for these strengths as other critically conscious modern painters or sculptors may be, because of her age, place, or medium.

We also have found our simple project innovation may be the Cinderella of IG collaboration. Using the simple act of coloring postcards shared between two groups created a significant tribute to an artist in a shared community artwork, engendering creative involvements for those with limited capabilities and creating relationships through shared efforts. This is how we answered the question: What can we learn about each other through art?

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Relational Ecologies: Artistic Engagement & Mentorship of Adults in Community Spaces

*“A mentor is also
a mentee, and this
awareness makes the
learning and
contemplative
pedagogies more
vibrant and
deliberate”*

Rebecca Bourgault

Boston University

ABSTRACT

Inside this article, I share insights from research and experience working as a teaching artist and mentor inside and outside traditional institutions. I investigate how relational and contemplative pedagogies promote and sustain authentic relationships of reciprocity. Narrating recent experiments with mentoring practices that emerged from the cultural landscapes of adults engaged in arts learning, the paper highlights new connections discovered through a research model borrowed from intuitive inquiry. Findings are presented as reflective stories, journal entries, or field notes gathered while mentoring graduate art education students and participating in a community of practice in the visual arts. The article demonstrates how a holistic and contemplative philosophy of mentoring supports embodied knowings and connective agencies that unfold as relational ecologies of lifelong learning.

KEY WORDS

Art mentoring, contemplative pedagogies, community, lifelong learning, transformative learning

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Introduction: Mentoring as pedagogy of nurturance

I am reading my graduate students' reflective research journals, one of their assigned weekly submissions for the online arts-based capstone course I lead. These research journals are often multimodal and the topics addressed are the students' choice. Students share reflexive observations on their artistic process, new ideas, a meaningful emotion or feeling about an artwork, notes on engaging readings. Their entry may ask for help with methodology and writing. All entries represent students' unique approach to their artistic and academic inquiry and their willingness to share. The journals may take the form of a personal letter or provide an informal report that communicates with the thesis advisor in a way that is authentic and open. At times, the journal includes process videos, photos, or audio recordings. As I write my responses, I feel my whole being engaging with students' ideas. To communicate and "meet" them in spirit, I must be willing to allow myself into the emotional and intellectual spaces their entries open for me, and very closely, journey with them through the written, audio, or video entries. It is both a work of attentive listening to and watching for what is offered and what is inferred, as well as to what might be unconsciously implied. My work as a mentor includes catching glimpses of meaning in students' writing that were perhaps unintended, but that I feel worthy of being brought to the fore, for the student to ponder and perhaps re-discover. Responding to the weekly journal entries is both privileged access to a student's spirit and an intense process of sustained presence.

The mentoring philosophies I explore in this article are woven with my understanding of intuitive inquiry, an approach to research developed through the field of transpersonal psychology and articulated by Anderson & Braud (2004, 2011). In addition to this holistic approach to honoring the wholeness of human experience, Beard and Wilson's (2013) principles of experiential learning offer practical and essential guidance, while approaches to contemplative practices in research (Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015) provide the grounding for my mentoring work. The integration of these concepts complements the holistic perspective on inner knowledge required to guide others. In reflecting on the different approaches and ethical stances to mentoring that may present themselves spontaneously or require an attentive self-awareness, one moves back and forth between the identities of the lifelong learning artist self and the mentor's sharing of expertise. The sense of being a learner is never far from that of the mentor; the roles are cyclical and each return retrieves new manifestations and knowings that deepen one's appreciation of mentoring as a living practice. In this reflective piece—perhaps more accurately termed in-flective—I refer to the different approaches and qualities of being a mentor as relational ecologies. The term points to the time necessary for one's connection with a mentee to evolve, and to the changing contexts in which that relationship develops and grows. As well, relational ecologies suggest that transformational learning (Tisdell & Tolliver, 2006; Cranton, 2009;

Brookfield 2009; Hansman, 2020) through mentoring is dependent on an engagement of body, mind, emotion, and spirit with diverse environments where we form and are formed by relationships.

Accordingly, the process of mentoring that I also call pedagogy of nurturance and becoming adopts different tones and positionalities that are constantly readjusted according to the situation. Through a pedagogy of nurturance, mentors provide guidance to young art and art education students as they develop new skills, support graduate students engaged in capstone arts research projects, or accompany adult women's artistic endeavors in a community of practice. While values of trust, empowerment, agency, interconnectedness and negotiated exchanges are felt in all contexts of artistic mentoring, their articulation is expressed differently. Approaches to working with graduate students typically attend to individualized goals but require a background of peer support, which manifests in a community of practice, where one is both separate and together, with the mentoring shifting between presence and effacement.

It has often been said that unless explicitly brought to consider different pedagogical methods, one teaches the way one has been taught. I experienced this transference firsthand in my early years as a studio instructor. Later, having furthered my studies of art and art education, I realized that once an educator begins to reflect on the meaning of a learner/mentor relationship, and how learning and transformation are shaped through mentorship, it is no longer possible to reenact a pedagogy without questioning its relational qualities and becoming aware of one's deeper values.

With these different and recursive experiences with mentoring, I weave a narrative that offers strategies for adapting one's pedagogy to the context, its participants, or students. More specifically, I reflect on the challenges and highlights of guiding graduate students through their research, explore the meaningfulness of working as a community artist and allow my meanderings to circle back to a realization that mentors and mentees are at times interchangeable, inhabit an ecology kept in balance by a diversity of ephemeral or lifelong relationships connected by values of support and sharing.

To set the stage for these realizations, I begin by summarizing the various principles that guide my interpretation of mentoring's potential and provide a clearer view of their shared or contiguous values. In working to develop and articulate the meaning of mentoring in these various communities of artistic practice and learners, I contextualize these approaches to praxis as my investigative framework.

Mentoring

As the term is generally used in contemporary parlance and adult continuing education literature, mentoring refers to a supportive relationship between a seasoned and a new employee during their induction period, or to the guidance of adults engaged in continuing education (Hansman, 2016; Daloz, 2012). Beyond procedural and technical support, mentoring is concerned with the development of "collaborative, judgmental, reflective and integrative capabilities" (Hansman, 2016, p. 31). In most contexts, mentoring involves psychosocial development, and social construction of knowledge (Crow, 2012), which is "knowledge that is co-constructed through the social and political negotiation process of relationship" (Crow, 2012, p. 231). Brookfield (2009) whose research focuses on transformative adult education adds the dimension of co-constructed peer learning which develops students' ability to critically reflect on their own knowledge and assumptions. Peer learning provides a mirror that reflects... "images of how their practice looks to others" (Brookfield, 2009, p. 133). As mentoring is focused on the development of the whole person, "a central element... becomes the provision of care" (Daloz, 2012, p. xv), and "a good mentor... has the capacity to provide emotional support when it is needed" (Brookfield, 1990, cited in Daloz, 2012, p. 34).

