

The Intersectionality of Critical Identities in Art Education

EDITORS: STEVE WILLIS, RYAN SHIN, & ALLAN RICHARDS



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We would like to acknowledge the efforts that made this book a possibility. We particularly appreciate the courage and willingness of the authors to share their stories publically with powerful voices. This book will become a profound cultural influence in every class that embraces the multiple dense narratives of our societies.

We believe this book will move all societies forward to improve the human condition for students and scholars alike whether young or old regardless of ethnicity, race, disability, gender, immigration, poverty, language, or other social identities by sharing the powerful and poignant first-person narratives about identity formation, and ongoing transformations.

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Ryan Shin, Allan Richards, and Steve Willis

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Introduction

Steve Willis, Missouri State University
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It is a rare occasion when we as artists and educators get the opportunity to read so many powerful stories written by our colleagues. This is perhaps one of the more powerful books to be used in the classroom to provide first-person accounts of the impact of experiences that influences contemporary pedagogy and curriculum development. In this book, the authors share their first-person narratives about their identity formation, development, and ongoing transformation, adopting the lens of the intersectionality of ethnicity, race, gender, immigration, poverty, language, and other social identities. The teachers address identity issues affected by White mainstream culture and supremacy in relationships with other underrepresented groups. They point out how popular culture and main-stream media have affected their identity, including racial stereotypes, myths, tropes, hate crimes, and violence. Additionally, each describes how their identity plays out in art-making, art education, or in art museum/gallery settings, and the authors discuss ways of dealing with their identity in the classroom, museum, or community settings.

Reflected in the chapters is a complicated and insightful anthology of diverse perspectives of artists, art educators, and museum and community educators who reflected on how their identities have been shifted, changed, and hybridized in a changing global society. Each author provides a view into their experiences that are reflected in personal and professional practices. This is the intent and structure of the book. As editors and educators, we recognize the shifting landscape of many educational controversies and have great respect for the authors for their courage to share their stories. We also share our stories in the book and acknowledge that all art educators have shifting identities that affect pedagogical practices in terms of cultural hybridization, idea diffusion, decolonization, diaspora, authenticity, and social justice in a shared global community. We see this shifting landscape in the news and through social media as teachers are attacked for teaching what some consider as controversial topics as manifested in the perceptions of some ultra-conservatives in many communities in the US. Two leading forces, Florida and Texas, are noted with the recent legislative mandates that severely limit topics for K-20 classrooms and these new laws provide for the termination or arrest of teachers if they perchance discuss a forbidden topic. Many universities in these states are preparing to address their state's legislation that removes any capacity for diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus - offices and programs are being eliminated.

Using a critical viewpoint on the intersectionality of identity, the authors present that demarginalizing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) must require a voice from the classroom because this is a critical time of understanding the intersectionality of race, gender, immigration, class, physical ability, poverty, and other social identities is paramount to our educational system and society at large. This is a perilous time to be able to teach broad educational experiences. Simultaneously, it is an opportunity to be clear, committed, and frontal with resistance to ultra-conservative educational terrorism, and educators must reinforce that everyone must have a free, equitable, and socially just education in the US and across the globe. We cannot limit the curriculum to the single narrative of an ideology of supremacy and dominance.

As we read through these chapters, we must address all educators' ongoing struggles and concerns about diversity and equity in the classroom and community that can be manifested as double or triple minority statuses and oppression. We find the insightful narratives of the art educators who we hope are the front line agents of transformation for social justice demanding the urgent call for equity, diversity, and inclusion in our international, national, regional, and local educational policies and practices.

Each chapter opens with a personal vision as the authors share their approaches to their teaching. As the authors reveal their unique experiences and stories of success or failure, lessons, and insights while working with students, museum visitors, or community members their pedagogical praxis in various settings it is important to note and share openly because these insights respond to and resist colonialism, cultural appropriations, and misperceptions of various minority statuses and positions. An added lens of teaching reveals how these teachers present their teaching strategies for balancing the inequities and injustices arising from acute differences in socioeconomic status, language, gender, sexual preferences, regionality, cultures, ethnicities, and racial diversity found in classrooms, schools, and communities.

We are extremely pleased with the amazing contributions to this book. We believe it is a powerful tool that can change the direction of policies, beliefs, and behaviors of the few to enhance the education of all. As seen in classrooms globally, dialogic pedagogy is both informative and beneficial. We all learn and grow from our personal and global narratives and teachers need to share these stories in every classroom, and then, lead discussions on the impact found in the local communities, families, and schools. These chapters can act as an adhesive for a united front to have a counter-narrative to the anger of a minority section of society that has forced issues with the loudest noise. Teachers, students, parents, and community leaders must find the voice of resistance to the inaccurate representation of teachers and classroom practices. We must stand united in a kind, peaceful, and loving way to resist what damages our students, the educational system, and the history of democracy. This book can be an important tool to use to stand together as concerned parents, civic leaders, and citizens. It gives us a voice. We commend each author for their courage, and we send our heartfelt compassion for taking the stand and doing what is right. We must do what is right to protect our citizens from extremist policies to limit or eliminate equitable education for all.

The Intersectionality of Autism, Woman, and Scholar

Laura J. Hetrick
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

“Have I ever told you that you remind me of Sheldon Cooper?” asked a random friend.

I winced internally. This particular person had not said it before, but several other individuals had previously made or implied the same sentiment. Several others would say something similar after this. The first few times this was said by others, I didn’t think anything negatively of the comparison, because, at the time, I quite liked the popular character on the TV show *The Big Bang Theory*. I saw little wrong with his behavior and in many ways, I identified with him. “No. Why do you say that?” I matter-of-factly responded, while eyeing the person with contempt. “You’re so much like him. You literally have ‘a spot’ on your sofa, you don’t like certain food textures, you’re obsessive, your eidetic memory is terrifying, and even though you have a Ph.D., you’re not good soci--”

As the person trailed off and stopped mid-speech of what seemed like a locked and loaded monologue about my likeness to Sheldon, I realized my strained facial expression and cold glare may have alerted them to their overstepping of unintentional marginalization. The person backpedaled to assuage the tense situation: “He’s weird. But he’s my favorite character. You act like him... I’m just saying.” To be honest, at the time, I didn’t know what this person was actually saying. It wouldn’t be for another five-ten years or so until I knew exactly what was meant by this and other comparisons to Sheldon Cooper (or similar comparisons with Benedict Cumberbatch’s rendition of Sherlock).

I can say it now. I’m autistic. I just didn’t know it then. Growing up in a small town in Ohio, I always knew I was different and that I didn’t quite fit in with everyone else. I was from a working-class White family that lived near the poverty level. We didn’t have much and what we did have (old, non-name brand, tattered) was ridiculed by my mostly White middle-class classmates. Education was not valued in my family: my father dropped out of school in ninth grade. His lack of a high school diploma and lack of ancestral wealth is what kept us in the working class. We were staunchly religious, members of a non-denominational Christian belief system that no one else in our town knew of or accepted. We didn’t celebrate the mainstream holidays and we did celebrate ones that no one had heard of and occurred at weird times on the calendar. I was overweight and awkwardly shy. I was bullied a lot, especially by the conventionally cute girls in my class. They all made a social group that passed notes, wore the same color of clothes on the same day, hung out at recess, and attended each other’s birthday parties. I was one of only three other girls in the entire grade level not included in any of those activities. I was smart though. I was a year ahead in school, having started kindergarten when I was four years old. I really wanted to go to school and learn as my older brother did, and I could read and write, so the administration let me attend even though I was breaking the age requirement (of at least 5 years old) for enrollment. Unfortunately, this era was long before it was considered cool to be smart. My mom had me tested to see if I was a gifted student. With what I can now refer to as selective mutism, though my test scores were high, they did not put me in that gifted category because of my social ineptitude. I was quiet. I was bashful. I didn’t make eye contact. I was not comfortable around people. However, I was not tested for autism. It was considered a new disorder that school psychologists did not know a lot about (at least in my area) and it was considered a “boy disease,” so students were rarely tested, and no female students were tested in my school. Alarming, the

myth of autism being predominantly male still exists today (Hubbard, 2010).

I hated being touched. I didn't like having my hair brushed. Decorative headbands kept my unbrushed hair out of my face but were over-sensory to my scalp and I would only leave them in for about 5-10 minutes at a maximum. I would only wear certain clothes over and over again because I could tolerate the materials' textures next to my skin. I threw absolute fits when asked to wear wool, corduroy, jeans, sweaters, turtlenecks, taffeta, ruffles, lace, or anything close-fitting. I did not like jewelry. I hated dresses. For a long time, I only wore shoes after being scolded for going barefoot everywhere outside and then absolutely forced my feet into what felt like foot prisons. If I had to wear shoes, I preferred saddle shoes or cowboy boots, with no socks. If socks were required, they could not be tight nor have lace around the tops. I developed a reputation within my family for being particular or picky and quite stubborn. Inside I was suffering, and I didn't know why. The concept of sensory overload would be decades off from my knowing and naming of it to explain my experiences.

Food textures can be absolutely upsetting to me, even now, but as an adult, I know how to order food to avoid what I cannot handle in my mouth. As a kid, I had a very narrow selection of foods that I would eat. This had mostly to do with textures. I liked having the same lunch packed for me every day of the week for years at a time. I would have an internal meltdown if one of my regulars was replaced by something else because my mom couldn't find it at the store. My parents were the type that said I had to sit there until I finished everything on my plate. There are photos in the family album of me asleep in my chair at the kitchen table with a plate of food in front of me that I refused to eat. I would cry and gag if they forced me to eat something that I could not stand. I wasn't being an ungrateful brat for not eating what was provided; it was causing me literal pain because my body would react (e.g., gag reflex, inability to swallow).

Perhaps without needing to say it, my formative years were rough. I had few friends in elementary school, and even those friends would talk about me behind my back. Then came the transition to junior high school. This was a big shock to my system because every routine I had known from kindergarten through sixth grade was suddenly upended. I went from being in a small rural elementary school where there was only one class of each grade level to a junior high school of over 1000 students fed into and populated by seven elementary schools. The one friend I had from elementary found new groups of friends and I had to start over. I was not outgoing. Making new friends was hard for me. I completely lost my internal compass. My grades slipped. The bullying intensified. I started faking illnesses to stay home from school. I was secretly suicidal. I just couldn't cope with how different I was compared to everyone else, but I also couldn't cope with it being pointed out daily. However, over time in seventh grade, I was taken in by a group of girls who were also smart and on the fringes of popularity. We were in the advanced placement classes together and in the string orchestra together. They were strong in their intellectual abilities and seemingly didn't care so much about what the popular girls thought of them. They knew they were in school to learn, and while they were somewhat aware of the fashion trends of teenage girls, they didn't put much stock in the trends. This group of girls changed my life.

For the first time in my life, I started to feel like I belonged somewhere. While admittedly still outside of the group (most of them had gone to the same elementary school, so their bond was well-established), I finally had a group of peers to sit with at lunch. I had people saying hi to me in the hallways and people who noticed my absence. I started to watch how they interacted with each other, how they negotiated the intricacies of teen friendships, and how they navigated institutional boundaries and social mores. I started adapting their movements, both socially and physically. I was learning how to be perceived as normal. Over the course of a few years, I passed as neurotypical. What I didn't know then that I know now, I was perfecting the coping mechanism called masking or social camouflaging, a more specific form of impression management. "Social camouflaging is defined as the use of strategies by autistic people to minimize the visibility of their autism in social situations" (Lai et al., 2016, as cited in Schneid & Raz, 2020, p. 2). Ironically, it was also my heightened ability to mask that further delayed my diagnosis, which is all too common for females

with autism.

Going into high school was a much more stable transition for me thanks to the friend group that adopted me in junior high. Even the changing of daily routines and rhythms was much more tolerable knowing that I had this group of strong smart women with whom I was now a recognized member. I was smart and I owned that. I made wise decisions. I joined social clubs that would look good for college admittance, as long as one of my friends was also a member. However, in order to be socially integrated, I had to let go of the parts of my personality that were not socially acceptable. At the time, I didn't recognize nor care about what that meant about what I was doing to my sense of self. Now I understand that "[i]f impression management, especially in the specific form of camouflaging, was required to pass as normal and score social points, it also meant that something had to be hidden inside because it was socially flawed and faulty" (Schneid & Raz, 2020, p. 3). For decades, I have repressed parts of me that were not socially championed. After my diagnosis and coming to terms with my autism, I have been slowly allowing these parts to surface again without feeling shame. They are part of what makes me uniquely me. I am feeling more like myself while others are suddenly struggling with these aspects of my personality appearing *out of nowhere*.

To be clear, I still struggle. I have so much more to say about my life experiences, especially the times before knowing why I was like I was. But it is my turn to speak to this chapter and the intersectionality of my various identities and how this emboldens my teaching practices.

Admittedly, while I do occupy many social statuses that usually go unnamed in the US culture: middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, and White, the invisible status of autism is the one that I most identify with (or am unknowingly identified by others) and recognize the most resistance to from outside of myself. There are a lot of social stigmas that go along with being a female autistic and with others (not) knowing this identifier about me while, at the same time, not knowing a lot about what it entails or relying on stereotypes. "For too many years, women on the spectrum have been pushed aside in terms of diagnosis, intervention, and support" (Henault, 2018, p. i). My main purpose is to share the story of a woman with late-life diagnosed Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). While some in art education have written books on students with autism, actual autistic voices are often unheard of or filtered through neurotypical thought processes. This is an opportunity for an autistic to speak and fill the void and absence of critical information to better understand, support, and engage with some autistic individuals, recognizing that no two autistics are alike. Autism is a radial spectrum, with all sorts of nuanced variances.

This chapter began with selective personal narratives from childhood detailing what life is like as a neurodivergent thinker in a neurotypical world. These narratives are shared to unfold the unique way in which some with ASD may identify, write, view, and embrace the world—as well as how others' treatment can negatively affect their daily lives, such as being left out of activities, feeling alone and misunderstood, and feeling no sense of belonging. The content that follows from this point is a cursory definition of autism and its evolution through the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published in 2022 (DSM-5-TR). Contemporary terminology, including identity-first language, is addressed to encourage eliminating outdated and segregating descriptions of people on the autism spectrum. After this foundation, following through to my current position as a tenured professor, I'll share how my late-life diagnosis completely derailed my sense of self and yet inspired a profound self-awakening in myself and in my teaching approaches. This intersectionality is relevant because "spectrum women have a voice that needs to be heard. They need people to understand the challenges they face in daily life, and to recognize their talents and many achievements" (Attwood, 2018, p. i). Because autism is often labeled as a disorder or disability, many people misunderstand the vibrancy, intelligence, heightened empathy, and creativeness that

many autistics, especially female autistics, embody. I provide my teaching strategies for balancing the inequities and injustices arising from acute differences in neurodiversity found in classrooms, schools, and communities. I do this because we need “to understand the ways that different social categories depend on each other for meaning and, thus, mutually construct one another and work together to shape outcomes” (Cole, 2009, p. 179). As an autistic, female, scholar, and teacher, I am the first to admit that I can do better in shaping my students’ outcomes. To end this chapter, I note how this is a world where disability oppression through educational institutions needs to segue into disability empowerment by way of caring and knowledgeable (arts) teachers.

Cursory Definition of Autism and Its Evolution

According to the 2022 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder.

Autism spectrum disorder is characterized by persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, including deficits in social reciprocity, nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction, and skills in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships. In addition to communication deficits, the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder requires the presence of restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities. Because symptoms change with development and may be masked by compensatory mechanisms, the diagnostic criteria may be met based on historical information, although the current presentation must cause significant impairment. (DSM-5-TR

Within this chapter, I will not get into the arguments around the organization Autism Speaks. However, because so many know about autism through their work, here is a list from their website of what constitutes Asperger’s. Others accessing this site, without doing further research, may be what influences their understanding of me. To be honest, this list is 98% accurate in my own experience, which may or may not be true for others with the same diagnosis.

Asperger syndrome, or Asperger’s, is a previously used diagnosis of the autism spectrum. In 2013, it became part of one umbrella diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5 (DSM-5).

Typical to strong verbal language skills and intellectual ability distinguish Asperger syndrome from other types of autism.

Asperger syndrome generally involves:

Strengths can include:

- Remarkable focus and persistence
- Aptitude for recognizing patterns
- Attention to detail

Challenges can include:

- Hypersensitivities (to lights, sounds, tastes, etc.)
- Difficulty with the give-and-take of conversation
- Difficulty with nonverbal conversation skills (distance, loudness, tone, etc.)
- Uncoordinated movements, or clumsiness
- Anxiety and depression

The tendencies described above vary widely among people. Many learn to overcome their challenges by building on [their] strengths.

Though the diagnosis of Asperger syndrome is no longer used, many previously diagnosed people still identify strongly and positively with being an “Aspie.” (<https://www.autismspeaks.org/types-autism-what-asperger-syndrome>).

And as in my own specific case, “many individuals previously diagnosed with Asperger’s disorder would now receive a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder without language or intellectual impairment” (DSM-5-TR). While I will not explicate the fact that this most current version of the DSM erased Asperger’s as a separate diagnosis, there are various arguments within and around the autistic community on whether this erasure is helpful or detrimental to those on the spectrum. Personally, I identify with Asperger’s and by way of self-empowerment, I am self-labeled with personal endearment, as an Aspie. It should also be noted that “[u]nlike Asperger’s syndrome, the terms ‘low-functioning’ and ‘high-functioning’ autism have never appeared in any diagnostic manual. Rather, they are colloquial conventions used to refer to an individual’s intellectual or verbal ability and/or level of apparent social and everyday capabilities” (Kenny et al, 2016, p. 458). I mention this because even among those friends and colleagues that I have trusted enough to share this diagnosis, these descriptors are sometimes used. My best advice is to call an autistic by their title, in my case, Doctor. Beyond that, call them by their name. And if you must address their neurodivergence, ask them how they prefer to be referenced.

In terms of contemporary terminology, as with any subgroup marginalized from the norm, autistics, or those with autism, or those on the autism spectrum, have preferred modes of reference sometimes different than the medical communities that diagnose and work with those same individuals. Like others with ASD, I believe that using the language of “a person who has autism” makes it sound like an illness or disease that can be cured, which it is not. That is why I personally prefer the term “autistic.” I can’t say I was that self-accepting immediately after my diagnosis. In fact, I initially pressed back against anything tying me to this disorder. The societal stigma was too great, and I wanted nothing of it. I went through something akin to a grieving cycle when I was coming to terms with my diagnosis. It took time before I proclaimed, “I’m autistic.” Similarly, in a 2016 study conducted by Kenny, Hattersley, Molins, Buckley, Povey, and Pellicano in the UK autism community, “[t]he term ‘autistic’ was endorsed by a large percentage of autistic adults, family members/friends and parents but by considerably fewer professionals; ‘person with autism’ was endorsed by almost half of professionals but by fewer autistic adults and parents” (Kenny et al, 2016, p. 442). We are the ones living these lives: let us name our own identity.

Late-Life Diagnosis and Derailment of Self

“The concept of intersectional identities is the idea that one’s identity is neither singular nor fixed, but rather a constellation of societal, personal, cultural, and political aspects of self that arrange and rearrange themselves to momentarily define us (Crenshaw, 1991),” (Powers & Duffy, 2016, p. 62). This quote resonates with me. I am obsessed with the idea of identity and that it is constantly in flux, though we can recognize people by a certain something, nonetheless.

My own scholarly research has always related to the bigger idea of identity, including my doctoral work on the emergent identity of art student teachers (Hetrick, 2010); my later work on teaching art and (re) imagining identity (Hetrick, 2018); and this current work on exploring my own autistic identity. I have come to realize that I am hyper-fixated on identity development because “[a]s persons in the world, we are continually engaged in becoming something or someone, such as a parent, woman, white person, old person, teacher. Because identities are conditional, restless, unstable, ever-changing states of being, they can never be ultimately completed” (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 3). I have always struggled with my own identity, recognizing I was different and wondering why I didn’t fit in or belong anywhere, and perhaps that is why I have devoted my life to helping others work through their own identities with support, guidance, and acceptance. Even though my scholarly research for the past 15 years has revolved around identity, I was unprepared for how this autism diagnosis would derail my sense of self.

As with many females, my diagnosis of Asperger’s or autism started with a self-diagnosis through intensive reading of autism literature. Originally doing a deep study on ADHD and autism for the sake of teaching my preservice teachers how to better accommodate such students in their art classrooms, I began noticing that a lot of the autistic characteristics described incredibly well, in some cases, a bit too well. At first, I brushed it off as coincidental. However, as I read more and more, the voices of all the people over the last few decades who had made various remarks suddenly resonated differently. “You’re neurodivergent. You’ll never understand how others think,” uttered a very perceptive graduate student who studied the brain. Then there was my coach at the gym who had observed me every day over months of time, pulling me aside, and matter-of-factly saying, “You have Asperger’s,” as she watched me nearly have a meltdown when a small strand of my sweaty hair was touching my face during an intense workout. I remember both specific times recoiling and very aggressively denying any connection to autism and being slightly offended that they had even suggested it. The Sheldon Cooper and Sherlock references hit differently. I look back now with chagrin, knowing that had I listened and started researching, I would have that much more knowledge about how and why I do the things I do and react the way I react to environmental stimuli. After recognizing that I could no longer deny that I had autism and reading about the similarities I had with others on the spectrum, I completely dissociated with my sense of self and everything I thought I knew of my own identity up through my early forties. I got really depressed. My anxiety skyrocketed. I wondered if other people knew, or if they found out, how their perception of me would change. Though I was learning more and more about myself, I felt like I didn’t know myself at all. This self-discordance lasted for more than six months. As I mentioned earlier, I went through something akin to a grieving cycle when I was coming to terms with my diagnosis. It took a long period of time before I proclaimed, “I’m autistic,” and I accepted it and felt okay with it. I went to the doctor. We confirmed it. ASD is now in my medical records.

Though I now have a new way of understanding myself and know that there are in fact others out there like me, I still struggle with autism being invisible amongst my White, heterosexual femaleness, which is what people know or perceive first. That along with my decades of expertise in masking or camouflaging to pass as neurotypical, I don’t think anyone has any idea how much I go through daily to maintain that momentary semblance of normal or neurotypical. Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) describe the intersectional invisibility that occurs when a person’s culturally subordinated identities distance them from what they refer to as the prototype (White, heterosexual, male). The more subordinated one’s identity, the more marginalized one becomes within a group—even within marginalized groups,” (as cited in Powers & Duffy, 2016, p. 63). Within any race, sex, or class autistic is culturally subordinated. I am suddenly seen as less than if I am seen at all. I feel that invisibility and subordination. It is this feeling that inspired my self-awakening. It makes me work harder to be sure that no one else is treated as poorly as I have been, nor feels invisible in my classroom. I work hard to be the change I wish to see in the world or to be the person that I needed when I was an undergrad. I do this through how I approach my teaching and pedagogical practices.

Self-Awakening in Myself and in My Teaching Approaches

Within my higher education preservice art classrooms in the recent past, I was often so busy teaching the necessities of curriculum development, classroom management, and lesson planning that I sometimes didn't take enough time to consider the intersectionality of my students' identities and "how social categories depend on one another for meaning, despite the obvious fact that every individual necessarily occupies multiple categories (i.e., gender, race, class, etc.) simultaneously" (Cole, 2009, p. 170). I had always respected who my students were as individuals; however, since my diagnosis and [re]formation of understanding myself, I have noticed marked changes in how I approach each student.

Because "[e]nvironments where students feel insecure, marginalized, invisible, threatened, and/or disenfranchised do not, of course, inspire meaningful learning" (Powers & Duffy, 2016, p. 61), I foreground creating community and offering a supportive space within my classroom on the first day of class. I purposely don't use the verbiage of safe space when implementing activities that encourage us to dig deep in order to know each other better. I step back and address this pedagogical choice right away. I tell them that while one might argue that the space is open to talking with them (preservice teachers) and should be a safe space for sharing when talking about one's intersectionalities of identity, the space is anything but safe. Divulging and coming to terms with concepts that may be disrupting one's idea of a whole self or a potentially marginalized self will likely be intensely personal and highly emotional. Therefore, I suggest that the space for talking through the intersectionalities of identity should be done in a supportive space because of the potentially unavoidable and necessary disruptions that may result.

Once I have established a supportive space where we can each share our intersectionalities and talk freely about how this has affected us (in life, in general, within education), I then like to highlight our similarities and commonalities while not dismissing nor denigrating any of our differences.

Asking where there are similarities encourages researchers to reassess any presumption that categories of identity, difference, and disadvantage define homogeneous groups as they look for similarities that cut across categories. Looking for commonality across differences entails viewing social categories as reflecting what individuals, institutions, and cultures do, rather than simply as characteristics of individuals. This shift opens up the possibility to recognize common ground between groups, even those deemed fundamentally different by conventional categories. (Cole, 2009, p. 175)

Though our identities may constantly be [re]forming or changing it is important for educators, current and emergent, to be aware of the various components, similarities, and intersectionalities that may constitute these identities. The underlying challenge "for educators, then, is to understand the multiple identity components and desires that pervade the educational field; and to variously recruit, redirect, reinforce, circumvent, or neutralize these forces in all parties, and particularly in themselves and their students" (Bracher, 2002, p. 93). As an educator, recognizing the invisible intersections of self and others may help stimulate the underlying dynamic in the classroom and/or alleviate potential misunderstandings and misdirection that could arise from ignorance or misinterpretation of unknown, undisclosed, or unseen identities that occupy a large portion of any one's sense of self or being in the world. "Recognizing our own and our future students' intersectional identities is an act of creating small openings where teachers may become responsive to learner's needs and identities" (Powers & Duffy, 2016, p. 62). In other words, understanding their different and sometimes conflicting identities and recognizing how those may

influence their teaching habits and styles may help preservice teachers refrain from pedagogical practices that are potentially unproductive or even harmful to their students (racist, sexist, classist, etc). An intimate knowledge of different identity categories and the internal and external resources that influence their formation can potentially assist preservice teachers in broader acceptance of their future K-12 students and their own intersectionalities of identity.

Once our unique intersectional identities have been validated and shown to be integral to our classroom learning community, I employ several teaching strategies for balancing the inequities and injustices arising from acute differences in neurodiversity. We start with readings and activities that explore the topic of emotional intelligence and self-respect, as well as social and emotional learning. I initiate discussions normalizing mental health experiences and encourage self-care amongst the preservice teachers first so that they are better able to support their K-12 students second. We talk about different tactile sensitivities that some students may have and how to offer different materials or approaches that allow the students to have a similar experience without sensory overload. One such example is having a material like Model Magic (which is smooth, but not sticky, nor dirty) be offered in place of regular ceramic clay which can be lumpy, sticky, and make a student's hands feel dirty or unclean. We also talk about potentially having a calm corner in the room where students who need a break know they can go to relax or reset, play with fidgets, or use noise-canceling headphones if they need auditory respite. During any of the discussions, I remain vigilant to correct any misperceptions of neurodiversity and its minority status. Furthermore, when we talk about these ideas, we also include the concept of offering alternative lesson options for all students (so that no one's difference is amplified) that still meet certain goals but can have multitudinous paths to completion. I believe that by employing these and other supportive strategies, we can create a world where disability oppression through educational institutions can segue into disability empowerment by way of caring and knowledgeable (arts) teachers.

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Educating the Whiteness Out

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We are born and have our being in a place of memory. We chart our lives by everything we remember from the mundane moment to the majestic. We know ourselves through the art and act of remembering. Memories offer us a world where there is no death, where we are sustained by rituals of regard and recollection (hooks, 2009, p. 5).

“Our kids are not going to be bused into that city with those [expletive] kids.” I remember hearing these sentiments from my aunt, my mom, and my friend’s parents. At the time, I lacked awareness of or appreciation for the *Milliken v Bradley* decision in 1974 or the *Milliken v Bradley* II decision of 1977, spotlighting desegregation in metropolitan Detroit schools aiming to “address urban educational needs” (Meinke, 2011, p. 22). What I recall was a fervent cry against any attempts to desegregate the Detroit suburban schools I attended. White parents wanted nothing to do with busing for desegregation; they mobilized against the buses that authorities might use to take their White children away each day and replace them with Black ones. I was a White girl attending an all-White elementary school in 1970s America: a concentrated White space determined to maintain separateness.

It took me decades to chip away at the literal and figurative dividing walls on either side of 8 Mile Road (Kozlowski, 2019). Amid the excavated rubble, I examined fragments of White-normativity and used artmaking to critique and reform my identity as a White, European-American, and cis-gender woman. Reading, researching, and learning about Whiteness transformed into reflective actions as artful self-inquiry. Flat, blank journals expanded into visual-textual, animated, and annotated pages of artifact creation. Arts-based reflection spurred conversations, sites of dialogic critique, exposure, and vulnerability – a reckoning. My reckoning catalyzed a change in my approach to teaching reflection/reflective practice with preservice teachers (PSTs), that focused on criticality, access, equity, and social justice concerns.

Led by my cautionary tale, I wrote this chapter from a place of remembering by gazing into my historical looking glass. Inside, I saw my past confronted by my present as a personal and professional journey of identity formation. Reflective practice revealed uncomfortable spaces, long hidden but needing exhumation. These practices inform further reckoning and identity transformation within my personal and professional selves. My work with PSTs focuses discourse away from mis-educative experiences (Dewey, 1938), toward aware/awake-ness acts (Greene, 1977) of coming into knowing, through self-interrogation and interpretive, artful encounters.

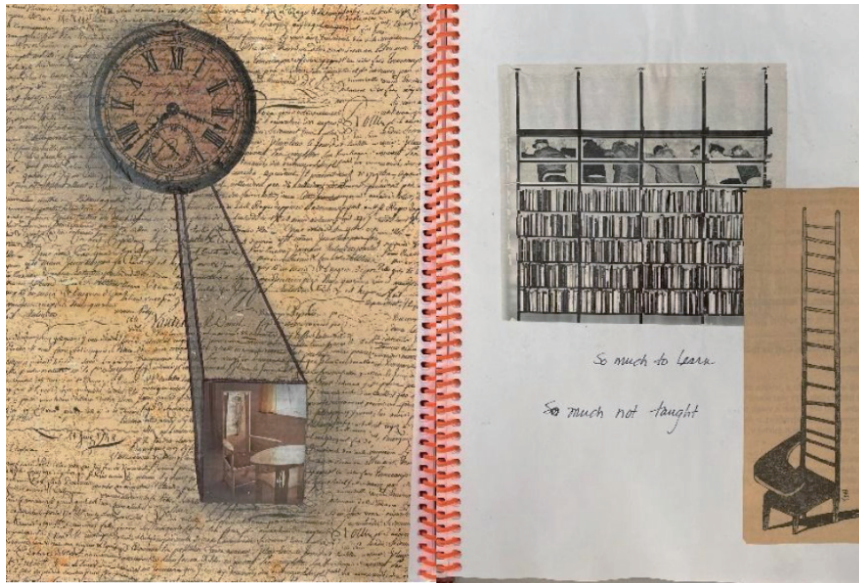


Figure 1: McGarry, 2017, *Time spent learning and not learning*, mixed media on paper, 11 x 17 in. Courtesy of artist

Identity Forming

The White, suburban location I was born into shaped my early identity. My young memories, some mundane, others more notable, are recalled through a lens of socialization within the Catholic faith, predetermined by my parents. My mother grew up in a home with parents of French-Canadian and German heritage, in an enclave bordering Detroit called Harper Woods. Her father's family came from a small village outside Berlin and left Germany before Hitler came into power, or so I was always told. Her mother, my grandmother, married her German beau, my grandfather, despite the protests of her parents. As I learned many years later, their marriage was consented – undoubtedly forced – after an out-of-wedlock pregnancy carrying my mother's older sister. Born the third child of her parents, my mother was raised in the traditional 1950s style, marrying after high school by the age of 19.

My father was born Irish-American Catholic in a meager home in Detroit. He was the second oldest out of 10 siblings. He went to school and joined the seminary for a year before leaving there to enlist in the army. Upon returning from being stationed in Japan, he began working in automobile insurance and met and married my mother. Though his plans to become a priest never materialized, he did continue in the Catholic faith and, between he and my mother, raised four children in the White suburban neighborhood known then as East Detroit.

Neither of my parents ever attended college. My siblings and I grew up in a traditional manner where my dad worked and my mother stayed home. My parents, however, wanted us to attend college all the while reinforcing the traditional mores of how we should live. Yes, I should go to college after high school, like my two older siblings, but, of course, I would get married, become a housewife, and raise a family, mimicking the life pattern of the world I entered. Not knowing any differently, I dutifully intended to follow that fated pathway.

Most of my extended family were not college educated either. The men mostly worked as blue-collar laborers and the women worked their homes. Geographic proximity determined the close-knit relationships between grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. It was within this extended family unit where I first encountered what I would come to know as racism, sexism, bigotry, and misogyny, well before I understood what those words signified. I grew up under an umbrella of dispositions that harbored racist, bigoted, and sexist attitudes and language,

spouted by my extended family elders more so than my parents. Though my parents shied away from speaking such words and visibly bridled when they heard or encountered such language, there was never any rebuke of what they heard. Instead, I saw them silently ignoring those utterances, as if ignoring them would cause them to dissipate and simply go away.

But those words and dispositions lingered; I internalized all sorts of defaming vocabulary aimed at anyone not like us: White, European-American, Catholic, and middle-class. These intersections were imbricated within religious beliefs, gender and sexuality, race, and class. Our “us” was considered “normal.” My formative years centered on Whiteness normativity, socially fortified. Over time I became more unsettled in my socialized environment and felt clashes rise inside my identity formation. Questions percolated: *How could I be a practicing Catholic, a churchgoer, for example, if I wasn’t practicing the beliefs espoused by the church I attended, mouthed by the people I was meant to emulate in thought and deed? Why did my father curse every other church-goer who parked in his way as he attempted to vacate the church parking lot and return home? Why did my aunts and uncles use such deplorable names for everyone who wasn’t White? Why was hard labor valued and higher education disparaged? Why was I valued for what my body could produce, but not my mind, and, why were my brother’s deeds celebrated while mine and my sister’s were diminished?* Before this simmer of inquiry grew to a boil, life, and living would happen, showing me a different pathway.

After high school, I did attend college, commuting from my family home to downtown Detroit for classes. My once all-White experiences broadened. I met people with different experiences to my own, prompting the aforementioned inquiry questions. New encounters rubbed against the hateful remembered language of my past. One remembered the critical incident, in particular, triggered a new awareness. I remember seeing a billboard with these words: “Nobody’s Born a Bigot.”¹ Those words framed against the black and white photo of two young boys in an embrace, remain etched in my memory, playing like a continuous film loop. I see myself reading the billboard’s words as they churn and collide within my lived experience. *Was I born a bigot?* I did not want to be one, but if I was *not born a bigot*, why were my character traits aligned with those of a bigot?

Critical incidents like this one began shaping a transformational journey of my identity by critiquing my mirrored reflection

Identity Transforming

Identity critique is fraught with challenges, discomfort, and a large slice of “excuses pie.” What I initially felt as remembered experience, when confronted by the billboard’s image and message, challenged my being – *what was I?* Primarily, I was uncomfortable and scared. Then, almost immediately, I found ways to excuse the whole critique process: *it wasn’t my fault, I was born into this life; I didn’t choose it; my family and society were to blame; I can’t be held responsible for happenings occurring before I was born; and, I’m not a racist, not like other people.* Each utterance evidenced an act of denial, of my complicity in Whiteness. If I intended to change, to transform my identity, I needed to unpack my baggage and examine it more intentionally. Such an intentional critique, however, took years to manifest, well into my adult life, decades after first encountering that portentous billboard.

To story or narrate my transformation herein, I chose to write about what I knew from my socialized past and to reckon with each storied element as transformational “exhibits and evidence.” My chapter includes three exhibits as storied elements: 1) family and religion; 2) gender and feminism; and, 3) race, class, power, and privilege. The writing comprises evidentiary images selected from a multitextual reflection journal created in 2017, to illustrate the storying process. In total, I created six such journals as arts-based research while earning my Ph.D. I called the journals multi-textual because they contained multiple elements – texts – that could be read and interpreted for meaning (McGarry, 2019). The assembled data within these artifact repositories embody a “sense

that what is being portrayed is real” (Eisner, 1997, p. 8), showing evidence of an artful thinking-out-loud process. I chose the 2017 reflection journal because it focused on self-inquiry regarding aspects of my past, of remembered or “memoried” experiences, as generative, transformational actions. The journal images made their presence known while writing this chapter; the once quiet pages inserted new conversational elements into the word-based thinking realized here. As the conversation expanded, self-inquiry and critique found additional pathways for transformative knowing: thinking through and across my interpretive texts.

Exhibit A: Family and Religion

A self-critique required that I look not only into the window of my current self but to look into the windows of my long past. I chose the role of family and the interconnected role of religion as a starting point: a segregated, racist upbringing reinforced by what I came to understand later as religious hypocrisy.

Image 2 shows two parts of my identity – family and religion. On the left side, I chose one image taken during the Detroit riots of 1967; a tumultuous event that caused further segregation and White-flight from the city (Detroit Historical Society, n.d.). I remember driving into Detroit to visit my grandparents, my mother telling my sister, brother, and me to get onto the floor of the back seat, to stay down. Before doing so, I recall seeing an overpass lined with men holding guns. Citizens too had taken up guns. The White woman pictured behind the wheel holding a gun resembled my mother, except we never owned guns. Two weapons stood between her, the driver, and the people on the street – the car and the gun. The photo captured a moment stopped in time, unresolved.

The right-hand side incorporated images clipped from a magazine displaying religious iconography, combined with other collage elements. The items assembled into this journal space show a group of women crossing between planes while a gaggle of cherubic bodies glare from above. The woman in front appears to move dutifully into the voided gray space, followed by the women who I deemed had already made a similar journey – a process of moving from one form of possession to another, from girl to woman and from father to husband. I saw these figures as followers, not questioning their place but accepting it as a prearranged obligation.

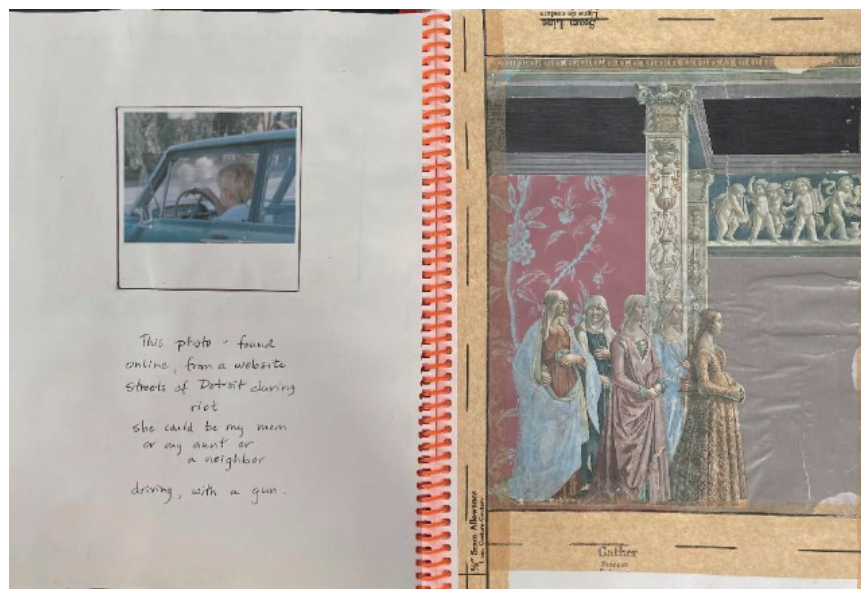


Figure 2: McGarry, 2017, *Losing more than a religion*, mixed media on paper, 11 x 17 in. Courtesy of artist.