In my practice, in both formal higher education and informal community context, mentoring is modulated by the demands of different roles arising from the relational needs and positionality of the mentees. Power structures exist within all types of mentoring relationships (Hansman, 2016) and it is "through honest and open dialogue [that] mentoring relationships have the potential to transform into a more balanced liaison, with mentors and mentees sharing power... where learning is reciprocal" (Hansman, 2016, p. 36). The ability to listen and to be fully present with the mentee is fundamental (Beard & Wilson, 2013; Mälkki & Green, 2014; Misawa & McClain, 2019), and so is the need to be authentic. "Making the mentorship relational and reciprocal allows the adult educator and adult learner to build rapport, share stories, develop understanding with each other's life situation" (Misawa & McClain, 2019, p. 58). Although power structures cannot be negated in institutional settings between mentors and students, it is possible to engage in a sensitive and trusting relationship that acknowledges the reciprocity of learning (Staikidis, 2020). Similarly, in community arts, a relational approach to mentoring where qualities of trust and authenticity are cultivated often eases into a community of practice, with a focus on collaborative learning.

Intuitive inquiry and arts-based research

Intuitive Inquiry brings intuitive knowing and insights directly into the research process. Intuition is defined as an ability to understand something without the use of conscious reasoning (Psychology Today, n.d.). The Inquiry method was articulated

by Rosemarie Anderson and William Braud (2011) who sought for their graduate students a more holistic form of inquiry, one that would expand beyond the structures of scientific social science research methods that anchored their field of transpersonal psychology. In working with and through principles of the method, researchers engaging in intuitive inquiry are guided towards the selection of a topic for which they have an abiding interest and that in some way has touched their lives, through experience past or present (Anderson & Braud, 2011). Students in the graduate course in arts research I refer to in this paper unknowingly followed much of the insights provided by the method and through exploration, I later discovered that this intuitive approach to research, and in our case, to arts research or arts-based research lent itself very well to its tenets. In the process of researching the literature and existing artworks whose forms substantiate, contextualize, and allow arts researchers to theorize their chosen area of investigation, the engagement with life stories often "prompt changes in the ways they feel and think about the topic, themselves, others, and the world" (Anderson & Braud, p. 1). It is as if research often began from an external question of interest, but soon is brought in connection with inner experiences and to what Anderson and Braud (2011) describe as "an expansion of the empirical", as these findings and explorations reach down into "private and unobservable" dimensions (p. 3). In intuitive inquiry,

What matters to the researcher may be an ordinary experience latent with symbolic meaning. A transformative or peak experience, or a communal or interpersonal phenomenon that invites inquiry for reasons that only she may apprehend, albeit vaguely, at the start. Intuitive inquiry cultivates the ways of the heart in human science research. (Anderson & Braud, 2011, p. 16)

The research process of Intuitive Inquiry invites an inventive expansion of ways of collecting, working with and presenting one's findings. This openness to creative methods and processes is particularly well suited to arts research, where art making provides the reflective method of data interpretation, echoing Marina Basu's (2021) suggestion that "aesthetic writing is the inquiry" (p. 333) [emphasis in the text]. While the narration of this paper testifies to its significant meaning for students' research, I recognize that it is also a path I follow to explore the depth of mentoring as relational ecology.

Experiential Learning and Wu-Wei

Mentoring often involves a long-term relationship where the goals, aspirations and processes are determined by the learner. The mentor acts as a resource, a presence, while the learner controls the process (Beard & Wilson, 2013). The authors of this seminal work on experiential learning observe that qualities of good mentorship include the ability to detach oneself, accessibility, good listening skills and a genuine interest in the participant or student endeavors as well as an attentiveness to their process. They write about the importance of trust building

and meeting the whole person, of being vulnerable and open " to areas of inner pain, chaos, confusion, and lack of skill; being open to our personal presence and power; affirming confidentiality" (p. 75). However, they also warn against trying to save and rescue everyone, avoiding being a savior or a guru, "not to push the river upstream" (p. 77), by which they mean not to do more than is needed, to be attentive to the flow; "to learn to wait until the mud settles, " (p. 77), or wait and watch and listen with full awareness.

In many ways this description of best practice in mentoring echoes the Daoist principles of natural action of wu-wei and ziran. These two principles represent two aspects of the same "spontaneous motion" idea. Encyclopedia Britannica explains wu-wei as "the practice of taking no action that is not in accord with the natural course of the universe" (Stefon, n.d, para 1). Ziran points to this spontaneity in nature and the cosmos, while wu-wei applies the principle to humans, how they should act in accordance with nature's ebb and flow, a concept that appears in opposition to many ideas of what is considered innate in the Western paradigms of competition and struggle. Daoism is spontaneous in the way that nature "allows things to grow, nurtures them, brings them to maturity, and protects them... without trying to control" (Bruya, 2020, p. xv). Lafargue (1992) translates the Daoist idea of doing by non-doing by describing the approach of one who can forgo the desire for remarkable achievements and who turns instead to the task demanding her presence " including especially subtle sensitivity and painstaking attention to its most significant details" (p. 155). A natural harmony, continues Lafargue (1992), is the result of this ideal state of things made possible by a careful work of not working. In this context, a wise mentor must know when to support and when to be silent and self-effaced. In guiding research students, it matters very much to be attentive to their state of mind, their resilience and sense of self-confidence, all of which are changing as their research progresses. One often calls for students to accept that they might momentarily feel lost; to let go of a need to grasp and control, so revelations can arise (Daloz, 2012, p. 27). One calls for balance between rigor, effort, and allowing. "Not to push the river upstream" and "to let the mud settle" both call for a shared commitment to trusting the ebb and flow of research and of the mentoring process (Beard & Wilson, 2013, p. 77).

Contemplative Practices in Mentoring and Research

In a shared practice that authors Susan Walsh, Barbara Bickel, and Carl Leggo (2014) describe as a dialogical, collaborative, and individual endeavor where art, spirituality, research, and teaching form an interrelated web of "being, knowing and not knowing" (p. 1), contemplative practices and arts-based practices resonate with all as aspects of their work. The goals of contemplative practices in education and mentoring are that of presence to possibilities and potentialities that manifest where the artistic and contemplative meet, affecting one's pedagogy and acting as

a catalyst for transformation. In their introduction to the topic, the authors espouse Matthew Fox's (1979) declaration that "creativity is close to compassion because both processes are about making connections"(cited in Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2014, p. 3). Their collective embraces the word "practice" to emphasize an embodied, active, and continued quality of contemplative engagement that serves their community of scholars, artists, teachers, mentors, and students. Through various shared and personal practices and rituals the authors seek to create a collaborative pedagogy that is sustainable, ethical, and whole.

This concern for wholeness and authenticity is espoused by critics such as Aislinn O'Donnell (2015) who points to the growing popularity of mindfulness practices as psycho-technologies that, "being uprooted from rich wisdom traditions and thus having lost sight of its ethical orientation" (p. 188) simply become a profitable self-help industry that "engages solely with symptoms rather than causes of suffering" (p.188). Contemplative practices in mentoring are not outcome-driven, they are not a consumer product. Rather they highlight a way of being that calmly sees what is, providing a sense of grounding and equanimity to the mentoring work, a vital presence that mediates and imbues communications with openness. In an authentic relationship between mentor and learners or participants, the contemplative practice is embodied, holistic, philosophical, and ethical, rather than simply an evidenced-based tool or technique.