Family represented a primary source of my original identity – foundational and predetermined. Because love underscored my understanding of “family,” I never challenged “family” as a source of negative impact on shaping my self-identity. My middle-class socialization reinforced family, and religion, as sacrosanct with our extended family included. The tight-knit nature of family gatherings and celebrations happened exclusively within our socialized cultural circle, without outside influence or penetration. I learned from my family what I should like and not like, how to respect elders and not question authority, and how to play my part – the part of an obedient girl becoming an obedient woman. And like the other women in my family, I played along with every ritual from dolls to dances, homework to housework, and from charmed to church. Two critical incidents are “memoried” within Exhibit A – family and religion – both interwoven inside the Catholic ritual of my first marriage.

My then fiancé and I were required to attend marriage classes with our priest, vowing to respect God above all else, to stave off sin in all forms, and to accept children lovingly from God. However, our betrothal and subsequent marriage defied the most sacred of Catholic laws: sex before marriage. Once that rule was broken, others soon followed. Over time, I found that the church rules never favored me; they were never in place to support me. I was taught that this religious institution was founded on love for all and eventually grew to understand it more as a patriarchal club of dominance and oppression. Any infraction my then-husband performed was expunged in the eyes of God, including extra-marital affairs performed by a White male in a White system of privilege, adhering to religious Whiteness above all else.

It was during the planning for that wedding, paid for by my then in-law family, that I first encountered religious Whiteness. My soon-to-be-sister-in-law was told by her parents and extended family that her boyfriend, a Black man, would not be welcomed at the wedding. She could not invite the man she loved due to family prejudice. Of note was the shameful role I played in keeping quiet, knowing my place. I never spoke up or spoke out in her, and his, defense. Decorum insisted on obedience to a religion of segregation over love. The racism I had inherited, woven into the fabric of my identity since birth, compounded the suffering of those dear to me to pacify Whiteness and religious superiority. Remembering this incident now, I embody the discomfort of exposing a shameful episode in my personal past. Regardless of personal discomfort, the memory highlights a critical incident in need of reckoning for self-identity transformation and change.

Change includes examining personal biases. In my current work with PSTs, I share storied incidents like these because I am a participant in unpacking biases as critical reflection. I make time in instructional praxis for us to examine individual biases and social constructs that shape our lives (Bastos, 2006). I share stories like the ones recited above as full disclosure, that I too need to continue my journey to educate the Whiteness out. Though I view these difficult conversations as necessary, they require care and sensitivity when acknowledging where each PST is situated along their change journeys. When creating safe spaces for insightful classroom conversations and critical interactions, I must assure PSTs they are supported and respected during our encounters which are both vulnerable and brave (Powers & Duffy, 2016). Self-critique can be scary; committing to it is even scarier. That said, I see my role as a guide and a practitioner along the same journey with every learner, always becoming, never arriving, but steadfast in approaching.

Exhibit B: Gender and Feminism

Traditional women’s roles informed my upbringing. My home economics class in middle school had nothing to do with the study of wealth, production, or goods distribution. I learned to cook and keep house and was tested on how quickly I could thread a sewing machine. I kept my grades high as I prepared for college and saw my brother scolded for earning a “B-” on a math exam, too close to a “C” for my parent’s liking. But my grades were never a bother to my parents because my role in life was implicit: I would eventually marry, have children, and continue to exude traditional womanhood norms. I grew up knowing nothing of women’s

liberation or feminism. It befuddled me when an uncle called me “little Gloria” when I was young. He said I looked like Gloria Steinem. I never understood the reference though because I would not learn about her until graduate school. Feminism was not a term I knew while growing up and gender meant staying inside the perfectly formed, existing lines of knowing my place – a place that would eventually collide with the radical space of higher education.



Figure 3: McGarry, 2017, *White gender feminism learning to notice*, mixed media on paper, 11 x 8.5 in. Courtesy of artist.

While in graduate school, I elected a Women’s Studies minor alongside my MFA in studio art pursuit. When I shared this choice with the then-husband mentioned above, his response was a shrug, quickly adding, “but you’re not going to become a feminist are you?” His words continue to resonate in my “memoried” self, contributing to a critical incident in my identity transformation – if I was not a feminist, *what was I?*

The Women’s Studies courses introduced me to the Suffragists, the vote, and the writings of Marx, Engels, Wollstonecraft, Gilman, Addams, and Stanton, and in that knowledge, I sought to find myself as a sister feminist. And for a time, it worked. I became a feminist and divorced that husband, whose prophetic question seemed to predict that eventual outcome. My Women’s Studies minor, however, prescribed a journey into White feminism, a fact made obvious after reading a speech by Sojourner Truth (McKissack & McKissack, 1992) where I was confronted with the image I had constructed of “a feminist” as a White woman. I began to see the Whiteness-informed learning along my becoming-feminist pathway. The majority of voices I had read were those of White people, Steinem included. Truth’s speech ignited a fuse linked to Black feminist thinking. New voices were heard alongside Truth’s: Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker. I had been so wrapped up in the notion of women as an all-inclusive ideal, that I neglected to notice the vocal singularity shaping my feminist journey. Audre Lorde’s (2018) words highlight the Whiteness-normativity of historical feminist writing:

...white feminists have educated themselves about such an enormous amount over the past ten years, how come you haven’t also educated yourselves about Black women and the differences between us – white and Black – when it is key to our survival as a movement? (p. 20)

This critical incident forced me to recognize what was always already missing: the voices

and experiences of Black women. In Image 3, the found poem reads, “She was here before but she couldn't make herself talk to someone listening behind her.” The found poem lacks an antecedent, therefore, the use of she, her/herself is intentionally confusing, representing the back-and-forth, visible/invisible nature of representative Black and White voices encountered along my feminist learning journey. Redacting the page of text to reveal an alternative reading and collaging the words alongside a diorama image of nature and growth, formed a new interpretive text. The Black woman pictured is anonymous, redacted, seen, and unseen, signifying a learned feminist history edited through centered Whiteness.

In my teaching practice with PSTs, we examine our individual and intersectional identity formation (Pugach et al., 2019), socialized through a White-centric lens. For example, when we work on unit planning in art education methods courses, PSTs are asked to include relevant artists’ work as inspirational models highlighting big ideas. I stress to PSTs that they seek out contemporary artists, artists of color, women artists, and indigenous artists, all bridging intersections of identity, as exemplars of creative practice (Acuff, 2018). I seek to push PSTs to move beyond the artists represented within the historical canon that tends toward artwork made by, what I define as, the old, dead, White guys. My focus is not to exclude artworks made by Western, European, predominantly male artists, but to counter-story the traditional canonical approach to art history, artmaking, and issues of aesthetics and art criticism. If PSTs wish to include work by old, dead, White guys, I ask them to also include another artist whose voice might intersect historical periods and whose artmaking practice is situated among a wider cast of creative participants.

By counter-storying the art historical canon, my aim is not to build a new canon (perhaps rather to disturb or disrupt the canon) but to create cultural relevance in educational practices. A counter-story approach recognizes dominant narratives alongside, or in tandem with, counternarratives to challenge majoritarian voices: “From a critical race theory perspective, counter-narratives are needed to interrupt and disrupt voices of the dominant group” (Milner, 2007, p. 392): in this case, the art historical canon. Such practices embrace learning that aims to broaden awareness and transform the palette of artful practice. The counter-storying approach, away from the traditional focus on Western-Euro-centric art and artists, asks PSTs to “read the visual signs of past and present cultures” (Zwirn & Libresco, 2010, p. 35) across and through multiple intersectional perspectives.

When I model, for PSTs, an awareness of intersectional perspectives, I reveal inclusivity in action by exemplifying counter-stories and personal narratives outside hegemonic canons. By modeling such practice, I encourage PSTs to witness and note how counternarratives might function as a “cure for silencing” (Blaisdell, 2021, p. 5), inherent in dominant, canonical practices. I regard storied practices as examinations of art history and of artmaking that may omit, overlook, erase, or make invisible, thus silencing non-White voices. Instead, I encourage a search for intersectional awareness that speaks aloud.

Exhibit C: Race, Class, Power, and Privilege

When I reread, *Invisible Man* (Ellison, 1952), notions of erasure, leading to invisibility, astounded me: “I am an invisible man” (p. 3). Ellison’s words conjured an image of a man both there and not there, possibly seen but immediately erased. I was reminded of all the times Black men were made visible in the media throughout my life: when connected to crime. My transformation process taught me the intent behind the message: to dehumanize Black men. Such media representations failed to show a fellow human, but only an “other,” visible only within negative contexts. “For White Americans, the greatest challenge in achieving honest racial discourse is making the “invisible” visible” (Sue, 2013, p. 671), to see the elephant in the room within the words uttered by White-controlled racial discourse. Race dodging, colorblindness/colorism, or the constructed “race-evasive identities” of White people (Jupp et al., 2016) collectively dip into the well of words and phrases, effectively erasing direct engagement in discussions centering on race: *I don't see color...can't we all just get along...we are all the same under our skin...I didn't own*

slaves, etc., etc. (Picower, 2009; Sue, 2013). Once these words/phrases are evidenced in audible conversation, the elephant is exposed. Choosing to notice, to hear, to see, is awareness in action, a critique toward visible cognizance.

In the *New York Times*, Rankine (2019) wrote about active awareness in a story about engaging White men in dialogue about White privilege. She shared excerpts of conversations or comments heard with/by White men in airports and during flights. In one story, Rankine revisited a time when a White man told her, “I don’t see color.” His words gave her pause: “Was he thinking out loud? Were the words just slipping out before he could catch them?” (Rankine, 2019, p. 8). Her response was to ask if she was invisible. Did the White man seated next to her actually not see her? Rankine’s questions reference the notion of being unseen, or unrecognized, revealing evidence of race-evasive talk (Appelbaum, 2006; Blaisdell, 2021; Jupp et al., 2016; McIntyre, 1997). In speaking the silent parts out loud, Rankine noted how such utterances impact those who hear, witness, and evidence racialized discourse, further visualizing the elephant.

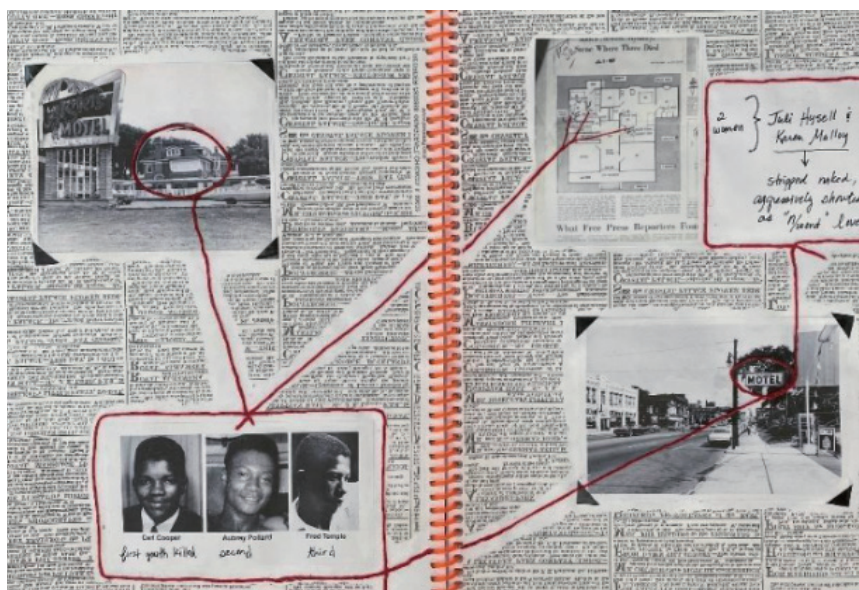


Figure 4: McGarry, 2017, *Tracing an unknown history*, mixed media on paper, 11 x 17 in. Courtesy of artist.

Making the 1967 Detroit riots visible in the pages of my 2017 journal showed an artistic choice: to see the elephant in the room and call witness to images, words, utterances, and memories and thoughts often left invisible. At the Algiers Motel during the Detroit riots, police were looking for a potential sniper they believed was in the motel (McGuire, 2017). The police wake left many people abused, bloodied, and beaten, and also left three young Black men dead: Carl Cooper (17), Aubrey Pollard (19), and Fred Temple (18). I do not own this memory. I never heard about this incident growing up. That part of history was craftily edited from the historical canon I encountered. The journal image was a way to witness a horrific period in an invisible part of my history, some 50 years after the fact. I do not believe this is unknown history; I believe it is known and deliberately veiled from existence. The actions taken along my awareness journey involved re-socializing my past by intersecting events and incidents omitted from normative – White – history and to more fully realize factual compositional spaces where elephants are seen.

The learning spaces I share with PSTs are constructed as awareness-building agentic environments. PSTs are asked to reflect in ways outside of traditional word-based models. They create journal pages and other compositional models to make their own thinking real, and visible. We discuss ways to become more anti-racist by critiquing “andro-ethno-hetero-centric” practices that promote erasure and invisibility (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008, p. 378). We make counter-stories problematizing educational practice and ask compelling pedagogical questions like: *How does our connection to art, to life, to humanity, to critiquing majoritarian norms impact the work we*

do? How might we learn to stretch our attention to words that matter and become more aware, more conscientized, and more antiracist? Perhaps the result of stretching consciousness may help these PSTs as students and as eventual art teachers to imagine spaces where “racial justice is the norm” and not “the exception” (Rogers & Mosley, 2008, p. 110).

These practices I model and we undertake support mindfulness through reflexivity. Critiquing my professional practice is an ongoing self-study process (Fitzgerald & Hetson, 2016; McGarry, 2021), facilitating awareness in action (Berry, 2004). One relevant practice I utilize while working in teacher education is Milner’s (2003) guide for reflective criticality on race. His writing impacts both what I practice and how I practice being a teacher educator. Reading his words and his rubric facilitates learning, for myself and PSTs, through reflexive attention to our own biases and socialization processes. Attending to my own word/idea usage is one way I witness what might be kept quiet or silenced in my discourse on/about race and race talk. My discourse reflexively flip the focus back onto “my own stories of teaching and learning about Whiteness and White identity” (Jupp et al., 2006, p. 1165) as more than skin color – as a critique of systemic power and privilege already articulated by a host of Critical Race Theory scholars and writers on operational Whiteness. Becoming an antiracist, by developing racial literacy, is a process of engaging in experiences with PSTs that attend to fostering dispositional awareness beyond university encounters and into relational K12 classroom practices (Rogers & Mosley, 2008).

Identity Becoming

The antiracist practices outlined in this chapter took years to discover/uncover. My transformative journey required time, critical attention, and a concerted excavation of my complicity in Whiteness normativity. Throughout this journey, I reckoned with intersections along racial, familial, gender, and social lines in a recurring visualization process of recognizing and thus engaging with meandering elephants in rooms. My journey represents a long road of: de-habitualizing (Montero, 2014), of dis-re-ruption of learned behaviors and attitudes (Milner, 2007), of critical reflection (Burbules & Burke, 1999; Ennis, 1991), of engaging in critical dialogue (Kress, 2011), of embracing counter-stories/narratives (Blaisdell, 2021), and of being a witness to my words and actions – endeavoring to say out loud those words and ideas that would be more comforting suppressed. Evidencing the intersections within my identity formation, transformation, and becoming provide a model of practice as a teacher educator, and a person. By articulating the uncomfortable memories within my identity, I make evident what only I can see in my mirror of time. In turn, I claim ownership of those “memoried” experiences as proof of continual, actionable, and agentic practice educating me out of ignorance and toward reflective awareness.

¹To view the billboard image, follow the link to: Library of Congress, Fifth Ave. East side, Gary, 1992, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018647054/> Credit Line: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, photograph by Camilo José Vergara, [reproduction number, e.g., LC-DIG-vrg-00305]

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Inside and Outside: Navigating through Cultural Transition and Identity Hybridity

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Inside and Outside: Here We Are

We live in a global multicultural society where we are greatly connected and influenced by one another. For the past several years, we went through isolation, separations, loss, distress, and trauma together. Currently, we face similar socioeconomic challenges, struggles, and depression no matter where we reside. We are all different individuals but have similarities and commonalities, and we experience things together in this globally connected world.

We can all experience, for example, the feelings of being an insider or an outsider based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, affiliation, legal status, socioeconomic status, religious background, or place, to name but a few. You can be an insider inside or an outsider outside—you can even be an outsider inside and an insider outside. If you are in a place where you are not a part of the majority, you might feel a sense of being different. Anyone can experience this feeling of foreignness anywhere, depending on the circumstances. Therefore, it is important to understand both sides of being an insider or an outsider, a majority or a minority, since anyone can become marginalized.

Everyone has stories to tell. And, regardless of background, everyone needs to be recognized, have their voices heard, and have their differences respected and celebrated. This is especially important in educational contexts; and art classes can be a safe space for sharing those individual differences, stories, and perspectives without being perceived as right or wrong.

In this chapter, through the framework of insider and outsider, I will introduce my personal and professional backgrounds and my art education practices, which were strongly impacted by those contexts. Also, I will provide other art educators with suggestions to encourage students to reflect on individuals' differences and commonalities. By doing so, I hope to open conversations about sociocultural situations which impact our connected identity and society.

Insider and Outsider: Who Am I?

As an Asian immigrant in a transnational context, I perceive and understand my identity in multilayered ways. This perception has evolved based on my accumulated experiences, relationships, and ongoing understanding of my surroundings (Koo, 2023). Due to my transnational experience of moving from Korea to the United States and my sociocultural transitional experiences within the United States, I have witnessed aspects of minority and majority communities in distinct settings. I never really thought about my racial, ethnic, and cultural identity when I was living in South Korea. But, when I came to the United States, I began to investigate who I am in different cultural and social situations. In this section, I will describe my cultural identities as an insider and outsider in my personal, institutional, and visual art contexts, and reflect on my sense of responsibility.

Part I: Myself

My perspectives on cultural identity have evolved significantly over the past decade. I was born in Seoul, South Korea where I lived for most of my life. In South Korea, over 90% of the population is racially and ethnically homogeneous Korean. I rarely saw non-Korean people in my daily life, except in the media. I never learned about my racial and ethnic backgrounds. I did not feel the need to reflect on my cultural identity as an Asian or Korean. I was not familiar with the concepts of race or ethnicity, majority or minority. As an insider, I was comfortable and looked for opportunities to work with people with diverse backgrounds.

After coming to the United States at the age of thirty, my experience changed completely. My identity as Korean—thus a minority - has kept impacting who I am. Whereas I never defined myself as Asian in Korea, here I am an obvious Asian foreigner wherever I go and whatever I do. My main research interest has thus become understanding minority groups.

I am a first-generation female Korean immigrant mother who came to the United States in 2011. My race, ethnicity, age, linguistic background, various relationships, gender, religious backgrounds, and evolving social/legal status impacted how I and others perceive who I am. I came here as an adult with limited knowledge of the cultural and societal contexts of this country. I had already completed both undergraduate and graduate schools with a terminal degree and established a career as a high school art teacher in Korea. However, here in the United States, I had to restart my study and build a career again as an international graduate student. Unlike younger international students or second-generation immigrants in the United States, I was alone and knew no one in this country. My English ability was extremely limited, and I had to learn everything without help from my family. My racial background has always been visible, and oftentimes people can even recognize my ethnicity due to my appearance or Korean accent. As an Asian female, I have frequently experienced gender and racial stereotypes and limitations. As a mother and a scholar, I see the importance of my work to general education and racial tensions/conflicts in daily life. Similarly, my evolving social and legal status, from an international student/legal non-resident alien to a faculty member/permanent resident has strongly impacted my professional path.

Part II: Institutions

As a faculty member, I have experienced two distinctive institutional settings in different parts of the United States with students from various backgrounds. My first full-time tenure-track position was at a small regional university in the Midwest with about 10,000 students. In 2016, 90% of the students were White, so I rarely had students of color in my art education courses. Similar to when I was in South Korea surrounded by homogeneous Koreans, students at this institution, most of whom had been born and raised in nearby towns or Midwestern states, rarely met others—people of color—on campus.

My second and current full-time tenured position is at a medium-sized regional university on the West Coast with about 25,000 students over 80% of whom are racial and ethnic minorities. About 57% are Hispanic, 12% are Asian, and 17% are White, resulting in the Hispanic-Serving Institution and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution designations by the U.S. Federal government. About 65% are first-generation college students whose parents came from another country as immigrants or refugees. So, I have rarely had White students in my art education courses at this school. Most students in my classes embody at least two different cultural backgrounds, which are integral parts of who they are. Students often talk about their parents' sacrifices for their education and mention their extended families still residing in South or Central America or Asia. Notably, the city where the institution is located is home to the largest Hmong population on the west coast and the second largest in the nation. Due to this context, most of the Asian students on campus share a Southeast Asian

cultural background and common narratives of their parents/grandparents as refugees.

The two distinct contexts broadened my understanding of the different dynamics that could exist in different institutions, despite being located in the same country. Because I have experienced both being a majority and minority, I could relate to my students in both institutions. As an insider in my previous home country, an ethnically homogeneous Korean society, I understood the limited perspectives of the White students in the White majority institution. As an outsider in my new home country, I understood the challenges my racial minority students have been facing on a daily basis. I have been able to observe how students perceive others, whether they were part of the majority or minority.

Witnessing the cultural gap between the two institutions led me to dedicate my academic research to serving the minority population. The White students belonging to the majority in my first institution were not aware of the struggles of the minorities, while my students in my current institution, most of them belonging to the minority, are underrepresented and underserved. Through my art education practice, this disparity incited me to focus on raising awareness of the stories of minorities to bridge the culture gap.

Part III: Visual Storying

Although visual art was a big part of my upbringing, I was not fully aware of its potential and power until I came to the United States. Upon moving, when my verbal and written languages became limited due to language differences, visual art opened an alternative space for me to easily communicate with others (Koo, 2023). Conveying viewpoints through visual art has helped me overcome the constraints of English. I realized the effectiveness of visual art as a new way of communication in my circumstance and the universality of that language. I could finally share my stories and experiences and be understood. It was a particularly effective tool with people of various cultural backgrounds, who lacked shared understandings. Regardless of my racial, ethnic, age, gender, or religious background, people paid more attention to what I wanted to convey. I came to develop Visual Storying (Koo, 2017, a conceptual framework that combines “Storying” (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014) and visual art. I conceptualized the notion to convey ideas and perspectives through visual language and collaboration with research participants/collaborators. As a minority and a non-native English-speaking researcher who was different from my peers, I began to find a path to express myself and help others to do so, by exploring cultural identities with this framework. Since then, I have shared many visual stories in kindergarten, community schools, doctoral courses, and professional conference settings, and people appreciated the openness, multiplicity, and accessibility of Visual Storying.

Additionally, by conversing through visual art, I could expand the understanding of my surroundings and build connections with others. While sharing thoughts in visual images, I was able to convey different perspectives, promoting further and deeper conversations. Different interpretations, viewpoints, and experiences became the sources of other meaningful discussions while developing awareness of our differences. At the same time, I could find common grounds and similarities with others and build positive relationships. And this was reciprocal. Those connections strengthened my sense of belonging in communities.

Part IV: Responsibilities

As a recent first-generation Korean mother and as an art educator, I developed a sense of responsibility to articulate my experiences and tell my story as an immigrant. Unlike the earlier Korean immigrants who came to the country to work before the 1960s, I came to the United States to study in graduate schools in 2011. The different purposes and situational factors add another dimension to the stories and experiences of Korean immigrants. Similar to other first-generation immigrants, I have experienced various transnational contexts, as I have been exposed to at least

two different cultures both as a majority and a minority. After being a minority in a new cultural context, I see the value of understanding differences. The cultural multiplicity has broadened my perspectives while enabling me to compare sociocultural structures and influences in diverse settings.

Since becoming a member of the minority, I have dedicated my research focus on promoting the efficacy of art to address cultural and social awareness, especially of the underrepresented and underserved. I lived my first thirty years without reflecting on sociocultural identity when I was a member of the majority. I came to deconstruct my own identity as I knew it, to reconstruct it as I evolved in my new environment. I became different but I was still myself. The immigration experience has deepened and expanded my understanding of the complexity, fluidity, and hybridity of sociocultural identities, which has fueled a lot of my research. While struggling to integrate into mainstream society, I realized that as an art educator, I could help bring awareness about the issues that minorities face throughout their immigration and integration journeys. For my academic research, I have been collaborating with many minority groups, empowering them and giving them a platform to share their voices and tell and document their stories. Helping others has also helped me. We were mutually supportive to grow and progressively becoming a larger minority.

Also, as a mother of a child with a multicultural background, I am deeply committed to changing people's stereotypes about others who are different from them. As more people relocate to other parts of the globe, it is important to understand cultural multiplicity, hybridity, and fluidity. My knowledge, experiences, and devotion can contribute to the narratives of recent Asian immigrants in different ways.

Furthermore, as an art teacher educator and a female scholar of color who has experienced distinctive institutions in different geopolitical contexts, I feel the responsibility to promote culturally respectful and inclusive education in multilayered ways (Koo et al., 2024). While teaching, I can share what I have learned and experienced with my students, mostly pre-service teachers, both racial/ethnic minorities and majorities. I believe that it is my responsibility to provide students with opportunities to be exposed to diverse perspectives and situations. In this way, students can be better prepared for this multicultural, connected society with an open-minded attitude. At my previous institution, I introduced different cultural aspects and ways of thinking to the students, who were mostly White. After transitioning to my current institution, I have reflected on various experiences of being a majority or minority in different regional and demographic contexts (Koo, 2019). My current students see the value of my experiences and appreciate the common backgrounds and have shown their empathy. In a way similar to many of my students, I have experienced cultural stereotypes and biases. In this context, I have been able to effectively promote cultural and social awareness and the celebration of differences.

Inside and Outside: Art Education Practices

My transnational experiences made me reconsider and re-examine the notion of identity as a majority and a minority. The fact that I have experienced both sides broadened my perspective as an art educator in higher education. In this section, I explain how cultural hybridization and struggles, identity confusion, and social influences played key roles in shaping my art education pedagogical approaches. Focusing on cultural diversity, social awareness, and the celebration of differences, I introduce two projects that highlight internal and external reflections in the two different institutional settings.

I, Internal Reflection

Thinking deeply about identities in educational settings is what I missed in my education. After my own sociocultural transitions, I realized the importance of internal reflections and making learning relevant to one's own life. By bringing their stories, experiences, backgrounds, and assets

into the art curriculum, students can understand and appreciate their surroundings. Sometimes students at my current institution reveal their social challenges or cultural struggles while talking about their everyday lives as immigrants of color (Koo, 2019). Their sociocultural backgrounds highly influence their perceptions of identity. I foster this aspect in my art education practice and invite my students to share their identities and experiences in a visual format—an alternative space and medium they may find easier to embrace and through which they could be better understood.

Due to my research on identity fluidity and complexity, I often begin with a unit focusing on cultural identity in my art education courses. The project that I will introduce first is rooted in the question “Who am I?” which I have used at two institutions with distinct demographic contexts. In this project, I ask students to rethink notions of identity and culture by reading articles and watching interviews with contemporary artists. Then, I encourage them to reflect on who they are as individuals and to visualize their identities through belongings, people, memories, and experiences that impact who they are. Students create photo collages or drawings in both digital and traditional formats (see Figures 1 & 2). I also ask them to include personal stories or cultural components which are important aspects of their life, because, by contemplating intimate stories, previous experiences, heritage aspects, and their influences, students can become more aware of how they have become who they are.



Figures 1 & 2. Undergraduate students' photo collages, 2022. Courtesy of the student artists.

In my first institution with mostly White students, several had a hard time with this project. Many seemed to be unfamiliar with the concept of cultural identity, and some told me that they do not have a culture. They revealed their limited perspective that culture is only what racial and ethnic minorities possess. Through activities designed to help them think about their knowledge, memories, experiences, and relationships, students began to share what had impacted who they currently are. Searching for their cultural signifiers and using them as symbolic visual images or keywords led them to think about those unfamiliar definitions of culture and cultural identity and their multiplicities of usage and interpretation.

In contrast, most students from my current institution actively presented their cultural symbols and influences, since their parents or entire families still follow their heritage customs in their home settings. Students have strong connections to and feel proud of their cultural traditions, which are often presented in their narratives and artworks. Because they keep many of their cultural customs including food or cultural celebrations in their community, those are great influences in their everyday lives.

In both institutions, students recognized the values of communication at both the personal and academic levels. First, they revealed their appreciation of internal, intimate communication—the chance to look back and think about their identities and cultures. The art project enabled them to explore their daily

lives in depth, care about their surroundings, and present them uniquely through visual language. During this process, students had the invaluable opportunity to talk with their family and friends intimately about their identities and influences. Secondly, they appreciated the time when they shared their own stories and experiences with their peers. Students pointed out that they learned more about others' stories than they normally do in academic settings.

Referring to Hannah Arendt's approach to teaching, Maxine Greene (1995) stated that "We need to have and to teach self-reflectiveness originating in situated life, the life of persons in their plurality, open to one another in their distinctive locations, engaging with one another in dialogue" (p. 126). Students' internal reflections echoed this approach. During the process of brainstorming, making, and sharing their art with others, students reflected on who and what has influenced their identities, and how they have evolved through those relationships and experiences. While sharing their own stories through visual images, students learned from one another, developed an understanding of their surroundings, and finally embraced sociocultural differences.

Others, External Reflection

The opportunities to discuss locality and globalism through examining our surroundings are pivotal in my art education practice. I intentionally create a space for critical dialogue where students can revisit their views about others and social issues. By facilitating projects focusing on those external reflections, I aim to promote awareness of students' surroundings, which include people who have different backgrounds and the social issues that impact their daily lives.

Students from both institutions expressed their lack of understanding of others in different contexts. In some cases, they lacked exposure to other cultures and opportunities to learn about their cultural practices. In other cases, despite being exposed to multiple cultures, students were not aware of other instances of cultural multiplicity or fluidity in different settings. For example, I showed the same video about racial inequality and cultural inclusion to students at both institutions. The video included various voices of students of color from my first institution. Many students from the first university revealed that they were unaware of the struggles and challenges that students of color experience in their everyday lives. In contrast, students from my current institution were shocked by the fact that students of color at another university experienced struggles that were worse than what they had experienced themselves.

Through art activities and critical dialogues, I encourage students to reflect on how they and others perceive or portray other people. With analytic reflection, students have opportunities to reconsider stereotypes, especially about those of different backgrounds, as well as media and social influences on these biased perceptions. Starting with examining their surroundings, students share visual images which reflect stereotypes about others and their cultures. At my first institution, many students brought images of a local sculpture that misrepresents a Native American tribe. Students critically analyzed why and how the statue could lead to cultural stereotypes and misunderstandings. Similarly, students at my current institution criticized cultural misrepresentations and biases based on their own experiences as members of minority groups. Those opportunities caused them to reevaluate their surroundings.

Furthermore, I ask students to think about who is and is not included in mainstream society, and how they are perceived in our community. As explained in the previous section, my current institution has about 65% first-generation college students, most of whose parents migrated from other countries. Also, about 12% of the total students are Asians, whose background is mostly from Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, art education often relies heavily on Eurocentric texts and images. Refugee or immigrant experiences are rarely a main focus in academic settings. For instance, my Hmong students seldom had opportunities to learn about their culture in a classroom setting; so, I invited Pao Houa Her, a Hmong American immigrant artist, to our class as a guest artist to share various perspectives through her artworks. During the lecture, the artist introduced her perspectives and interpretations of Hmong identity and her own family stories in the context of a cultural transition from Laos to the United States. Students were surprised and excited by this cultural representation that they had not experienced in their previous learning environment. After the lecture, many students stated that Pao Houa's work resonated with their upbringing as 1.5 or second-generation immigrants. These exposures to stories of other people made many students want "to know more about others," and to "learn about cultures and experiences of people to better reflect [on] all people," "while also creating diversity within [our] classroom" (personal communications, October 2022).

Students have further opportunities to reflect on diverse social issues in my art education courses. By

engaging in contemporary sociocultural issues that students are interested in, they deepen their understanding of what impacts their daily lives. In particular, we discussed multiple racial and political issues during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figures 3 & 4). Students visualized diverse aspects of social situations including Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, anti-Asian hate crimes, political tensions around the globe, and vaccine-related debates. Through visual expression, students pointed out their common concerns and connectedness, which spur active discourses. For instance, a student reminded all her peers of the criticality, urgency, and continuation of racism in our daily lives through her digital drawing (Figure 3). She stated that “2020 and 2021 ha[ve] been flooded with these types of [racial] crimes and made me reflect that nothing has really changed. There are still people that believe the color of your skin determines whether you are worthy or not” (personal communications, March 2021). The powerful visual message awakened her classmates that they had pushed those important topics onto their “back burner.” A student acknowledged that “you are right when you say that things aren’t changing. Imagine how many names will be added to the list if we don’t start making a difference” (personal communications, March 2021). Impactful visual images spurred a critical dialogue in a classroom setting that expanded students’ comprehension of their everyday lives.



Figures 3 & 4. Undergraduate students’ digital drawings, 2021. Courtesy of the student artists.

Similarly, another student shared her artwork, Figure 4, with peers and emphasized that:

[the year of 2020] was a hectic time for all, so I chose to use bright colors that bring attention to anyone who happens to come across it. It’s messy and all over the place just like the year alone. It is an event that affected everyone, and some of the events are still happening today. (personal communications, March 2021)

Responding to this artwork, students agreed that it “taught us a lot of things that we weren’t aware of before” and the artwork effectively demonstrated what we all went through together. The reflections, conversations, and learning experiences among students with different perspectives enlarged their understanding of themselves, others, and society.

Who Are We? Reflections of Differences and Commonalities

I have encouraged students to acquire multiple perspectives in seeing and interpreting the lives and values of others, shedding light on underrepresented stories and issues, especially of minority people. The new reciprocal learning approaches helped my students undergo transformative learning which led to dramatic shifts in their understanding of their own identities and those of their peers. In this section, I will suggest two art educational strategies incorporating identity reflections of differences and commonalities in art education curricula.

First, I suggest that art educators consider helping students to see the differences among people by providing a safe space where they can share individual differences and various viewpoints. Before globalization, people were raised within the same community where everyone shared similar values. Individuals lacked opportunities to be exposed to other cultures and grasp varied standpoints. By contrast, with increased migration both temporary and permanent, and the development of online spaces, few can live in a cultural vacuum in this contemporary multicultural society. However, our differences can still be neglected or misinterpreted for various reasons (Lorde, 2020). According to Lorde (2020), “It is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences...” (p. 105). If we do not offer enough opportunities for our students to contemplate and share their distinctiveness, they will have a limited understanding of differences and appreciation of others from different sociocultural backgrounds, resulting in both intentional and unintentional exclusion.

To address this challenge, I create an inclusive space in my art education practice where students can reflect on their own identities. In that space, students are invited to share their unique stories and perspectives with their peers. In the process, they expand their understanding of various cultural backgrounds. I also provide students with various opportunities to be exposed to different sociocultural contexts. They critically analyze their existing perceptions and stereotypes that cause misrepresentations of others and their cultures. While exploring others’ viewpoints and listening to the perspectives of their peers, students revisit their cultural appropriation and expand their cultural appreciation. Students can reconstruct new cultural understandings as their peers are deconstructing the stereotypes.

By reflecting on themselves and their surroundings, reconsidering existing perspectives and visualizing them in art, listening to their peers’ stories and observing their art-making processes, and communicating with others, students become more socially and culturally informed in this global context. The learning process, coming from both their internal and external reflections, exposes them to various perspectives and situations that they might not be familiar with. Also, as described previously, art educators may invite other scholars and contemporary artists to share their professional expertise and scholarship and expose students to settings beyond their classrooms. By participating in lectures and workshops facilitated by national and international scholars, students expand their understandings, which may have been limited to their local societal contexts.

Our differences are positive. Our differences represent our richness. They mean diversity, creativity, originality, and strength. Because through our diversity, we complement each other. We can accomplish greater things, by capitalizing on our differences.

Second, I encourage art educators to offer collaborative learning opportunities so that students can discover their commonalities in addition to their differences. We are social beings. We influence others and, at the same time, we are impacted by them. To live in this connected global society, we as art educators should draw our students' attention to our connectedness and similarities while providing them with opportunities to work together regardless of their different sociocultural backgrounds. In the process of collaborative reflection, we can build a sense of community. This can be accomplished through collaboration within the classroom or university as well as outside the immediate learning environment. For instance, I have initiated and participated in multi-institutional projects for the past several years. My students, with their unique cultural and regional backgrounds, met and worked with students in other parts of the nation. While sharing their different surroundings and contexts, students discovered that they had similar experiences, struggles, and accomplishments, leading them to see their connectedness despite their different geographical locations. Expanding their learning community through multidimensional collaborative opportunities helps our students be prepared to interact with an increasingly connected community.

Here We Are Together, A Whole Circle

We select which stories become alive when we share them. I have told my unique story. But my story is also similar to those of other minorities. My transnational experiences have inevitably shaped my identity, not because I wanted to, but because I had to. The deeper understanding of my intersectionality as a female, a person of color, an immigrant, and a parent with a multicultural family background, and my students' multilayered contexts as Mexican immigrants and South Asian refugees and their descendants, has laid down the foundation of my evolving teaching approaches, which aim to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion. Through conceptualizing Visual Storying, I found a way to connect with people—particularly with my students. Images are powerful because they can be interpreted by all cultures regardless of language. We can convey ideas via images while reconsidering and learning about our differences through internal and external reflections.

Understanding one another and sharing different stories allowed me to create a space of empathy and trust. This became a fundamental part of my teaching framework in my classroom for effective learning while promoting the celebration of diversity. The safe space nurtured a positive environment for untold stories to become told.

It is easy to dismiss someone else's struggles when you are not directly impacted, but you must remember that tomorrow, you can become what you reject today. You can be a majority in one context but a minority in another. Indeed, people have their unique differences and individualities; but when you take the time to step back, you realize we have more in common than may first meet the eye.