Negotiated relationships and exchange: Mentoring graduate students

I have been teaching an online graduate arts-research capstone/thesis course for a few years now. While it cannot be said that all mentoring relationships with students reach the same quality of exchange, every year brings a gift of vibrancy with some students that feel like inter-mentoring and multidirectional learning. Working with graduate students often fosters a sense of expansion that is shared by both parties. Bronfenbrenner (1979) refers to this kind of engagement as "reciprocal activities" (cited in Hamilton, et al (2006), p.728). Transcending the teaching role, becoming supporters and companions (Hamilton et al., 2006), we relate as scholars and artists, from the depth of our engagement and the meeting of interests, as creative equals. I do not mean to deny the obvious presence of a hierarchy, as I remain the mentor while the student understands her position as the emerging expert. I stay responsible for grades and guidance as she engages in completing requirements and achieving expectations. However, influences in these relationships are not unidirectional. Additionally, "the equality of the partnership... depends upon the more experienced person doing what they can to neutralise any power imbalance" (Brewer, 2012, p.197), embodying the researcher's vulnerability, which means that we include and embody difficult thoughts and emotions (Rice, 2018). Once this positionality is accepted, however, the work of mentoring opens to a relationship of like-minded artists/scholars/teachers, delighting in conversation and discoveries about practice. If one is fortunate, the meeting of minds is deeply

transformational. At times, despite our geographical distance, we imagine that we are sitting together in a studio. We allow the moments of mentoring to gather the warmth suggested by the intimacy of the virtual space we mentally and emotionally stepped into. Mentoring does not persuade or coerce but encourages and challenges. It supports self-reflection and a commitment to change (Brewer, 2012). Staikidis (2020) writes of these relationships as spaces of meaningful encounters.

Relationships may be likened to a meeting ground that holds understanding. It might be visualized as a space created between intersecting entities with a door for entry and exit forming a common area. Trust within the relationship becomes the invisible yet powerful force which is hand-built by repeated actions such as showing up, responding predictably, telling the truth, being present, and finally, embracing. (p. 288)

Mentoring as place-making: Community at the open studio

First day. I was expecting the presence of an intern, but she/he did not materialize, nor did Sara. I decided to do my thing, just set up and see if someone will come. L., a new guest came first; she studies art at a Community College and she was delighted to find a place with art supplies and space where she could complete her homework. She had to paint a color wheel with primary and secondary colors. L. has malformed hands, and the right one is missing fingers, but she is very agile with her hands.

As she was beginning to work, my now good old friend Ms. F. appeared. I was sincerely happy to see her. She was relaxed. I set her up and we sat across from each other at the table. Only these two were present today, and the conversation flowed.

I realized that my speaking to them about aspects of my life allowed them to feel free to talk about theirs. I think in the past I refrained from talking about me because I wanted it to be about the women and not me, but the response to one's stories is one of trusting the process of storytelling. They responded with their stories. (Personal fieldwork journal-Community Arts, September 20, 2019).

In her work on artistic mentoring with Indigenous Mayan artists, Staikidis (2020) wrote about the transformations that she experienced as a researcher as she was being mentored by her teachers, as a painting student. Staikidis remarked that in the relational exchange, the traditional power structures were deconstructed, and she contrasted learning in formal art classrooms with the relational, heart, and community connections necessary for the type of artistic learning that the Indigenous artists offered her. "Mentoring as a process within community becomes

an informed, loving, cultural and spiritual act as well as a bridge of friendship” (Staikidis, 2020, p. 277)

My experience with mentoring as a community artist began in New York Community Centers for Seniors to later, find a fuller expression at a shelter for homeless and impoverished women in Boston’s South End. This practice has taken the form of a weekly *open art studio*. Over time, I devised what I call a “pedagogy of presence,” which borrows from adult education theory, Daoist and Buddhist principles, and Freire’s liberatory pedagogy, with the specific needs of a peripatetic population in mind. In the early years of this practice, as I searched for community-focused relational pedagogies, I visited GRACE (Grass Roots Arts and Community Efforts) in Hardwick, Vermont¹⁴. I was greatly inspired by the philosophy of its mission, which proposes a pedagogy infused with attentive openness, presence, and non-teaching. Non-teaching is also referred to as a detached presence. Wolf (2010) who practiced this type of mentoring approach in teaching art in community explained,

Contrary to the notion that detachment is to withdraw from becoming involved in the world of things, it is actually to be completely willing to become involved with everything. The self that projects is simply dissolved into emptiness and so no longer resists, allowing us to be more attuned to what is actually happening as we are less distorted by the entrenched patterns of conditioning. (p. 36)

While working at the shelter, I kept a fieldwork journal where I reflected on the nature of my relationships with participants, defined and reconceptualized the ethical dimensions of this work, articulating in the process, an approach to the studio that imbues a pedagogy as mentorship with a Daoist view of the action in non-action where there is no teaching but a space-making that allows simple *beingness*, itself the source of creative energy. It cannot be seen in the usual ways that we look but a pedagogy of presence is a way of mentoring that involves a knowing that is non-grasping, or non-knowing.

Such a receptive eye cuts through convincing and seductive intellectualism to access the pulse that is our inter-relatedness. . . . Beyond the illusions of designation, we recognize that any particular identity of ourselves as this or that is therefore not who we ultimately are, and that reality is something other than an idea we can compare to other ideas in our mind. (Wolf, 2010, p. 6)

My approach to mentorship in community context is to be available as a discreet facilitator, fully present and responding when a need is expressed. A pedagogy of presence (Bourgault, 2020) allows participants to experience for themselves how

¹⁴Grass Roots Art and Community Effort. Retrieved from <https://graceart.org/about-us/>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25889/62es-g797>

small gestures and a creative impulse can generate a spark of felt sense of agency that prevails at our living core. The likelihood of personal self-advocacy and social activism manifests from that innermost sense of agency. One does not need to come up with a big idea for social change, but the work we do to shift small actions can have an impact. Inner awareness fosters the recognition of interconnections. Social justice starts within (Lundahl & Keating, 2020). In its ideal, a pedagogy of presence does not impose a particular way of being or working on others, transcending itself as an agent of conditioning to function as a space for the possible to unfold (Wolf, 2010).

Some arts & health researchers have linked aspects of this approach to art therapy. Drawn to the importance of context for the calming qualities and the feeling of self-efficacy that have been associated with art making as act of self-expression and self-care, in their project report, Kaimal & Ray (2017) introduced the role of the art therapist as the facilitator who is “holding the space by being fully present both to their own art-making as well as that of the participants in the space” (p.155). In their view, the facilitator becomes responsible for creating a safe environment where non-judgmental self-expressive activities can blossom. However, given the clinical setting of the research, the individual sessions followed by “posttest” questionnaires, and the limited time devoted to artmaking, the presence and place-making negated the possibility of transformative relationship building that is the anchor of artistic mentorship. Art therapy practitioners such as Allen (2008) realized that stepping outside the clinical approach and “eschewing the role of the therapist in favor of the role of artist in residence” (p. 11), allowed for a relationship of relaxed awareness where “the healing aspects of art making arise from the making and doing, the trying and failing, the experimenting and succeeding alongside others” (p. 11).

I mentioned before (author, in press) that when someone finds oneself at a shelter, it is usually because of a life emergency or great need. A sense of injustice, social shame, anger, and failure may accompany the person as she moves to a shelter. A quiet time in the art studio begins by providing space for slowing down, the possibility for an inner “gathering of the pieces”, without any conversation or need for explaining anything. “Never evidence of a fixed condition, art is an inquiry where the self is lost and found and lost again, over and over, and meaning is renewed in the process” (Allen, 2008, p. 11). For this reason, there is no need to fix, change or interpret. We are just there. Self-compassion, in this context, appears as an inner place-making, perhaps also peace-making, where no one needs to perform, defend, fear, or fight.

Similarly, in a community theater practice, one instructor anchored his mentoring philosophy by explaining that, if one came with an awareness of being a victim or a disadvantaged person,

We are not going to exacerbate that perception (or even self-perception) by taking it as our starting point. Come into the room and dream. Dream of a different world – maybe a better one. . . . The fact is that the issues will inevitably follow you into the room in due course anyway. But why let them lead when they can just as easily follow? What I mean is this. The issues of class, race, gender, ability, and so on are part of the political backdrop which— dare I say it— defines us because it dictates to us. Politics is part of life. We inherit our labels, we absorb them, we resist them, we embrace them. They are as real as the trees and the houses. So, we cannot lock them out of the creative, imaginative process any more than we could lock them out of life itself. But we do not start with them. As artists, surely, we can see more in the criminal than his or her criminality; more in the victim than his or her victimhood. (White, 2020, p. 161)

While mentoring women engaged in art projects, the studio space allows that same possibility of distance. There is no need to bring up our politics and intersectional realities unless the impulse to express them through visual means facilitates the emergence of a voice, the realization of a stance that demands our consideration. Similarly, spontaneous conversations and yarn connect participants with the invisible depths of community building, how it moves, what happens to the mind, and the inner workings of "quiet activism". Its political force resides in its critically resistant and transgressive ways that are like how nature works its ways in a quiet, insistent manner. It is creative and will not be undone, with a sure presence. One can think of water, of green growth in any crack of asphalt, the continued persistent ability to bring change. If we are going to go against the grain of our current situation, a neo-liberal pragmatic and productivity-bent uncritical behavior, quiet activism can awaken ethical values and a sense that things are possible because the community place-making and being-with embody that possibility.

The Mentor is also a Mentee

Learning is lifelong, grounded in community and relationships, and widely informal. It need not be practical in the sense of economic and professional development but offers a continuing holistic and mindful quest for growth, and self-knowledge. Blended with a contemplative pedagogy, the approach to a lifelong process of learning and transformation is not separated from other life activities (Merriam & Sek Kim, 2008). Its goals include inner equilibrium and attunement with the interconnectedness of all things, what Zen calls inter-being, as around us everything changes.

The theory of education that underlies contemplative pedagogy is one that presumes that the capacities of sustained voluntary attention, emotional

balance, insight, and compassion are able to be developed through practice. (Zajonc, 2013, p. 89)

A mentor is also a mentee, and this awareness makes the learning and contemplative pedagogies more vibrant and deliberate. In my meditation practice, my mentor does not speak or offer personalized advice, unless I ask a question, but his availability is equanimous and tangible. As I communicate with my writing partner, her stories about her day's work are received with a mentee's mind. In her notes about writing practice and research outcomes for the day, I glean insights that assist in highlighting my next day's work, as ideas are set to percolate. Even my efforts in cooking foods for our meals are supported by an online mentor, whose suggestions I seek regularly for ideas in combining textures and flavors, details about proportions, and cooking time. As I become aware of how I learn through every experience, I see mentorship in most experiences where the learning is continuous and open.

Given that learning is embedded in the context of everyday experience, active participation in everyday activities and the rites and rituals of a community are seen as conduits to learning. Learning occurs through observation of others and through practicing what is being learned. (Merriam & Sek Kim, 2008, p.77).

Conclusion: Self-transformation, agency, and quiet activism

The perspective of being-with and of the vulnerable researcher eliminates the need to position oneself as the authority subject looking at the participant objects. Beyond the daily reality of privilege differences and issues of power, which I do not ignore, I think it is possible to relate at a level that is not focused on civic and social differences but on a deeper, existential interconnectedness of spirit, something "not local, not contained in separate vessels/bodies, but like air and water, energy and matter" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 155). Is it unrealistic to uphold the sense that "in unison, this work to come into deep awareness of our interconnections can help us to imagine, embody, and enact a world based on collective well-being—a future where everyone can be whole? (Lundahl & Keating, 2020, p.32)

Carl Leggo (1999) described research as finding cracks where light can find release and it was his work to align himself with such wisdom - a sense of the connective ground in which all forms of life emerge from and return to. This state of openness is not only the key to creativity but to morality insofar as "ethics start when you don't know what to do, when there is this gap between knowledge and action, and you have to take responsibility for inventing the new rule which doesn't exist" (Derrida, 2003 cited in Wolf, 2010, p. 36).

Empowerment begins with naming our own reality. We must define it in our own terms. This is the only way we come to understand how to transform ourselves (Cajete, 2015).

Another day with energy. This morning, Ms. F brought a woman whom she thought would enjoy being with us at the art studio. Her name is S. S looks like she is going through a hard time, her face has the color and texture of hard drinking. She was tired and vulnerable and did not want to do anything. That was fine. I said: Just sit and be with us. No obligations here and no expectations. She was sad, she looked shaken, but did not say what the cause might have been. She showed me the photo of her grandson, (she said “the son of my son”) a just born baby. Then she added that he is about three months old now. She showed me the knitting she started, saying she was making a ghost costume for the baby. A few minutes later, she was crying. I held her gently, stroking her arms. She said that she missed her family so much.

Ms. F. was silent. She works, she paints with fluidity. As she works, she must be processing things and thoughts, but she is very discreet, never really says anything unless one addresses her directly.

Two other women came. They seemed energized. Once I introduced the concept of the open studio, they asked for acrylic paint and jumped right in. M was very explorative, playing with paint, scraping, overlaying, etc. G did some of that too but was more introverted. She was interested in embroidery. I was trying to get something started today on my studio project, to begin transposing the bird on the silk I had brought. Susan came over to watch. We had meditation music on, and the women loved it. We were all adults and on that side of youth. We related. Quiet, we talked little, and when we did, it was about art making. (Personal fieldwork journal-Community arts, September 27, 2019)

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An Exploration of Restorative Artmaking During COVID-19

*“I felt a calm
sense of
accomplishment
after each session....
It was a pathway to
a better mind-body
connection.”*

Linda J. Helmick

University of Missouri

ABSTRACT

This research explores a curriculum, delivered on Zoom, that blended art education with art therapy to support educators' well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. To understand the restorative aspects of collective artmaking and reflection. I established a series of artmaking workshops to educators via Zoom. As an artist/researcher/teacher, I made collages as an arts-based inquiry method. I found that participants needed a safe place to express, create, and share in a community of others who have similar needs, desires, and experiences, a respite

KEY WORDS

Therapeutic art education, online art experiences, restorative creative practices, self-care

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This research explores a curriculum that blended art education with art therapy to support educators' well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. To understand the restorative aspects of collective artmaking and reflection, I established a series of six artmaking workshops for educators via Zoom. I used a/r/tographic methods, including collage as inquiry, to analyze participants' experiences.