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Wandering Between Arts and Education

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I could never explain myself with words! How can I think of myself as a woman, mother, artist, teacher, and researcher? I try to understand myself in these multiple and complementary facets. I cannot separate it; I can't even collate it. I can't see myself. I can only perceive my shadows along the paths of my wanderings. In this text, I opted for a narrative of my life as a journey, mapping the situations and people who influenced me as an artist or as an art teacher. Looking back to my past as an artist teaching visual arts, I found a journey full of questions, doors that were never closed, waiting for a future revisit that I may leave to others. As I walk through my present, I am now 62 years old, and I feel tired and sometimes puzzled. I suppose this is normal at my age after having seen so many turns in the different scapes of society. I was born in the time of radio and analog photography, with the printed press, in a time where long-distance traveling was not common, the time was measured by mechanical clocks and people used real money to trade, I remember when I was a child to listen to stories about difficult times of inequity, poverty, war, colonial dominance, and censorship. Today I listen to other stories, with different technologies but with the same inequity.

Through the decades I put all my efforts into understanding the complexity of numerous human relationships, avoiding complications to deal with the important things without losing the entire picture of the situation. Many times, I felt a negative force pushing me away from the specialized circles of art and educational research, because I didn't fit in the standard size of an artist or educational career. To fight against such entropies, I always carry water to take care of the encounters of my life. Maybe, because I am a woman, I chose the metaphor of water, recognizing myself in the liquid element, in the fluidity of becoming other.

And in these encounters, I was privileged enough to meet wonderful artists and educators. I followed my destiny in the impossibilities of life, walking a path full of enchantments and open to new encounters. Without haste, following intuitions more than directions, I let myself be carried away by forces whose origin I don't know, in the drift of the tides that take me to ports where companions from other places had welcomed me.

Mapping

Maybe I can draw this journey that made me a person, by drawing the 'map of the self', starting from today, drawing the shadows on the roads of yesterday.

Think of yourself today as the educator that you are, to observe the connections between your beginning and what you would like to become. Draw your silhouette to dialogue with the course of your life of teaching and learning. Leave spaces to locate positive events outside the line and negative events inside it. Place circles, signs,... write words. Focus on joints, curve points, memorable moments, or mark milestones (Agra Pardiñas, 2010, p.27).

I am in-between places, stepping on frontiers, inserted between different, sometimes antagonistic, fields. I feel like a hybrid made up of various understandings that coexist in precarious balances. Between arts and education, between arts education and education through art. Between aesthetics; politics and ethics. I live in antagonist situations of the normalized school education, where I am expected to teach concepts of modernist art and train students for future high education courses and careers in creative industries. And in the same time, I am expected to bring transversal education topics that are included but not evaluated by the school system of my country. Every day students face me and I face them in this complex student-teacher relationship, both of us are terrified, bound by different expectations, different beliefs, and different ways of seeing education. During my teaching career, I claimed project-based didactics, for conversational processes of inquiry and learning. With others, I dreamed of poetry and critical thinking in education, for a utopian school of possibilities.

[...] From a vision increasingly focused on a school that breaks the traditional molds and establishes itself open to the contexts; of a school in continuous change due to the action of its protagonists: a school as a project; therefore, imagined and imaginal, traversed throughout by the image [...] (Salort, 2007, p 1).

The great majority of students expect to have good grades to enter the university, this is the most important for them. And sometimes I think I don't listen. I should pay more attention to students' expectations. My colleagues, and teachers of Drawing, think teaching how to draw realistic representations of objects, human figures, and spaces is the core of our subject in high school: 'Drawing They Must'. Maybe I should listen to them! Drawing is wonderful, and we can explore many political and social engaged topics through drawing, I learned with the times that it all depends on the perspective, and we can make positive learning experiences with very traditional syllabuses.

In the last decades, I saw art education lose curricular space in many European educational policies, encompassing the ideological turn of aggressive finance-scaping and ambiguous ideological-scapes. Although soft skills are sometimes listed in twenty-first-century educational policies, it is not valued; sciences and technologies are esteemed to be much more important.

The methods are based on memorization and repetition. Reason prevails. The emotion is banished. The rules between generations are impersonal. This form and grammar survive to the present..... Even the new knowledge is adapted to stagnant structures, causing friction or directly closing the doors. It is necessary to ask then, as, Anthony Giddens did, if the school is nothing more than a shell institution, that is to say, if it is in a position to respond to the requirements for which it was established (Kon, RIAEA, 2009, p 2)

In my arts education map, there are many references to Latin American arts educators, such as Ana Mae Barbosa, Ramon Cabrera, and Victor Kon who claimed for change and made me think that each art educator is an agent of change. No matter how and with what, I remember an art educator from Belgium who was teaching arts processes of inquiry in a subject called Ethics. The subjects are not so important, the important aspects are the memories that we can build together through arts education. I learned how to create activist strategies in a normal classroom, looking for the fissures in the walls, in those hybrid small spaces between the norm and the transgression, as art educator Ana Mae Barbosa (2008) has claimed the utopian spaces of arts education.

Draw your silhouette from yesterday

Draw your silhouette from yesterday, the one from your beginnings with those words you had at that time. What was your impression of your first day in front of the desk in the office or behind it as a beginner? (Agra Pardiñas, 2010, p.27)

I kept from childhood the age of the whys and the dazzle before life. I kept the smell and colors of the land and trees in the village where I was born. I never forgot the fantastic stories of the old women about taking care of the Earth and the silence of the forest. I remember a time when time was a slow pace. I kept the joy, the colors, and the ability to marvel. I grew up in different places, different countries, in the same Europe, I remember the colors of autumn in Porto, which peeked out from behind the grey windows of the boarding school. I remember the smell of Parisian gardens during my adolescence. During my adulthood I traveled across different continents, I remember the smiles of the people I met in some cities and I remember the colors of the sky. I remember the potter's blessing in Jeonju in South Korea and the singing of the boys from Deák Diák primary school in Budapest. Today I understand myself, as a woman, in a Southern cultural context. By Southern I mean a sense of belonging to hybrid cultures; multiple viewpoints and slow pace ways of living.

I was a silent child and a difficult teenager. In primary school, I used to make flowers around the holes in the calligraphy paper. I remember a visual education teacher who made me cry during the art classes because I tended to make a mess with all the painting and glue. I was not a good student or very popular. I devoured books of any type and size, I read everything I could find. I remember to enjoy reading Dostoevsky when I was 12 years old, maybe because at the time, in the boarding school, it was a forbidden author. I vaguely remember the carnation revolution in 74 and the end of the dictatorship in my country.

After that, I had extra art classes in Paris with a surrealist painter, he believed I could be a painter. I remember the box of Holbein oil pastels and the Canon camera my father gave me. My mother would prefer another career for me. I did a scientific option in the high school in Paris in the late seventies, It was not a glamorous time, after the heroes of 68, but it was certainly a time of great changes. I returned to Portugal in 1980 to attend the Fine Arts School in Porto, and there I read Herbert Read who influenced me a lot.

When I finished five years at the Porto Fine Arts School, I wasn't so sure that I wanted to pursue a career as an artist. Having participated in some exhibitions on the art circuit of young Portuguese artists, I soon realized I did not have the social skills to survive in the closed circle of galleries and critics. I started teaching Visual Education, reconciling classes with individual artistic production, in the areas of painting, ceramics, and graphic novels. During the nineties I organized several group exhibitions on alternative circuits, this gave me some cultural production skills for further projects on community arts. At the time, this dual career, the so-called Artists Teachers, was very common.

My first years as a teacher were a revelation of a world that I had never known before, of social strata that I had never touched, of affection and tenderness that I had never imagined. I was a lousy teacher, with no pedagogical training. I did what the more experienced colleagues told me to do. I followed the visual education textbooks, which were very much influenced by Bruno Munari and post-Bauhaus pedagogies of elements and principles of visual communication. I remember my classes at a junior secondary school, in a very poor neighbourhood of Porto, in the mid-eighties. I was scared by the context: a reality so strong, so cruel and so alive! But I was fascinated by the affection and rebelliousness of the children. So, I decided to dedicate myself to that profession that scarred and enchanted me. Because I felt through this emotional path of arts in education I could

make a small change in the life of students.

I did my pedagogical certificate to be an art teacher in a city in the North of Portugal, I don't have good memories of that training, it was an example to avoid in teacher training: an arrogant social sciences discourse imported from Boston, where the tutors had made their training.

At the end of the eighties, the digital revolution appeared with affordable computers, I need to confess here, that I was enthusiastic about the possibilities both in art and education. I explored hypertext creation with the students and colleagues in a school project. In the mid-nineties, the Internet (web 2.0) became accessible to everyone. I started participating in discussion forums for artists and art educators where I met many interesting people. From one moment to the next, I could make contact with people on the other side of the world, exchanging ideas and opinions with other artists. With the collective R2001 we explored drawings, music, and poetry as digital performances. I organized with some of them, poets, illustrators, musicians, and plastic artists, the project 'Land Without Borders' in three cities in Portugal, at the time of Kosovo war. During that project with the Norwegian illustrator Wilfred Hildonen, Icelandic poet Birgitta Jonsdottir and the American writer Ron Whitehead, we co-created a Manifesto claiming an activist role of the artist against the causes of violence and war; strengthening the relationship between art, science, and technology and to reduce the objects and to foster the reflection about them. Following that, with the activist print-maker Seijii Ueoka and web designer Sharif Ezzat, we organized two artist residences with other members of the R2001 group at the Cerveira Art Biennial, in Portugal, in 2001 – UTUTU and in 2003- UTUTU/ eARTh (Eca et al, 2004). During the final performance of the residence, we asked the public to interact with the artists' drawings and vice versa using Internet communication so that artists from other spaces could participate in real-time, in the second collective performance we chose the theme 'Conflicts' and Seijii held continuous sessions of tea ceremonies with the audience for four days. At the time, there were no social networks, and the real-time connection was depending on a very low bandwidth connection, but anyway, we tried out something really amazing: the collaboration of several persons in a collective work using digital means!

Networks

During the end nineties and the beginning of the first decade of the twenty-first century, I was experimenting with new territories in arts, and it certainly influenced my perception of art education. I made an MA course in arts education and a Ph.D. at the University of Surrey/ Roehampton, UK where I met influential art educators such as Rachel Mason and John Steers. My supervisor John Steers introduced me to the International Society for Education Through Art (INSEA), where I later served as World Councillor, Vice President, and President, I can say InSEA really changed my life, because of all the encounters with amazing art educators in the Society.

Research

After my Ph.D., I returned to teach in secondary school and started to be more and more involved in the Portuguese Association of Teachers of Visual Expression and Communication (APECV). I disseminated the results of my Ph.D. research about using portfolios for assessment in visual arts in in-service teachers' training courses and started to make other research studies as an independent researcher. With art educators I met in InSEA congresses I conducted a study about young people's narratives through drawings (Eca, Kroupp, Lam (2009), and with Milbrand, Shin, and Hsieh, we carried out a study about visual Arts Education and the challenges of the Millennium goals (Eca et al, 2017). I also collaborated on European Projects with other InSEA members such as Create-Creative Primary School Partnerships with Visual Artists (Eca; Elzerman, Maksimovic, 2017). But little by little my research interests moved towards other arts education contexts, especially in community arts, participatory arts, and participatory action research. The last project I was involved in was the European-funded Project Acting on the Margins: Arts as

Social Sculpture (AMASS), an arts-based action research project through participatory approaches, using practical methods from the field of service design to explore the role of the arts in mitigating societal challenges, aiming at capturing, assessing and harnessing the societal impact of the arts and further generate social impact through policy recommendations (Saldanha et al, 2021). I believe this long path gave me some knowledge about the world of research and project management. However, I don't work in any university, which is in one way a positive aspect, because of the freedom of research projects to undertake, but it can be very frustrating in terms of recognition and financing options. Very often, research is seen as possible only for university professors.

Visibility of the different voices

On my trips, especially to InSEA congresses, I meet wonderful people: researchers who marked me a lot, like Rita Irwin and the concept of a/r/tography. A/r/tography has been broadly characterized as a practice-based research methodology (Springgay et al, 2007) that provides a flexible framework for a process of inquiry encouraging (Irwin et al, 2006) and encounters between people rhizomatic connections and ideas.

I met art educators working in arts education as social transformation, art therapy, arts and emancipation, and I have been wondering about arts education as a form of community art. From my trips to Egypt, I was puzzled by the urgent need to bring art to the world of education with disabled people. From the trips to China, I brought more and more questions about celerity, big data, and creativity. In Colombia, I understood how arts in education can transform communities. I felt I needed to show the work of the art educators I meet on these paths, to make their voices visible, especially for those who are not native English speakers and are constantly left out of the arts education mainstream (Eca & Barbero, 2015), and this made me propose a visual journal for InSEA: the IMAG magazine (<https://www.insea.org/imag/>). Having organized the first 10 volumes with several guest editors from Latin America, Africa, Asia, the US, and Europe, I am very happy because it offered me working with an excellent editorial team, letting the voices of art educators around the world be expressed beyond the constrictions of hegemonic languages.

C3

I learned by creating artistic situations with others. At APECV, the Portuguese Association of Teachers of Visual Expression and Communication, where I have been working for the last 15 years, we slowly engaged in socially engaged arts and education; working more and more with artists and communities. We intended to broaden the horizons and bring social and collaborative arts, inviting artists and teachers to make residences and workshops for children and adults in vulnerable community settings. In our in-service teacher training activities, we fostered the inclusion of contemporary artistic processes as pedagogical strategies.

In 2012. With other colleagues, we started a fantastic adventure exploring the potential of collaborative artistic work. The first project called collaborative books, was based on activist sketchbooks (Eca and Saldanha, 2017), passing from hand to hand. Later with the InSEA project Artgila 123 the same strategy was used to enhance and value the artist in the art teacher (Eca, 2022). In this line of work, the encounter with artist, art educator, and researcher Maria Jesus Agra-Pardiñas and involvement with the C3 group was essential. With Maria Jesus, I learned how to use performances in educational settings to promote intercultural understanding and respect for others through collaborative arts education situations (Eca et al, 2012). I also learned a lot with younger researchers in C3 like Cristina Trigo and Angela Saldanha; walking side by side with them in wandering and drifting processes. With C3, I am now working on the participatory arts project Textile cartographies. The Project aims to study the potential of textile arts making and the role of arts and crafts in society to open new horizons for micropolitical actions and democratic participation in the general debate about environmental sustainability (<https://textilecartographies>).

Wandering

In my quests around collective situations and arts education, I found a permeable process in the relationships between people and places, and in the act of walking as a sensory activity and a learning experience. I am interested in these experiences because it is multifaceted, encompassing various artistic dimensions as a method of questioning and pedagogical action (Heddon et al, 2019). Walking as a pedagogy has been affirmed in publications in the field of arts education (Snepvangers & Susan, 2019; Henderson et al; 2021).

Wandering can even be a state of resistance, where our vulnerability acquires nuances of collective affirmation, a space for questioning and resistance (Henderson et al; 2021). Walking collectively can be useful for the practice of decolonization, where issues of power and cultural hegemony are debated (Yoon-Ramirez, 2021). Together with my colleague Angela Saldanha we have organized collective situations, where walking actions are facilitated as wandering experiences and learning experiences through a gift to break the ice and a metaphor to reflect upon the landscape. We have found that artistic processes such as wandering, drifting, or walking through a landscape may be powerful political and pedagogical actions. We have used it to elicit dialogue on transdisciplinary topics as varied as climate justice; species extinction; water and eco-pedagogy (Saldanha & Eca, 2021).

Narratives

I don't know how to conclude this narrative. I don't have any right or wrong answers. I suppose when we engage ourselves in auto-reflective processes and autobiographical writing it is not easy to find conclusion remarks, because the conclusion is the negation of the path, denying the multifaceted aspects of life. Being compromised with wandering and drifting processes, with arts as a form of life, my narratives are always maps of becoming other, through learning encounters. So, my narratives as a woman, as an artist, and art educator are multiple and tend to have complementary facets in a rhizomatic time process that materialized in the shadows along the paths of my wanderings, in the marks of the encounters that helped me to question, to understand, to accept and to be fascinated by arts in all contexts of education.

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The Identity Exploration of a Korean Immigrant Art Educator and a Researcher of Korean Women's Art, *Bojagi*

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As an art educator, my background is quite different from that of typical art educators who majored in art or art education in their undergraduate studies. Not only was my undergraduate major completely unrelated, but I also have no experience teaching art in grade schools. Nonetheless, I write this narrative in the hope that my experiences in becoming an art educator in the US as a Korean immigrant woman may help or inspire others who come from atypical backgrounds but share a similar professional goal.

First Jogak¹

My life in the US began in 1987 as a rather casual trip with only two big suitcases in hand. At that time, I had already graduated college with a degree in English Literature and was working as a TV producer. I had also just gotten married, so I took a two-year leave of absence to recharge myself by experiencing the US. It was on this trip that I received two priceless gifts that would change my life—my child and art. As soon as my leave of absence was up, I resigned from work and went right back to the US to pursue a new path in life with art. In Korea, we call all sorts of luggage *bottari* (a bundle made with *Bojagi*). There is a saying in Korea—if you pack *bottari*, it means you are leaving something old (whether that is a job or a home). And if you unpack *bottari*, it means you are starting something new or settling in. So, the second chapter of my life began in the US with a literal packing and unpacking of *bottari*.

My first encounter with visual art language was when I took my first drawing class as a special student. The first assignment we were given was to draw still life using only values. It stumped me because I did not know how to interpret the world of vivid colors using only the black charcoal I had in hand. But slowly, as I learned how to ignore colors, I began to see the world through values--the subtle but also stark ways the world could be portrayed in light, dark, and all manner of subtle gray in-between. That is when I realized that as beautiful and stirring colors can be, they can be just as superficial and distracting. In the simplicity of values, there is a world of hidden depth and substance that can cut straight to the essence of things. So to me, this class was not just about art but also philosophy. As such, visual art language became a philosophical and metaphoric language to me.

I felt deeply that I wanted to share this joyful realization with others so that they could also view the world in a new way like me, and it was then, I believe, that my identity as an art educator was conceived. Ever since it has become my wish to help others see inner spiritual values embedded in visual things and read them metaphorically for meaning by using visual language as a tool.

¹ Jogak means a piece in Korean.

Second Jogak

However, I did not know how to materialize my wish until I applied to a master's degree program for art education and met my mentor, Dr. Noel Lawson, at Radford University. Despite my humble and unorthodox portfolio, he saw my potential. I am forever indebted to him for seeing beyond the surface, believing in me, and ushering me into the world of art education. And to this day, I strive to imitate him by seeing the potential of my students as well.

During my master's study, I worked as a work-study student for post-production in school where I produced computer graphics for TV and learned non-linear digital video editing, which was still a new field in computer graphics design. It was also when many schools were beginning to talk about the possibility of using the World Wide Web in education. I have to say that I was one of the first beneficiaries of what the 1990s technological revolution injected by the Internet offered. The skill set that I attained during this period prepared me well for the next phase of my life.

Later during my doctoral study, another great benefit of studying in the US that I received was multicultural education. Even though it was a big social and educational agenda in the US at that time, it was an entirely new concept for someone like me coming from Korea, a society of homogeneous culture. Consequently, the concept of multicultural art education made a great impact on me and woke me up to the challenge. And as a temporary resident living in the US, I could easily empathize with its importance. So, armed with technology and multicultural education, I was able to develop the department's first website as well as the very first art education methods course teaching both computer technology and multicultural art education at Florida State University. I also taught this course and used my experience for my dissertation, which became the basis for landing my professional art education teaching job in the US.

One of the biggest assets from my graduate studies that I still cherish is the supportive school atmosphere toward foreign students along with the bond formed among students in the doctoral program at Florida State University. I have fond memories of traveling together to unfamiliar cities to attend NAEA conferences in a jam-packed car and spending nights together in a single, crowded hotel room to save money. These experiences led to an enduring comradery that became a rich soil for professional collaboration in the art education field even after graduation.

However, despite the support I enjoyed, there were unique challenges I had to face as a Korean immigrant student. Toward the end of my doctoral studies, my graduate advisor warned me that my prospects of getting a job in the US were not good. It was understandable, since at the time, there was no precedent for a foreign student from Korea in the department getting a job in the US after graduating. Not to mention, I did not have any teaching experience in grade schools. Still, since I had first learned about art in the English language, and Korea at the time had no place for multicultural education, I felt strongly that my passions and goals would best be realized in the US. So, despite having the odds against me, I applied for jobs in America.

Third Jogak

Thankfully, my gamble paid off as Chicago State University decided I met their needs. For the first time as a teacher, I faced a different kind of multicultural challenge as a Korean immigrant when I met my students who were mostly underrepresented minority students. I found myself as a minority in front of my minority students. Like many Asian faculty, I had to work on my communication skills, especially with my students who had a unique command of the English language, with rhythms and tones that I was not familiar with at the time. And I am sure that my students must have felt the same way about my English.

Since multicultural education can happen only where mutual respect prevails, I wanted to establish mutual ground where cultural exchange could freely take place and our differences be embraced (Fullinwider, 1991). In that endeavor, I decided to take an unorthodox approach by introducing myself in Korean on the first day of class. Students were puzzled, but I continued to speak in Korean and write my name in Korean along with two Chinese characters associated with my name.

By the time that students zeroed in on me in their effort to understand me better, I finally, in English, explained the meaning of my name and what the two Chinese characters meant, and why the official use of Chinese characters in Korean names has been the culture in Korea for many years. Often, students responded enthusiastically by asking me to write their names in Korean and asking many additional questions about Korean culture.

Out of respect, I also determinedly tried to use the original pronunciation of names for students from Africa or Arabic-speaking countries. By the end of class, we all felt much closer by nurturing a classroom environment that respected other cultures and a willingness to listen, which helped reduce the communication gap. In this way, I was able to establish a multicultural environment for the class from the beginning, and it paved the road to introduce more Korean culture and art throughout the semester whenever I could.

Fourth Jogak

Bojagi lessons, which I shared in the International Society for Education Through Art (InSEA) publication², began as a metaphor-based multicultural art project that I did with my elementary education and art education students. Based on the book *Art for Life*, we were exploring three themes: awareness of self, awareness of others, and awareness of place (Anderson and Milbrandt, 2005). Under the theme of awareness of others, students first created a concept map by recording their family members along with eventful memories of each member and then translating each member's characteristics into metaphors in terms of visual language or visual objects. Next, reflecting on the concept map, students searched their family resources to collect associating items and created a textile art by tying and threading those objects freely and creatively into one united whole. Later, the lesson culminated with installation and performance.³

Students brought many intriguing objects including cultural food, music, voice recordings, souvenirs, and quilts to their performance and shared their family stories and experiences with others in the class. I was so touched by their authentic voice and storytelling, which I had not heard from doing other lessons. As I was listening to a female student's soulful voice as she shared her own family's story of African-American women's art and quilts, I finally realized that authentic learning comes from the heart and not the head.

As a Korean immigrant art educator, *Bojagi* lessons were my part done as the extension of this project as I looked into my own root culture and the *Bojagi* that my mother had given me when I had gotten married. I found that the more I meditated on *Bojagi*, the more I felt that all the values embedded in *Bojagi* - Keeping Memories, Wrapping Blessings, Recycling, and Virtuous Living⁴ - were the culturally nurtured, personal values that my mother had shared with me until she passed (Shin et al., 2017).

Identity is understood as a social construct developed with experiences that constantly shape the self (Trede, 2012). My identity as a researcher of *Bojagi* was constructed over many years of sustained effort to share traditional Korean women's art in American schools. In 2005, I wrote a grant with colleagues to invite a *Bojagi* artist to the campus to share *Bojagi* in Chicagoland and presented metaphor-based *Bojagi* at the 2006 National Art Education Association (NAEA) Conference based on my grant research. For my sabbatical year in 2013, I decided to do more focused research on *Bojagi* at Duksung Women's University in Korea, for their museum was well known for housing some 4,000 cultural artifacts of traditional Korean women's art including *Bojagi* and *Maedeup*. I also learned to make *Bojagi* at the Intangible Cultural Center in Seoul, and later exhibited *Bojagi* along with other Korean women's art, *Maedeup* and *Hanji* art, after returning to America.

² It was published in the anthology, *Pedagogical Globalization: Traditions, Contemporary Art, and Popular Culture of Korea*, in 2017.

³ This lesson was expanded further into a series of *Bojagi* lessons later.

⁴ They are four metaphors of *Bojagi* included in the author's article, "Teaching Art as Cultural Metaphor using *Bojagi*" in the anthology, *Pedagogical Globalization: Traditions, Contemporary Art, and Popular Culture of Korea*, by InSEA, 2017.

Figure 1 *Wrapping Cloth, Pojagi*



Note. Bojagi is also written as Pojagi. This is jogakbo (a patchwork Bojagi) in silk created by an anonymous Korean woman in the 19th century. From *Wrapping Cloth, Pojagi*, by Art Institute of Chicago, n.d. (<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/145403/wrapping-cloth-pojagi>). In the public domain.

Figure 2 *Jogakbo (Patchwork Bojagi), in Ramie, by Chongim Choi*



During my half-year stay in Korea, I was fortunate to meet Kim Hyun Hee, a *Bojagi* Master appointed by the Korean Government as well as the director of the Korean Embroidery Museum, Huh Dong Hwa, for my research. I am so grateful for their generous sharing of specialties, expe-

riences, and philosophies of *Bojagi*. Additionally, based on the sabbatical research, I presented Korean women's art and aesthetics at the 2014 NAEA conference and published four metaphors of *Bojagi* with matching metaphor-based *Bojagi* lessons in a 2017 InSEA online publication.

Final Jogak

As a Korean immigrant art educator living in America, I feel that *Bojagi* has become the metaphor of my life in many aspects. Like *Jogakbo*, a patchwork *Bojagi* made by putting different pieces together, my professional identity is composed of many different *jogak* (pieces) or qualities gradually put together as I went through different stages of my life. As identity is defined by the enduring qualities that distinguish a person, I often ask myself, "What qualities do I want to define me?" I feel that my answer is in one of the *Bojagi* metaphors that I personally cherish, that is, Virtuous Living.

Bojagi shows very subtly what is inside by adapting itself to the forms inside. Unlike a Western suitcase that keeps always its own shape and completely hides any objects in it, Bojagi does not force its own structure on others but rather adjust itself to the given form or situation. (Shin et al., 2017, p. 23)

I want to be like that as a person and an art educator. I think that all immigrant art educators resemble *Bojagi*. They have a life made up of different foreign pieces but transformed themselves as successful examples by putting their life pieces together harmoniously as a whole despite unique challenges. I believe that immigrant art educators can further contribute to the current divided society as they emulate *Bojagi*'s metaphor—being inclusive, flexible, and modest.

The students that I meet at Chicago State University make me humble, for I feel that my chance of employment in the US as a minority teacher was established largely upon their forefathers' sacrifices made in the Civil Rights Movement. I have a special admiration for my mature African-American female students who often have two jobs to provide for their families and still attend class faithfully to ace the class regardless. They truly make me humble and instill in me a deep sense of duty. They are a constant reminder that art education can happen at any time in anyone's life – just had it happen to me after giving birth to a child. It is my hope that I can always be a person that offers a helping hand to them, so that they can experience and expand their world through the beautiful metaphoric lens called art.

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Cartographic Tracings: Cities, Folk Heroes and Art Teachers

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Introduction

I enter this conversation in the vein of Clandinin & Connelly's (2000) metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry space where the researcher "travels" directionally, "*inward, outward, backward, forward, and situated within place*" to *experience* the experience (p. 49-50). For me, this divergence best accounts for the messiness of unpacking the human condition in educational research, especially as it relates to racialized or marginalized perspectives in teaching and learning. I look backward to understand the late Mayor Young's influence on my hometown (a public figure I never met in person) and inward for my dissertation experience and K-12 teaching experience, and search my present teacher educator inquiry.

Contextualizing Mayor Coleman Young's Detroit 1974-1994

Young's family left Alabama in the early 1920s for Detroit, a Great Migration Black American family story, similar to my own and other Black Detroiters. After high school, he won a scholarship to the University of Michigan but the offer was rescinded when his race was discovered. He was later drafted into the US Army Air Force serving in a unit of the Tuskegee Airmen, where he defied segregation rules and was imprisoned and later released. Once back at home, he took a job in the automotive plants and sought to unionize and unify Black and white workers, which led him to be labeled as too militant and radical (Peterson, 1983; Neil, 1995; Young, 1997). Due to his union organizing, in the early 1950s he was accused of communism, and McCarthyism summoned him before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Peterson (1983) reported that instead of answering the questions posed to him by inquisitors, Young asked why the egregious long-standing racial terrorism and social systems imposed on Black people like "lynchings and the poll tax" (p. 5) weren't worthy of investigation. He questioned why those *un-American* activities weren't the topics of discussion. This of course led him to be blackballed and without employment for much of the remaining decade. As the climate evolved, he entered the political arena as a state senator in the mid-1960s (Peterson, 1983; Young, 1997). His fearlessness in part, made him a popular political figure with city residents.



Figure 1. Public Domain Image. Coleman_A._Young_1975.png

Young's 20-year stint as the mayor (Figure 1) was also due to "... his refusal to accept the oppression and inequality experienced by his community" and his unwavering belief in place and people, enduring him to his constituency (Young, 1997). He was elected to office in 1973, post-Vietnam war, dissolution of the civil rights movement, and disbanding of the Black Panther Party, the height of the Black arts movement was waning, and depopulation due to White flight following the racial uprisings of 1967. The 1967 uprisings were the culmination of decades of over-policing and brutality. Young himself had experienced an incidence of police brutality in his youth in the 1940s, and he likened the city's majority white police force to "a foreign army occupation" (Detroit Historical Society, 2015; 44:24). My father, in his late teens in 1967, recalled a common colloquialism for the police - 'The Big four' - because they patrolled communities with four per car, particularly harassing the neighborhood boys and young men. Especially, if they congregated on the corner of the block (a popular social activity at the time) you were certainly low hanging-fruit. When Mayor Young took office, he sought to diversify the police demographics to increase the number of Black officers to reflect at least 50 percent of the force. His tenure began during a precarious era, when many believed Detroit was a ghost of its former self, to be reelected 5 times, amidst accomplishments, failure, and scandal but through it all he remained The People's Mayor, a folk hero, best summarized by Hunter (2018):

There were good times when Young held office as Detroit's mayor: The Renaissance Center, Joe Louis Arena, city mass transit system improvements, Hart Plaza, the Detroit People Mover, abolishing STRESS (Stop the Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets), the undercover police decoy squad that killed 17 black men, many of them under questionable circumstances, and giving blacks equal opportunity when it came to government jobs.

Then there were the bad times: the high murder rates, including a record 714 in 1974, the demise of the automobile industry in which Detroit made its name, the high unemployment rate, ... and the population decline.

Young's tenure as mayor was controversial from beginning to end. His combativeness on race endeared him to blacks but turned off many whites, some of whom accused Young of racism himself, especially when he scorned political challengers as "Uncle Toms"a popular streetwise politician, and

a hero to the people of Detroit. He was all for his people and never changed who he was to make anyone else feel comfortable (para. 9-10).

Despite pitfalls, his enduring legacy was his vision and dedication to uplifting Black people (not at the detriment of others, but to have equal access as others) (Young, 1997). He did not succumb to the white gaze or criticism. Some scholars may deem his stances to be the detriment of the city's growth as Neil (1995) posited, "increasing tension during Young's tenure was purveying a representation of place which is attractive to outsiders, most notably investors, and tourists, and yet comfortable and authentic to black Detroiters. It is argued that the city of Detroit, under Young more satisfactorily imaged itself to black residents than to white outsiders.." (p. 639). Neil (1995) also notes, "Place imagery can be embedded in a variety of cultural milieus, including poetic met-aphor, literature, legends, and even planning documents" (p. 640). However, his stance could have been counternarrative to disprove the trope that the absence of whiteness is an immediate source of demise. The assumption is that proximity to whiteness is necessary for a place to be worthy of living. Young pushed back on that narrative 'in response to decades Black people in metro Detroit were systematically excluded from moving into the suburbs, thusly "the city has produced a lively black middle class of business and professional people for whom living in Detroit is a point of ra-cial pride" (Peterson, 1983, p. 5). This sense of pride informed my decision to return and teach in 'urban' education. Moreover, during his tenure, he expressed a controversial ambivalence toward gentrification in a 1989 interview when he rebuked an interviewer's insinuation that he was making improvements for the benefit of the "gentry class." Young responded, "Well except that we're not building it for the gentry, we're building for the folks who stayed. We welcome them back but we're not into gentrification in Detroit" (Detroit Historical Society, 2015, 30:07-30:39). In con-temporary times, gentrification can be viewed through various lived experience and epistemological lenses.

Conversely, a myth that endures is the notion that the Black experience is monolithic when growing up in cities like Detroit when nothing could be farther from the truth. There were different neigh-borhood communities within one Black community: working class, well-to-do /upper middle class/wealthy (Parmer Woods), areas in transition and poverty, middle class (Sherwood Forest, Rosedale Park, Grandmont neighborhoods, etc.), and areas in need of revitalizations. While most of the city residents were Black, the metro area was segregated much like many other American cities, due to legacies of urban renewal, cartography, and redlining policies. Of the non-Black groups who re-mained, Hamtramck, a bordering 'suburb' was historically Polish-American, the southwest side of the city was largely Mexican-American and Dearborn (a close suburb) was demographic consisted largely of families from the Middle Eastern diaspora.

With economic and racial/ethnic demographics in considerations and integral to his vision for a futuristic city, Young's administration championed the creative arts-which saw major growth and resurgence in the 1980s. This commitment was evidenced by the expansion of the cultural district, and the creation of the People Mover, a downtown, aerial light rail public transit system where multicultural artists were commissioned to create murals for each stop/station (Duque,2014; Voicemap, n.p). Moreover, Rootoftwo (2019-2020) noted "...Young was cred-ited for a number of solid accomplishments: decreasing police brutality, bringing increased racial representation to the police and fire departments, developing downtown projects, and strengthening arts programming and public transportation..." (para. 2). I was a teenage artist and actor in the city-funded, now defunct, Detroit Council for the Arts Summer Youth Program, an initiative popular in the late 80s- late 90s. Students from ages 14-22 were admitted by audition or portfolio only. As a drama student throughout high school, we learned *Purlie Victorious* (Davis,1961), *Ego tripping* (Giovanni, 1974), and August Wilson's plays alongside Shakespeare. After high school, I studied visual art at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), later returned to Detroit (after my first year teaching in another state), and taught art in majority-minority schools for many years. Looking back, Mayor Young influenced my decision to teach in Black spaces (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Dec 13, 2006, in my elementary classroom, wearing paint and glue-stained red, black, and green apron. Red, black, and green were first popularized in Marcus Garvey's early 20th century, (short-lived) back-to-Africa movement, years later becoming a symbol of pride. The chalk writing reads "Welcome Young [elementary] Artist (s)" and the VHS videos on the chalkboard ledge are Bette & Alison Saar, Faith Ringgold, Benny Andrews, and Jacob Lawrence with children's books *Nappy Hair* and *Harlem*. Photo by author.

Part 1: Identity Formation/Family Ties

Paul Laurence Dunbar's seminal poem written in 1896, "We Wear the Mask" (Barksdale & Kinnamon, 1972) has echoed throughout the decades as an eloquent expression of code-switching and assimilation. His work was a form of social justice by pen, speaking out against the injustices of the day. Today, after many years of both formal and informal schooling, as I write this, I choose to no longer wear the proverbial mask, recognize the dichotomy of pro-Blackness (partly a byproduct of Young's Detroit) and internalized anti-Blackness (an American side-effect). Jostling between these conflicting ontologies, began genealogical research.' sentence be added before a few years ago, via Ancestry.com research and cross-referencing, through my maternal line, we were able to find relatives as far back as my sixth great-grandmother, born enslaved in 1820. She appeared on the 1870 U.S. census as a free woman living with her grown daughters and their families in the Mississippi Delta, further layering my identity construction.

In the late 1940s as part of the Great Migration (migrants in our own country), my paternal grandparents left South Carolina, in the late 1940s, to move to Detroit for steady factory jobs in the automotive plants. My father, a middle child, and a baby boomer, became the first generation to be born in Michigan. He was raised in the Black enclave of Detroit on the city's east side, his parents were new homeowners- a part of Detroit's burgeoning Black middle class. My mother's maternal grandfather left Mississippi in the 1930s or 40s for fear of his life and he never returned. My parents married young and put themselves through college and purchased their starter home with my father's GI Bill. I'm the youngest of three and the second home we moved to when I was four, my childhood neighborhood, Sherwood Forest is still a middle to upper-middle-class area on the city's west side. Our parents provided some semblance of being sheltered and we attended private schools for a period of time, this was also the experience of most of my peers.

One of the childhood memories that remain, despite my self-identified middle-class-ness, around the age of nine or ten, I was outside playing or riding my bike in our quiet enclave, a Cauca-

sian man was driving up the street coming towards me. It seems like I was the only person outside. He slowed down and said in a clear, calm voice, "*Do you live around here?*" (I just stared at him) "*When you go home, ask your parents why so many niggers live in this neighborhood.*" He rolled up his window and drove off. I stood there with my bike, confounded, and just watched him drive away, unsure of what to say or how to react. As an adult, I have encountered microaggressions on a regular basis, and for me racialized healing has been an ongoing, cyclical process because some of the lessons/experiences I learned only to "repeat/(re)impose, exorcise then (re)intenalize. I imagine Mayor Young went through his own healing and settled on abject fearlessness as his mode of rebellion and assertion of humanity.

Autoethnographic Dissertation Work: Becoming a Social Justice Oriented Teacher Educator

Becoming a Ph.D. student in 2014 further transformed my pedagogy, especially designing a 6 -week social justice art unit addressing issues of gender, social class, and race, for an art methods course for preservice elementary generalists. During the data analysis process, I unpacked identity construction within the sociocultural context, documenting my unexpected discomfort and evolving ontologies. As a collective (my undergraduate students and I) discussed these topics in a diverse setting, although I was usually one of a few if not the only Black person in the room, a new experience because I had become accustomed to *not* being a minority in my classroom. As the experience evolved I understood that my transformation was neither static nor linear. Riedler (2016) posits poststructuralist underpinnings of art teacher educator journeys, as "...sociocultural identity is not something that belongs to a person but emerges out of the individual's interaction with the cultural context" (p. 139). Constructing my identity as a social justice educator, involved more than a surface examination of my skin color and sex, but deconstructing my own "double consciousness" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 3) of race/class, class/gender, place/stereotypes/self, and the nuances in between. Furthermore, Riedler (2016) noted that self-study uniquely positions the researcher to relate their own narrative to societal issues to confront our positionalities and subjectivities. Thus, as a Ph.D. student and newly minted teacher-educator, I learned from and with my students how to become aware of my own biases and background and theirs. I was willing to tell my story but tried to remain neutral, which did not work and was not the fearless approach of a Young Era educator! I believe that I successfully managed the topics, but together we uncovered that collective risk-taking was necessary. For example, I will present a small piece of the lesson on social class and schooling.