Foundations

This research project was grounded in an aesthetic encounter with art of our own making. Maxine Greene (1995) advised that participatory reflective aesthetic encounters with artmaking make us “aware of ourselves as...makers of meaning, as persons engaged in constructing realities with those around us” (p. 382). Greene asserted that such processes open a new dialogue about ways to change perceptions about individual and social experiences and ultimately imagine things differently.

Encounters

In the early, terrifying days of the pandemic, we all needed respite. Greene (1995) wrote that the arts allow us to explore the landscape of our existence regardless of state, time, or place. Feeling the stress of COVID-19 myself, I wanted to offer colleagues a safe place to explore the healing potential of art and community. In April of 2020, I posted an IRB-approved invitation to friends on Facebook. One art therapist, six school teachers (one pre-kindergarten, one math, and four K-12 art teachers), and six higher education instructors ultimately participated; all identified as women, aged 23 to 65.

The group met by Zoom six times over three weeks, making art and reflecting about the experience in conversation. I employed art therapy-inflected projects from my previous research (Helmick, 2019), including expressive self-portraits, collage mapping, affective identity, and self-mandalas. A typical meeting might entail:

Guided imagery meditation:	10 minutes
Making expressive self-portraits:	2 hours
Reflection/sharing:	30 to 45 minutes

Guided imagery meditation eased us into a comfortable space of sharing with one another. As Maureen Murdock (2013) wrote, “Guided imagery is a process of going within, focusing attention on breath and bodily relaxation and moving to deeper levels of consciousness where more images are accessible to the conscious mind” (p. 2). She found that it calmed participants and granted them a greater awareness of each other's feelings.

Conducting the sessions during the pandemic demanded flexibility. I did not want participants to have to go out to shop for art materials, so I encouraged them to use any art materials they had on hand.

I collected data by observing and participating in the artmaking, and video recorded the sessions as well. The participants' artworks were a valuable source of data. I also conducted semi-structured post-interviews with each participant. Classroom talk and interviews were transcribed for detailed analysis.

White Space

The workshops were designed to provide “white space” for the participating teachers. In the language of design, white spaces are areas of a composition where the viewer's eye can rest. Our virtual classroom offered a metaphorical white space where participants could find restoration, critical at a time when teachers' workplace and private spaces were bleeding together. Participant Orange (Figure 1) recalled:

The strangeness of the circumstances made it hard to concentrate. Quarantine removed boundaries between work, home, love, and play. But even though [the workshop] was at my own table, in my own home, I felt like I was escaping. (Orange, personal communication, May 13, 2020)



Figure 1. Participant Orange. Color pencil on paper.

Orange's self-mandala expresses both a sense of being bound and having the energy required to escape.

Participants often talked about their affective responses to the pandemic during the reflection period at the end of the session. One participant, Yellow, seemed to

speak for the group when she confessed, “I’m broken into a million pieces, everything is on fire, I’m in a cage and I can’t get out.” Participants shared fears about contracting COVID-19 and their experiences navigating isolation, loneliness, layoffs, and school closures.

Even in a time of restriction and worry, however, new opportunities bloomed. Participants articulated the value of making something, using their bodies to create. Purple (Figure 2) reflected,

I forgot how therapeutic it was to have that paintbrush in my hand. As soon as I put the paintbrush to the canvas, I remembered. I felt a calm sense of accomplishment after each session. I did something. I showed up. It was a pathway to a better mind-body connection (Purple, personal communication, April 17, 2020).



Figure 2. Participant Purple. Acrylic on paper.

Purple is not an art educator, but reported she loves to paint. This layered painting abstractly expresses reconnection to her artistic self. Purple’s words suggest that the workshops enhanced participants’ sense of agency during the pandemic, when much felt out of control. Furthermore, when COVID-19 made us anxious about our health, artmaking could recreate healthy connections to our bodies.

The online format also offered a certain degree of privacy, offering participants space to confront personal issues through artful expression. Yellow reported the meditation and the consequent artmaking “broke me in a good way (Yellow, personal communication, May 20, 2020),” opening her to reconsider difficult family relationships (Figure 3). Yellow’s mandala emerged from thinking she was always in competition and never quite enough.



Figure 3. Participant Yellow. Pastel and ink on paper.

Other participants valued the virtual classroom as a place to be together with others. At the outset of my research, I wondered how the virtual environment would affect participants' talk. Would silences feel awkward? In actuality, we took pleasure in hearing one other at work. Blue (Figure 4) marveled,

It was amazing how people can make the effort to connect when they want to. Nobody felt like they had to be talking the whole time. We would spend 15-20 minutes in our own world, listening to the sounds of others making, and you didn't feel like you were alone (Blue, personal communication, May 21, 2020).

We could hear paper rustling, pens scratching, paint being mixed, just as if we were working around a table together. Making art in the presence of others created community and connectedness.



Figure 4. Participant Blue. Collage on posterboard.

Blue's face appears in the center of her collage, surrounded with things she loves, including family, coffee, and listening quietly.

Openings

As an artist/researcher/teacher (Butler-Kisber, 2010), I conducted my inquiry with collage. I took four key concepts from Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), using collage to frame the context, express my perspective, navigate relationships among and with the participants, and search for patterns. Figure 5, for instance, presents several themes. Feathers evoke a soft, safe space to gather. Lines segregate areas, reflecting pandemic isolation. Drips suggest how our lives run together.



Figure 5. Helmick (researcher). Marker, color pencils, watercolor, pastels, and feathers on posterboard.

After the workshops, participants remarked that the experience was unexpectedly meaningful. Research confirms that creative activity can open us to self-care and empathy (Greene, 1995), and making art can reconnect us to ourselves and to humanity (Hutzel, 2007; Lawton, 2010). The workshops fostered a supportive community and encouraged everyone to feel less alone. As Margaret Walker (2018) asserted, “when artists work with and in a community, they not only are elemental in transforming the community, but the community is elemental in transforming the artists as well” (p. 42). In the white space of these workshops, educators could take off their armor, rest, and be restored.

Inroads

This project was a learning opportunity for me. It taught me to pay closer attention to demands placed on participants. Participants in this research were adjusting to teaching online, from home, often working, eating, playing, loving, all in the same place. In future iterations of this work, I will begin with conversation about arranging a dedicated space for art and meditation. I will also request feedback about the cost of participation. How much time could a participant reasonably afford to give to the project? Do they need a babysitter or caregiver while they are participating? What about the cost of materials? Getting answers to these questions would be a first step toward equity for all participants.

I have already begun to extend the practice described here as a model for professional development, and believe it offers real benefits for art teachers. I urge other educators to continue this exploration of restorative practices blending art education and art therapy, and to report their findings here.