Essentially, I was asking my students to be "class conscious" (hooks 2000, p. 5) before they entered schools, so they didn't repeat the mistakes I'd made as a beginning teacher. An understanding of class bias is exponentially salient because they might be teaching students of different socioeconomic backgrounds different than their own. Becoming class conscious requires reflectivity, self, and societal awareness, as hooks (2000) described her own rural southern upbringing juxtaposed against college life amongst Stanford's elite where differences of social class were seen as projected predictors of hierarchical mobility.

While teaching this unit, swathed in doctoral student liminality and uncertainty (and again the only Black person in the room, or one of two) leading and negotiating potentially fraught discussions, I asked students to trust me and each other with their honesty. But knowing I may not want to hear the responses or really *see* the complex responses reflected in their artwork. I had to trust myself enough and believe that my students trusted me enough to take the risk together. My teacher-educator identity as social justice educator was forming or (re) forming through readings, teaching, interaction, research, reflection, and experiential trial and error. Thusly, Tidwell and Fitzgerald (2004) described self-study as it relates to the construction of the self as "...researchers examin[ing] their own identity through the construct of their practice" (p. 95). During this self-study process, while contemplating how my upbringing and professional years as a K-12 teacher positioned me as a member of the (nuanced) American middle class, I decided to allow the complexities and uneasiness

of my story to undergird how I head the discussion.

It was necessary to examine myself and discover why addressing social justice issues is important to me. Even though, generationally, I had come from humble beginnings, my first year as a teacher in an alternative school located in an economically transitioning neighborhood, in an out-of-state city. I was unknowingly guilty of classism and naïve to schooling kids in traumatic environments (I came to understand it over time, and experience, of course). In my undergraduate education as a visual art major, I was well-versed in African American history, art history, art, and literature. But I received my teacher training the following year, after graduation, at a Prominently White Institution (PWI) for my post-baccalaureate teaching license. I don't recall discussing inequity in regional schools. As a K-12 student, I had racialized experiences with teachers in both private and public school settings and in varied life situations while growing up, so I entered the school under the false assumption I already knew their experience. I thought my students had mostly progressive, positive school experiences (for the most part) as I had.

The multiple border crossings required to analyze my own identity construction as I transitioned from teacher to teacher-educator had indeed involved troublesome fields of negotiation. These crossings prompt the "...ongoing task of identity construction by compelling individuals to reconsider assumptions and look beyond what is already known...where identities are shaped and reshaped" (Trent, 2013, p. 262). Full of youthful arrogance and naiveté, I entered my first year as a K-12 art teacher at a middle school in an African-American neighborhood in transition, a community traumatized by crime, drugs, higher incarceration rates, and children in foster care in a new city out-of-state. My student teaching experience had gone very well, so I confidently entered the school as a know-it-all. When in fact I had no real idea what the kids' lives entailed, what the surrounding neighborhood meant, and/or how it shaped them and their parents. I thought my race granted me immediate cultural capital and a unique understanding. However, I was judgmental, youthfully arrogant, and naïve, so the chasm that divided us was social class. Gay (2000) reiterated the assumptive mistake I made, "membership in a [racial] group is necessary or sufficient to enable teachers to do culturally competent pedagogy. This assumption is as ludicrous as assuming that one automatically knows how to teach English to others simply because one is a native speaker ..." (p. 205). I subsequently judged the parents and students, both quietly/subconsciously and audibly: *Why don't these parents attend parent-teacher conferences? Why would you send your child to school that way? Why do the kids behave this way?* Internalized anti-Blackness, even though I knew better, I leaned into capitalist notions of class.

At the age of 23 as a first-year teacher, in the late 1990s, I misjudged my students' motivations, behaviors, modes of being, and mannerisms. Although we were bound by collective memory, I initially did not take the time to try to understand the kids or the surrounding community and the systems that brought them to this point. By the second semester, I continued to struggle, but I reconciled and improved my own unintentional anti-Black gaze, and by the end of the term, I had written a short play about overcoming obstacles despite current circumstances. The play included a character in the foster care system. I held auditions and my middle school burgeoning actors performed it for the entire school at the end of the school year. The short play was well received, and it was my way of connecting with the student body, something I wish I had done much sooner.

Many years later, the social justice art unit I created consisted of one lesson on gender and one on social class and race. For the lesson based on social class and art teaching in schools, with my own personal story as a starting point, admitting to my undergraduate preservice generalist, at the top of the three-hour class, that the issue of social class played a major part in my failure as a first-year teacher. As I told the story to my students, I grasped the bag in my hand which I had held the colored balled-up pieces of paper from the Basket Toss activity and said to them in dramatic fashion:

If you go in that classroom dropping your middle-class baggage (plopped the bag in the middle of my desk) on those kids that are not yet that (middle

class/upper class) you are setting yourself up for failure. I can say that because that's what I did, if you go in the room judging them and the decisions of their parents, instead of seeking to understand, you will butt heads and create a chasm between you. (Researcher Quote from personal recollection, November 2017).

The only African-American student said aloud, "That's the realest thing I've heard today." To further the concept of Black middle-class teachers and Black students in SES-challenged schools, Coffey & Farinde-Wu (2016) concluded,

While teachers of color may be successful with students of color, we argue that simply pairing a student and teacher who share the same race, but not the same socio-cultural background, will not ensure student progress.... implicitly inferred is the idea of cultural awareness..., (p. 25)

Young's Detroit was a microcosm of the larger Black community, and growing up we think our life world is reflective of most, and inter-group difference is rarely discussed, at least not openly. Moreover, hooks (2000) wrote of class differences within the Black community as, "...difficult for black folks to talk about class. Acknowledging class difference destabilizes the notion that racism affects us all in equal ways" (p. 8). hooks (2000) also noted the legacy of the intersection of race and class, well into the 1960s as she was in her teenage years, "Like most southern cities where racial apartheid remained the order of the day long after laws were on the books championing desegregation.... No matter how much money anybody black could make, they were still confined to black spaces" (p. 22). A concept, I argue, is that Mayor Young decided that Black spaces were not 'confinement' but instead a point of freedom. He viewed Detroit through the lens of self-determination and place-based reimagining. Unpacking experiences, with my family's Detroit stories similar to Mayor Young's and many other Black residents, the choices I made for my dissertation work which includes my teaching past, may seem like disconnected rhizomatic lines, but they all entangled roots influenced by era and place.

Part 2: Art Teaching Pedagogy Journey Based in Identity Construction/ Deconstruction/Reconstruction Teaching K-12 Art

After overcoming the failure of my first year as a K-12 art teacher, I moved back home and a year later, returned to the classroom, and continued to teach, by choice, in majority-minority schools. I certainly still had moments of failure and struggle but also of success and impact (sometimes all in the same day). As a protegee of Young's Detroit, I knew honoring home and history were intertwined in how and what I taught. Moreover, examining culturally relevant pedagogy as part of my master's degree program, I sought to routinely engage culturally relevant frameworks including foregrounding Black art and artists (Figure 3 & 4) but certainly did not exclude European artists like Van Gogh, Picasso, and O'Keeffe (Figure 7). With varying degrees of success, as an imperfect art teacher, I taught lessons reminiscent of the Heidelberg Project (figure 5), precolonial West African adinkra symbols as lino or Styrofoam prints (Figure 3), hand-sewing kufis, recreating the artworks and styles of William H. Johnson, Jacob Lawrence, Lois Mailou Jones, and others, as representative art on the walls of my classroom. When I taught students how to draw faces we rendered variations of broader noses and age-appropriate drawing techniques for Afro hair textures.

Furthermore, during my last two years in the classroom before starting my Ph.D. program full-time, my middle school was within walking distance of the Detroit Institute of Arts (our large museum). During our quick 40-minute trips during class time, my classes visited the museum or the public art on the grounds. I made sure to escort them to the African-American Art gallery to practice VTS discussions (we unpacked works by artists of all backgrounds as well).



Figure 3. A page from my physical teacher portfolio 2007-2008. I named each table after a famous artist, half of the tables were African-American artists, the other half non-Black. Posters of “Le Fetiches” by Lois Mailou Jones on center photo far left wall, posters of Cameroon masks on back bulletin board on the bottom picture.

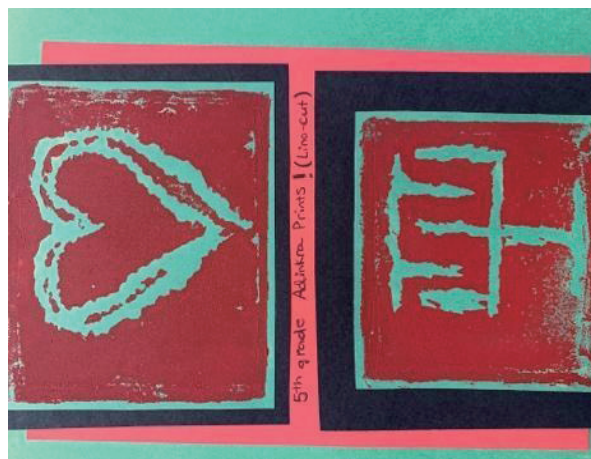


Figure 4. From the author's K-12 teacher portfolio



Figure 5. From the author's K-12 teacher portfolio

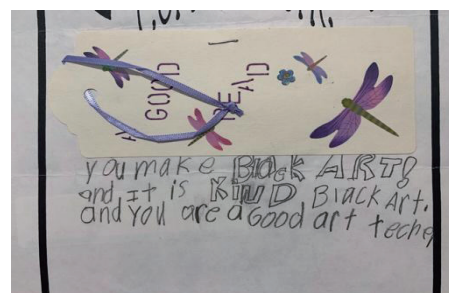


Figure 6. The author's portfolio

Conclusion

To reiterate the three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I employed to drawing connections from Mayor Young's influence (backward), to my dissertation (forward and backward again) to my K-12 pedagogy (backward, then forward). I recognize the non-linearity of self-study and identity formation. Young's influence had been previously unexamined, but upon reflection, I noticed a tangled thread thorough, that binds my experiences. Similar to many educators, my self-conceptualization and pedagogy manifestations are an amalgamation of family, place, and positionality. Growing up in The Coleman Young era taught me pro-Blackness for the purpose of understanding and celebrating culture, *not* to ignore, subject, or dismiss others) as a form of reclaiming joy, hope, and determination. This influenced what I chose to teach while working in Black spaces, and partly why I created a social justice unit of study for my dissertation work. As a doctoral student analyzing inequity in schools, I looked backward and further understood that I had exhibited internalized anti-Blackness as a new teacher-in spite of how I grew up. The lasting influence of Mayor Young is a sense of self and community that I can always reclaim, even when I stray from my core knowings. In part one, I unpacked some of my family's sojourn to the city and embeddedness in city pride. Under the mayor's care, mishandlings and steadfastness, the complex evolution, and lasting images of the city as a misunderstood, but gritty underdog remains. I think I subconsciously inherited his sense of stances because he represented our stories. As an art teacher, foregrounding Black Artists and visuality was a byproduct of coming of age in that era. He influenced a generation of educators, and I am one of many. We reclaim, much in the way he did as reclamation is one of the tenets of Afrofuturism, our stories and past to inform an unlimited future (Capers, 2019). Lastly, present day, in the wake of anti-CRT legislature, I will admit to racialized battle fatigue, as I'm continually learning and unlearning, relearning the multiplicity of my global identity as an artist, art educator, and scholar. In my artmaking practice, I obviously have more freedom of expression than I do as a professor. I know that in my evolution and iterations, I have always been and will be a product of a fallible but unapologetic Black space.

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Savages Destroy Heritage; Free Men And Women Preserve It

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Introduction



Figure 1. Three artistic installations about (my) life¹: Dreams_Images 1 and 2 left (1996); Time is a castaway (2015); Water's drop (Barbero, 2016)

Intersectionality is the interaction between two or more social factors that define a person (Rios, 2022). As social theory tells us that social organization proposes that there is not only a transversal axis that marks the inequality, not only the differences, between people and society but that there are several axes that are intertwined, such as functional diversity, age, gender identity, among several other factors that determine a social place, which gives a situated experience of oppressions and privileges that accounts for some of the diversity of manifestations of inequalities and injustices in contemporary human societies.

Intersectionality is directly related to the construction of people's identities. Thus, understanding intersectionality requires a deeper understanding of identity and the determining factors in constructing the self.

Identity means recognizing itself as an integral part of a body, a clan, a family, a group, a village, a neighborhood, a city, a nation, a state, a continent, or a planet (Lotman, 1999). The «self» and the «others» are the sides of a single act of self-knowledge which is impossible for one without the other. Meanwhile, cultural identity can be manifested with the use of familiar objects (clothing

¹ Dreams_Images 1 and 2 left (1996) was an art installation at Nuova Accademia di Belli Arti di Milano; *Time is a Castaway* is part of the art installation *Columns of Hercules*, for Ocupação Tropicana, a contemporary art exhibition open to the public in which 15 artists of different nationalities participated. The objective was to occupy a house/building in one of the streets in the centre of Coimbra to reflect on the concepts of public and private (More information in <https://pt-br.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1188621607983577&set=ecnf.100069493320447>); and *Water's drop* is an art installation for the sole exhibition *House 48* at Museum de Arte Contemporâneo Quinta da Cruz, in Viseu. (https://www.academia.edu/36829530/CASA_48_LA_DECONSTRUCCIÓN_DEL_ESPACIO_EXPOSITIVO)

and adornments), with practices (language, music, and dances), with shared knowledge (expected values), and with the interpretation of the past. Identity and cultural identity are fundamental factors that support community members' nexus. Both depend upon social interaction. "Identity" and "cultural identity" presuppose identification and recognition and depend on "virtues" and "values". Because of this, we need to understand how they govern our behaviors, emotions, and way of being; we need to be conscious of how they lead our decisions: for example, valuing and respecting heritage can be considered an act of identity. As Abbot Gregore (1793) said, savages destroy heritage; free men and women preserve it...²

It is also necessary to understand how we attribute these values. For example, in the case of people, we value those that serve as examples and shape our identity; in the case of cultural assets, the community may recognize ownership, use, identity, or even patrimonial values, making them worth preserving. This is known as the principle of "patrimonialisation" (Davallon, 2002; 2017). However, "value" is a relative concept that appears and disappears according to a framework of intellectual, cultural, historical, and psychological references, which varies according to individuals, groups, and times (Ballart, Fullila, & Petit, 1996). In the case of heritage assets, it also happens that the attribution of value contributes to their transformation into symbols capable of expressing in a synthetic and emotionally effective way a relationship between ideas and values since the symbol can transform conceptions and beliefs into emotions, to incarnate them, and to condense them and make them, therefore, much more intense (Prats, 1998).

To be "valedor" and its values

Understanding the etymological origin of this Latin word of the Indo-European root is essential: value derives from the Latin "valere", which means "to be strong". To the verb, "valer" (to be strong, to have no defects, to protect the weakest, ...) is added the suffix "-or", which indicates effect or result. Therefore, we see how the word "valor" is designated as the result of being strong and defending the one who needs it. Being "valedor" means to be the one who gives value to another and supports or protects him. In other words, in its origins, this word designed a fundamental virtue for all citizens: the physical and spiritual strength that should command both personal and family life and public or political life. It was in Ancient Rome -whose cultural, social, and political legacy is still visible in the Western culture and civilization- where the word value acquired meaning. When we talk about Roman values or virtues, we can divide them into personal and family virtues (Auctoritas, Clementia, Dignitas, Firmitas, Frugalitas, Honestas, Humanitas, Industria, Pietas, Severitas, Veritas); and public or political virtues (Abundancia, Aequitas, Clementia, Concordia, Felicitas, Fortuna, Iusticia, Laetitia, Liberalitas, Nobilitas, Patientia, Pax, Providentia, Pudicitia, Salus, Securitas, Spes, Virtus).

These virtues or qualities, to which all Romans should aspire, were their reference in terms of social or moral values. Some of these values have come down to us, and others have changed with the times. Nevertheless, they had to be transformed into habits or customs experienced by society to reach us. Yarce (2001) reminds us that when we incorporate value into conduct, we can call it a virtue. With virtues, the person works without needing to be reminded of something.

It is through our experience that we can forge that habit. So, our characteristics, the conditions in which our existence develops, and the learnings with the people we interact with are some of the elements that we consider, consciously or subconsciously, when deciding, when choosing our conduct, and when we decide to attribute value to a person, an idea, an object or a cultural asset.

Returning to the matter at hand, values that regulate the behavior of individuals are those that we know as "ethical values"; among them, we can highlight values such as justice, freedom, respect, loyalty, and honesty. These, in turn, are considered universal values, i.e., they are regarded as

² The original sentence referred to is as follows: "Inscrivons donc s'il est possible, sur tous les monumens, et gravons dans tous les coeurs cette sentence: «Les barbares et les esclaves d'estiment les sciences, et détruisent des monuments des arts; les hommes libres les aiment et les conservent » (Grégoire, 1794: 27)

such by all individuals at a given time and age (regardless of the cultural differences between people). “Ethical” behavior is desirable because it goes hand in hand with those universal values that we should all share and that should also serve as a basis for fostering peace education, helping to establish peaceful coexistence among individuals, families, communities, ethnicities, and cultures, and thus advance towards the goal of a homogeneous human strength for this new millennium (Negrete, 2014).

However, we must remember that ethics is nothing more than the rational attempt to find out how to live better. Ethics is worth being interested in because we like the good life (Sabater, 1991). We are talking about “the art of living,” that is to say: How should a human being live? What is necessary for a human being to live happily? To be happy and live better, one of the main objectives of intersectionality, humans must learn to be ethical and use all their capacities and possibilities (Gaarder, 1994). Nevertheless, being ethical also implies being transparent and confidently explaining the reason for each action. And is the only way to maintain respect for other people’s lives.

Intersectionality, Justice, And Identity Construction

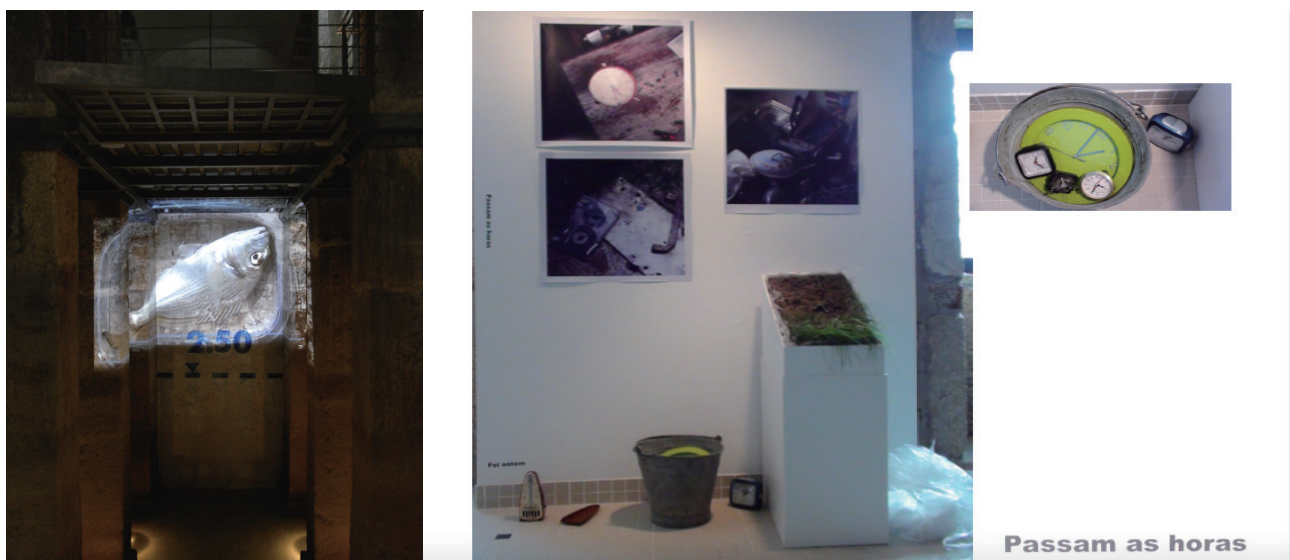


Figure 2. Two art installations about time: Beta Perpetuas³ (2014) and Hours go by (Barbero, 2016)

For Professor María Lucía Rivera Sanín (2022), intersectionality, as a conceptual framework, allows us to understand how people in societies like ours, which are organized according to different structures, experience oppression or privilege. For example, I was born and raised in Salamanca, and at a very young age, I began my adventures in the world of arts and culture. The years of my childhood and youth passed without significant mishaps, in the bosom of a conservative family, with an architect father, Arsenio José Barbero Martín, and a mother focused on the education of her three children, María Obdulia Franco Ruba. From these years, I highlight my studies as a student of drawing at the School of Arts San Eloy (where I taught for two academic courses years later), combining them with school classes and musical training (music theory, piano, and harmony). In these years in forming my identity, my concerns began in that “art of living” (Sabater, 1991), where the foundations of life as an artist, teacher, and researcher were forged. That was a privilege.

³ Beta Perpetuas is an audiovisual art installation exhibited in the Patriarcal Reservoir, in Lisbon, integrated in the Water Museum Museo da Água

The main right, the main virtue

To use intersectionality in our work, first and foremost, we need to think differently about identity, equality, and power. It means focusing not on predetermined categories or isolated issues but on everything that defines our access to rights and opportunities.

Talking about intersectionality is synonymous with talking about justice. And justice is understood as the most important of the virtues and the most complete, given that it applies to others and not only to oneself. Michael J. Sandel, the Princess of Asturias Award for Social Sciences 2018 recipient, questions justice regarding the rights of discussions concerning honor, virtue, and moral merit. Justice involves cultivating virtue and reasoning about the importance of community and cultivating solidarity and community feeling.

But what does Aristotle mean by practicing “just things”? To obey the laws and observe the rules of equality so that what is just is following the law and equality. Likewise, when speaking of the laws that govern relations within a community, we must understand that they must create or preserve the welfare or some elements of that welfare within the community. In this way, justice acquires the quality of value or moral principle by which an individual decides to live, giving each one what is due to him. As it is easy to understand, we must cultivate this value as teachers.

Regarding intersectionality, justice is one of the central values because it allows us to delve into the typification we sometimes arbitrarily make about people and how they influence our way of interacting with them. Therefore, from the perspective of intersectionality, it is essential not only to conceive the difference but to find the tensions, relationships, and how the categories of gender, race, and social class mainly interact and are constructed and reconstructed from that interaction with these domains of power to avoid injustice.

If I think of just being respectful, loyal, and honest, I think of my father, the architect University Professor Arsenio José Barbero Martín. An upright, integral man whose values have marked my life and my way of being. He and my mother are the first seats of “identity,” and being fair appears as an essential value, representing the family and its way of being in its bosom, in the community. However, my father also introduced me to the world of art. When I came home from school, I would go straight to his atelier, and he would be drawing on those giant tracing papers from the days before computers and plotters. He taught me to draw, paint, and enjoy works of art. He was my first mentor in this world of art and artistic creation.

As a student at the Fine Arts School, University of Salamanca, I specialized in sculpture and graphic design. From this period, I still have some pieces and an exceptional memory of my first sculpture teacher, the Zamorano artist José Luis Coomonte who won Castilla y León Arts Award in 2020, at 88 years old, commented, “I am still thinking about what art is. At some point I say that art is life” (Tobacco, 2020). I agree with him! I also remember with special affection for its implications in my later artistic work -for example, the project *House 48-Unhabit Place* - my year as an Erasmus participant at the NABA (Nuova Accademia de Belle Arti at Milano, Italy), where I studied the 4th year of my art degree. There I began to explore the concept of installation with the artist and professor, Hidetoshi Nagasawa. In addition, I attended the printmaking workshop Grafic Uno (Stamperia d’arte Grafic Uno) at the hands of another great master, Giorgio Upiglio. At the end of that course (1995), I was fortunate to participate as a collaborator in the *Dialogues of Peace* exhibition. Curated by Ms. Adeline von Fürstenberg in the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, its activities involve the participation of artists and filmmaker from around the globe. In terms of reflecting on intersectionality, this was a precious experience. Inspired by Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “Everyone has the right to take part freely in the cultural life of the community, [and] to enjoy the arts,” the principal idea was “to show art as an essential tool for fostering dialogue among diverse peoples, cultures, and worldviews to encourage tolerance and solidarity in the defense of human rights, underlying the importance of the relationship between the artist and the most compelling issues of our time” (WAF, s.f).

In addition, I got to know the work of great artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, working

with some of them to assemble their works. This year was also the year of my participation in the Sargadelos Experience, where I met the Argentine sculptor Marta Folco Testorelli, a force of nature and a person full of life, who taught me that anything is possible. With Marta and her experiences shared in long hours of conversation, I began to understand what Kimberlé Crenshaw (1959) explained about how intersectionality allows us to understand the complex way in which multiple systems of oppression interact in the experiences, mainly from a gender perspective, that is: how different forms of oppression can coexist in a woman because of her gender condition, but also because of her condition of ethnicity, race, social class, or social orientation.

In Sargadelos, among other things, I learned that art is another form of expression that should be offered and promoted, no matter gender, race, or social class.

Moreover, it was from this experience that I began to understand that art and culture are two powerful tools for a community's economic, social, and cultural development and where the idea of working hand in hand with the people, with the communities, began to take shape. The importance of critical and reflective thinking about an idea or project, workshop work, and, above all, collaborative work are aspects I internalized from my experiences in Italy in contact with these and other teachers and artists, which are reflected today in my approach to plastic and visual education. For example, from my time at Atelier Gráfico Uno, I remember, as something very positive, the conversations at the end of the day about art, culture, and classical music. The constant dialogue, the exchange of ideas, and the advice on the different possibilities when choosing a technique for my work were precious lessons. I learned that it is necessary to dialogue, to be open to criticism, and to be flexible, but at the same time to defend one's own choices. In my classes, I instill in my students that we must dialogue; to know why we choose one technique or another, one idea or another. We have to be flexible but, at the same time, critical about our work and about what comes to us from the outside. We have to know how to educate our gaze. Moreover, we must be up-to-date and open to new knowledge.

Being a woman in a man's world

Once I finished my degree, I started a Master's in European Communities and Human Rights, a University Degree in Historical Heritage Management, and a Ph.D. in Fine Arts. Then, I collaborated as a university teacher in Portugal at the Piaget Institute of Viseu, a private university. In Viseu, I started my working life and developed my first research project in cultural heritage management. To keep up to date and improve my professional skills, I took several postgraduate courses, such as the Cultural Policies and Cultural Management course at the University of Barcelona and the Community Development and New Technologies course at the University of Salamanca. After that, I left the Piaget Institute to work at the Coordination and Development Commission of the Central Region of Portugal, in Coimbra, where I also collaborated as a cultural programmer in Coimbra 2003 National Capital of Culture. At the end of this project, I left for another adventure and worked as the manager of the Cáceres 2016, Candidate City for the European Capital of Culture in 2016 structure. These years were crucial in my personal and professional formation, and in them, I highlight two people, Ms. Adília Alarcão, an art historian. She was one of the top minds of the Heritage Education Programme PEPA. We two developed a heritage educational project for Coimbra 2003, MO(NU)MENTOS, which was the origin of the PEPA project, and Ms. Mercedes Samaniego Boneu, Europeanist, and professor at the University of Salamanca, who unfortunately died in July, 2022. These women are the key to understanding my interest in heritage education and research. Regarding intersectionality, their works show how a woman can be successful in a man's world. Again, being flexible and open to new knowledge and new ways of thinking and doing are lessons learned from them. And planning. To be a teacher is to be a good planner and manager. We have resources, knowledge, and people, and we must understand how best to connect them. Experience is essential, and so is the passion for what you teach. Management, planning, and passion are three words that I try to combine in my work as an artist, teacher, and researcher. I also worked as a graphic designer

on several projects and as a trainer on various courses, including those of the APECV (Association of Teachers of Visual Expression and Communication), where I met its president, the artist, teacher, and researcher Ms. Teresa Torres de Eça, a person who personifies the capacity for work, empathy, flexibility, creativity... and a friend to whom I owe the reminder that it is possible to combine all these roles and still be a cheerful person and available to others. Teresa's vision has made possible the projects I have mentioned and others with which I have been able to collaborate, all of them projected from the APECV. Thanks to her, I have discovered that one can be a leader and an artist at home, school, work, and in life. Thanks to Teresa, I met another excellent reference, mentor, and friend, Seville University professor Juan Carlos Arañó Gisbert who passed away in May, 2022. I admired Prof. Juan Carlos for his work in art education. With them, I have learned that it is necessary to act, not depend on resources, and not give in to adversity because it is always possible to look at things differently and put ideas into practice. This resilience must be strengthened to overcome discriminatory situations, whatever the cause. This idea of not letting ourselves be defeated by adversity is something that all of us must have in mind. Learning from mistakes and seeing the possibilities they offer us are essential lessons that we must transmit to our students: first, we are not perfect, and things can fail; second, if they do fail, we must learn why and see how we can transform that situation into something positive.

Cultural Assets Values: House 48 and PETA projects

The intersectionality approach involves an analysis of a “situated context” constructed based on categories that vary according to space and time, giving way to creating new subjectivities and offering proposals for political change. Likewise, under a human rights framework, it helps to identify inter-relationships between power, age, racism, gender, sexuality, and social class, making it possible to understand how the family, educational, social, and community context conditions the development of individuals and their way of living in the world. This approach is related to educating in heritage through the arts and arts education to promote knowledge of the assets that make up our cultural legacy from the perspective of understanding, respecting, and valuing them as a link to society and their preventive conservation, respecting their integrity with a view to their transmission to future generations, using artistic methodologies and processes. We call this strategy “education in values,” where the objects that make up our cultural heritage go from symbols of a past to living elements for transmitting ideas, feelings, ways of doing, and thinking. For this, two essential methodologies are education based on creation and a project-based approach.

HOUSE 48: THE UNINHABITED PLACE



Figure 3. *The house 48. Insides.* (Barbero, 2016)

Using intersectionality implies valuing a bottom-up research, analysis, and planning approach. In gathering information, we must ask how women and men live. In this way, we can construct the respective portrait from the “bottom up,” accounting for the various factors that influence individual lives. But, how we use intersectionality always depends on our position, needs, and objectives. Reflecting on the ways of inhabiting allows us to open the way to empower those with less access to resources to exercise their rights and focus on the processes that lead to poverty and exclusion. One way to give visibility to these realities is to recognize the invisible heritages that make up the daily lives of people who live, struggle, and interrelate in the geographic spaces that have been ceded to them. As the main space where these tensions are exercised, the house is where many discriminations begin.

House 48: the uninhabited is a visual reflection of the affiliation to an uninhabited space through the objects and memories that occupy them. Bachelard (2000) speaks of the values of shelter or the “values of inhabited space,” where every inhabited space carries as its essence the notion of home and, for this reason, whenever man finds the “least shelter,” the imagination works to return him to his space of intimacy. We all have the natal house physically inscribed as a space of intimacy. It is a group of organic habits. This value of shelter makes it possible to establish links with the spaces from their interpretation as places of culture and identity. When we talk about “inhabiting” (Heidegger, 2004), it is a matter of thinking about how we relate to those spaces and how we feel those connect to the objects we find in them. Will the objects we find in uninhabited houses be containers of values that transit between the public and the private, allowing our journey through time and memory? Can we transfer those experiences from one place to another without perverting the natural state in which they were experienced?



Figure 4. On the left, “It looked like an abandoned house itself”, the handwriting opinion of Mara, a visitor to the art exhibition House 48 and Alice in Wonderland artwork (Barbero, 2016, p. 35); on the right, images of the performance (Barbero, 2016).

The House 48 is an existential place, close, comfortable, friendly, welcoming, and relational, a place of experience concerning the world where to think about the concept of identity, where to find cultural roots, and where to root values and convictions. So, naturally, it is necessary to think not only about the objects we find gathered in the place but also about the collection, furniture, and structure that shapes the space or about its conservation, study, research, expansion, or exhibition. It is a matter of encountering the memories that these objects suggest; of giving impulse to the imagination by proposing new ways of discovering and feeling the space; of offering a place to inhabit as a living space, close and welcoming, a place with which to affiliate oneself.

Casa 48, as an artistic project⁴, focuses on exploring the relationship between architectural space and collective memory. Its starting point is the compilation and inventory work initiated by the artist Ana Barbero and the photographer Cristina Nogueira within the framework of the rehabilitation and safeguarding works of the Municipal District of Viseu that the Movement “O Bairro” (the neighborhood) has been developing. The collection and inventory of the tangible and intangible heritage of the uninhabited dwellings in the uninhabited houses in Bairro Municipal aim to identify the characteristics, particularities, history, and cultural relevance of the objects and memories that contribute to determining the context of the neighborhood and its social experiences that marked a period of life in the Bairro.

This reflection about “de inhabiting” has its parallel with another project for children, *Viseu-BirdsCity* (<https://createviseu.wixsite.com/viseubirdscity/blank>), where more than 40 young people from the São Salvador school in Viseu (Grão Vasco group) participated in various creative activities to design, manufacture, and paint birdhouses. The children explored art, nature, heritage, and creativity in this project.

PEPA: Viseu Educa Heritage Education Program

PEPA webpage: <https://viseueducapepa.wordpress.com/projeto/>

⁴ *House 48: the uninhabited place Performance* <https://youtu.be/2pSV8gJH8Hw> and *House 48: the uninhabited place Exhibition Catalogue*

https://www.academia.edu/36829530/CASA_48_LA_DECONSTRUCCIÓN_DEL_ESPACIO_EXPOSITIVO



Figure 5: Photographic collage made with images of different moments of the PEPA project: teacher training, classroom work, and study visits. Photos by Author.

PEPA is an educational project I designed and managed that aims to sensitize teachers and young people and, through them, their families and communities on preventive conservation. Heritage education is related to preventive conservation as it encourages appreciation and respect for cultural heritage. Educating the community about the importance of cultural heritage can prevent much damage and deterioration caused by ignorance or neglect. On the other hand, from a broad perspective, heritage education can help involve the community in identifying the cultural assets that are part of its identity and, therefore, its heritage. However, it can also help to identify and warn about factors that may affect the integrity of cultural heritage. The greater the awareness and understanding of these issues, the better will be the creation and implementation of preventive conservation measures, such as regular cleaning and maintenance. From this point of view, I highlight the main challenges in the field of education: The training of teachers regarding the social, cultural, economic, and identity value of cultural assets; the creation of didactic resources related to training young people and adults concerning Cultural Heritage; and the promotion of networking, research, and innovation in Cultural Heritage Education.

The strategy I propose was also to support the development of local and territorial actions and infrastructures that foster this sense of belonging and deepen the knowledge, defense, and dissemination of our tangible and intangible heritage; and the emergence of activities to empower the creation of heritage-based enterprises capable of going beyond local borders.

One of the main lines I designed was the Heritage Education Pilot Project, “Heritage is ours! Pass the Word!” where 444 students at primary schools participated. The project sought to involve young people in the appreciation of cultural heritage, encouraging their active participation and the exchange of knowledge and experiences on the subject. The methodologies applied were diverse, from project-based learning, proposing the identification of an asset and its subsequent analysis, study, registration, and dissemination (<https://viseueducapepa.wordpress.com/eb1de-mundao/>),

through learning projects based on creation, where students, in addition to identifying the heritage that they wanted to study, they inventoried it, documented it, recreated it and learned it in collaboration with their families (<https://viseueducapepa.wordpress.com/eb-farminhao/>); to STEAM projects where students created a virtual character to carry out a Visual Tour in the city of Viseu (<https://viseueducapepa.wordpress.com/eb-da-ribeira-turma-3b/>). Talking about these heritage educational projects, one day, we were making drawings and photos for a cultural inventory of the material heritage of a small village from Viseu, and one of my students was talking with a tiny and very old woman dressed in black. She spoke of her life in the small village and invited my students to have a cup of water at her house. At that moment, I was not with my students, so one of them came to me and asked me to go with them, so I did. After talking for a while with the woman, she turned to me and said: at the end, Spanish women are not so bad. This conversation perplexed me, but the woman explained some stories from dictatorial times in Portugal. So, I learned that we need to leave behind our prejudices, talk to people face to face, and be friendly and interested in their life stories because we can always learn something and, even more, change a point of view and break barriers that divide people. As can be seen in the work done by the students (for example, in the video What do adults think about Heritage? available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqz92LjIKdw>), working with values, heritage, and culture allows us to remember who we are, how we want to live on this planet and which footprint we want to leave for the future. Being careful with the oldest, animals and objects and respecting the difference is the first step to show the values we want to represent. This is what I tried to transmit to my students.

Conclusion

Intersectionality can offer tools to analyze inequalities that affect individuals due to causes such as functional diversity, age, and gender identity, among several other factors that determine a social place. In the educational context, it can offer tools to consider these inequalities in constructing our identities.

Projects such as *Casa 48* - a project focused on the recovery of a social neighborhood and its memories - or PEPA - a project aimed at heritage education through preventive conservation - are an expression of the values learned in childhood, in the heart of my family and during my life, thanks to all these persons, and many others, that I have been lucky enough to meet. In turn, these projects reflect the values transmitted to me and those I acquired over time.

Heritage education, hand in hand with art education, makes it possible to accompany processes for the construction of new subjectivities, analyzing the relationships between the different factors that influence the structuring of communities, thus promoting the construction of knowledge. In this way, and concerning intersectionality it should:

- Encourage joint reflection on subjective aspects related to identity and diversity.
- Question identity and culture as a closed, watertight, and homogeneous whole.
- Make diversity visible within the same social group (intra-group relations).
- To favor new processes of identification and empowerment based on shared experiences.

The true importance of working with this cultural heritage, as we can see, lies in its capacity to link the members of this group with their history, with their collective memory, thus facilitating the processes of identification.

The truth is that educating in heritage is educating in values; it is developing an effective link with our past through the present, which contributes to the creation of active and responsible citizenship that takes care of its immediate environment and is concerned about diversity, justice, and the future of the planet and all the beings that inhabit it.

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What Does it Mean to Teach About Intersectional Discrimination in a Multicultural Middle School Art Class? - A White Immigrant Art Teacher's Perspective

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What Does it Mean to Teach About Intersectional Discrimination in a Multicultural Middle School Art Class? - A White Immigrant Art Teacher's Perspective

Three years ago, while I was investigating how to discuss White privilege in the classroom, my ninth-grade students came to art class arguing about a discriminatory comment about a student's skin color. Even though I had intended to open a dialogue through an art project regarding racism, I felt unprepared to cope with the argument. But as a White heterosexual, immigrant woman not so fluent in Norwegian, I had to take action. I attempted to create a safe space to allow my students to talk. I also invited them to agree to be respectful listeners while discussing these issues verbally. My class discussion went well, which I considered a success despite many pitfalls and some failures. I used this experience as the basis to address intersectional discrimination with my ninth graders and extended the theme to the following year's art curriculum. In addition, I began to plan for seventh and eighth graders to address the topic of racism.