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Lola's Story: Love and Resiliency

*“Often a person
will readily bond
and communicate
with a puppet
because
it offers
unconditional love, is
nonthreatening and
non-judgmental, and
asks
nothing in
return”*

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ABSTRACT

Lola, a hand puppet, tells her story of being constructed in a university's special topics class for the purpose of encouraging older adults who may be experiencing loneliness and isolation. Lola is introduced to an elderly woman who bonds with the puppet. Engagement with the puppet encourages positive emotions that contribute toward resilience and subjective well-being. Lola's story supports the idea that feelings of happiness and positivity attributed to puppetry may be instrumental in memory retention and overall socio-emotional health.

KEY WORDS

Puppetry, emotional wellbeing, resiliency, older adults, therapy, art-based research

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Where do I begin?

This phrase reminds me of the first line to the Love Theme from the movie, *Love Story*. This seems appropriate because my story is one about love and resiliency. You may have never read a personal account from a puppet's perspective but, in fact, that is who I am. I am known as Lola. I began life as an idea in a special topics course co-taught by three university professors: an art educator, fiber artist and a theatre arts instructor. For readers interested in research, my story can be described as an art-based case study. Barone (2011) calls arts-based research a conscious pursuit of expressive form in the service of understanding that is not a quantitative array of variables. In other words, as a puppet I am an expressive form created with the intention of helping others better understand the possibilities of puppetry. My maker chose to use me in a particular environment where she could study a specific phenomenon. This defines the context of my story as a case study (McCombes, 2019/2022). For her it was the experience of engaging with older adults by using me. I will recount my experiences using the theoretical framework of socio-emotional selectivity theory and critical pedagogy. Socio-emotional selectivity theory addresses the differences in importance of relationships during the lifespan or rather the likelihood of forming loving associations (Fingerman, et al. 2010). Critical pedagogy also addresses the connection between people but is more concerned with empowerment (Open, 2019). Often older adults are in the category of those who are disregarded. This is particularly evident for those who live with dementia (Thraves, 2015). The methodology for my story aligns with art-based research. Hafeli (1998) defines this type of qualitative inquiry as a systemic approach that considers issues and topics related to teaching and learning through visual art production methods, visual art forms, artistic ways of thinking and practice (Hafeli, 1998, p. 111).

The special topics course that was the impetus for my creation was entitled, *Puppet Construction for Purposeful Play*. The name implies that the visual art production for this art-based research was puppet making. For the students in the class the learning reached beyond material manipulation and our classroom environment to meaningfully touching community members in a significant way. The course's experiential approach to learning followed the ideas of theorist John Dewey. Dewey (2015) believed education was not an "affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process..." (p.49). The students were called to actively engage in the process of knowledge building not only about how to create a hand puppet but, how to apply their knowledge of puppetry for a practical purpose. Many of the university students who registered for the class did so without fully realizing what such a course would entail. Nevertheless, the first week of the course provided an opportunity for students to get a taste of how puppets could be used in an environment other than as a source for children's entertainment.

Students were required to do personal research about puppetry and determine for what purpose they wanted to create their own puppet. This could be considered a literature review that included perusing numerous journal articles and viewing informational videos. During the process students learned about the many ways that puppets can be used in therapy and education. Students learned such things as how puppets have been helpful in treating traumatized children (Anderson, 2019; Hartwig, 2014; Novotny, 2012 Reid-Searl, Quinney, Dwyer, Vieth, Nancarrow, & Walker, 2017; and Tilbrook, 2016) promoting empathy for individuals with Autism (Malhotra, 2019); providing a sense of playfulness and joy for those diagnosed with dementia (Schneider, 2015) and how puppets can be used in an informational context to teach history lessons and math concepts (Groth, Austin, Naumann, & Richards, 2019; Romanski, 2019). Several of the videos that the students watched showed clips of puppets in therapy sessions along with explanations of what kind of puppets were best employed for specific therapeutic needs (BBC News, 2017, Children's Hospital Foundation of Manitoba, 2014; Dyson, 2016; Florida Department of Health, 2020; Integrated Treatment Services, 2014; J. M. Puppets, 2021; Judd, 2013; TED, 2020).

Problem Based Learning to Generate Research Questions

One of the university course's learning objectives was for each student to find a local problem to solve with their puppet. The problems that were generated acted as personalized research questions related to answering how an extreme sock puppet can be used in various contexts for purposeful play. One student chose to create a bat, another chose to create a book worm. The intentions for these puppets were for them to be used in an educational context. The plan for Batty was to provide information on the usefulness of bats and to help alleviate fear that some may harbor against the nocturnal creatures. The book worm, Wrym, a serpentine-type dragon, was designed to encourage reluctant readers to value literature. Two other students in the class created sock puppets that were designed to be used during therapy sessions with people who have Autism Syndrome Disorder (ASD) or used in an educational situation where puppets could inform audiences of ASD characteristics. My purpose was to answer the question of how a spunky, older lady puppet, can be created to act as a source of encouragement for aging adults who may be experiencing loneliness or isolation.

As university students were making plans for their puppets and identifying an intended purpose, my designer/creator, the art education professor whom I will refer to as Doc, researched her interest in using puppets with older adults. A particular website caught her attention (<http://www.therapeuticpuppetry.com>). The website was created by a Swedish arts therapist, Asa Viklund, who uses puppets in her practice. Numerous references and links were provided on the website that inform readers of ways that puppets have and are currently being used in expressive arts therapy. Expressive arts therapy (EAT) is defined by the National

Organization for Arts in Health (2017) as a field that incorporates the arts into healthcare settings. It includes play, creativity, improvisation, aesthetics, space, time, rhythm, resonance and mind/body connections. “The primary purpose is promotion of expression and imagination...EAT practitioners are trained to combine two or more art forms in clinical practice” (NOAH, 2017, p. 7).

One of the books listed on the site, *A Hand in Healing: The Power of Expressive Puppetry* (Schneider, 2015), made quite an impression on Doc. Numerous vignettes in the book described how puppets have been used to make connections with people at various ages and functioning abilities. The book's author described working with many who were non-speaking or at an end-of-life stage. Doc began to think of me when she read how puppets could touch the hearts of older adults who others had deemed as unreachable. I think again of Love Story's theme song. Another line in the lyrics states:

Where do I start?
With her first hello
She gave new meaning to this empty world of mine
(Williams, 1971)

That is what Doc imagined would be the response of some older adults to me when I popped in for a visit.

Puppet Construction

The second week of the puppet class was a flurry of busyness. Students were encouraged to tie-dye tube socks or choose socks of a particular color appropriate for their puppet design. Students were also faced with decisions like whether their puppets would have a soft-mouth or a glued felt one. Some students used a tube sock as the base for their puppet and then covered any exposing sock portions with faux fur. Other students decided to disregard the idea of using a sock altogether and opted to construct their puppet body from fabric. The fiber artist instructor helped with creating pattern pieces to all those who needed it.

Doc made a couple of sock puppets before she came up with her idea for me. The first was a cute little thing with rainbow yarn hair and a big mouth with extended felt teeth and a protruding tongue. The purple darling who was later named, Sally, had Velcro, or hook and loop fastener strips on the end of her tongue and on the inside of her mouth at the base of her front teeth. The sticky strips could hold her tongue in position and provided a visual example of how one with a lisp or other speech impediment could position their tongue for better speech articulation. I did not really get to know Sally well since she went to live with a speech pathologist shortly after her creation.