I am a White South American heterosexual woman teaching in Norway, aiming to open dialogues about intersectional discrimination at an international middle school. As an art teacher, I have mixed feelings regarding how art is taught in many IB schools worldwide. On the one hand, what I like about teaching at this type of school is that their mission statement suggests fostering international-mindedness. On the other hand, I have mixed feelings how this frame is practiced in connection to our situationality as educators regarding the current world issues. After working in different international schools, attending workshops, and collaborating with other teachers, I have observed how the world and the predominant geopolitics of neoliberalism negatively influence what is taught (Lorde, 2012: 110-114). My reality is that the majority of my students carry painful marks from intersectional discrimination¹ that history made under their skin (hooks, 1981). I understood that this must be addressed through the middle school art curriculum. However, when looking at other international schools in Europe to understand other art curriculum perspectives, I found that, in practice, international-mindedness does not include intersectionality (Carbado et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). Following discussions with other art teachers using the International Baccalaureate (IB) school curriculum framework, international mindedness was not always practiced nor understood (Hacking et al., 2018: 5-9). Not surprisingly,

¹ Intersectional discrimination is rooted in Black feminism and Critical Race Theory. It is a term used to expose the internalized hierarchies utilizing a discourse of power against the entanglements between race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and disability (Carbado et al., 2013).

most IB schools I looked at in Europe are privileged. Meaning that Whiteness and heteronormativity are barely questioned through art as a subject. Due to the Norwegian educational regulations, the situation in our school is different. Being only 20% private, it is accessible to all students regardless of their social-cultural and economic background. Because of this geopolitical scenario versus state capitalism here in Norway, I designed a curriculum where the pedagogical approaches varied depending on how I interpreted that frame. In this chapter, I presented and analyzed three projects attempting to try, fail, and improve how art as a subject can incorporate intersectionality as a theme. These projects are mural paintings to honor the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, comics on intersectionality, and collaborative murals connecting intersectionality and possible environmental connections. I would also like to clarify that these projects are the beginning of an arts-based, long-term research project. At the same time, I used this experience to reflect on the question: How can White teachers teach about intersectional discrimination through art as a subject?

Finding my Intersectional Position(s) as a Motivation to Design and Teach a Critical-Oriented Art Curriculum

Among the challenges I encountered, I acknowledge art teachers need more time to conduct research. Middle school is a hectic and stressful level to teach, and teaching art doesn't imply that art teachers understand the scope of contemporary art as a subject. How can art teachers find balance within their praxis by using art to visualize social issues? One of the things I do is to, I incorporate many artworks of artists who work with intersectional discrimination as a theme. I do that to foster dialogues and articulate an art praxis toward inquiry-based art discussions. From an ethnographic and critical perspective, I shared an overview of three art projects: a mural honoring the BLM movement, individual comics, and group murals.

I teach art in the International Baccalaureate curriculum (IB) using English as the language of instruction. Each teacher in my school is responsible for designing their curriculum and lesson plans. The curriculum is framed by guidelines and structured by four objectives². The first objective, investigating, guides students to investigate an art movement and examples of artworks. The second objective, developing, focuses on technical skills so students can explore techniques in connection to a theme. The third objective, making/performing, is where students materialize their project ideas. The fourth objective, evaluating, reflects on the student's development considering the broad scope of the arts as a discipline.

Students connect to an open statement of inquiry when discussing artworks suggested by the teacher or those selected based on student interest. The statement of inquiry is a conceptual framework that students use as a starting point to create art. For example, I wrote two statements with my students: 'Our own stories inform art to inspire changes in audiences about intersectional to work discrimination and possible connections to the environment' and 'Power and privilege in history can be challenged by the reinterpretation of its aesthetics.' The pedagogical approaches are described later in this chapter.

The Student Demographics

My students have different socio-cultural backgrounds. Some are privileged, and others are unprivileged. They come from Tanzania, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Norway, Estonia, and the United States. Many have more than two cultures in their homes: Norwegian-American and Brazilian-American. There are mixed-race students, Christians and Muslims, and students in the LGBTQ+ community.

² The objectives of art as a subject are presented in a circular diagram for students to understand that the creative process can have different directions and foster connections between reflecting, investigating, and making art (*International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme Subject Brief Arts*, 2023).

Changing My Colonial Gaze: I Can't Teach About Intersectional Discrimination

Finding balance requires facing my Whiteness, heterosexuality, and immigrant background in a multicultural school context. It is a self-critical approach, a work in progress involving all the subjects in the research to later think about how to use art to teach about intersectional discrimination (Carbado et al., 2013: 303-312). I began by creating a research diagram in the form of Figure 1, which draws inspiration from ice cracks and a/r/tography (Balzi, 2023; Irwin, 2018). This diagram helped me to crack the ice of the difficult conversation I had with my ninth-grade students by guiding my pedagogical steps in my art class as a research territory. I informed the diagram with relevant literature described later in this reflection.

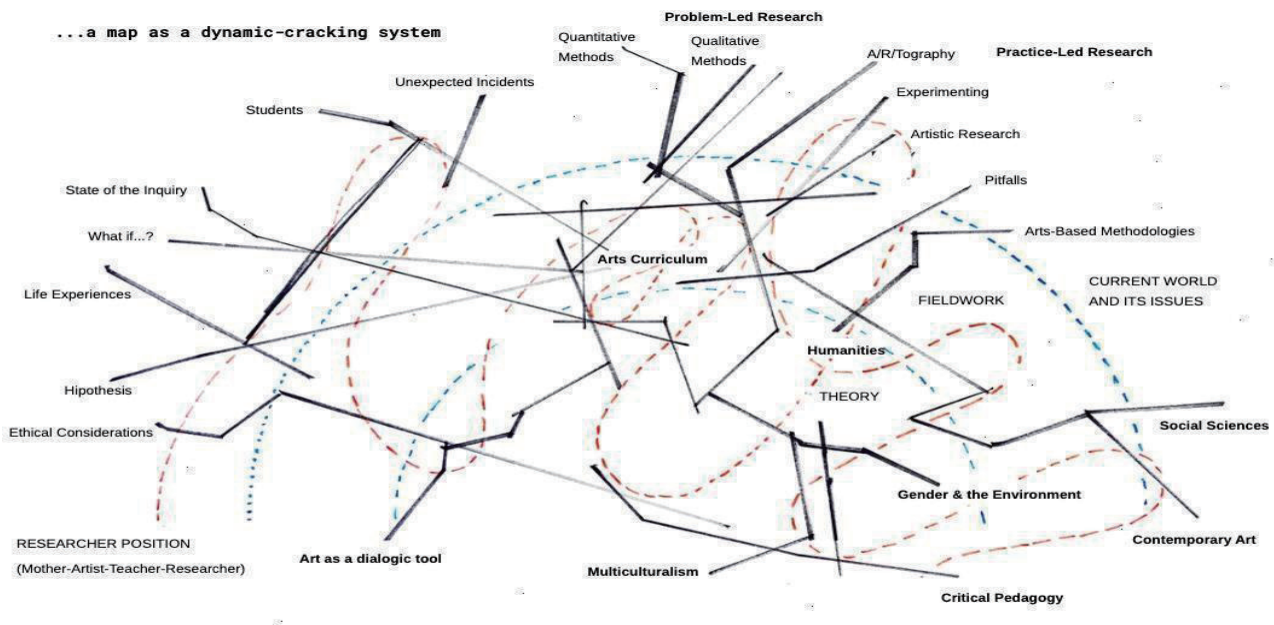


Figure 1. Research map. [Drawing]. Leticia Balzi Costa. (2023)

When designing the pedagogical approaches, I focused on what the students from minority groups needed and wanted to learn. In addition, I incorporated art examples of artists working with communities making murals visualizing climate change and intersectionality. Some of these artists' examples were *Half of the population = Half of the power* (Tüfekçi, 2021); the time for equality is now! (Provozin, et al., 2021), *Defend dignity* (Faurey, 2017), and *There is something I can do* (Kakizi et al., 2021). The pedagogical approaches used literature excerpts to counteract discriminatory prejudices students brought to art class. Examples of these texts include the Norwegian laws against discrimination, the United Nations Sustainable Goals, and quotes from Crenshaw (2020).

White Privilege

Prejudices are behavioral patterns that need to be deconstructed as the body cannot be split from the history and the suffering from our experiences in a social-political terrain (Freire, 1993: 105; Darder, 2016: 4-5; Lorde, 2012: 110-114 & hooks, 1981: 119-127). The discussion with the ninth graders was the starting point, yet my power position as a White teacher had to be examined. How can teachers in multicultural classrooms review their privileges? How can we acknowledge

that an educational system³ still trades with the domestication of students belonging to minority groups?

It is hard to unlearn the biases affecting my own colonial gaze as a White educator trying to discuss intersectional discrimination (Carbado et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 2013 & Lorde, 2012). Because of that, I positioned the art curriculum as a space where I reflected on the theory of intersectionality, informing art projects as possibilities of non-hegemonic frameworks in the context of formal education (Collins, 2000: 41-53). Implicitly, a power position will always be present in the classroom, being an art teacher.

Darder's review (2016) of Freire's works (1968, 2002, 1997) explains the idea of disembodiment and embodiment regarding the voices that have been silenced through the Freirean idea of bank education systems. This system led to standardizing the students' gaze under Western values and predominant hierarchies. Echoing Darder (2016) and Lorde (2012), Desai (2003:149-158) suggests that race, gender, and ethnicity are questioned while heterosexuality is not. So, what does not fit into a heterosexual cultural perspective, is left out of the discussions

In the same vein as Desai (2003), Mallarino (2017: 28-53) explains that there is a discourse that materializes heterosexuality at school sustained by the cultural authority of the government, school, and society, domesticating the body. Alternatively, she suggests that the needed discussion should focus on rethinking the types of schools shaping social values through their missions because the bodies already inhabit those classrooms. She also emphasizes that while students are forming their identity and acquiring media literacy and critical thinking skills, they must challenge their own culturally internalized beliefs of how the world should be. I remind myself and discuss with other colleagues how important it is to acknowledge that the body and history are intrinsically connected. They conform to a social space where power and pleasure present uncomfortable feelings regarding heteronormativity and stereotypes at the intersection of race and gender (Ahmed, 2013:123-165 & Hooks, 1981: 119-127).

Segregation

I decided to design the art curriculum focusing on environmental issues, which could deconstruct how intersectional discrimination had been structured when considering the impact of it on a larger scale. I am not suggesting my curriculum is successful or easy to understand and teach. Nevertheless, it can work as a set of steps to try possible pedagogical approaches giving a more holistic overview of the entanglements of intersectionality and environmental issues. Visibilizing intersectionality could make students change their positions regarding who they are and how discrimination is structured. Desai (2003) explains that there are hidden narratives regarding what educators understand about multiculturalism and, therefore, teach about the notion of art and culture as social constructions. For example, as an educator, I am biased by my Western education and White privilege, acknowledging this matter to design the art curriculum in a multicultural international school context. I argue that the student's lived experiences brought into the classroom daily are essential to challenge the notion of culture. In addition, the examples of artists working to question identity as a social construction are also essential to support the different views regarding intersectionality.

Mediations

In most art classes, I designed a curriculum focusing on the same themes throughout the year. I mediated the project discussions through posters and turn-and-talk activities. For example, as shown in Figure 2, students read, researched, and discussed intersectional discrimination and White

³ Regarding the educational system, I argue from my own experience that the geopolitical contexts I lived in – Argentina, Spain, Germany, the United States, and Norway – influence the way we learn and the content that is prioritized by national laws present in the national arts curriculum.

privilege. Some students rejected different students' positions regarding that White privilege is also connected to overlooking a lesbian of color. I asked students to discuss the concept of "multiply-burdened" (Crenshaw, 1989: 138) to understand better why gender and race should not be addressed separately. In the same vein, while reading the BLM claims that there will/is no liberation when the marginalized groups do not have a leadership position in liberation movements (Crenshaw, 1989: 139-150), the discussions moved in all directions creating flows of knowledge in the art class

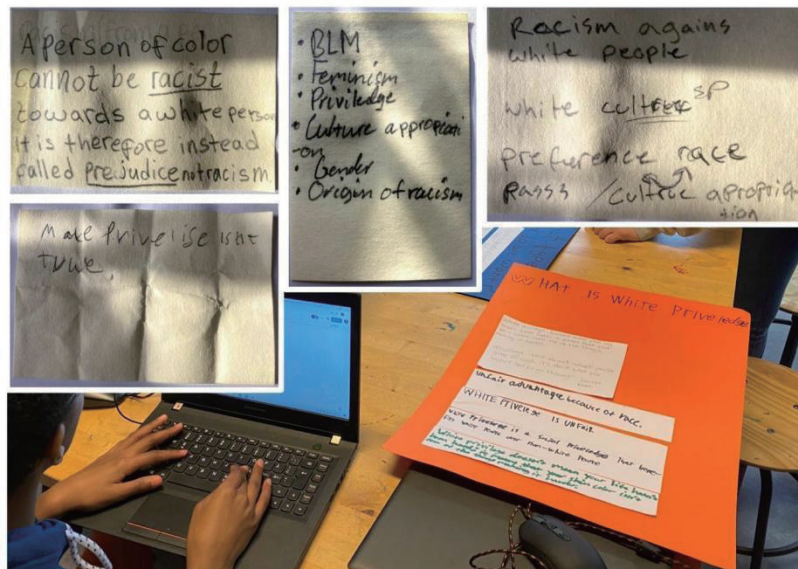


Figure 2. Post-it and poster activity. [Photography]. Leticia Balzi Costa. (2022)

Boundaries

The first project, shown in Figure 3, consisted of making a mural painting where students conducted collaborative research tasks following the statement of inquiry: 'Boundaries of power and privilege in history can be challenged by the reinterpretation of aesthetics'. To mediate the conversations, I established my role as a mediator, not a teacher. The activists my students decided to include in the BLM mural were Marsha P. Johnson, Martin L. King, Malcolm X, Claudette Colvin, and Shirley Chisholm. I suggested including activists within the Norwegian context, but according to students, they could not find anyone. After this, I could recognize how disconnected the local community here has been from the works of activists who advocate for minority rights. Regarding anti-discriminatory educational practices, I wonder how not talking about civil rights from a local perspective places the social issues in a distant place as if they are not happening here. First, I asked all the students to create a circle with their chairs. The seating arrangement exposed racial segregation. Silence dominated the classroom when I said we would discuss discrimination against race during the next art project. Second, I gave each student a sticky note and introduced the keywords of White privilege, systemic racism, and feminism. I asked them to write three things: what they would like to discuss—concerning the recess incident involving discriminatory comments against a black student. Then, I asked them what they would like to know more about and to include any thoughts about these topics. They worked in different groups discussing and researching intersectionality within the framework of the BLM civil rights movement. They collected images, including keywords and activists. They used the images to make a collage and later as the sketch for the mural. They also wrote a statement regarding White privilege as the cause of racism. The idea of having students in racially and gender-mixed groups aimed to break the segregation in the class. In addition, we had conversations to discuss situations where they have witnessed discrimination and better understand what White privilege means in a social structure and how it is enacted.

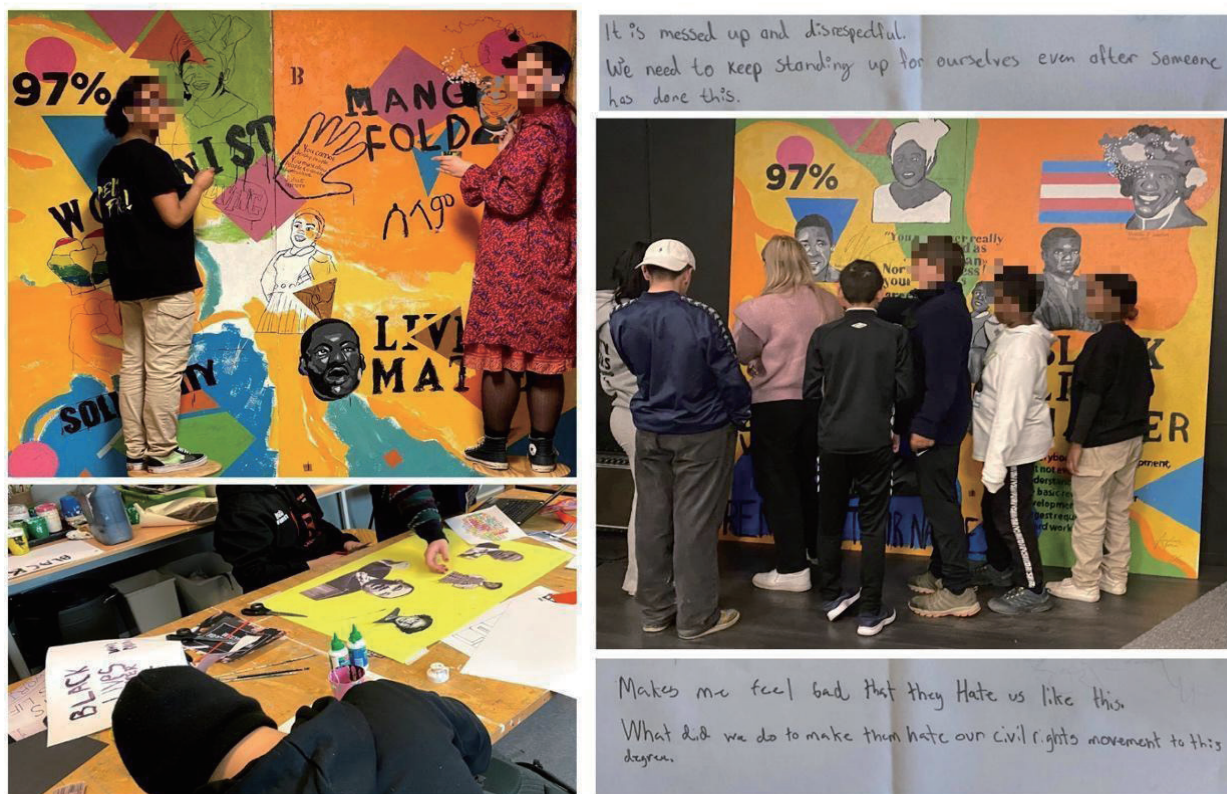


Figure 3. Mural process. [Photography]. Leticia Balzi Costa. (2022)

Comics About Intersectionality

The second project took place the following year when students were in grade ten. The idea was to continue with the conversations about intersectional discrimination. In this project, students investigated their personal lives and national and global laws to create a short graphic novel about gender diversity. I used a collaborative brainstorming session and comic examples to start answering the unit questions: What is a gender stereotype? How can we break prejudices about gender diversity? I purposefully repeated the questions from last year from the mural project. Students used process journals to write personal related experiences so that year's mural project information could be used to inform the character(s) and plot for their short comic. I also used the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (2017) and a visual diagram explaining intersectionality. Among the examples, students made comics exploring being a Muslim immigrant in Norway, a girl from an ethnic minority, sexuality, mental health, history's impact on the body from a racial perspective, and race in connection to gender diversity. Some examples of the process and outcome can be seen in Figure 4. These comics were copied and assembled into a magazine, which was made available to all students at school.

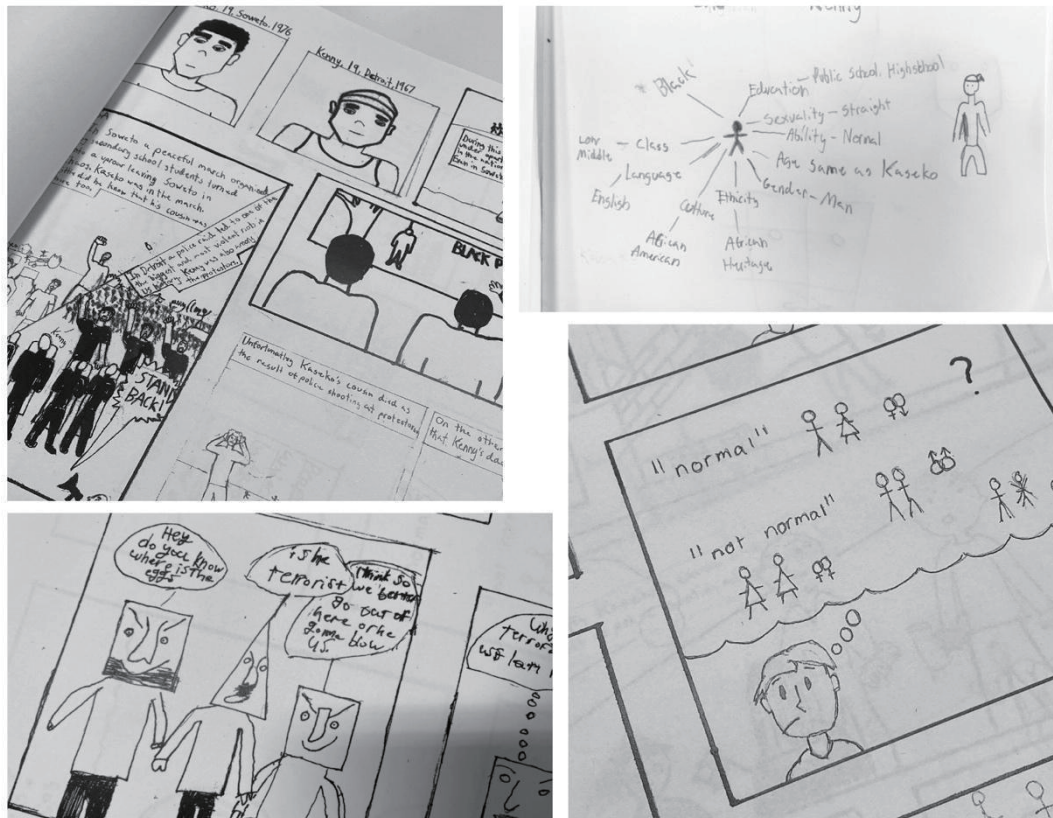


Figure 4. Students' comics details and character brainstorming. [Photography].
Leticia Balzi Costa. (2022). Courtesy of students.

Graffiti, Drawing, and Mural Painting as a Collaborative Artwork

The third project was to incorporate the comic information into a mural and gather voices through a collaborative mural project fostering more connections to environmental issues. I posed different questions for each grade, but all connected to intersectionality and environmental issues. I selected and printed examples of contemporary street murals addressing the same themes and posted them on a wall in the art classroom. For example, in grade seven, the focus was on building community. In grade eight, students connected the community mural to address bullying with a focus on intersectionality. In grade nine, students discussed what it means to be human. Last, in grade ten, students continued working with intersectional discrimination and possible connections to the environment. Students' visual brainstorming included drawings of bees, an upside-down Earth, and a portrait of Malcolm X, with keywords like "understanding," "community," "love all," and "respect." It also included phrases in connection to immigration and sexual diversity. The three murals included a considerable diversity of students' voices. Every student had an assigned section to draw their thoughts on the mural.



Figure 5. Students working on the murals. [Photography]. Leticia Balzi Costa. (2022)

Visualizing Silence Across the School Curriculum

What is the role of art as a subject regarding international mindedness to address intersectional discrimination and possible connections to environmental issues? As a pedagogical strategy, I used the research map to guide my steps as an artist, researcher, and educator, which informed the design and implementation of an art curriculum. In theory, understanding the body's desires in terms of liberation, especially in connection to gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, helped to partially change my colonial gaze as a Western European-trained art educator. Technically speaking, the first project worked, the second was partially successful, and the third was left incomplete due to a lack of commitment from many students.

However, the conversations flowed, and the process journals captured many interesting visualizations of these two complicated and entangled themes to address. The space for dialogue was open in each class, and some students were able to grasp the meaning of intersectional discrimination. To establish connections to the environment, I had individual talks with students about it and used the visual support of the examples from street art already illustrating the intersections of the themes. But more approaches, time and research is needed to ensure that this entanglement is properly addressed. Many of my students struggled to develop technical, research, critical, and social skills, among many other challenges. Not to mention how difficult it was to discuss White privilege with White male heterosexual students.

While teaching these projects during two academic years, I have also witnessed that "queer subjects may be asked to make a heterosexual feel uncomfortable regarding a shared social space" (Desai, 2003: 145). I had problems discussing the importance of empathy with a Muslim student who would not accept gender and sexual diversity. My male students of color also rejected at first Crenshaw's intersectionality explanation even though I used prints of her articles in class. I had students sneaking into the storage room used to work on the mural panels.

Then, writings against the LGBTQ+ community appeared on the panels and shelves used to store the paint. The way we addressed this issue as a school was to ask the discriminated students what they would like to do. They suggested the teachers discuss this with all the school students. So, the principal, the middle school coordinator, and I used the school auditorium to express our rejection as a community against the incidents. We also asked the students to anonymously express their views by writing on a post and then collecting all the comments. We shared the students' thoughts with the teachers and considered their voices to keep discussing the incident in each class. We were grateful for having such a supportive community of open-minded students rejecting what happened with the mural. I continued reading laws and regulations against discrimination in the art class and planned the next lesson.

Ahmed's idea of reintegrative shaming is also a key axis to moderate conversations as they require the offender to defend their prejudices and the offended to tolerate this so later a transformation can occur (Ahmed, 2013: 144-160). She argues that if we are to rethink our place as educators to guide and moderate conversations with students, "emotional and physical scars" (p. 201) must be faced. The reintegrative process of decolonizing their views is also painful because it touches their egos, and sometimes it is not easy for young students to control their emotions. So, how are teachers prepared to go through this? As an art educator, would you teach art just because of the importance of aesthetic appreciation or because it can be a liberation vehicle for restorative justice? These authors also suggest that the body is a terrain-condition-battleground where knowledge takes place, but it's silenced by the heteronormativity of neoliberal education (Ahmed, 2014: 106-114. Mallarino, 2017: 8-13, & Desai, 2003: 147- 161). Can this statement be used to contradict the privileged perspective from some international schools?

Intersectionality, Multiculturalism, and Environment through Contemporary Art at Middle School

Racism inhabits our world, and intersectionality is overlooked at schools. Multiculturalism is rooted in intersectionality, so decolonizing the youth body means taking a closer look at the school and teachers' biases regarding heterosexual ethnocentric glasses. Becoming our students' allies and queer up the social school space through love in its broader sense sounds like creating spaces where students' diverse voices can be heard. I believe this can model multicultural learning counteracting projections of heteronormativity in the art curriculum. Addressing discrimination against race was the starting point, but this combination of neoliberal visual culture predominating and permeating the students' young skin produces a sense of false identification with the contemporary world. It also overlooks social and environmental issues.

As a teacher of art, integrating the contemporary world into art as a subject is a way to justify necessary dialogues. Examining the context in which the school is located can also help teachers to understand the hierarchical gaze affecting the students' lives through curricula at school. While I am still thinking with a colonial mindset because I have been educated that way for a long time, I learned that intersectionality and the consequences of this on the environment are at the core of decolonization. My takeaway from these experiences is that we, educators, must keep learning to think through the arts, analyzing power and social privilege to create inclusion. It is not too early for teenagers to start discussing these themes and issues because their physical body changes while experiencing a strong sense of identity formation. Moreover, It is still possible for teachers to welcome moments to stop and rethink their arts curriculum. What stories can you tell after reading my reflection in another school context? How would you challenge yourself to use the arts and advocate for social inclusion continuously in and through the arts curriculum? Last, I cannot give any advice because I am also a learner who has failed many times with myself and my students. But, examining our privileges critically and discussing with minority students as well as the principal of the school can gather allies while co-designing pedagogical approaches. Dare to do it.

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Navigating the Intersectionality of My Identity Through the Arts in a Turbulent World

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Introduction

Know your past lest you falter finding your way forward. The world is in turmoil when it comes to race. Being discriminated against, enduring acts of cruelty, hate, intimidation, and violence, and being subjugated to a lesser form of human, dominated, and exploited by those of “privilege,” just because you were born Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), can drive even the most hardened person insane. The energy exhausted just thinking about this situation and its ramifications can be paralyzing, preventing us from doing anything, but doing nothing maintains the status quo. To effectuate substantive change, we must challenge the status quo to improve the human condition, and if each of us did our part in our community, in our chosen profession, and choose leaders who believe in and support multicultural and multiracial democracies, change will come. As a native of Jamaica, I learned about the invasion, destruction, and occupation of my country by White Europeans during colonialism and slavery. I also learned about White supremacy ideology and its destructive legacies that White Europeans left behind that is now an existential threat to humanity. Education through the arts provided me with the confidence, the creativity, the ingenuity and the stubbornness of thought to interrogate the Intersectionality of my identity and confront the legacies of White Supremacy in Jamaica, Mexico, the United States, and around the world, engaging my colleagues in this conversation in over 30 countries that I have visited, and educating my students to work to create a human world that is equal and just for all. My journey in education through the arts and the reflection on the intersectionality of my identity are the focus of this chapter.

Reflecting on the Intersectionality of My Identity

By reflecting on the intersectionality of my identity, I have come to terms with the complexity of the human condition that empowers me to tell my own story and contemplate a vision



Jamaican Coat of Arms, Courtesy of the Jamaica Information Service

for the unknowable future. As a teenage boy, born and raised in Jamaica, my parents made education a top priority for me and my siblings. In high school, I learned about the cruelty, brutality, and inhumane treatment of my ancestors, the Arawaks and Africans, at the hands of White Europeans males via the system of colonialism and slavery. The Arawaks, also called Taino Indians, came to Jamaica, then called Xaymaca “the land of wood and water,” from South America and settled on the island approximately 2,500 years prior to the Spanish invasion that started in 1494. After the Spaniards arrived in Jamaica, searching for gold, they encountered the Arawaks. The colonizers stole their lands, overworked and ill-treated them, and slaughtered many of them. These Europeans also introduced diseases that killed a significant number of the Arawak population. A little more than a century and a half after the initial invasion of Jamaica, the English seized the island from the Spaniards in 1655 and continued the system of European colonialism and slavery by establishing sugarcane plantations. To maintain this labor-intensive establishment, over 600,000 Africans from Ghana, Nigeria, and Central Africa including Akan, Ashanti, Yoruba, Ibo, and Ibibio people were shipped to Jamaica as slaves. They met with similar treatment to that of the Arawaks before them, but they fought back successfully to liberate themselves from this system of slavery and exploitation. Jamaica gained its independence from Britain on August 6, 1962, but has remained a member of the British Commonwealth.

As a member of the British Commonwealth, the Jamaican population grew, and it became diverse, and this is why the motto of Jamaica is “Out of many One people” (Coat of arms of Jamaica, 2023). With this diversity, the population includes people of African descent, Afro-European, East-Indian and Afro-East-Indian, Caucasian, Chinese, and others, but the people of African descent are the overwhelming majority, and I am a member of this majority. This diverse population created competitive stressors in society, but my parents stressed the importance of education for me and my siblings and were very protective of us navigating the emerging political and social situation at that time. Despite this protection, I consumed the liberation music of Bob Marley (1945 – 1981), the internationally known reggae artist; the politics and economic revival messages of the Former Prime Minister of Jamaica, Michael Manley (1924 – 1997); and the warning of the perils of European imperialism by Walter Anthony Rodney (1942-1980), a Guyanese historian, political activist, and academic. In school, I learned about the Jamaican national heroes who fought to liberate my people: Cudjoe, Samuel Sharpe, Paul Bogle, and George William Gordon (Jamaica Information Service, 2023). But the person who seemed to gain the most attention and admiration was Nanny of the Maroons. She was known to both the Maroons, descendants of Africans who freed themselves from slavery in the Colony of Jamaica and established their communities, and the British settlers in Jamaica, during the 18th Century, as a fierce and outstanding military leader and a symbol of unity and strength for the people during times of crisis.

These exposures have deeply influenced my interest in history, politics, and the human condition. As I reflected on the human condition of my fellow Jamaicans, I asked myself the question, “Why after so many years of colonialism and slavery are my people still struggling for economic, political, and social advancements?” Tessa Duvall (October 31, 2023), in an article, “*Group defends ‘Uncle Daniel’ ad that Cameron, GOP call racist,*” in the *Lexington Herald Leader*, reported “You do not have to be White to pursue and reinforce White supremacist policies.” White supremacists' policies are the legacies of White Europeans that represent the residual effect of the system of colonialism, slavery, and continued European imperialism in Jamaica. It stands to reason, therefore, that if the Jamaican people continue to struggle for economic, political, and social advancements, our leaders are either not competent to lead effectively, or they are content to continue the systemic legacies of White supremacists' policies because they benefit them. This reminds me of what Martin Luther King, Jr. said about leadership; “We need leaders not in love with money but in love with justice. Not in love with publicity but in love with humanity.”

Confronting the Legacies of White Supremacy

Despite my mathematics and science background in high school, I was looking for something different, so I pursued biology and art education at Mico College University in Jamaica. Art education, as a discipline, not only taught me the pedagogical strategies to impart my knowledge about art, but it also gave me the freedom to think critically and the creativity to express myself about the issues I care about. After graduating from Mico, I taught art and biology at Jamaica College, and I saw the difference an educator can make in the lives of young people, but there was a restlessness throughout my tenure as I read the accounts of European domination of other people employing the White supremacy ideology. A simple search on Google defines White supremacy as: "...the belief that [W]hite people are superior to those of other races and thus should dominate them" (Wikipedia: Free Encyclopedia, April 27, 2023). This continued to heighten my passion for world history and politics and made me want to travel abroad to experience the human condition in other countries.

My restlessness landed me in Mexico where I earned my BFA and MFA degrees in drawing, painting, and printmaking. During this period at the Instituto Allende Incorporación con La Universidad the Guanajuato, I studied the Mexican muralists Jose Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros from whom I learned about the plight of the Mexican people. What caught my attention, however, was the history of the Spaniards invading Mexico and exploiting its people, and I thought, "This is like the history of colonialism and slavery I learned about in Jamaica." Hernan Cortes and his fellow countrymen demolished the Aztec Empire, in what is now central and southern Mexico, killing and subjugating the natives and confiscating their lands and natural resources on behalf of the Spanish government (Helm, 1968). This made me recall the plight of my African ancestors on the continent of Africa who I learned about by studying the colonialization of the continent (Manjapra, 2020). Africa was colonialized by the European imperialist power in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, but South Africa continued as an Apartheid state (1948-1994), where the overwhelming percentage of the population had been Black people, and where systemic segregation and dehumanization persisted until the 1990s. Indeed, some might argue, at this juncture, we are in a different era, colonialism and slavery have been abolished, and this is certainly the official record, but living in the United States as an immigrant student, the legacies of colonialism and slavery seem to lie just beneath the surface of the society.

After earning my doctorate in art education/administration at Illinois State University, I was hired as an administrator/art educator. During these early professional years, I thought that promoting multicultural education would address the issues of racism and discrimination that were often reported in K-12 education and higher education institutions. From my work as Associate Dean of the Graduate School of a prominent institution, I learned that multicultural education was extremely complex, and the main thrust of this complexity was aversive racism that is considered widespread in too many educational institutions in the United States. Dr. Robin DiAngelo (2018), in her book --*White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* described aversive racism as when White people say the politically correct things in public but behind closed doors, they do everything to maintain the status quo to preserve their privileges, elevate themselves, and perpetuate systems and attitudes that subjugate and marginalize the advancement of BIPOC and other marginalized groups. This situation caught me off guard because I thought that everyone, if not most people, genuinely wanted to address the racism and discrimination problems in education, but little did I know that these attitudes are deeply embedded, and they manifest themselves through aversive racism.

Aversive racism is the residual attitudes and behaviors of White Europeans who thought they were superior to other races, and that they had the right to exploit them. In the 1800s Arthur de Gobineau (1853), a French novelist, diplomat, and writer, wrote an essay claiming that his scientific research proved that the White race was superior to that of others and thus had the right to dominate them. As if to emphasize this point, European imperialists believed that "...the White race

is obligated to civili[z]e the non-white people...” (*The White Man’s Burden*, September 17, 2023). This has provided me some insight into why White European males thought they had the right to colonize my ancestors’ lands and that of others and to enslave the inhabitants in many countries around the world. But now these attitudes and behaviors have metastasized into legacies that deprive equality and justice to BIPOC and other marginalized groups and are also an existential threat to the idea of a multicultural, multiracial, multilingual society in the United States.

“While white people are not to blame for policies that began before they were born, they are still benefiting from them at the ---often grave – expense of Black Americans [and other marginalized groups]” (Gleig, 2020). Abraham Lincoln, the 16th US President, officially abolished slavery in the United States on January 1, 1863, but the *modus operandi* in the country made it look and feel like a modern version of colonialism and slavery. Worth Rises characterizes it this way:

Slavery is the evil that has loomed over [the US] our nation since its founding. Its racist legacy ---carried through Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, Mass incarceration, and police brutality ---continues to threaten the li[v]es of Black people and other people of color (Worth Rises, September 14, 2023).

This reality is demonstrated by police brutality that was on full display when the world watched in horror the killing of George Floyd, an African American male, on May 25, 2020, by Derek Chauvin, a White Minneapolis police officer, who knelt on his neck until he was lifeless. This happened beside a marked police vehicle on the street with other police officers present while onlookers begged Chauvin to stop. Police officers are supposed to be peace-keeping forces that protect us, not one that terrorizes Black and Brown people. Unfortunately, George Floyd’s death is just one example of the many race-based violent incidents that continue to be perpetrated by police. As a Black man I am constantly looking over my shoulders, not because I am doing anything wrong, but because I am now aware that the police are not looking to protect me from harm but to use the power given to them by the state to subjugate people like me, even if it means taking my life. When I leave my spouse and home each day for work, I worry, and I know she does too, that it might be the last time she sees me alive because the police may choose that it is my turn to face their racist legacy of brutality and dehumanization that day.

Sadly, the legacies of White supremacy do not stop with the Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, mass incarceration, and police brutality and dehumanization but they have created individuals who have sworn allegiance to White nationalism. White nationalists, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary are characterized as “... one of a group of militant White people who espouse white supremacy and advocate enforced racial segregation.” Living in the United States it seems that as Black and Brown people and other marginalized groups increase and demand their freedom, equality, and justice, the more apoplectic, enraged, and sadistic White nationalists have become. The possible loss of power and control seems to have led them to engage in voter suppression, conspiracy theories, litigating grievances, and even engaging in intimidation and violence to maintain the status quo ante. For example, on January 6, 2021, a mostly White mob, summoned to Washington DC, the capital city of United States democracy, attacked the Capital building and its police force, and expressed a desire to kill political leaders who did not subscribe to their demands to overturn a free and fair election that did not result in their favor (Dunn, 2023 & Fanone, 2022). This insurrection committed against their own democratically elected government, I believed, was intended to appease their grievances, privileged position, and their White supremacy authoritarian tendencies.

These authoritarian tendencies that led to this insurrectionist act seems not to be limited to the White mob violence that took place in the United States Capital, but includes politicians who subscribe to White supremacy while White nationalists are banning books in schools that discuss the plight of BIPOC, sexual identity of marginalized groups, and other subjects that do not comport

with their myopic worldviews; restricting the civil and constitutional rights of women and other marginalized people; promoting a gun culture that is harming children, women, and men; and engaging in falsehood and alternative facts. These actions seem obviously intended to keep White people in power to subjugate Black and Brown people, women, and other marginalized groups to a servitude status of the state. And at the same time, they also seem intent to use the power of the state to further enrich the billionaire class, which sits at the top of the economic ladder, and who provides corrupt politicians and some judges, even on the highest court, with lavish gifts and campaign donations to maintain minority rule and continue to use the government for their economic, political, and social advancement while ignoring the plight of the disadvantage in society.

The legacies of White supremacy seem to engender discrimination, exploitation, grievances, hate, intimidation, racism, selfishness, and violence to maintain the status quo ante, but the problem is that these idiosyncrasies are an existential threat to the norms of civil societies. As I contemplated this situation, I recalled the words of Ken Robinson (2011) who said that we created the human world we now live in, and we can recreate it. This gave me hope and with my administrative experience and returning to faculty status full-time, it became obvious to me that I must do something to ameliorate this turmoil in society. Knowing that the greatness of the United States lies within its diversity and recognizing that diversity cannot co-exist with the legacies of White supremacy, if we want a peaceful and progressive multicultural, multiracial, multilingual, multinarrative democracy where there is equality, justice, and freedom for all people, my response was obvious, create the foundation for change.

Creating a foundation to dismantle the legacies of White supremacy and at the same time foster a peaceful and progressive democratic society where there is equality, justice, and freedom for all, is an enormous and complicated undertaking. However, I am reminded of the Chinese proverb, *"The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones."* Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa and one of my role models, said "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." This reassured me that education through art is the correct tool to challenge the legacies of White supremacy. Hanging on the inside of my office door was a poster that read, "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten." This credo by Robert Fulghum (2003) made me think that the best hope for removing the legacies of White supremacy mountain is to educate young people to be resilient and equip them with the skills to work with and respect individuals who have different worldviews than their own but at the same time, use these experiences and skills to counteract the legacies of White supremacy. Respecting and working with others who have different worldviews, young people can gain new knowledge, advance their creative ability to resolve conflicts, be informed about current events, identify and reject fake news, and be brave enough to advocate for improving the human condition.

In October 2019, I took this message to the global community, I delivered a speech at the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) Conference held in Malta where I discussed the issue of empowering young people to work together to build a strong democracy where all people can benefit and resist the behaviors and attitudes of greed, hate, and exploitation of others for the benefit of the privileged few in society. This speech was entitled, *Democracy in the 21st Century, Citizenship, and Art Education*, and it articulated the ideas that are found in my book, *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers*, now in its 3rd edition. I argued for, among different ideas, a multifaceted arts education approach to preparing students to succeed in a society where the future is unknowable. The arts are particularly important to this process because they are more than pedagogical tools, they help to formulate the creative mind during its development (Wachowiak & Clements, 2006; Richards, 2003; & Eisner, 2002). In this speech, I also argued that the classroom should reflect the real-world environment where young people are challenged to leave greed, destructive behaviors, and selfish attitudes behind for a more robust human empathetic instinct to take *care of one another and the environment*, have self-confidence, and be empowered to resist the legacies of White supremacy (Richards & Willis, 2023). I also outlined a pedagogical strategy to help young people develop these skills and the creativity they need to work

with and learn from others who have different worldviews. This pedagogical strategy combines current events, the theory of conceptual art, and project-based learning through visual arts education.

Current-Event, Conceptual Art, and Project-Based Learning Pedagogical Strategy in Visual Arts

Why did I choose this combination of approaches for a pedagogical strategy? Current events familiarize students with the world around them; the practice of conceptual art (Alberro & Stinson, 1999), in art education, provides students opportunities to be creative and innovative and to engage the use of their imagination; and project-based activities provide students authentic learning opportunities in research, for factual information, and by interacting with different classmates who may not share their worldviews but at the same time, can work together for a successful conclusion of the class project. This pedagogical strategy is intended to equip students with life and career skills and the intuition they need to navigate an uncertain future while challenging the legacies of White supremacy and the ideology White nationalism.

I teach three different categories of students: visual arts education preservice teachers who will be certified to teach art in K-12 schools, preservice teachers who will be certified in different disciplines (English, science, physical education, etc.) to teach in elementary schools, and graduate students who will teach in community colleges, other job opportunities, or pursue their doctorate in education. I employ the *Current-Event, Conceptual Art, and Project-Based Learning Pedagogical Strategy in Visual Arts* differently for each of these groups of students. Through this pedagogical strategy, graduate candidates are encouraged to explore their interests through art education. This is how the graduate program in art education produced an MA graduate who has successfully pursued research into Alzheimer's disease. Another graduate has developed an art-education-based program

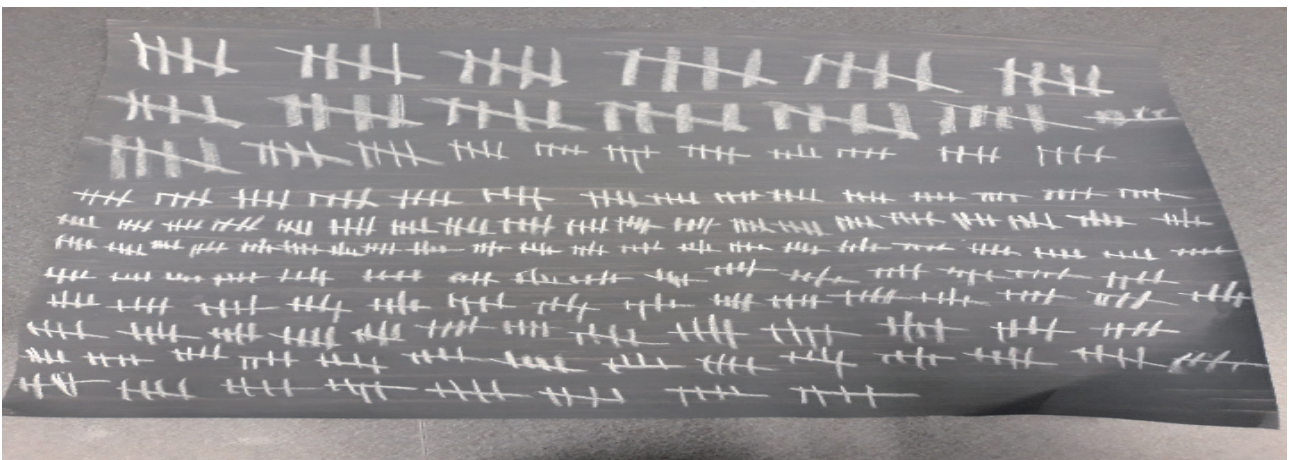


Figure 1: This piece speaks to the lives of people living in the jails and prisons of the US.
Courtesy of the student artist

to improve the psychological well-being of medical doctors in training.



Figure 2: Cultural involvement in eating habits, animal welfare and the environment.
Courtesy of the student artist

The training of art teachers for K-12 schools is prescribed mainly by the Commonwealth of Kentucky. However, I employ *the Current-Event, Conceptual Art, and Project-Based Learning Pedagogical Strategy in Visual Arts* judiciously in assignments for *A-E 577 Art in Secondary Schools* and *579 Arts and Humanities in Art Education* courses. In my *A-E 577 Art in Secondary Schools* class, student teachers are requested to read texts, conceptualize ideas from these texts, translate these ideas into images that tell their stories, and write about the process. This assignment gives art education student teachers the freedom to exercise their imagination and creativity and connect to issues that concern them most. In the book, *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers, 3rd Ed* (Richards & Willis, 2023), which I use as the textbook in my class, *Chapter 4 –Contributions* discusses the importance of the contributions we make to society suggesting that society generally perceives us based on the contributions we make to it, and in the end, we are treated accordingly. After reading this chapter, for example, art education student teachers were requested to design different images from their reflections. One student teacher submitted an image on a black background with many sets of vertical lines, five in each set, to raise the issue of continued discrimination that results in the disproportionate number of Black and Brown people, particularly males, who are incarcerated in the United States, and no one seems to care (See Figure 1).

Another student teacher produced an image depicting a pronounced pair of female's red lips to draw attention to the eating disorder issue (See Figure 2). These images reflect the student teachers' stories and the issues with which they are concerned and are working to improve the human condition.

Preservice teachers who are being groomed to teach in elementary schools are required to take one section of the *A-E 200 Workshop in Design Education for Elementary Student Teachers*. Many of these preservice teachers never had an art class prior to this course. Because the delivery of the content of this course is flexible, I have creatively implemented the *Current-Event, Conceptual Art, and Project-Based Learning Pedagogical Strategy in Visual Arts* in it. Preservice teachers in this course are required to read, understand, and interpret texts. My preliminary exercises for the first three to four classes are to create a collage, a still life, and a landscape to prepare preservice teachers to learn to manipulate art elements and design principles to create a coherent image that tells their stories. Once they have grasped the concept of creating images, they read and interpret the text of the selected chapters in the textbook, *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers, 3rd Edition*. This allows them to conceptualize and produce images that best represent the essence of what they read to tell their stories. This encourages them to engage their identity, imagination, and creativity in a way that inspires authentic and self-directed learning.

At about four weeks from the end of the semester, the preservice teachers are required to engage in a class project. One of the concerns I have about the current education system is the

segmenting of disciplinary learning that tends to limit students from applying their full range of experiences across disciplines to solve problems. This class project was intended to provide these preservice teachers an opportunity to apply not only what they learned in my course but to use the full range of their cross-disciplinary experiences to resolve the problems that they may encounter bringing the class project to a successful conclusion. In addition, this class project provides these preservice teachers the opportunity to enhance the development of some life and career skills like learning to collaborate with individuals who might not share the same worldviews, but also understand that diversity of thought and ideas is essential to building new knowledge and creating change. In the final analysis, the preservice teachers were expected to organize themselves to complete the class project. This was intended to simulate their reaction to the diverse global environment in which they intend to work.

Executing the Water Project

One semester one of my classes selected to do a water project, *preserving and conserving clean drinking water*. To accomplish this project-based activity, I requested that the preservice teachers make suggestions about what medium they were going to employ to disseminate the best results to their community. They discussed employing advertisements, emails, Facebook posts, and posters but settled on producing a play. It was argued that the play would be more appealing to community people to see their youngsters coming back home to perform on stage. Once this decision was made by the class, the preservice teachers elected various groups from their colleagues for the different roles and responsibilities. A director and an assistant director to oversee the total production of the play were selected. The director and assistant director worked with the class to assign responsibilities. For the most part, preservice teachers self-selected the duties they wanted to perform. Artworks for the backdrops on stage were completed, several rehearsals took place, and the play was performed in front of a live audience of other preservice teachers and relatives of the preservice teachers (mainly relatives in Lexington, Kentucky, and those who worked on the University campus). It was very effective in communicating the message intended to preserve and conserve clean drinking water. After production of the play, preservice teachers attended debriefing sessions to register their thoughts and discuss their experiences. These debriefing sessions were also used as teaching opportunities for preservice teachers to realize the importance of cultural diversity in the creative and innovative process of the production of the play and the enrichment of their education.

Student Comments and Analyses

The intent of the *Current-Event, Conceptual Art, and Project-Based Learning Pedagogical Strategy in Visual Arts* was to harness the potential of cultural diversity and to ameliorate the conflicts it engenders among some individuals. Harnessing the potential of diversity meant exposing students to different customs, traditions, perspectives, and ideas through student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions. Exposing students to different customs, traditions, perspectives, and ideas in a culturally diverse setting like the classroom fosters multicultural education naturally.

I used the preservice teachers' comments to guide the analyses of the efficacy of my *Current-Event, Conceptual Art, and Project-Based Learning Pedagogical Strategy in Visual Arts* to harness the potential of cultural diversity and ameliorate the conflicts it engenders among some individuals. In doing so, the analysis is expected to demonstrate that students are using language, ideas, and concepts that flow out of multicultural education. The plight of individuals in society, and the concern about preparing students to recognize that they must take care of themselves, others, and the environment is at the heart of multicultural education and following the caption, multicultural education through cultural diversity. Preservice teachers' statements demonstrated the degree to which this pedagogical strategy is effective by articulating some of the tenets of multicultural education through cultural diversity.

Preservice teachers' comments reflect the true barometer of what they were thinking, feeling, and more importantly what they learned. From this class, therefore, it was expected that preservice teachers, through their comments, would show what multicultural education through cultural diversity meant. In this case, I selected one example of a preservice teacher comment to analyze. To protect this preservice teacher's identity, anonymity is used with the selected comment.

Multicultural Education through Cultural Diversity

Rosalind wrote:

"Spirituality is cultivated through the study of humanities to expose the similarities of the human condition throughout people of all backgrounds. This spirituality through humanities creates an understanding and a level of connectedness to other human beings that will prevent the perpetuation of "othering" that plagues our society and instills each student with a responsibility to take care of themselves, others, and the environment. The chapter (Chapter 4 in Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers) also defines human rights and focuses heavily on current cultural events that shape our society including terrorism, police brutality, poverty, education, and the environment."

Richards' and Willis' (2020) book, *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers* (now in its 3rd Ed.) was the textbook for the *A-E 200 Workshop in Design Education for Elementary Teachers* class. After reading the textbook for the class assignment and after collaborating and communicating with her classmates about the water project, Rosalind, who wrote the above comment, chose to speak on spirituality. Spirituality in this context is not about religious dogma, it is about taking care of self, fellow human beings, and the environment. Why did this student choose to address spirituality in the way she did? It could be that she remembered what she read from the class textbook. Spirituality is not the only subject mentioned in the textbook, she could have chosen some other subject on which to comment. The other possibility is that after working with her classmates on the water project the subject of spirituality was the most appropriate one she recognized that would express her thoughts and ideas about her experience on the issue of cultural diversity.

To recognize cultural diversity and the ramifications it has on individuals and communities we should do a better job preparing for it (Lum & Wagner, 2019 & Hamid, 2017). The water project provided my students an opportunity to collaborate and communicate with individuals from different backgrounds and experience cultural diversity. This cultural diversity experience allowed this preservice teacher to recognize similarities exist in the human condition of individuals from different backgrounds. She also recognized that "... *creating an understanding and a level of connectedness to other human beings [can] prevent...*" the othering of those who may be different racially, culturally, and in other ways. This suggests that Rosalind was conscious about her situation as it relates to her classmates. In addition, a focus on human rights and current cultural events is further evidence of the consciousness Rosalind had about her environment and the world around her.

Cultural diversity is central to multicultural education and multicultural education is paramount to preparing students for their futures. Multicultural education is about exposing students to different perspectives, ideas, and concepts, and expanding their understanding of the world around them, and what is taking place in it. Understanding the world around her and what is taking place in it indicated that Rosalind was grappling with the reality of cultural diversity that was seeping into

her consciousness. *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teachers, 3rd Edition* (Richards & Willis, 2023) appears to have given this preservice teacher a voice or the language to express her thoughts. The conceptual-art concept in visual arts through project-based activities and the water project provided the preservice teachers with the environment in which to experience collaboration and communication with individuals who speak and look differently from them. These manifestations reflect multicultural education and a preservice teacher using it to express an emerging consciousness of cultural diversity and its ramifications in society.

My teaching interest is predicated on the concept of preparing students for their futures, in hopes of improving the human condition and changing society, in an unpredictable global community. In my book, *Global Consciousness through the Arts: A Passport for Students and Teaching, 3rd Ed.*, in the *Life and Career Skills* chapter, I argue that for young people to succeed in the 21st Century, they must be flexible and adaptable to new and unexpected situations; demonstrate personal initiative, self-motivation, and self-directedness; possess strong social skills and cross-cultural understanding of diversity; be productive and accountable; and demonstrate leadership and responsibility. The preservice teachers' comments about the water project assured me that the Current-Event, Conceptual Art, and Project-Based Learning Pedagogical Strategy in Visual Arts are already impacting the human condition.

The legacies of White supremacy, along with its violent past associated with colonialism and slavery, pose an existential threat to multicultural, multiracial, multilingual democracies. When Ken Robinson (2011) said that we created the human world we now live in and we can recreate it, this gave me hope to know that our perception influences how we think and behave, and how we think and behave determines who we become because this suggests that there are possibilities for change. Writing this chapter not only opens the way for me to reflect on the intersectionality of my identity but it allows me to bring together my total lived experience to learn and understand better the turmoil in our society. This turmoil is generated from a lack of understanding of ourselves, and others, and the civic nature of how our democracy functions or should function. It also involves the political nature of power used to divide us rather than addressing critical issues that impact our daily lives. The rule of law and the democratic experiment that are supposed to afford us justice and equality and the nurturing of diversity and inclusion are instead used to strip us of our freedom and our individual rights to grow and prosper given our natural aptitudes. In the end, it is up to us to determine the human world in which we want to live. White supremacy and White nationalists' ideas are evil, and "[t]he only thing necessary for evil to triumph in the world is [when] ... good men [and women] do nothing." This quote was delivered by John Stuart Mill, a utilitarian philosopher in an 1867 inaugural address at the University of St. Andrews. It was appropriate then as it is today.

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Identity and Pedagogical Transformation

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Beginning

I was born in South Korea as a farm boy and raised under the influences of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Even though I had a fond memory of being a farm boy in South Korea, freely enjoying nature as a little boy, I faced the strict and authoritative voices and expectations from my parents who followed all traditional social customs drawn from Confucius's ideological expectations. I faced similar expectations in my schools. Most of the students did not resist or challenge them, following the social expectations of firm gender roles, hard work, seniority, and social etiquette. In my classrooms, we sat still and followed directions from our teachers. This affected my early understanding of education and worldview.

In the 1980s, boys were privileged in Korean society in terms of social movements and schooling. In my family, I was the first child who attended college. Most of my female friends in my town, except one of my sisters, were denied or decided against college, instead getting a job right after graduating middle or high school. Gender was an important identity figuration then in Korea. It was obvious that boys were not expected to use any pink toys or school supplies. They were not expected to play with girls or meet as friends. Even though I could become good friends with girls in my elementary school, kids in the playground were separated from playing games and social gatherings.

After graduating college and becoming a teacher, I became conscious of gender equality in learning and curriculum design. As a teacher in an elementary school, I doubted traditional gender expectations, as the curriculum in schools embraced more gender equity and democracy in education. I was exposed to new educational theories, such as open education, critical pedagogy, and social justice while taking graduate classes in the evening. After several years of teaching at a couple of public schools, I came to the U.S. to study for my Ph.D. However, my former schooling was a big roadblock for me, as I only focused on observing and acquiring knowledge for a while, rather than being creative with art and teaching methods, as an extension of schooling in Korea.

Reshaping My Identity in the Process of Cultural Assimilation

Arriving in the United States in the summer of 1998 in Austin, Texas, my first impressions of the city were distance and isolation from your culture. Acculturation stress (Ren & Jiang, 2021) was precisely what I experienced, as I pushed myself to fit in learn new ways of social expectations, and work on English fluency. My initial feelings were due to a huge cultural gap between Korea and the U.S., along with many uncertainties about my future. Relocating from my native culture to the U.S. was one of the most critical moments of shifting and reshaping my identity from a Korean teacher to an immigrant graduate student. As Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) described, I went through cultural shock as an immigrant student. I learned a lot about how people treated and respected each other. Moving away from my native language and social norms, without any networking or social media, I had to learn from personal experience about different social and cultural expectations, developing new perceptions about race, gender, ethnicity, and other social categories. Entering an art education graduate program also helped me expand my views, as gender equality and multiculturalism were key underpinnings of my art education graduate program. All my professors

and classmates were more open-minded and accepting, even though I faced some challenges in stores and part-time jobs.

For many years, I had to face conflicts within me about cultural differences and confusion about what to do in educational and social circumstances. Sometimes I was too polite, and other times I applied what I did in Korea but faced unexpected responses from friends and others. In the classroom, I tried to absorb and accept all of the course content without raising questions or challenging European and Western theories and methods in art education. As a student who accepted US art education as the highest form of knowledge, theories, and pedagogical practices, I gave up a lot of pedagogical practices I learned in Korea. There was no mentor to discuss how to deal with pedagogy. This early stage of my immigration and learning was summarized as cultural assimilation, or self-colonization, learning to act and think like my American professors and peers in the school.

Unlearning Racism

Racism was also one of the main concerns to me in my graduate study and as an art education faculty, as I had to struggle to deal with racial issues. I did not know how to deal with racism in the U. S., as I went through resocialization (White et al, 2008). There were not enough educational materials in Korea, because most Koreans were not familiar with racism in the 1990s and did not even include or discuss multiculturalism in our textbooks and schools, as most educators saw Koreans as one ethnic group until around 2000. In my graduate classes in the U.S., I learned the deep history of racism. My understanding of racism, stereotypes, and biases was limited, as I was not exposed to them while I was in Korea. I was only exposed to the negative media representation of racial minorities because Korean television and movies imported Western popular culture. Most Korean kids learned from Hollywood and popular culture's depiction of White, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and other social minority groups (Amin-Khan, 2012). I often felt shameful about how the media represented East Asians, which was not what I knew and understood about Chinese, Japanese, or Korean people. Korean schools did not train or provide any resources or information about challenging and addressing racism.

While working with many friends and colleagues as well as exploring the history and realities of racism in the late 1990s and early 2000s, I broke many stereotypes about certain races and racial biases and misconceptions. I often heard from them about their narratives. My exposure to multiculturalism and diversity was beneficial to my unlearning of beliefs and perspectives absorbed from Western popular media. I also appreciate my friends who taught me informally about their racial identity and allyship, through which I dispelled many biases and uninformed assumptions. I also developed pedagogical projects to address this in my art education classes described later in this chapter.

Marginalization and Oppression through Language

Language in my graduate study and as newly hired faculty was critical to my performance and survival. Writing and presentation skills were embedded criteria for academic success and accomplishments. This underlying requirement demanded more energy and time in almost all of my work, often causing language anxiety (Lindberg, McDonough, & Trofimovich, 2022). In graduate school, I felt that most class activities and discussions were designed mainly for and by English speakers, so I felt isolated or often restricted in my ability to participate. Some international students often complained that all conversations in English were too fast and included a lot of jokes, and it was hard to understand them without knowing their cultural knowledge and backgrounds. As a graduate student, I thought I just needed to adjust to American ways of thinking, speaking, and gestures. I deeply looked for American thinking or belief systems, learning from my classes and people I met in the community. Unfortunately, the majority of art education courses did not include

content from other cultures, as most textbooks and theories were developed and applied in the U.S. and Canada.

Publishing art education research and writing curricula in English, although not intentional, had a great influence on academia. Then, most of the theories and teaching practices were the product of European and White scholars. Even though Korea enjoyed a long history of an educational system based on Korean traditional and philosophical thoughts and belief systems, I had to assume that U.S. art education theories and readings were more distinctive and advanced, rather than tap into the rich theoretical and cultural developments of theories and concepts in Asia. As a doctoral student, most of my classes were taught by White professors, and I was mainly exposed to White scholars' and teachers' presentations at national or state conferences. I did not realize that the field of art education was the history of White scholars (Bolin, Kantawala & Stankiewicz2021), whose theories and publications were cherished and valued.

Decolonization in the Pedagogy

I consider my training in the U. S. as assimilating into European White master pedagogy as the practice of the systematic and embedded educational values and principles derived from White supremacy (Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Museus, 2013; Museus & Iftikar, 2014; Museus & Park, 2015). I adopted dominant White pedagogy and culture in art education research and scholarship. When I first got a job as an assistant professor in Wisconsin, I couldn't pay attention to anything but teach contemporary art education research, such as visual culture, postmodernism, and new media. White master narratives were systemic and structural in my art education courses, which made me peripheral and marginalized. This was also reflected in my work and some daily engagements in my department and community. It also affected my early education career and history. I felt far behind and could not catch up to the present in scholarship and theory, as if I were peripheral. The metaphor of the perpetual foreigner (Huynh, Devos & Smalarz, 2011; Lee, Wong & Alvarez, 2009) represented my early training as an art education scholar.

However, within a few years of teaching in La Crosse, Wisconsin, I realized the value of Asian arts and crafts in the North American context, which later became the foundation for my ethnic and pedagogical identity exploration. Even though La Crosse was a small and predominantly a White town, I began to take notice of numerous Asian ethnic and cultural images in public spaces, such as restaurants, retail stores, community centers, and even billboards (Shin, 2010 & 2012). I observed and studied these Asian images, including travel souvenirs, arts and crafts, furniture, tattoos, merchandise, ethnic instruments, community festival decorations, characters, and other graphic or cultural symbols. These objects and images were seen in Asian restaurants, markets, cultural centers, and in such media as television, film, newspapers, magazines, video games, and the Internet. I also noted many high school and college art students were fascinated by East Asian cultures and symbols that were applied and adopted in their artworks.

Based on my research on Asian objects, symbols, and crafts visible in North America, I published articles about them and suggested incorporating them in the art education classroom (Shin, 2010, 2012). Through my research, I argued that art educators should embrace ethnic minority visual culture as a pedagogical space to embrace diverse voices and views in the art classroom. My pedagogy moved away from Western aesthetics towards diversity in aesthetics. I emphasized in class that many Asian objects and images cannot be approached and understood from formalist art languages or art criticism models.

Until this point, I was one of the few voices valuing Asian art and culture in the field. There had been no collective voices as many Asian American art educators were few and scattered, most of whom researched mainstream theories and topics. I read some of their papers and books, but I could not but acknowledge that research and publications by Asian American art educators were the reflections of the White master narrative. I was one of them. Even if they addressed Asian art and culture in their research, their research was accepted as an add-on or single-group approach (Grant

& Sleeter, 1986). My perception of Asian American scholarship in art education seemed to play a minor role, serving as a token for diversity in academia.

Diversity and Inclusion in Art Pedagogy

When I moved to the University of Arizona in 2007, after teaching for six years in Wisconsin, I continued to work on developing a pedagogical approach to teaching ethnic objects as social and educational objects for intercultural communication and learning. At the University of Arizona, I officially became an immigrant to the U. S., seeing myself as an immigrant art educator.

As an immigrant to the U. S., my scholarly and personal interests have expanded on migration, immigration, and diaspora of diverse ethnic groups in North America. Examining global and local changes that affect the lifestyle and culture of immigrant groups of people, I have cared about their vulnerability facing immigration status and policies, which affect their job security and educational opportunities for their children. I seek to recognize how migration promotes diversity in the communities. From the perspective of an art educator who is also an immigrant, I want to help my students develop skills to access cultural meaning. To that end, I developed the ethnic object research project as an assignment for my university students.

One of the main reasons for starting this project is that many groups of people, regardless of race, ethnicity, and cultural background, have limited experience in terms of interethnic and interracial communication. Educators and social scientists Patricia Gurin, Eric Dey, Sylvia Hurtado, and Gerald Gurin (2002) noted that attending an ethnically diverse public school or university does not necessarily guarantee meaningful interracial interaction; therefore, they suggest that students engage with diverse others in deeper, more meaningful ways. This lack of communication and opportunities to meet people of different ethnic and cultural groups was evident in my students' autobiographies, which I often assigned to understand their racial and cultural experiences in my classes. The personal narrative essay about their lives and the experiences that have shaped their views on race, ethnicity, culture, gender, etc. provided me with a wealth of information about my students' backgrounds, indicating a general lack of interethnic meeting and communication.

Another reason to develop this project was to encourage students to hear the voices of minority-group members in their communities to help them engage with authentic learning experiences and expand their understanding of other groups of people. This is especially true for White students or students from rural areas who tend to have a naïve conviction of fairness and equality in American society. Many White and middle-class students have not had opportunities to realize what people of minority groups experienced, such as stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (Rodenbord & Huynh, 2006). Through this project, my pre-service students were engaged in dialogue with other ethnic groups who are mostly immigrants in Tucson, Arizona.

Students' responses to their community-based ethnic object research confirmed that interethnic communication and direct contact helped correct and dispel stereotypes and biases that they might have learned from early socialization. Through this project, students were engaged in dialogues and interaction with individuals and groups of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the community, which helped them break out of their social comfort zones. They learned that communication with people from different ethnic backgrounds is an important first step in embracing others and their cultures. They also came to see the abundance of ethnic objects that exist in the community and that art teachers should consider them when planning their teaching. This project also indicated the value of objects in promoting an understanding of immigrant groups and their culture in the community. Despite the rhetoric and metaphors of current political climates, art educators should advocate and value these interethnic cultural exchanges among students and community members.

Solidifying Identity and Challenging Pedagogical Practices

During the COVID-19 pandemic, my research focus expanded from ethnic minority visual culture and globalization to more urgent issues, such as Anti-Asian racism, violence, equity, and other social justice issues. I connected with several Asian American art educators. My engagement with other Asian American art educators going through the pandemic resulted in learning the significance of creating and developing a learning community and space for Asian American and immigrant scholars. I joined a couple of research groups by and for Asian American higher educators in the field. The pandemic and racial violence against African Americans, Asians, and other minority groups motivated these groups to form and discuss how we could address these urgent racism concerns and issues in the art classroom. We looked at the historical origin and context of Anti-Asian racism, violence, and stereotypes in popular and visual culture. Based on this research, we developed several pedagogical approaches to address Anti-Asian racism in the art classroom (Shin, Bae, & Song, 2023; Shin, Lim, & Hsieh, 2023). For example, art intervention (subverting racism) strategies, Anti-racism gazing, and anti-racism memes are taught to my students as teaching strategies designed to counter or dispel anti-Asian racism or other racism.

We met weekly via Zoom and discussed our work critically. Through this space, we all learned that we faced various challenges on campus, against which we supported each other for equitable pedagogy, or coalition among us and with other minority groups. We also realized the importance of how we address our voices in contributing to the field, as Asian American art educators, recognizing that we are an essential part of the field. We also learned that many Asian American art teachers in schools looked for ways to incorporate their cultural heritage and experiences in the classroom. So, we were excited about developing Asian Americans' pedagogical theories and pedagogies. As an Asian American immigrant art educator, I envision that this new lens will contribute to the conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion in our field.

As Asian American and immigrant scholars, we realized that most of us have struggled with our identity while engaging in research in higher education. This resulted in revisiting our research paradigm and works, realizing that we heavily relied on research methods drawn from European and White master narratives. We discussed alternative research methods looking at ways of knowledge construction in philosophies and social theories, even though they are in the early stage. We are looking for ways of offering new lenses for portraying art and educational experiences.

New Beginnings

I finish this essay with the significance of recognizing and valuing the voices of Asian American art educators. I have been teaching for more than two decades in higher education. However, I believe that few Asian American cultures and histories in the U.S. have been discussed or recorded in our field. Recently, I worked with several Asian American colleagues to collect the history of Asian American art educators, publishing their narratives and early immigration histories in North American contexts (Shin, Lim, Lee, & Han, 2022). This project allowed me to learn their stories and experiences as early immigrant art educators in North America. Their narratives also included excellent examples of identity formation and pedagogical applications in terms of their critical identities. As an extension of this project, my future project is to collect the narratives of Asian American and immigrant art teachers, museum educators, and community art educators. Their works have played a critical role in shaping the art and educational landscape in this country but have been buried and less valued in the history of art education.

As an Asian American and immigrant, I also envision a new pedagogical theory or framework to address the art and experiences of Asian American teacher and students. Many art teachers have used White master pedagogy or Euro-central frameworks in knowledge construction in art. I believe that a new theoretical framework for Asian American students and teachers will help them see their value and contribution to enriching the art curriculum in this country by sharing their voices that were often unheard or neglected.

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Inside/Outside-An Intersectional Dialogue Between Two Indian American Art Educators

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Introduction

This chapter is a dialogic narrative inquiry among two Indian American artists and art educators located in the Midwest region of the United States. The authors describe their hybrid women of color identities, one identifying as Indian American of TAMILIAN descent, and one identifying as Indian American of Gujarati descent. Our dialogue presents our individual narratives of being raised by Indian immigrant parents, navigating the American Generation X experience, and moments that led us to pursue art and art education as professional pathways. In presenting our narrative dialogue, the authors showcase the commonalities and divergences of assuming, becoming, and being Indian American through personal and professional vignettes.

Narrative inquiry allows scholars/artists/educators to frame their lived experiences to and speak their truths and share stories as a form of transformation (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McNiff, 2007; Pushor & Clandinin, 2009). Our collaborative work and writing are grounded in critical theory to challenge the status quo and disrupt dominant narratives (Kinchloe & McClaren, 2011; Whitehead, 2012). My colleague Ramya and I (Ketal) use this chapter as a story-sharing and gathering of two Indian American art educators and the ways we have converging and diverging experiences that inform our artist and educator practices. We engage in a process of dynamic narrative inquiry in which:

Dynamic narrating is a social process occurring in life and, thus, should be the basis of research... building on practices of daily life, where people use storytelling to do things-to connect with other people, to deal with social structures defining their lives, to make sense of what is going on around them, to craft a way of fitting in with various contexts, and sometimes change them. (Daiute, 2018, p. 4)

As members of the Global Majority¹, artists, and educators that identify as Indian American, our narrative inquiry frames the intersectionality of our lived experiences and the impact on our professional practices.

Ramya's professional training has been in studio art and design practice. I work as an artist/researcher and designer who teaches art and design studio, art history, and writing for artists at the undergraduate and graduate levels in higher education. I have also worked in pre-college, museum,

¹ The authors intentionally use the term Global Majority as a decolonizing term to address our membership with 85% of the global population and as a shift away from the racialized language of "minority" (Cambell-Stephens, 2021).

and college admissions settings to recruit, mentor, and edify. My artmaking practice is informed by new materialism and my South Indian identity. And I work primarily with community-based non-profits in my design work.

Ketal's professional training has been as an artist and art educator. I have worked in Pre-K-12 schools as an art teacher, in schools and communities as an educational consultant, working with graduate programs for STEM and STEAM initiatives, and within higher education primarily serving in a role to train future art educators. My work as an artist and art educator is steeped in collaborative and narrative practices to investigate culture work, art education practices, and action research (Patel, 2022a).

Sharing our post-Indian immigration stories adds to the scholarship that speaks to the Indian American experience, which, according to Maira (2012), is an area that needs exploration as she explains:

The second generation of post-1965 Indian immigration began to come of age and to enter colleges and the workforce during the late 1980s and 1990s, but the stories of these Indian American adolescents and young adults have not yet been etched into the larger narratives of immigration, ethnicity, racialization, and youth cultures in the United States. (p. 2)

We share stories of our adolescent and adult experiences to frame our first-generation narratives. The following sections frame our dialogic narrative inquiry to explore the complexities of being Indian American artists and educators.

Inside/Outside profiles of our respective experiences as Indian American women Ramya's Inside/Outside Experiences

My work as an artist and researcher explores the confluence of my artmaking practice and research as shaped by posthumanist and new materialist theories and diffraction as a methodology (Ravisankar, 2019); as such, my exploration of identity is informed by the people, structures, and entities that shape who I am. I attempt to attend to and acknowledge both human and non-human entities that shape my identity construction in my narrative explorations. I cannot tell the story of these entities, but I can explore how they shape me. Although my research explores my artmaking practice through narratives, using narrative exploration to critically explore my past is a relatively new venture I began exploring in Ravisankar (2022). As bell hooks (1998) beautifully articulates, "The longing to tell one's story and the process of telling is symbolically a gesture of longing to recover the past in such a way that one experiences both a sense of reunion and a sense of release" (p. 431). This chapter offers such a sense of release for me. I am sharing personal narratives of encountering race in America with the help and support of another Indian American Ohioan, which is both comforting and gives a sense of freedom to express my truth.

I am not and have never identified as purely American. As a first-generation American, my immigrant parent's ties to their homeland were strong and fresh. These ties influenced my identity to the point where at times I felt more Indian than American as I grew up in Dublin, Ohio. Inside my house, we spoke Tamil, a South Indian language from the Dravidian language family. My parents only spoke Tamil at home, and as multi-generational households are typical in my culture, my grandparents and other relatives from India often lived with us. My grandparents were a constant presence in my life, and although they knew some English, it was often more expedient to speak Tamil with them. In addition to linguistic Indianness, my grandmothers retained their traditional clothing and rituals. My Amma and Ammama (grandmothers) wore saris and put pottus (a dot of vermilion or a round red sticker) on their foreheads. My Thatha (grandfather) recited verses from

the Vedas daily to provide even more depth to the microcosm of life in India that they recreated in Ohio. We also had a small shrine to Hindu gods, and every morning, my grandparents or parents would light a small vilakku (oil lamp) and a stick of sandalwood incense. Every morning I woke to the smell of toast and sandalwood incense, which is an apt parallel to how I feel about growing up Indian American—I am not quite Indian and not quite American. It was important for my family to maintain these cultural touchstones, and their desire to hang on to their traditions profoundly influenced the fondness with which I regard being Indian American.

Ketal's Inside/Outside Experiences

My vignettes in this chapter provide a small glimpse into identity construction and counter-narrative work I engage in as an art educator, artist, and scholar. I'll begin with my specific definition of being an Indian American (I will use both Indian American² and South Asian American interchangeably for this chapter). My identity is a site of hybridity and hyphenated identity in name and lived experience, where I connect with the concept of "hybrid identities as a response to opposing, binary assumptions about belonging to particular social and cultural groups and has drawn attention to dynamic processes of power and exclusion in our understandings of being and belonging" (Kustatscher, Konstantoni, & Emejulu, 2015). From an early age, I was often reminded that my physical appearance, the food I ate, and the festivals I celebrated did not match White America. I was also reminded that my use of language (Gujarati or English), my knowledge of American pop culture, and my manner of dress were not "Indian" enough. Being South Asian American is full of these "reminders" of how holding a dual identity means a liminal state of identity. Knowing enough about each space but never quite fitting into a neat demographic check box is emblematic of my hybrid identity. The "other" box is another looming reminder of a hyphenated American identity, full of promise and full of literal "othering" we experience by self-identifying and physically placing a check mark as an "other" identity on demographic markers.

I am the daughter of immigrants from the state of Gujarat in India; there are many ways in which I think about the varying ways my hybrid identity construction was developed "inside" and "outside" my home. Inside my home, we learned and spoke Gujarati, a north Indian language stemming from Sanskrit. Part of my "inside" experiences was to travel and spend time in Gujarat with extended family, immersed in the language my mother grew up speaking, having a dual experience as an American in India. My Indian American identity is shaped by the places and spaces I experienced and they continue to construct my hybrid/hyphenated identity.