Figure 1. Sally.



Figure 2. Lucky.

The second sock puppet that Doc made was my friend, Lucky. Lucky was created from a white tube sock tie-dyed green. He was made with apple green, faux fur, floppy ears and a soft mouth that allowed him to pick up sticks or other random articles. Lucky was named by Doc's elderly friend, Mrs. K. on our first visit to the assisted living facility. That was quite an experience! I did not even say a word during the visit, but I certainly felt loved. In my head I hear the Love Theme's lyrics again:

She came into my life and made the living fine
She fills my heart
She fills my heart with very special things
With angels' songs, with wild imaginings
(Williams, 1971)

I think Doc felt a need to make a hand puppet more in the style of a Muppet when she saw the exuberance of her university students who were taking extra time viewing YouTube videos to create extraordinary puppets. Pom-poms, foam heads, and moveable arms were just a few of the added details. Doc likewise studied several videos for how to construct a puppet. Two of the videos showed how to build a puppet using foam and fleece (Kreutinger, 2017, 2021). Prior to my construction, Doc gathered the supplies she needed. She found pieces of polyfoam that had been tucked away in her garage to use for building my head. She located an electric knife for shaving the polyfoam. She made a trip to the fabric store to purchase fleece for my skin. She secured a hot glue gun with plenty of hot glue sticks. Finally, she set aside a piece of the same green faux fur as what she used for the puppet Lucky to use as my spikey hair. The next step was how to create a moveable mouth plate. After several attempts of cutting and gluing foam to plastic, my mouth was operational. The shape of my head took quite a bit of planning and reworking before coming together. Attaching my skin was another challenge for Doc but eventually my head took shape. I remained only a head for several days before Doc added large felt lips, bulging eyes with feathery eyelashes, a fiber filled nose and ears. She added some button ear rings and a pierced nose ring for a little added character. Doc found my glamour outfit at a thrift store in the children's section. She used it to bring my body parts together attaching my fiber filled arms and legs to my head and neck. Doc was quite satisfied with my flouncy, gold flecked black skirt that topped a pair of black tights. She stuffed the ends of each leg of my tights into a golden tennis shoe that was adorned with a swatch of cheetah fur. A long sleeve glittery, gold top and a golden puffer vest completed the ensemble. My hands were attached to wire rods to better express myself. My entire outfit and added embellishments made me quite the looker or so I was told.

Visiting Mrs. K.

It was not long after my creation that Doc took me and Lucky to visit Mrs. K. The dear lady is an elderly friend that Doc sees on occasion. Quite a long time had elapsed since Doc had been to the assisted living facility where Mrs. K. lived. A mutual friend had expressed to Doc that she was worried about Mrs. K. who was not doing well. The friend reported that Mrs. K. was spending a great amount of time in her room and not interacting much with other residents. She engaged little with friends, often took her meals alone in her room and wanted to do little more than sleep. The friend confessed that she believed Mrs. K.'s dementia was getting worse. Doc recorded her reflections as a source of data collection after our first visit with Mrs. K. and she has given me the liberty to share them.

February 7, 2022

I went to visit Mrs. K. today. Shortly after I arrived, I brought my green dog puppet out of my bag. She thought it was very cute and offered him some popcorn that she was eating. I next showed her the purple sock with

the big teeth. She pushed some of the rainbow hair out of the puppet's eyes and remarked that one of the green eyes was larger than the other. What really made Mrs. K. light up was when I brought out Lola from my bag.

She immediately began talking to the puppet. She asked how she was doing, if she was happy or sad. Mrs. K. looked right into the puppet's big eyes and addressed her. She made comments about her outfit and how Lola was a little short so that her vest had to be tucked in. Mrs. K. commented about Lola's earrings and when I pointed out the nose ring Mrs. K. did not seem to mind. Mrs. K. hugged Lola and kissed her. She held hands with her. I asked Mrs. K. if she wanted to operate one of my puppets. She wanted Lola. So, Mrs. K. put her hand inside and we took a couple of pictures. Later, after a little coaxing, we walked to lunch together. Mrs. K. had planned to stay in her room and have her lunch brought to her. M.R., a friend of Mrs. K.'s, came by while we were still in her room and made comments that Mrs. K. had been much like a hermit for the last several days. When we arrived in the dining room, we were greeted warmly by other residents seated at Mrs. K.'s table and had numerous others from the dining room come by the table to be introduced to Lola and the gang. Mrs. K. offered Lola part of her lunch and asked her if she wanted bites. I had Lola whisper to me about Mrs. K. leaving vegetables and how eating them would be good for her eyes. Mrs. K. just said that she did not want her eyes to look like Lola's. Mrs. K. ate little and blamed the quantity on the fact that she was busy talking to Lola. There really was very little conversation among the table members.

Mrs. K. seemed to be engrossed in talking to Lola and Lola would move toward her, cover her eyes at times appearing timid then nod her head in agreement to other comments. I felt a little inadequate to have Lola talk and merely explained that Lola had laryngitis. After lunch we walked back to Mrs. K.'s room. It was time for me to go. Bingo would be happening in about 15 minutes for Mrs. K. anyway. When I left, I marveled at the confirmation of what I had read. Mrs. K. had really engaged with Lola and acted like she wanted her to come back. My other puppets had also been given names by the time we left. The green dog was named Lucky and the purple puppet was named Sally. (S. Whiteland, personal communication, February 7, 2022)



Figure 3. Mrs. K. and Lola.

Recounting that day brings tears to my eyes. The Love Story theme song again relates when it says love can replace loneliness. I believe that when Mrs. K. reached for my hand and showered me with kisses that she was experiencing the kind of love that does not dissipate with an aging body or cognitive decline.

She fills my soul with so much love
 That anywhere I go I'm never lonely
 With her around, who could be lonely
 I reach for her hand, it's always there
 (Williams, 1971)

Hargis, Siegel and Castel (2019) write that socio-emotional selectivity theory (SST) is at work in people like Mrs. K. who are over the age of 65. The theory states that there is a shift in an older adult's motivation from the goal of acquiring new knowledge to an interest in emotional wellbeing. Researchers say if more of older adults' goals are related to emotion their memory for emotional items may be preserved. Positivity is also regarded as an influencing factor for processing information in older adults. These findings suggest a puppet like myself can provide

experiences that prompt joy and happiness and may play an instrumental role in memory retention and overall socio-emotional health for aging adults.

Puppet Animation

By the fifth week of the university puppet class, each student's puppet had been constructed and the puppet's personality had begun to develop. Doc learned how to give me a voice and taught me to how to breathe and focus conforming with her hand movements. Doc's slow whispery drawl became the way that I verbally communicated with others. She and I practiced together as we bonded to become one. The theatre arts instructor helped all of us puppets come to life in the hands of our puppeteers. Once we got the hang of becoming animated, the instructor informed the class of how to write a puppet script according to the format of a professionally written script. The scripts that the university students created were varied; yet all were illustrative of their puppet's newly formed character and representative of an art-based research approach. An art-based approach in our case utilized the art forms of a puppet and written script to raise questions for the viewer, promote further inquiry, and possibly change world views.