From a young age, navigating the two worlds became second nature and an important aspect of growing up Indian American. Inside my childhood home were the daily reminders of our Indian-ness and the way my mother navigated her hybrid experiences as an immigrant. Inside we had a small Hindu temple, the smell of incense and our pressure cooker are reminders of the ways my mother kept Indian food and religious practices in our daily lives. The ways I can be transported back to those memories through smells and bright colors are a vibrant reminder of how my identity is constructed and reconstructed through these experiences and over time. Similar to my colleague's narrative of her grandparent's presence in her life, I too experienced having grandparents (my Ba and Dada) and later my Masis (my mother's sisters) live with us. We had a practice in my home to pray to Hindu gods and were reminded to pray to the Hindu goddess of education, Saraswati, to show gratitude for the opportunity to learn each day. My Ba, while she was still alive, and now my mother reminds me to show physical respect to books as objects that provide us with knowledge; the respect is shown through the act of placing our hands together in the Anjali mudra. These are small examples of "inside" experiences that have shaped some of my lasting experiences, relationships, and engagement with education and knowledge.

² "Indian American" itself is a contested identity. While Indian American is a commonly used shorthand to describe people of Indian origin, it is not universally embraced. Only four in ten respondents believe that "Indian American" is the term that best captures their background (Badrinathan, Kapur, Kay, & Vaishnav, 2021).

My “outside” experiences are similarly influential in that it speaks to the ways my hybrid identity construction was part of taking what I knew and navigating peer and social groups that didn’t understand my Indian American identity. As a child, I remember wanting to “fit in,” to wear the right clothes, to understand pop culture references, and not to “stick out” among my predominantly White peer group. Some days I was more successful at this. As the daughter of immigrants, we were encouraged to be resourceful and to be mindful of money. I have memories of going to the local library and trying to pick out the new kids’ books that would help me learn a bit more about “being American.” I remember reading the popular *Babysitters Club* series and others to figure out what it meant to be an American kid/tween/teen. Books often were a window for me into glimpses of how to “be American.” A place where I engaged with the idea that “books provide us with knowledge” and used it to learn how to perform identity outside of my home. My navigation of two worlds was often a back-and-forth between taking what I learned inside my home as well as what I learned outside my home to engage in both spaces.

Ramya’s Code-Switching Experiences

My double life, inside the house/outside the house, cultural code-switching was exposed when my family stepped out of the house wearing clothing from India. The walk from our house to the minivan made me feel so exposed. It was when the inside Indianness of my house had to enter the Whiteness of America. I was afraid someone from school would see me in my Indian clothes, and I would have to explain what I was wearing, why I had oiled braided hair, why I had a dot on my forehead, why my clothes glistened in the sun because they were so golden and flashy that the morning sun blinded passersby. While I loved experiencing my Indianness inside my house, stepping outside and being stared out by my White neighbors was rough. My neighbors were/are great people, but I was conditioned from school to know to hide my culture. The students already mercilessly made fun of my Indian name; if they knew I wore blinged-out clothing, I knew I would never hear the end of it. Every time we walked from our house to the minivan, I would keep my head down and pray that no one from school would see me. If given the option, I ran to the van and sat in the car until my family took an eternity to join me. The fear of being discovered and exposed as more Indian than my cultivated “American” identity at school was intense. Even though I loved being connected to my culture at home and school, I tried as hard as possible to be as ordinary, small, and forgettable as possible so the other students would leave me alone.

As I got older, the threat of exposure diminished because my peers at school mostly stopped repeating the culturally insensitive sentiments of their parents and started regarding me as a person and not an “other.” I was no longer afraid of being exposed as Indian because I knew it was impossible to hide my Indianness. However, I did my best to minimize my Indianness to blend into professional settings. For example, I used to change my earrings and wear a tiny nose ring if I met someone for the first time for a work opportunity. I thought hiding my jimiki earrings and larger nose rings would give me a better chance of being considered. My first job in the arts was as an admissions counselor at an art and design college in New York. There, I did not try as hard to diminish my Indianness, and I even wore kurthi tops to work. Living in New York City offered me a freer feeling and the ability to explore my hybrid identity through clothing. However, as soon as I openly displayed my culture through clothing, people started asking me questions about the subcontinent, most of which I could not answer because they generalized India based on their limited knowledge. For example, a supervisor once asked me for saag paneer and naan recipes. I politely told him my family is South Indian from Tamil Nadu, so I have never made saag paneer and naan. He was incredulous and asked how that was possible. I explained that cuisine in India varies by region, as it does in the United States as well. Although seemingly harmless, these interactions with people in power extracting information unrelated to a professional setting are tiring and unnecessary.

Ketal's Code-Switching Experiences

Code-switching had become a survival tactic in high school. In other narrative work, I have written about being a teen in a post-9/11 era (Patel, 2022b). The questions about my identity and belonging in the U.S. became more pointed. I was and still am often asked “Where are you really from?” Holding a hybrid identity, it becomes evident overnight the ways you must act, speak, and share to maintain your safety. I was a senior in high school when the twin towers were attacked by terrorists. Following the attacks, there was a heightened anti-immigrant and anti-South Asian sentiment. Violence faced by immigrants and South Asians rose considerably (Badrinathan, Kapur, Kay, & Vaishnav, 2021).

In those heightened moments, it seems like second nature to begin to be more careful about how and when we might wear traditional Gujarati clothing, how and when I might speak to my mother and grandparents in Gujarati and versus when I would use English, and how often my citizenship would be questioned. Code-switching is studied in multidisciplinary realms to address “a bilingual’s ability to inhibit or activate a language” and “a focus on what bilinguals do with their languages...” (Bullock & Almeida, 2009, p.189). This literal code-switching of language is a survival technique, it is a way to let the outside world know that I am a safe individual and do in fact speak English. I engage in cultural code-switching to survive, assimilate, and further engage in the American democratic experiment.

My cultural code-switching is similar to my colleague’s experiences of working to edify our surrounding community about my identity. Everything from pronouncing to re-pronouncing my name to the ways I push against essentialism about people’s understanding of South Asian or South Asian American identities. I was often looked to provide a “minority” voice so long it supported a model minority myth. In education spaces when discussing race, equity, diversity, and inclusion concepts, I have been asked “Is that the experience for minorities?” I must respond and educate that “I don’t speak for the many diverse experiences of our students or staff that identify as a ‘minority.’” These examples remind me of the importance of counternarrative work to illuminate the many facets of intersectional identity and to disrupt hegemonic values.

Ramya's narrative for how and why Global Majority communities come together

Our minivan went to Indian events where other Indian families gathered and celebrated Indianness away from the judgmental eyes of White America. There I saw Carnatic music, Bharatanatyam, and even performed myself. It was an opportunity to shed feelings of distrust and marginalization I experienced outside that shared space. It was a chance for us kids to experience some of what our parents left behind in India without getting on an airplane. It was a chance to talk to other kids about school and life and trade strategies for navigating the world. It was a chance to learn that Indian families, even in our small circle, spoke various languages, celebrated distinct holidays, and had different food names than those used at my house. At our South Indian cultural events, we had families from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. Each state has a different language and culture. However, we shared the experience of being othered in the United States. Despite differences like language, culture, and caste that might have separated us in India, we came together to experience the Indian culture our parents cobbled together in India. And being around so many different kinds of Indian folks allowed me to appreciate the diversity of cultures in India.

As Bhatia (2007) explains:

The community events are imagined, recreated, and personalized in the home space in order to activate old memories and to show affiliation and identification with Indian culture. Such enactments and performances play an important role in constructing an agentic, dialogical self that moves be-

tween the distinct culture space of home and the outside space of whiteness or American culture. (Bhatia, 2007, p. 223)

Indian American-ness, Intersectionality, and Art Education

Ketal

As I have shared above, I identify as an Indian American woman. I am the first generation to be born in the United States, to attend the U.S. public school model of PreK-12 education, and though not a first-generation college student, I was the first generation to navigate the U.S. higher education model whereas my parents had earned degrees in India and then immigrated to the United States. The statement alone speaks to the many converging and diverging identities I hold as an Indian American. Indian enough to speak and converse in Gujarati with my family and other Gujarati people. American enough that people feel comfortable saying to me “Your English is so clear”- I often respond with “Thanks, so is yours.”

I was a child and teen in the 1990s and early 2000s (Generation X), I can speak to American friends about the TV shows *The Simpsons* and *Friends*, and I can speak to fellow South Asian friends about popular Hindi films. I was raised in a time of dial-up internet and had a personal computer at home, and I also saw how India passed those steps of infrastructure to jump towards Wi-Fi and mobile technology. My mother came to the United States in the 1980s and at the time would send home letters and make limited but costly calls to India to check in with my grandparents and extended family. Now our family has access to smartphones, and video calling is a common way to connect internationally. These are small and nuanced examples of narrative and counter-narrative work to breathe life into the lived experiences that have framed my experiences as an Indian American woman. These experiences complicate my work as an artist, art educator, and an art teacher educator to think about the complexities of practice that I must engage to support and work with students that have rich lived experiences.

As an artist and art educator, the nuance and counternarrative work is a potential ground to connect with students and their multifaceted identities, where Whitehead (2012) states “Art education experiences can provide significant opportunities for students to articulate, represent, and imagine their histories, experiences, and cultures in richer and more in-depth ways...as sources of knowledge and information” (p.35). By engaging with a fellow Indian American colleague to story share and discuss the layers of understanding we engage in, we discuss the ways our narrative work further complicates our identities as pedagogues.

Ramya and I discussed how we experience our hybrid identity in professional settings and the multiple layers of intersectionality we think through as Indian American women. We address the intersections of class and our experiences and understanding of caste from our hybrid experiences, our experiences layer the ways we see parallels and reproduction of class and caste discrimination here in our U.S.-based experiences and knowledge of our immigrant family backgrounds. We don’t conflate these as the same but rather share how counterhegemonic work as artists and educators we must engage in the nuance, layers, and intersections of these concepts in our work and understanding of the places and students we work with.

Similarly, we engage in antiracist and abolitionist practices as art educators. Our experiences are complicated by our racial and ethnic lived experiences shared throughout this chapter as well as the social contexts in which we live and work. We cannot separate the layers of race, gender, and social class from our American experiences just as we cannot parse our knowledge of colorism, gender identity, and caste from our Indian experiences. These are interwoven ways of knowing that help us further our positions as critical pedagogues.

In my practice as an art teacher educator, I work to dismantle binary thinking and essentialism with my students who are emerging art educators. We engage in discourses of critical pedagogy as a form of culture building and the participatory and collaborative work involved in honoring and

recognizing the lived experiences and knowledge bases of the Pre K-16 students we serve to engage in justice-oriented practices as art educators. In my social practice as an artist and educator, this means engaging in the vulnerable act of story-sharing with students and colleagues as forms of dynamic narrating and enacting empathy in educational spaces.

Ramya

As Sara Ahmed (2012) articulates in her book *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*:

The act of writing was a reorientation, affecting not simply what I was writing about but what I was thinking and feeling. As [a] memory, it was an experience of not being white, of being made into a stranger; the one who is recognized as “out of place,” the one who does not belong, whose proximity is registered as crime or threat. As [a] memory, it was of becoming a stranger in a place I called home. (p. 2)

Like Ahmed’s experience of writing as a reorientation, we, too, have understood ourselves and the intricacies of our identities and positionalities as Indian American women. As we continue to parse our narratives and notice their convergences and divergences, we can identify how our stories inform our teaching practices. Primarily, we seek to push and advocate for increased minority representation at all levels and subject areas in education. We also seek to understand institutional factors that disenfranchise our students, particularly students identifying as BIPOC, LGBGTQIA+, and those with (dis)abilities, and serve as abolitionists who work to ameliorate conditions. Additionally, as South Asian women, we would be remiss if we did not specifically call out caste discrimination as a nefarious institution that continues to infiltrate educational institutions and society at large. As educators, we must ensure that we cultivate safe and accommodating learning environments for our students where we cultivate mutual understanding and pedagogical moments that uplift and celebrate differences.

In the Classroom Ramya

My teaching practice involves claiming my positionality and proudly telling my students that my life, culture, and experiences inform how I see the world. In the classroom, that usually means describing how my identity affects how I approach artmaking, design, and art and design history. In 2020, I was asked to teach Asian Art History to university students. Although I had never taught Asian Art History, I was excited to teach a course where I could share my cultural knowledge and interject personal reflections on some of the artwork discussed. The class offered a comparative view of artmaking from prehistory to contemporary practices solely focused on countries conventionally defined as “Asian” and mapped influences and traces from other countries, including unpacking colonialism’s immense impact on Asian cultures. Although the COVID-19 pandemic deeply impacted course delivery, student feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Shortly after the course ended, I was approached for help with independent research projects incorporating non-Western art, artists, and artmaking practices. The student asked for additional mentorship to develop an undergraduate symposium presentation that surveyed three well-known contemporary South Asian artists. He won a university diversity and inclusion award for his thoughtful discussion of these artists in his presentation. Following his success, he returned to me for mentorship after finding a group of peers who wished to produce a non-Western art histo-

ry podcast. The students created a podcast called “Art Explorers.” They researched and prepared thought-provoking questions for guests who spoke about non-Western art, art history, and artmaking topics.

When I asked the students why they were interested in this topic, they resoundingly stated that my enthusiasm and the sharing of my narratives piqued their interest. Through my close mentorship and honest discussions with this group, I gathered that they sincerely appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the world in college. Many of these university students have yet to travel outside of Ohio, and the course offered them a glimpse at other parts of the world. It inspired me to want to deepen my understanding of different cultures and actively advocate for increased critical diversity and inclusion in university course offerings and curricula. It was great to have the opportunity to collapse the boundaries between my “inside” cultural identity and my “outside” teaching practice.

However, this experience also showed me that researching and planning this course was in addition to my existing workload instead of being treated as an integral contribution to the university and counting towards my course load. Zambrana (2018) states that underrepresented minority faculty are often asked to teach and prepare more courses while feeling obligated to mentor and serve as role models for students. The course development and mentorship I mentioned previously was extra work I felt compelled to do to help students realize their learning goals. I am left wondering when my identity as an Indian-American woman is valued by academia enough to reallocate institutional resources to compensate minority faculty for their time and energy with equity and justice in mind.

Ketal

My experiences in the classroom have been with PreK-12 students as an art teacher, working with educators as a consultant, and in higher education to train future art educators. Story sharing is a practice I engage in as an art educator. It is a practice that further highlights the ways narrative can be used to connect with students and use lived experiences as a shared starting point within the art classroom.

With my students in PreK-12, this meant creating curricula and units of learning that engaged students in art making that allowed them to tell their stories and use art as a tool to engage in counter-narrative work. I worked in PreK-12 sites in Columbus, Ohio, and taught in schools that predominantly served Black and brown communities. I intentionally designed learning units that utilized art, artists, and visual culture representation from the Global Majority. Often students would remark that this was the first time they were seeing art outside of the Western canon. It highlighted that as an art educator, my curricular design work was a site where students could engage with multiple stories in and through art and stories that did not reify Whiteness in art, art education, and the art world. Engaging students in exploring social issues, concepts of home and family, and their contemporary world shifted our collective work in the classroom to be about their multiple life stories using art.

Similarly, while working with fellow educators across the United States and pre-service students in Ohio, the concept of multiple stories is embedded in my pedagogical praxis. This practice is directly engaging in what Mignolo (2018) refers to as, “sensing the world as pluriversally constituted. Or, if you wish, pluriversality becomes the decolonial way of dealing with forms of knowledge and meaning exceeding the limited regulations of epistemology and hermeneutics” (p. x). This is through working with educators to share their stories and positionality and to begin to find ways that our classrooms are participatory sites of knowledge construction with our students. Their and our pluriversal ways of knowing are ripe opportunities to dismantle hegemony and engage students in culturally relevant ways of teaching and learning. My colleagues and pre-service students have shared that these approaches are appreciated as it dismantles a “one size fits all” approach to education and reform initiatives. We also discuss this which means the answers will be collectively

designed versus a singular solution or truth that may not serve the students and communities we live and work in and with.

While Ramya and I (Ketal) wrote for this piece, we used story sharing to use our narratives to make sense of our worlds and work as artists and educators. This process honors our diverse experiences and recognizes the interconnectedness of our human-centered work. This furthers our praxis within our respective work with students and colleagues to engage collectively in pluriversal ways of thinking and doing in art and art education.

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Twelve Vignettes

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—FAITH—

I have faith; well, hope. I believe and I trust. I think things *will* make sense and eventually be of purpose. This feeling, that all things will be reconciled—if not soon, then at some point—colors every aspect of what I do as a person. It informs my duties and decisions. It informs my desires. My faith allows me to be the kind of artist I am. This is how I work: I make and I look, I look and I make. The looking is for the sake of gathering permissions and the making is for the sake of seeing how pairings—collages if you will—make reverberations. Of course, collage-making *and* its engendered meaning-making is not a passive activity. It's something I push myself to do. That's where faith comes in. I need something to give me confidence. Not confidence that "it" will work, but confidence that something—anything—will happen. And that something, that anything, might be useful now; it might never be useful. Still, without the "doing" the emergent newness doesn't have a chance to even be considered. And truly, that's all I need. I just need to see my options. I need to see what happens. I work better as an editor than as an inventor. I can't conjure, but I have become increasingly better at deciphering. I can tell what could be kept. I can tell what needs to be put away. I can tell what needs to be replicated or made smaller. I can tell when it sounds right. I can tell when it doesn't have energy. I can tell when the person who made the juxtaposition is unsure; not unsure about what the making means, but rather whether they should be doing the making at all. I can even tell when I'm the unsure one.

At this juncture of faith and discernment is where both my teaching and artistic practice meet. This is where I found out that they are the same activity.

—THINKING—

I read an interview in the *Paris Review* with the writer Lydia Davis where she said something whose context I can't fully recall and which citation I will not look for. She said that "writing is thinking". I won't go back and look up how she meant it, even though I suspect that—like most things I read—I'm misremembering it. What's important is that I constructed a thought after I read Davis's quote and it is that amalgam-thought (and the accumulated memories of that thought) that consistently guides and teaches me something about writing. Thank you, Ms. Davis!

My writing practice exists in many forms. Because *writing is thinking*, I've tried to move away from exclusively using my computer to do my work as a writer. This move helps me to steer clear of the usefulness trap in writing, where every bit that gets typed is mostly a means to report or record for efficiency's sake. Doing the writing on paper makes it less like writing for strict use and more like drawing. Writing on paper allows the doing to produce the thoughts and the subsequent editing feels more like shaping than correcting. Like the Davis quote, my first thoughts about this writing on paper preference is from Jerry Seinfeld, who I would argue is one of contemporary America's most devoted writers—and if we listen closely—one of its best writing teachers. I've managed to cobble together many of Seinfeld's tips on writing through the wealth of longform interviews and video clips where he generously talks about his process. Seinfeld says that he writes all his jokes, even before the sitcom, on yellow legal pads. He made a joke—but I could tell he meant

it—about not liking what the blinking cursor on the computer is saying to him. “I don’t like that cursor flashing. Looking at me like, [taunting] ‘So, what do you got?’” Seinfeld mimicked in a New York Times clip about his process (New York Times, 2012: 1:52).

Since Seinfeld is a seasoned writer, and as I argue, a teacher of writing, you’d think at this point in his career he wouldn’t express any insecurity about his writing practice. Still, this observation about the word processor’s insatiability and its relentless demand articulates for me something that is easily felt, albeit hard to admit: writing (aka thinking) is not easy, even when you do it all the time. Even when you do it for a living. Even when you have all the tools and the privileges you could ever want. Seinfeld lets on that writing is a challenge, maybe even torturous in its necessity (as he once told Howard Stern). Seinfeld must overcome—even after being a professional writer for decades—the entanglement (maybe burden?) that is living a life where you mostly think through putting pen to paper. But he also points to the moment where you get to altitude in the process by revealing that it’s “only [work] in the beginning. Only in the first ten, fifteen minutes...then you’re kinda having fun” (Netflix is a Joke, 2019: 10:00). And I have tried it. This very paragraph is a product of fifteen minutes of staying with it. I sat down. I wrote poorly for fifteen minutes and then things started to sit well with each other. They began to harmonize. The word-sounds—because I edit through reading aloud—began to flow, but also the ideas. Little scraps held hands to make bigger scraps, which I’m now sharing with you.

—INTRODUCTION—

Here’s how I’m writing this piece about my identity as an artist intersected as a teacher, intersected as a parent, intersected as a son, intersected as a husband, intersected as a father, intersected as someone who believes in something beyond what I can see with my failing eyes and my limited imagination. I’m stealing something from the only Stephen King book I have ever read. Don’t get me wrong, I’ve seen a lot of King movie adaptations, but I guess I just don’t have the patience for being scared through books. Stephen King (2000) wrote a book about writing—about his approach to writing—and it’s called *On Writing*. It doesn’t read like a book about writing, at least for the first part. When I was reading it, about sixty pages in I asked myself, “Is this guy a genius or is he never going to talk about writing in this book?” I mean, he was touching on it here and there, but more to talk about his career or his protagonists, only occasionally bringing up some lesson he learned, maybe about writing, but mostly about how hard life is. The whole beginning section is written as a series of vignettes, little windows that give the reader a peek into a layered existence that many times is framed by the profession and the art of writing, but more than anything is just Stephen King being attentive (or reflective) in his daily living. After finishing the book, where he does eventually go into some nuts and bolts about writing, I had a generous (however incomplete) sense of who Stephen King was when *On Writing* was put together. It was like being near him for a little bit.

I love the vignette. Short movies, fifty-second songs, *cuentos*, fragments, elevator pitches, haikus, appetizers, jokes, and dioramas. Vignettes in aggregate are like breaths, hardly felt, but in their accumulation indicative of a lived life, of profundity, and sprawl. Tiny nodes wildly, precariously, touching. I’m drawn to a pile, a list, a collection, a mixtape, a group show, tapas, dim sum, or a library. I like how the collection can be shuffled, assembled, and consumed in whichever order its audience wishes. I can take a little from there and then some from here. I can eat one now and save those for later. I can pick favorites and come back to them. I can ignore some and let them surprise me when I’m older, more adventurous, and more willing.

This chapter is a collection of vignettes that can be consumed in any order. I purposefully put the introduction to this chapter as the third vignette so you could see how it works. From here forward, don’t feel compelled to read the parts sequentially because I didn’t really write them that way and that’s why sometimes you’ll come upon a redundancy—an echo—from another part.

Sometimes I write on the computer, using Word, but many times I write in note-books. I use my social media accounts to create short pieces of writing. I do this with text messages as well. My teenage daughter says all the punctuation in my text messages makes her nervous. I take the opportunity of responding to emails to think through the urgency of the matter. Sometimes I respond to colleagues and students in long emails that I know they won't want to read. I'm provoked to write. I write those emails and then I delete them; some-times I save them (but no one will ever know). These undelivered or erased emails don't feel purposeless to me. There are no wasted moves in my practice.

I used to hate filling out forms, but now that I work at a university—and sometimes perform the role of a researcher—I am frequently asked to fill out paperwork. When I am applying for a grant or reporting back on how the money was used, when I have to state my teaching philosophy or why I should get promoted, or when I'm writing a letter of recommendation for someone, I take the mandate to explain myself as a chance to think through processes and intentions. So much of this writing is for very small, private audiences of adjudicators and reviewers, gatekeepers, and finance officers, but I have forced all the writing to be for me first. I like to think through their parameters. To play with my ball in their court.

I also keep a website. It is a palimpsest of writings and rewritings, rearrangements and presentations, documentation, and ideas. In some ways, the website is like a viewable scrapbook/sketchbook. I think of it as showing my face to the world, twenty-four hours a day, while I'm contorting it, grooming, cleaning it, and putting things on it.

If I juttet a selection of all these types of writings—from these various venues and opportunities—you would get a generous sense of who I am as an intersected thinker and practitioner. Not a complete sense, but something like being near me for a little bit.

—PHONY—

When I was six, I had a big Spiderman coloring book. It was big in size, not in pages. If I was two and a half feet tall, that's how big the book was. Coloring it—splayed open in the living room, me sitting in the center of the book—it was a flying carpet made-up of a coloring book. Everything else about it was the same as other coloring books: same paper, same ink, same compatibility with crayons and markers, but for me—the impossibility of its size—was transportive. No one told me how to color it, but I stayed in the lines and always made the hero red and blue. I had a good time.

The summer of that coloring book, my dad's mom—Mama Rosa—came from Mexico to stay with us. One day I took a piece of lined paper and traced one of the Spidermans with a pencil. I walked up to Mama Rosa and showed her what I had made. She asked me if I had made the drawing from memory. Sensing that tracing was less impressive than what she thought I did, I said yes. She was so proud and made proclamations about my talent to everyone in the room.

This may be the earliest memory I have of myself as an artist.

—HOUSES—

One winter night, probably the year after that Spiderman coloring book, the doorbell to our second-floor apartment rang. This was weird because no one came over on weeknights and my father had a key to let himself in after his overtime shift at the factory. My mom and I looked out the front window and we saw my father standing at the door with what looked like two cartoon detectives. Seriously, a couple of Dick Tracys with dramatically street lit snowflakes landing on their fedoras. Looking down from the parted curtains I saw my dad through a forced calmness signal, "abre la puerta" to my freaked-out mom. Shaking both her head and finger, she answered that she wouldn't let them in. Mouthing "No", the sound still came out as she realized what was happening.

You see, white tv-style cops, accompanying a husband home way past quitting time was perhaps the worst noir tableau an undocumented migrant mother could witness out her Chicago window in the mid-eighties.

But before the terror of having our home and story invaded by *la migra*, the first pages were romantically written in between two neighboring houses.

A few years back I made a miniature sculpture of those houses and their in-between space in a *veliz* (see Fig. 1). It is a replica of my parents' childhood homes in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. The houses were originally built with a shared courtyard which is where my parents grew up and got to know each other, first as *vecinos* and later as teen boyfriend and girlfriend. The title for the sculpture, *Una Nube Blanca | Una Nube Azul* (a white cloud | a blue cloud) are the opening lines from the poem *Ultramarina* by Honduran-born, Mexican writer Rafael Heliodoro Valle (1891-1959). The poem seesaws from one point of nature to its opposite (e.g., sea and sky, waves and kisses), playfully teasing out the expansiveness of young romance through metaphors that simultaneously reference vastness and nearness. It imitates the back-and-forth that occurred between the coauthors at the beginning of my story. I first found the poem in a hand-bound collection of copied poetry that my father had dedicated to my mom during those young courting days.



Figure. 1. Jorge Lucero, *Una Nube Blanca | Una Nube Azul*, 2018. Courtesy of the artist

Eventually, even the physical distance alluded to in *Una Nube Blanca | Una Nube Azul* was something my parents had to overcome since my mother was sent to live with her sister in Chicago in order to get her away from her determined suitor. Thankfully the two-thousand-mile chasm forced between the couple didn't keep fate from taking its course. My father secretly moved to Chicago and married his girlfriend. They held their wedding reception at the Cubby Bear, a restaurant bar still located kitty-corner from Wrigley Field. They lived the next few years sharing a twin-sized bed

on the top floor of a three-flat on Albany Ave: *The House on Albany Street*. The three children born to the couple—including me—would not see these colorful Mexican houses until after 1986 when Ronald Reagan granted amnesty to nearly 3 million undocumented immigrants. The two houses—although modified from their original, simple geometry—are still standing and can be uncannily examined through Google Maps (see Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Google Maps capture of two houses in Jorge Lucero’s parents’ old neighborhood.
Courtesy of the artist.

—HYBRID—

I am a first-generation, first-to-go to college, Mexican-American artist and arts educator from Chicago. I knew I was an artist when I was six, and many of the interests and processes that I had as a child (before I was taught that categories were prohibitions) inform and motivate what I do today. Increasingly, as I went through more schooling—and then became a teacher—I became in-volved in the articulation of how these delimited (*and* limiting) identities are—in fact—perpetually overlapped and unstoppably blurred.

For twenty-five years I have undertaken the project of positioning teacher practice(s) inter-sected with conceptual art practice(s). This work comes from the crisis that many artists/art-students experience when they become teachers. The ingrained bifurcation of these practices is a source of frustration for art teachers who imagine that their professional occupation interrupts—and some-times derails—the fulfillment of the myopic, art-school fantasy of what an artist is. Through con-ceptual artists (many from the global south) and from the last one-hundred years (e.g., printmakers, performance artists, sculptors, archivists, regional planners, writers, etc.), I offer the hybrid identity of “teacher as a conceptual artist”. This hybrid identity is a liberating proposal, learned from the permissions of inescapably hybridized artists that opens a pathway for people to move through their experience simultaneously as educators *and* artists who—in the end—take on the world’s most important work, which is the constant and slow mutual repair of each other and our ecologies, not beside our intersections, but in and through them.

—TOGETHER—

As an art education practitioner and scholar, I work at the intersection of conceptual art and teaching. I want to learn from and share the permissions that these two creative forms give each other. These permissions have the potential to alter the way that people think and make art, and they are also permissions that offer new ways for people to think about teaching and learning. I have made discoveries at the intersection of conceptual art and teaching by testing the pliability of schooling and education as artistic materials, and by examining the forms of contemporary—mostly conceptual—art where educational motivations, approaches, and forms are employed. As an experiment, much of this work takes place within the confines of schooling in the conventional sense (e.g., alongside traditions, policies, economics, plans, and politics); and as an artform, this work takes place as performances, workshops, exhibitions, publications, symposia, and objects. Both manifestations, however, touch on a central human concern which is to distinguish what is worth knowing and ultimately how to share those priorities with others.

The work then enters the wider discourse in museums, galleries, artist residencies, community, and cultural art settings; and in blind-reviewed or invited academic venues like journals, books, conferences, and lectures at peer research institutions and art schools. There are also workshops, artist residencies, conferences, and symposia presentations I participate in and which I conceptualize as artworks as well.

I know that my investigations and findings on the permissions that conceptual art and teaching give to each other have found a worldwide audience, but more importantly, I am energized by the fact that these contributions are finding kinship and new collaborators. When I think of what I will do as an artist-scholar for the rest of my life (both in and out of the academy), I am buoyed—more than anything—by this collaborative network of like-minded, prolific individuals who are committed to injecting both education and contemporary art discourses with mutuality, justice, and joy. Since my work touches on a primary concern for many art(s) educators—the desire to continue an artistic practice, while being a teacher—the work that I’ve articulated can be picked up and advanced by all sorts of makers and teachers (even outside of the visual arts proper, across geography, and in all levels of schooling from early childhood to higher education). This coming together of interlocutors across the globe will be essential in the coming years, as these ideas make their way from discourse and publications; from podcasts and exhibitions to the face-to-face reality of daily educational encounters amongst arts co-learners in and out of classrooms everywhere (e.g., teachers, students, parents, administrators, museumgoers, and other ancillary stakeholders).

—TEACHER—

I am an artist who has been teaching for twenty-five years. Like many artists who teach, that wasn’t the original plan. Early in my career, I thought of teaching as—at best—an annoying necessity and—at worst—an antagonistic intrusion to a myth I believed about a singular way to be a serious, full-time artist. Thankfully, the narrow thinking that pits the *doers* against the *teachers-of-the-doing* is continuously debunked by contemporary artists and teachers who have reconceptualized the intersection of education and art as a sophisticated conceptual art form in and of itself. Throughout my career, but even more, since receiving tenure at the University of Illinois, I have made my home as an artist who teaches in that generative overlap where art is education and education is art.

Although I’m not surprised to be a teacher anymore, I define my teaching practice—and my steady involvement with institutional schooling—as a perpetual coming to terms with the tension of being in this intersected role. By coming to terms, I mean that I arrive at the enabling agreements and conditions by which I can further explore and test the pliability of this dynamic hybrid space. How can I be an artist who works with the *school as material*? How can I be a *teacher-as-conceptual artist*? As I will explain below, the never-ending surprise and tension of being an artist who works

in schools have proven to be the focus of my teaching practice, as well as my artistic posture, and even the scholarly contributions I have made to the field of art education via the privilege of being a faculty member in an R1 institution.

Like most conventional teaching, there is an aspect of what I do as a professor that can be described as vertical, that is, the dissemination of vetted knowledge through the sharing of expertise and the reification of the institutions' norms, systems, and traditions. Still, the majority of what I am working through as an artist who teaches is much more horizontal. This horizontality—in both curricular concerns and pedagogical approaches—prioritizes learning alongside each other to co-construct a mutual education that is generative, situational, and emergent for all participants regardless of differences, past achievements, and measurable aptitude. Since teaching is not a prescriptive exercise for me, most relational encounters then prove to be opportunities to learn together and to make an education with each other. In this way, my posture as a teacher (and learner) spills outside of the classroom and its discrete instructional contact hours. I'm not just a teacher because I have a teaching job. I have discovered through teaching itself that teaching is a lifelong creative project of liberation that—curiously enough—I've been committed to since before I considered it as an occupation for me. And, maybe even most curious, I have been committed to teaching from the initial stages of my artistic career when I thought these two practices were incompatible, because—of course—they're symbiotic in their motivation, reach, and impact.

—LOVE—

I'm invested in the educational mission of the academy as a phenomenon of opening up permissions (for myself and others). Of course, I work for the University of Illinois, and I want to do a good job as an instructor and worker at this institution, but truly, what matters to me more than anything as an artist who teaches—both in and out of the institution—is how the academy as a material as a medium in its truest etymological sense of being a conduit can be used to inquire, communicate, and express ourselves about what matters to us as a species across time and geography. If we push it, if we test the limits of its pliability, maybe even (gasp!) *work with it*, can we change it to what we want it to be for us and ours? For twenty-five years I've asked a version of this question, first through my initial crisis of identity (my own need to be liberated) and then through a move towards liberation that many artists make—captured perfectly by something that the Swiss-French artist Thomas Hirschhorn claims Andy Warhol once said, “Don't cry—work!” (in Hirschhorn, 2004). Bear with me please; this proclamation is not as neoliberal as it first appears! In fact, it's not a proclamation (even with the exclamation mark); it's an encouragement towards perseverance. There's a subtle subversion to what both Hirschhorn and Warhol accomplish through what appears as a concession, that I have also taken up in my relation to the academy. Hirschhorn (2004) wrote:

Andy Warhol said “yes”, he agreed with the social and economic reality. Andy Warhol is the artist of agreement. To agree means to confront oneself with reality as it is. To agree is the condition for a possible acceptance or refusal of something. I understand that only if one agrees one can change something. Andy Warhol was courageous. He cooperated with reality in order to change it. (para. 4)

As we all recognize through our personal relationships, knowing the reality and saying yes or knowing the reality and staying to work *with it* or *through it*, is love in action. In this way, my role as a teacher follows the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire who proposed that education is love for the sake of liberation. I get tired when teaching, but I've yet to get tired *of* teaching, because—on the one hand—I know what teaching affords us as a material/medium of liberating expression

and inquiry; and—on the other hand— for all my experience, it turns out I don’t know teaching as a material as well as I’d like to! It reveals itself anew in perpetuity. I see the echo of this love (to stay for the sake of liberation and to see what else can happen) in what artists do. Artists stay. What is frequently identified as an artist’s style is often revealed to be an artist using their entire life, to see what else it does. Asking: “How far can this medium go”? What new challenges arise through my engagement with it? What hasn’t been asked or said yet? And—especially—how does this medium change now that I (the artist) am someone else?

—PLIABILITY—

So, here’s the only thing that I’ve done, first as a Chicago Public School teacher and now as a professor at the University of Illinois: I’ve tested the pliability of being in and around schooling and amassed the results. Some of these results are concrete enough to share (and I do), but many of the results are still in the making or latent. As an artist who teaches I’ve leaned into the rules and expectations; helping students to reach their benchmarks and complete their degrees. While doing this, I constantly point to the perceived immobility of the standard(s) and how—from one perspective—standards and procedures can be felt as oppressive (uncreative) monoliths; but from another angle, the rigidity of certain rules, expectations, and rhythms can be a launching pad for an expanded trajectory (an indeterminate future). Imagine this *Warholian* concession as a swimmer’s block that allows us to stop crying and keep working at what matters to us. After this, I’ve helped my students to operationalize their degrees and more importantly the education they co-constructed for themselves while at the University of Illinois. Still, amid the reality of the institution’s concreteness, I have also written syllabi as love letters, *Mad Libs*, and *Choose Your Own Adventures*. I don’t hand the syllabus out until the end of the first class—after we’ve made something together—and then I ask them to take it home, read it, and come back on the second day with one question and one moment of wonder highlighted in the document. It is our first text to examine critically.

And then, I yield to the amorphousness of evaluation and assessment in conversation with students. No student gets a grade as a surprise. I share the successes and failures of my students and they know from the onset that our boats rise and sink on the same tide, together. With students, I create and alter course sequencing, assigned course readings, and assignments. On the occasion that a class has a budget, I walk them through using that money on their terms for resources that matter to all of us. I’ve driven students to Chicago (countless times), to Ohio and Missouri (several times), and to New York City (once!). “Why?” some of my colleagues have asked. Because I want what my students want. Not to pantomime schooling for the mere benefits of social and economic mobility, but to be in the world, taking it in and contributing to it alongside each other (even intergenerationally, with their uncool professor!). I feed my students food constantly, sometimes in the classroom, and many times in our family’s home. In fourteen years, I have invited twenty-one visiting artists and scholars to the School of Art and Design (more than half of them BIPOC thinkers) despite the off-putting logistics. “Why do I do it, knowing how much trouble it is?”, as I have also been asked. The answer is simple—and it is not because I am altruistic or hopelessly pollyannaish—it’s because I am an artist who works through a very specific, albeit arduous material—and I’m into the labor it takes to figure it out.

Upon arriving at the University of Illinois, I turned my institutionally assigned office into two artworks: one an art installation/library open to the public for one to two hours every week; and the second artwork I made was turning my office into is a set of performances called *Split My Lunch*, wherein I arrived to school every Tuesday with a double-lunch. I would then share my meal (and hopefully make conversation) with whoever came to my office at 12:15 p.m. on those Tuesdays. I met a lot of students, faculty, and staff through this quiet, but consistent action. I flipped the symbolism of my professor office from a *taking-care-of-business* space to a *business-of-taking-care* space. The pedagogue, in its Greek roots, was not the person who gave the instruction, rather it was the person who took (sometimes carried) the student to the learning. The pedagogue was a servant

actually, and I guess what I have found is the most pliable aspect of schooling (and therefore the part that lends itself most to artistic expression and inquiry) is also the part that, at first, signals as oppressive and that's the call to serve. Vocation is a slippery term because it implies sacrifice, but I guess in the end, I don't mind that.

—PROJECT—

A conceptual artist in every school is a performative work of scholarship where individuals in schools (could be teachers, but this is not required) take on the posture of a conceptual artist within their school buildings. We will work with five teachers (practitioners) to begin. Each one of those teachers will take on the posture and permissions of the conceptual artist in their school. This role is performed by engaging the school as an artistic material and by taking on the role of the teacher through a conceptual art lens. Art and life get blurred in this process, but the practitioner will always be documenting (collecting data) and reflecting (writing) about what is happening in and around the school. The research objective (from the researcher's perspective) is to present generalizable knowledge to the wider art education communities about what happens at the intersection of conceptual art permissions and the materiality of schooling.