Take my puppet script for instance. It dealt with an art topic, called for the use of critical thinking skills, and set the stage for expressive therapy. According to the script I had seen one of Nick Cave's sound suits on display. In the script I go on about how the contemporary artist created the costumes as performance pieces. Cave's desire with the suits was to encourage those who watched the performance to refrain from making judgements about the person inside the suit. Gender, race, and age were not important. Being a puppet, I could relate. It's not my outside appearance that really matters although I feel like I can fit right in with one of those dancing costumes considering my sassy hair and the way I can do a little jiggle.

A Second Visit

On my next visit with Doc to see Mrs. K. we took several laminated pictures of the sound suits to show to Mrs. K. I think that Doc was curious to see if the script she wrote might generate interest for the elderly lady. When we first arrived to visit Mrs. K., Doc found her sitting in the TV room of a new location. Mrs. K. had been transferred from her home in the Assisted Living facility to a new residence in a nursing home secure unit. Mrs. K. was now reunited with her husband who was also living in the nursing home. Mrs. K. and Mr. B. were sitting closely together, but not engaging in conversation. Doc noticed Mrs. K. was staring off in the distance seemingly lost in thought. The couple did not seem to be paying any attention to an animated movie playing on the television monitor across the room from them. When Doc entered the room, I was tightly squeezed into a canvas bag with my friend Lucky. Doc grabbed Mrs. K.'s hand in greeting and told of her pleasure in seeing her and Mr. B. It wasn't long before I came out for a visit.

Mrs. K. seemed to remember me. Her eyes were bright, and she was smiling. I was offered a couple of kisses on my wide lips to which I happily smacked in response. Mrs. K. pinched the toes of my golden tennis shoes and rubbed my hands with her own. Doc helped me give Mrs. K. a neck hug. The affection from Mrs. K. was a clear demonstration of her excitement to see me. Mr. B. did not really direct any attention my way. He spoke little and when he did, he was difficult to understand. He seemed agitated about sitting in his wheelchair while we were there. In fact, he expressed a desire to get up but said he could not. Mrs. K. told Doc that Mr. B.'s request was not uncommon. After the explanation she tried soothing Mr. B. telling him that he would be okay. She suggested that he look at me. I reached over to touch Mr. B.'s hand but he offered little response. Even though Mr. B. was not an automatic admirer, I believe that Mrs. K. felt I could be a benefit for him just by me being there. Mrs. K. and I exchanged a few loving pats and then Doc brought out the sound suit pictures to see what interest Mrs. K. had in them. Sure enough, Mrs. K. took the pictures and read the accompanying text about the artist. I must say that the pictures were quickly put aside when Mrs. K. tickled me then leaned in with pursed lips for another kiss.

Geriatric psychiatrist, Helen Lavretsky (2014), writes that there is accumulating empirical evidence that positive emotions are good for one's health and can help aging adults in promoting optimal resilience later in life. For Mrs. K. it appears that a puppet can encourage positive emotions such as love and joy. Lavretsky says that frequent positive emotions and feelings of happiness affect subjective well-being and can help individuals maintain hope in the face of stress. So, while I may be considered just a pretty face by some, I am much more than that to Mrs. K. Our relationship can be called a love story. Art therapist, Marge Schneider (2015) describes the phenomenon as one that can be experienced by anyone who is open to it; she says:

Often a person will readily bond and communicate with a puppet because it offers unconditional love, is nonthreatening and non-judgmental, and asks nothing in return...there is a part of each of us that wants to respond to playfulness and spontaneity. (pp. 32-33)

Findings

My story affirms that expressive arts in the form of puppetry, such as myself, can be effective in providing a source of encouragement for aging adults who may be experiencing loneliness or isolation. Consistent with socio-emotional selectivity theory, Mrs. K. demonstrated a positive emotional response suggesting joy, happiness, and sense of well-being when visited by Doc and myself. Although it was just the two of us and we only offered a few hours of companionship, we made a connection with Mrs. K. The experiences with Mrs. K. strengthened Doc's commitment of including critical pedagogy in her classroom instruction. While my

focus was to build relationship with those who struggle with dementia, the course's focus to encourage or give voice to those often overlooked in society was embraced by many of the students taking the course as they sought ways to use their puppets in various community contexts thereby striving to reconstruct a more empathetic and caring society.

Analysis of Doc's students' accomplishments were described in written reflections and discussed in a class focus group. One of the students told of her puppeteering experience as a reciprocal benefit. She wrote about her time performing at an assisted living facility in the following excerpt:

According to the organizer, the audience that we had was very large and more interactive than they had been for other events. Which made me feel like we were doing something really good for them emotionally and mentally. Many of the seniors interacted with the puppets during the show which made it easier to keep going. After the show we went around to many of them and let them touch and talk to the puppets... I loved the interaction we had with them [older adults] because many of them seemed to light up and have a fun time with our puppets (J. Dudley, personal communication, May 7, 2022).

Another student commented in her reflection that she was excited about the success of her puppet. She said, "I get excited to show Bubbles off to people! I actually sent a picture of him to my grandma yesterday and she loved him!" (S. Maddox, personal communication, May 7, 2022). The comment suggests that the student saw value in sharing her puppet with a valued older family member.

A third student wrote in her reflection that she created her puppet to encourage people when they encounter bullying. By using critical pedagogy, a teaching approach that challenges the idea of power and domination, the student recognized the need for individuals to take personal initiative when confronted by aggressive behavior. Writing about her intended purpose suggests that she recognized how a puppet could be useful as a motivational device for a variety of ages. She wrote:

My driving question was how can a puppet be used to teach children how to handle bullying in an appropriate matter? I was interested in this question because I feel like it is something that a lot of school age children need to be taught. Being bullied is such a harmful act and can lead to all sorts of consequences...Something that is just as harmful as bullying is bystanding. It's when people just sit and watch something happen...Waiting for someone to say something can lead to so many wrong things, so teaching kids how to speak up for someone being bullied...allows for them to help someone in need and handle situations safely. Also, they can use what they learned when they were kids well into their adulthoods. (E. Evans, personal communication, May 7, 2022)

Implications

The students' writing samples about their puppetry experience validate the theory that puppets can be used to cultivate critical pedagogy and fulfil socio-emotional needs for many individuals across the lifespan including those with cognitive decline or dementia. The words from the theme song in *Love Story* (Williams, 1971) speak to a kind of emotional attachment that may not be measurable by time but fulfills a valuable role for the ones involved. My story tells about this kind of love that I experienced with Mrs. K. Doc was present to see it happen and help me share what it means with others so that they too may construct a puppet friend for purposeful play.

Can love be measured by the hours in a day?
 I have no answers now but this much I can say
 I know I'll need her 'til the stars all burn away
 And she'll be there
 How long does it last
 Can love be measured by the hours in a day
 I have no answers now but this much I can say
 I know I'll need her 'til the stars all burn away
 And she'll be there
 (Williams, 1971)

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