A conceptual artist in every school foregrounds the materiality of schooling and its pliability, to enable teachers to test how the school and its happenings move and can be re-presented as a creative practice and an artistic manifestation. School is quotidian and accepted as-is, its forms are under-considered in terms of their art potential. The materiality of school is typically thought of in terms of better function, which is in line with the neoliberal imperative embedded in even the most progressive schools. A conceptual artist in every school aims to trouble the conservativeness of schools through a subtle pedagogical and curricular mechanism. The teacher who sees themselves as a conceptual artist in their school understands that testing the pliability of the *school as material* is not about destroying it or revolutionizing it (although that may eventually happen), but rather about seeing what parts of the school's everydayness can be made soft and therefore expressive and inquiry friendly. When the teacher as a conceptual artist starts to become more literate about the material nuance of their school, they can then teach this to their students. It's not certain content that the teacher passes along, but rather a posture; a growing institutional literacy that opens up the possibilities of schooling for all of its stakeholders. Teachers' sensibility to the situationality of the school's dynamism usually remains invisible. We propose that through permissions provided by conceptual art, teachers can test the pliability of their schools. Here, a conceptual artist is someone who uses conceptual art's permissions, practices, and paradigms to affect their daily experiences and encounters. To be super clear, the problem per se is that the school is—and has always been—a pliable material that presents itself as immovable. The teacher posturing as a conceptual artist refuses to take an immovable material at face value. For the conceptual artist, the more banal, stagnant, impossible, transient, dynamic, or unconventional material is, the more we are drawn to it. The second problem (or question) to be investigated as part of this worldwide project is: What happens when a teacher thinks of themselves as a conceptual artist within their school? What opens-up/closes-down?

This project is simultaneously a spectacular artistic gesture (meaning it's meant to be seen) and an invisible pedagogical activity (meaning it relies on the passage of time and multiple intersections for it to turn into something). It is durational and relational (and therefore dynamic). In this performative work of scholarship individuals in schools (teachers, or others) take on the posture of a conceptual artist at their institutions. The goal, beyond artmaking, is creatively examining schooling's forms and materiality, requiring both the nuance of an artist and the diplomatic acumen of a critical pedagogue. At the moment, there is an influx of interest in the artist-teacher, the teaching artist, and what can be done through/with art in terms of scholarship (Loveless, 2019), but the gap is in the levels of conflation as well as in the academic bifurcations of these modes of working. A conceptual artist in every school can insert another layer into this discourse by asking whether or not these labels need to exist so cleanly. Isn't there a realm where artists move through the world—

their world(s)—thinking about it, less in terms of academic designations, and more in terms of material pliability and curiosity? Can an artist worry less about what it's being called and more about what is actually happening? This project—curiously enough—constantly troubles the definitions, with the anticipation of finding something new in a relatively simple methodology: help the artist (in this project the teacher) to get to know their material (in this case the school) better, for the sake of the local (in this case, the here and now) and the global (in this case, new generalizable—and actionable—knowledge).

—EXIT—

In 2023, I was named the National Art Education Association Higher Ed Educator of the Year. The night I received the award some of my former and current students, alongside some of my colleagues, took me out to dinner to celebrate. As the evening closed, we took a picture together (see Fig. 3). Surprisingly, I was overwhelmed by the experience. Not the award itself, after all, I understand that these types of awards are partially political and partially luck. What caught me off guard that evening was a thought about the number of lives—in worlds and times distant from me—that were, are, and will be affected by the twenty-five people at that dinner. This thought made me feel cosmic, and by this, I don't mean big. Within the context of those amazing people that I had the good fortune to come alongside, I saw myself as infinitesimally tiny at the periphery of an immeasurable reality. The time I've been gifted to be a teacher who attempts to do it as an artwork is relatively short and what I wish for that time is to steward my little gift with integrity and generosity. I want to want less than what my six-year-old self wanted, which is to have the work seen and laudable. This is a tough ask, of course, because art's main tenet is to "show your work" for the sake of notoriety, which in turn is the primary currency that enables artists to extend the game (to keep working).

I aim to get out of the way. As the Uruguayan artist Luis Camnitzer (2014) wrote:

The mission of a good teacher or a good artist is to help society to make them unnecessary, because those who are presently consumers of education or of art should be equipped to learn or create on their own, without intermediaries. (p. 95)

These words are in the front of my motivation, in sync with something Camnitzer personally told me when I asked him if he had any interest in the University of Illinois' libraries archiving his papers. "Papers?", he exclaimed. "What papers? My papers are just a jump drive!" He took a sip of his coffee as he noticed that his answer made me retreat a little; he added, "Besides, you shouldn't be worried about my work. Worry about yours."

Got it. Thanks for that permission, Luis. I aim to pass it along.



Figure 3. Photograph taken after the NAEA Awards ceremony in San Antonio, 2023.
Image courtesy of Leah Olive).

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ACEs, Artmaking, and Adaptation: Making Changes Now

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Childhood should be full of adventure, learning, fun, exploration, swimming, bike riding, sledding down big hills, tadpoles, and love. My childhood was like this until age eleven. Before age eleven I did not understand terms such as poverty, single parenthood, racism, biracial¹, victim, or survivor. I understood my biological father, who deserted our little family, was from Sri Lanka, but I did not understand the socio-racial-economic implications as a mixed-race, little brown girl living in poverty in the United States who often passed for White. As a daughter, I was loved (and still am), lived in a trailer park on the edge of Hassler Lake in rural Michigan, in what many may consider squalor, and yet the world was my oyster. I relished the days my mother would give me a two-inch-thick pad of newsprint paper, a fresh box of sixty-four Crayola crayons, and new pencils that would allow me to pursue my humble creative endeavors while laying on my tummy in the living room. I observed everything. I constantly asked my mother *why* and spent time reading dictionaries to get more information. I watched flowers grow, turtles flee, fish swim, the sunset, apples turn red, people laugh, and food get cooked. I would climb under the kitchen counter cupboard to get into the deep shadow and watch my little Kenner slide machine in the dark. The neighborhood was a small community but one that was full of fun and adventure from my childhood perspective. Parents watched out for children, and children went inside when the streetlight turned on in the summer evenings. I lived with my mother and brother and with my grandparents ten houses down the road. I did not understand the stigma of not having a father, but I eventually realized, about the mature age of eight, that there was something missing from my young life. I remember asking my mom that year if she could just buy me a father as my Christmas gift and her tender, kind reply of *no*.

But all of this changed when my mother got a job at General Motors. She had a high school education and had been deserted by two men who ejaculated irresponsibly,² my brother's father and my father, both absentee. She did the best she could with what she had, and I understood that she loved (and loves) me very much. She worked very hard to be a great mom and simultaneously provide financial stability for our little family. A skill I am grateful to have observed. Working in the shops making automobiles brought new yet humble opportunities for wealth. She was able to buy a brand-new mobile home and move us to the north end of the town where we shopped and went to school. This new trailer park had sidewalks, streetlamps, and paved roads, a stark contrast to the dirt roads and single street lamp of our former residence. She also purchased her first brand-new car, a Buick Skylark, burnt orange with a cream simulated-leather top. It was the only new car she ever purchased off the lot, and I still recall her excitement and personal satisfaction as she drove it home. Her new job allowed us to have more consumables such as furniture, clothes, art supplies, and books.

In our new trailer park, I did not realize we were still poor by the standards of the dominant

1 As a little brown girl of Asian-Euro descent who was living in poverty, I was a target. My mother is Caucasian with ancestry from the United Kingdom and my absentee father is Sri Lankan and of indigenous native descent.

2 For more information on my word choice see the recent book by Gabrielle Blair (2022), *Ejaculate Responsibly: A whole New Way to Think About Abortion*, an easy-to-read book shares 28 brief readable, humor-filled, funny and clarifyingly bold arguments that shift focus to male accountability of unwanted pregnancies. The lack of male accountability directly impacts many lives, in a plethora of ways, many of which are included in my chapter.

culture. I was happy, made new friends, and enjoyed my fourth grade at the new school I attended. I lived my young life fully. I was pals with girls and boys my age and enjoyed riding my bike all over the large trailer park of about 70-90 trailers playing, visiting, and hanging out with my friends. When we moved my grandparents moved and again were near our new location just houses away. But during the summer after my fourth grade, my world changed forever. One hot summer day I was playing with a girlfriend. The younger brother of a male friend came to get me. The boy said, "My dad wants to talk to you." I asked why and he replied he did not know but that I needed to come quickly. The man was the neighborhood friend, everyone's buddy, regularly chatting with children and adults alike as we played about the neighborhood. I naively trusted him.

Upon my arrival, my life was brutally changed forever.

Gone forever was my trust, my innocence, my sense of wonder about the world, my curiosity, my zest for living, my bug for travel...it was all gone. During the act of being sexually assaulted my brain screamed at me to escape which I did miraculously after a brief struggle. I rode my bike, sobbing, with all my might and speed to my grandmother's home, for my mother was at work. Once inside an automotive plant for her twelve-hour shift, my mother might as well have been on Mars. No one could talk to anyone while working in the shops during the pre-cell phone era and landlines were scarce. After arriving at my grandmother's kitchen, sobbing, and unable to breathe well I got through sharing the experience after several attempts, telling my grandmother what happened to me, to my body, as I sat shaking. I recall her standing up with this grim determination, and me fearing I had made a mistake in telling her what happened; I held my breath. She was a battle-ax of a woman, formidable, fearless, and sometimes cruel, and though I trusted her, I must say it was a pessimistic trust. I was unsure of this trust from time to time. But she stood and said, "This is a matter for the police." Terrified, I sat, trying to breathe, experiencing such a deluge of emotion while continuing to shake uncontrollably. I could not stop shaking, no matter how hard I tried. I tried holding my body still with my arms squeezing my torso and yet the shaking would not stop. The officer came, his name was Archie Gibbs³. He was kind, soft-spoken, and gentle with his words. I had to repeat the violent experience to him while shaking and sobbing. After that second telling with Officer Gibbs, my memories are just a blur. I was told later that I needed to be sedated. Later that night the perpetrator and his wife staked out our home to blindside my mother upon her arrival home—prepared to accuse me of lying. The next day I must repeat the experience a third time to my mother. Later, I take (and pass) a polygraph exam and I must repeat the experience a fourth time while being cross-examined by a large male state police officer in a cold, gray tiny room alone with an adult man behind a closed door.

Gone forever was the girl full of wonder and daring. Gone forever was the happy girl who loved to explore and seek. Gone forever was the girl's sense of adventure. Gone forever was the childhood trust of adults. Gone from the girl was any spec of respect, trust, or confidence in all boys and men. Even my own grandfather, one of my only two male family members, was pushed to the outside of my new world. My own brother called me a liar, as his best friend's father was the perpetrator, my brother thought I was making up a story. Our relationship would never recover. My experiences are not your experiences nor are they my students' experiences and I (and other educators with similar *her*-stories), "must listen and be open to variations of lived experiences instead of assuming that my experience is the same as theirs" (Kantawala, 2022, p. 5) because lives shift dramatically and in unexpected ways after trauma.

Living as this new girl, I became one living with hyper-vigilance for personal safety, relaxing only at home. Time out of our home was an emotional war zone of potential revictimization and self-preservation. For example, two years after the initial assault on a spring morning and after an 3 Recently, I contacted the sheriff department to reach out to Officer Gibbs, to thank him for his kindness as I felt like I never had. To my chagrin, he had passed away years earlier. But I use his true name to share my gratitude and respect to a young officer that believed a little girl. In the following years I would run away from home over and over to escape revictimization and Officer Gibbs would be the person called to help me return home. *Thank you, Officer Archie Gibbs.*

overnight rain while walking to my bus stop in middle school, the perpetrator's sons decided that I needed to be covered in earthworms. Picking up and throwing earthworms at me left me with no place to escape as I had to get on the bus and go to school. Upon getting on the bus, I removed over thirty-nine earthworms from my hair, my clothes, and those down my shirt, while listening to "this is what happens to sluts" and called "bitch" and "liar" by the sons of the perpetrator. The other children just laughed. As a working single mother parenting with an absentee partner, living in poverty, my mom did not have the social privilege nor luxury to stand at the bus stop and keep me safe.

As a child no one protected me. No one. And the revictimization was nightmarishly unpalatable.

I began learning how to protect myself, but as a child, I was not very good at it. I learned to survive childhood while learning to be creative. Art/making were the only activities where I felt comfortable not only through *doing* but the act of creativity became a space where I felt some meager confidence. I did not know what the trauma had done to my young brain, nor that artmaking and other factors such as love were helping me re-balance my brain after the childhood trauma. I would find out while doing my doctoral degree decades later that what I endured as a child has since been identified as *adverse childhood experiences* or ACEs. In the seminal study by Felitti et al. (1998), the seven original household dysfunctions⁴ that cause trauma and brain damage to children ages birth to eighteen are identified. Brain functions shift due to traumatic events during ACEs and cause neurodiversity. Exposure to ACEs "can result in stress that becomes chronic and/or unpredictable, and changes can occur in the developing brain and body" (Horner, 2017, p. 192) and change the development of "nervous, endocrine, and immune systems, resulting in impaired cognitive, social, and emotional functioning and increased allostatic load (i.e., chronic physiological damage) implementing lifelong neurodiversity and disabilities" (Hughes et al., 2017, p. e365). Further, (in)voluntary physical outcomes can be nightmares, inability to cope with social interactions perceived as threatening, lack of individual agential control, living between layers of subordination, crying, separation anxiety from a trusted parent/caregiver/teacher, difficulty sleeping, development of eating disorders or self-harming behaviors, and/or becoming involved in risky sexual behaviors (Annamma & Ferri, 2013; Clare, 2001; Felitti et al., (1998); Garland-Thomson, 2001; Green, 2010; Kraehe, 2018; Schalk, 2017; Trickett, Noll & Putnam, 2011). I later found my poverty-stricken childhood combined with my racial diversity made me a statistic, not an anomaly as I was "12 times more likely to report instances of sexual assault or rape than people with a household income over \$75,000" (Fessler, 2018, n.p.). My experiences were not dissimilar to other women of color artist survivors of ACEs who as children, felt isolated, a need to disappear, or escape by being quietly creative "to sort of disappear in the chaos of the family. Invisibility became a childhood armor" (Leaym-Fernandez, 2022, p. 117). Out of the home, girls of color with ACEs find themselves learning to "*shift*" (Knight, 2007, p. 25, added italics). Leaym-Fernandez (2022) citing Knight (2007) explains that "shifting is the forced enactment to 'lead double lives in order to cope with racial and gender discrimination'" (p. 34). Clarifying even before adulthood children with trauma (and/or those living in entangled marginalization) depend on adaptive behaviors of shifting to survive. I was no different.

Having very weak shifting skills, I barely survived the abuse of my sixth-grade teacher who was the worst—verbally and physically abusive to me and others in our class. She took great pleasure in hurting and controlling me and another boy, Reddawg⁵. She would throw full-sized textbooks at us, pelting us in the face with pieces of chalk, and hit us with tissue boxes or other various objects from her desk—and the screaming. Reddawg and I both recall many a day sitting on the

4 The original seven dysfunctions are the springboard to more global and inclusive categories of harm towards children which can include incidents related to war, harm-filled political interactions that negatively impact lives of children, and/or natural disasters that impact family life. Globally there is no one list that defines all ACEs but Felitti et al. (1998) give a strong starting point.

5 I contacted my pal and asked him if I could use his name or if he preferred a pseudonym—he preferred his handle that was used during his twenty-three years in the military. *Thanks, Reddawg!*

floor out in the hall alone not learning and this woman's continual screaming at us. Reddawg shared her attempts to get him labeled as special education. The teacher was interested in control and power, not in questions such as *why this little Brown girl was so angry, defiant, rebellious, unengaged, and defensive?* No, this was not her priority and sadly for many students, I feel little has changed in today's classroom. For me, a huge part of coping and learning to shift was creative activities and these activities took place in our home.

As a child, my artmaking was about fun. I don't recall as a late elementary, middle school, or high school student making any art expressing any connection to the traumatic events in my life. I was heavily in survivor mode, learning to shift, learning to adapt, and always, *always* hyper-vigilantly aware of my personal safety, my surroundings, and people. I watched my mother and grandmother—strong creative women while learning to grow violets, decoupage, macramé, paint, do commercial store-front ceramics, make candles, draw, garden, make books, voraciously read, and play with color through drawing and painting on my own. During my middle school years, art-making became my go-to activity to unwind, relax, and step away from the stress of hyper-vigilance required while out of our home. I found moments of calm (except when I was ordered to weed the garden) through creative acts.

Once I arrived at the local community college with my high school GPA of 1.97, focused creative learning began to change in my life. I learned to hone skills, make on demand, and submit artwork by deadlines all the while working within the limitations of a project. I married a childhood sweetheart and found myself in an abusive relationship (which years later I terminated). I became properly endowed with new skills to better express myself creatively. Emotional content exploded from inside and I can now see how words to describe my early work transitioned from *fun and relaxing* to *violent and furious*. For example, I completed a series of sculptures made from expensive China dishes donated or purchased secondhand that I shattered and reassembled into violent, sharp, and dangerous structures. My artwork followed an exploratory path of self-interests, asset-based thinking⁶, and cultural connections. I studied elephants and made artwork focusing on the roles females play in the herd, mother, auntie, sister, and daughter. I made art contemplating the power females hold to protect and change societies and social groups through the use of symbolism and pachydermic forms. I found and find myself engaging with traditional fine art and craft materials. Today I have not had the collective or commercial success that I seek but I continue making artworks reminding viewers of female strengths empowering and sustaining *myself* as I continue learning.

As an undergraduate, I took my first class to learn about women artists, granted it was mostly White western women, but a door of curiosity slammed open in my mind, and I readily jumped through it! However, working to get a degree in fine arts with a focus on painting left me terrified to be a working artist. I was scared stiff to step out of my studio, but no one who knew me could tell that reality, as it was a tightly bound secret. I had no money to submit work for consideration in shows. I had no one to model how to network or contact galleries, and quite honestly, I was living in the romanticized fantasy of the artists I had learned about in school. The collection of mostly White, western, (dead) men who just magically showed their work and were immediately seen as powerhouse artists, selling work, living in New York City, and being successful—whatever that all means. I did not know or understand the painful underbelly of being a woman artist of color in the United States and no one in academia prepared me for such a painful and exclusionary reality.

A year after getting my first degree, a BFA in painting, I chose to return to get my second degree in art education. I had worked as a part-time teacher during my undergraduate studies at a local museum and I really enjoyed the work. Though still terrifying, I knew I could teach. I had learned what bad teachers do to a child and I refused to be a bad teacher. I was a product of Discipline Based Art Education, or DBAE, which is very teacher-driven. In my early years of teaching, I found myself

⁶ Asset-based thinking allows individuals to consider people, their skills, and/or social settings while focusing on opportunities and positive outcomes. In comparison, a deficit-based mindset focuses on the negatives such as problems, perceived weaknesses, and what is lacking when examining others and their communities.

seeking control in my classroom. I was functioning in direct contrast to hooks (2018) theory of engaged pedagogy which includes a partnership between teacher and students to facilitate “intellectual and spiritual growth” (p. 13) while “teaching in a manner that respects and cares for souls of our students [as] essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (p. 13). Chaos in any form in a classroom scared the hell out of me as did managing thirty-five little bodies and their diverse personalities. But years later after teaching in a privileged White rural country school, then in Detroit, and later with the leprosy-affected in India as a volunteer, I started to give students, especially those about the age of 12 and older more choices. I can say I lean towards a Teaching for Artistic Behaviors (or TAB) model, but I adamantly disagree with calling students *Artist* (with a capital A). They are *artistic* and can be *creative* but as young or inexperienced learners, students are *not* Artists. I took math classes as a child, and I can assure you, no one called me a mathematician. I took science classes and no one called me a scientist. Yet many art educators bury children under professional signifiers with professional expectations even when thinking they don’t; and as a result, educators often beat the love of being creative right out of children. I was probably guilty of this too. Teaching about the painterly strokes of van Gogh, Mary Cassatt’s observations of her limited family experiences, and strictly staying in my lane teaching the Western canon of art as directed. I did projects on plaster with cave paintings and talked about the Western *masters*. I reiterated to students what I had been taught in my university studies as important in the visual arts classroom, for “in art education, rituals are practiced as classroom norms and procedures. They take shape through handed-down techniques, tools, styles, and aesthetic values” (Coats & Alexander, 2022, p. 10). I learned about White, mostly male Western artists and that is who I taught. I facilitated the perpetuation of art education patriarchy.

Always open to self-improvement as a professional I had a life-changing epiphany while teaching in Flint, Michigan, at an alternative education school during the height of the ongoing water crisis. With a population of mostly Black kids who described themselves as parents, parentless, losers, jailbirds, and who were seen by others as angry, uncontrollable, dumb, and learning disabled, I found many students socially and academically challenged. Most students were reading at a third-grade level and living with ongoing ACEs, and existing in poverty. These were students shoved through the proverbial crack, not souls who accidentally fell through. I was talking about van Gogh with the class one day and a male student testily asked me, “Why the hell do we have to study van Gogh?” My first response was “Why the hell *do* we have to study van Gogh?!” I immediately tossed van Gogh out the window and started my own unidentified consciousness-raising. I wanted to build and sustain real relationships and I listened to what this boy asked, without judgment or pride. I started to search for artists of African descent in the United States. Though extremely time-consuming and often frustrating to find artists, as there were few resources celebrating artists of color or of mixed-race heritage that I had access to at the time. But I tenaciously found artists from a variety of social backgrounds. I honed my learning on artists like Jean-Michael Basquiat who was bi-racial, living in violence and poverty as a teen, tagging objects on the streets of New York City, and who was later accepted into the fine arts world. Kehinde Wiley who grew up in a happy middle-class home with access to the arts during his developmental years and he holds an MFA from Harvard and two honorary doctorates. And Elizabeth Keckley who was born into slavery, was raped, produced a son, and later purchased his and her freedom working as a *modiste*, in *haute couture* fashion as a dressmaker. Keckley would go on to become the exclusive dressmaker to Mary Todd Lincoln and write one of the best female-authored narratives of the era. The art lessons discussing these three artists and others were collaboratively constructed and well-received by students. I found students become comfortable sharing their thoughts and I became comfortable adjusting. After learning about Keckley, students did not want anything to do with fashion design but passionately wanted

to sew. Their want led to the collaboration and creation of The Ugly Doll Project⁷. Students repeatedly shared with me that no teacher had ever asked what they, the students, wanted to learn. Once I realized the gap in my own knowledge, I was excited to find new artists and resources for my students. I grew up with no women or artists of color in my educational spaces. I knew my curriculum building had to include my students for they initially thought I was just another White woman coming to teach them because that is what I look like. But then I had *the conversation*. As a mixed-race person, I made time for students to ask me *anything*. I share my story. I ask them questions and in conjunction, we come closer together in our understanding of poverty, violence, and fighting for a better life. Students see me in a new light and are more accepting of my ideas and my adaptations. I struggled to find non-tokenistic resources so I made my own. I stopped teaching and started talking and listening to my students. I redefined what is art, craft, and creativity and how they are enacted in my spaces for learning without ranked social structures. Not yet knowing, I started to resist “dominant understandings of ‘the arts’ and what it means to be an artist [which] are profoundly shaped by racial logics and racists assumptions” (Gaztambide-Fernandez, Kraehe & Carpenter, 2018), p. 1). I collected stories of their lives. I asked when they came into a class full of anger, what made them angry, and if I could suggest an artmaking process to help them find a bit of peace in their day. I started to look at them, these kids in alternative education, thrown out of every other school for a variety of reasons, and see their power. I intuitively started teaching my students how to express not only the emotions churning inside but how to creatively express their voice. I continued talking with kindness and respect despite being assaulted, called a bitch, pepper-sprayed, and having my life and the lives of my loved ones threatened with death regularly. I shared my testimony regarding *today*. Today is ever-changing, fluid, and powerful, and today, can or cannot, define tomorrow. I tried to teach my students only *they* have the power to change their lives regardless of what *today* is like.

I had no idea at this time in my professional practice I was intuitively engaging and developing my feminist pedagogy, “teaching feminist thought and theory to everyone means that we have to reach beyond the academic and even the written word” (hooks, 2015, p. 23). I realized that clinging to the White Western-based canon for dear-professional-life just reinforces the idea Love (2019) clarifies

that dark people have had no impact on history or the progress of mankind is one of the foundational ideas of White supremacy. Denying dark people’s existence and the contributions to human progress relegates dark folx to being takers and not cocreators of history or their lives. (p. 14)

I let my inner feelings out through acts of love—moments of intense connection with my students as defined by Fredrickson (2013) as “micro-moments of love, your own positivity, your own warmth, and openness, evoke—and is simultaneously evoked by—the warmth, openness emanating from the other person” (p. 19). As an educator, love is a space of vulnerability. Love is a space of equality. Love is a space of genuineness. When working with students of all ages, one must know this one truth, you cannot bullshit your way through. For those who truly need your vulnerable strength, your honest love, and your warmth carry X-ray vision in their hearts and can see right through you and your lies.

⁷ The Ugly Doll Project was a collaboration between myself, students, and the local women’s shelter for intimate partner abuse victims (women and children). Students learned to design, sew by hand, and make felt “ugly dolls” which were gifted to the children as a service-learning project. Students learned that teens living in poverty, dealing with social and academic challenges and deficiencies, often while living with ongoing abuse or neglect *still* have secret superpowers and can help others. The crowning point was when a student who completed the processes of learning and making but metaphorically was kicking and screaming the entire time came in to share her story. While at the beach she saw a little boy with her sea star, and to see and feel her excitement and success as she talked about her interaction with the family was powerful to her, other students, and myself as an educator.

I was a first-generation university student purposely defying that horrible sixth-grade teacher, who repeatedly ordered me not to go to college, telling me over and over and over again during that long school year “Don’t you dare go to college! You’d be stealing the seat of a deserving student!” She lacked warmth, love, and equality. Not only did I ignore her, I went on to complete two bachelor’s degrees; I completed a master’s in art education and another in arts administration. But that is not the end of my story.

As a very late bloomer, I completed a Ph.D. in art education and women’s gender and sexuality studies. While completing my studies I learned terms, theorists, and artists to empower and give value to my praxis. I read Bettina Love (2019), Sara Ahmed (2016), and Lois Carey (2009). I learned that childhood trauma changes the brain potentially causing intergenerational damage (Finckelhor, 2020). I found words and facts to support the reality of the ongoing oppression of women of color artists in this country (Guerilla Girls, 2022). I savored Patricia Collins *Black Feminist Thought* and devoured the works of bell hooks, declaring to all that I want to be like her when I grow up. I learned in detail the outcomes of ACEs and closely examined what female working artists of color have done (and do) creatively to overcome and manage what ACEs have done to their bodies and minds (Leaym-Fernandez, 2022; Green Fryd, 2019). I learned about malevolent creativity through Copley, Copley, Kaufman & Runco (2010). I studied disability justice in art education and the words of Keifer-Boyd (2017), Keifer-Boyd et al. (2018), Escueta & Butterwick (2012), Garland-Thompson (2001, 2005), and Smilan (2012). I learned about expanding and inclusive uses of neurodiversity through the work of Felitti et al. (1998), Heisel (2019), Schalk (2017), and Tseris (2019). I learn that others, like me, struggle with living between cultures through the words of Fang He and Phillion (2001). I learned about patriarchy-resistant, non-Western-based feminisms enacted all over the world through Hong Fincher (2018), Moraga (2011), and Hwang & Parreñas (2021), and I learned about the daring life of Rha Hye-Seok (2022). I learned about pop culture influences when finding a new normal and re-balancing one’s brain after ACEs and simultaneously how pop culture is used to define and sustain oppressional influences regarding girls and women in media.

While teaching at Penn State University I recall one class where I required students to read *Feminism Is for Everybody* by bell hooks, *The Pornification of America* by Bernadette Barton, and *Pretty Bitches* by Lizzie Skurnick. We discussed the readings and midway through the semester students had to choose a woman artist from my global list, learn about the artist, and make an artwork influenced by that artist while tying in the course readings for a final presentation. During the presentations a pair of boys teamed up to do their project, which was an option for the more intimidated, non-art students; the pair chose Cuban exiled Ana Mendieta and her work. The team was shocked at her piece, *Untitled (rape scene)*, in which she recreated the 1973 rape and murder of a female student at the University of Iowa. The boys were shocked at Mendieta’s invitation and performance to guests who found her nude, appearing raped, and splayed over a table covered in fake blood for over an hour while they sat and discussed the artwork. The team of student presenters briefly talked about *Untitled*, quickly moving on to Mendieta’s *Untitled: Silueta Series*. The partners, one with a Latina girlfriend, decided to collect and print off all the timely warnings from Penn State University during their four years at University Park. A timely warning is posted each time a person, mostly women, is sexually assaulted⁸ to notify the campus community. The team found 80 posted timely warnings during their four years on campus. The art included two images of their girlfriends. One girlfriend was laid on the floor with scattered papers about her body to create a Mendieta-like silhouette. The other girlfriend was wrapped in the announcements. During the powerful presentation, all could see how art-making influences thinking and lives. University students in my class started to understand the importance of art while they sat in their own tears, anger, and uncomfortability as young adults who previously thought art was stupid, cute, and not necessary in our lives.

Why do I share my experiences of learning with you? I want to confirm to you, my dear

⁸ Additionally timely warnings note muggings, assaults, and robberies—and similar criminal activities taking place on campus.

reader, today is the day to let go of harmful traditions that are killing our children's minds, souls, and hearts in art education. After getting my doctoral degree in my 50s, I chose to live as an artist-scholar-researcher and I love my work! It's never too late for any educator to learn, change, adapt, and flourish anew. I have five active classes a day with a variety of learners including cognitively impaired kids who are developmentally at age three to kids ready to head off to the university with super sharp minds. I impact more lives in high school and have more fun doing it than I ever would at a university.

Today I enact all that I have learned over the years fearlessly and with joy. I have walked the path of a victim, struggled as a survivor, sat in the chair of the student, and now traverse the role of feminist scholar and educator utilizing my embodied experiences to educate and lift others while thriving. I listen to students when a project isn't working and toss it out. I ask learners what they think, and I honestly listen to the answers, even when I don't like them—and *then* I adapt my praxis. I let my students influence my professional life as I hold them accountable to do *their* work because I know that through creative work lives are truly changed.

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Images



Leaym-Fernandez, M. (2016). *Ugly Doll: Green and Hairy* [mix media]. Flint, Michigan, USA.
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Leaym-Fernandez, M. (2016). *Ugly Doll: Mommy and her Baby* [mix media]. Flint, Michigan, USA.

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Collaborative Digital Collage Using AR: Navigating Our Experiences as International Graduate Students of Color in the U.S.

Eunjin Kim & Münire Burçak Gezeroğlu-Christensen

Introduction

In the fall of 2019, we each moved from our home countries of South Korea and Türkiye to the United States to pursue our Ph.D. degrees in art education. Coming from countries where we identify as the majority in terms of race and ethnicity, we have been coming to terms with the changes in our understanding of our identities while residing in a new location. A Black feminist scholar, Patricia Hill Collins (2015) discusses intersecting systems of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism, shaping our experiences as women graduate students of color. Despite how systemic oppression affects international graduate students' experiences, the research on issues of intersectional racial and gender inequality—which harms the emotional and mental well-being of international graduate students of color—and studies that include their voices and stories in higher education are lacking (Koo et al., 2022). Given the lack of such studies in literature, as both cohorts and friends, we created a collaborative digital collage, *Generative Experiences (GE)*, using an Augmented Reality (AR) program, Adobe Aero, to build a safe space where we share our experiences in academia which include our thoughts, concerns, doubts, and anxieties. The augmented reality platform allowed us to layer multimodal elements in various physical locations which aligns with our fluid and intersectional identities. Through GE, we address the complex sets of circumstances that are rooted in the power dynamics in academia that international students experience in the U.S. Also, the project was a way for us to support each other, form solidarity, and challenge the prevailing inequities in academia. We utilize the method of counter-storytelling informed by critical race theory (CRT) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), and feminist theorist Karen Barad's (2007, 2014) concept of cutting together-apart together to explore the fluidity of our identities and the heterogeneity of our lived experience.

A Brief Sketch of Studies on International Graduate Students' Experiences

The marginalization that international graduate students of color experience in academia is prevalent in the existing literature that examines the challenges that they face on and off campus, their support systems, and their sense of belongingness (Brunsma et al., 2016; Cardona et al., 2013; Curtin et al., 2013; Erichsen & Bollinger, 2011; Gladd & Westmont, 2014; McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Rice & Kim, 2007; Rodríguez et al., 2019; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Yeh & Inose, 2003). The literature features stressors that international students experience such as language barriers, lack of social support, feelings of isolation, academic and social differences, homesickness, and acculturative pressures. Furthermore, existing literature views international students as “a homogenous population with little differentiation based on national origin, gender, race/ethnicity, or sexual identities” (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014, p. 596).

Although recent literature from a broad variety of fields is inclusive of many different voices of graduate students of color's experiences (Jones et al., 2022; Madriaga & McCaig, 2019; Reyes et al., 2021; Ruvalcaba et al., 2020; Walsh et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022), there is still limited research on international students' experiences from their perspective regarding issues of race and racism in U.S. higher education. In addition, the why and how they experience racial discrimination on a systemic level, which is embedded in academia's historical roots, is lacking (Yeo et al., 2019; Phelps-Ward, 2022; Samatar et al., 2021). Thus, to add to a list of international graduate students' testimonies in the related literature, we discuss and share our lived experiences in and around academia through *Generative Experiences (GE)* to bring attention to the differences in our backgrounds and experiences in the U.S.

Theoretical Backgrounds

Cutting Our Stories Together/Apart

Our method of cutting together/apart in our collage-making stems from feminist theorist Karen Barad's (2007) concept of agential realism¹. As opposed to interaction, which assumes a pre-existing condition of bodies prior to their interactions, agential realism puts forward the notion of "intra-action", which signifies the "mutual constitution of entangled agencies of ontologically inseparable entities" (Barad, 2007, p. 128). In the context of our collage-making, Barad's concept of intra-action stresses the fluidity and the multiplicity of our identities and their inseparability from relationships, contexts, and other elements. Together with Barad's (2014) definition of diffraction as "iterative (re)configuring of patterns of differentiating-entangling" in "one move" (p. 168), it can be said that cuts that intra-actions enact produce multiplicities instead of producing dichotomies.

The process of our digital collage-making has been a constant weaving of the similarities and differences in our lived experiences. By collaborating to bring together different texts, images, sounds, and personal vignettes in our exploration in and around academia, our ongoing collage shows how "two different people can cut together differences to find a sameness" (Barnes & Netolicky, 2019, p. 382). Consequently, as we explore and enter our collaboration of what it means to be together-apart in our experiences in doctoral studies as international students of color through our digital collage-making process, our co-authorship keeps generating new differences and unities that patchwork new selves and becomings (Shelton et al., 2019).

Critical Race Theory and Counter-Storytelling

In our collaborative digital collage, we implemented counter-storytelling, a methodological practice informed by critical race theory (CRT) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Critical race theory draws from legal studies and extends further abroad sociology, histories, women's studies, and education, interrogating race, racism, and systemic oppression (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT holds five fundamental tenets to form the theory: 1) situating race and racism at the center of social structure and oppression analyses (Fernández, 2002); 2) challenging the dominant ideology and knowledge of White people, which distorts that of people of color (Delgado Bernal, 1998); 3) commitment to social justice; 4) emphasis on "experiential knowledge of people of color" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; p. 26); 5) engagement of transdisciplinary perspectives to better understand systems of oppressions such as racism, sexism, and classism.

Aligned with the core tenets of CRT, the method of counter-storytelling challenges the majoritarian stories of the racially privileged and highlights the experiences of marginalized groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counterstories are based on lived experiences, and they uncover the

¹ Karen Barad's (2007) concept in which reality is composed of entangled, intra-acting agencies that produce phenomena (pp. 148-151).

stories of people of color, which are entangled with race, racism, and other forms of oppression. Critical race theorists Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso (2002), advocates of the counter-storytelling method, underscore the power of stories of socially marginalized people regarding race, gender, sexuality, and class.

Hence, using the method of counter-storytelling, we foreground race and racism in our discourse and tell the stories of our racialized and gendered experiences. We tried to document our lived experiences as two international women of color and our attempts to support and stay alongside each other. Through telling our counter-stories in our digital collage, we demonstrate how core tenets of CRT, such as the endemic nature of racism, Whiteness, and interest convergence play out in our lived experiences (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004).

Making *Generative Experiences (GE)*

As two international women of color, we found digital collages to be an interesting way to express our varied feelings and struggles during our doctoral studies in the U.S. The digital collage space became a safe space for us to share our candid thoughts and co-relate with one another. Engaging in creative art makings, such as digital drawing, GPS drawing, and filming, has been a mentally and spiritually healing process for both of us. We were able to set aside academic stresses and anxieties and did not have to conform to any language rules nor express ourselves professionally as we often do in academic settings. Thus, expressing our unpolished and authentic experiences in academia in such a raw way has been an important factor throughout our project. Moreover, talking about our struggles with each other assured us that we are not alone on the journey.

In the fourth year of our doctoral studies, we have accumulated a lot of anxiety about our research, teaching, committee meetings, visa extension processes, feelings of in-betweenness, and the uncertainties regarding our future upon completing the program. The idea of collage-making came from our need to visualize and re-visit the many frank conversations we have had throughout the years of us being cohorts. We immediately leaned towards making a digital collage utilizing iPad because of the multimodality, mobility, and changeability that its downloadable applications offer (Wang, 2018). We set up a shared journal in a digital format using an app, Good Notes, to share memos from readings, drawings, videos, and sounds that reflected our lived experiences. This shared journal became the primary source for our digital collage work. In our conversations, we delved into how the multiplicity of our identities has been shifting from the point when we started the Ph.D. program. We also reflected upon how living through the pandemic era has affected how we situate ourselves in the U.S. Moreover, we discussed the issues of White Eurocentric practices that persist in higher education, such as standardized academic language requirements (Dołowy-Rybińska, 2021), lack of faculty of color² (Arday, 2021; Lawton, 2018; Sion & Coleman, 2019), and delegitimizing knowledge of color³ (Acuff, 2018b; Bazerman, 1988; Bernal & Villalpando, 2002).

Using Augmented Reality: Adobe Aero

We implemented Adobe Aero as the platform for our collage project, which allowed us to locate multimodal texts, images, and audio ubiquitously (Stylianidou et al., 2020). As several researchers suggest, using Augmented Reality (AR) allows our artmaking to be personalized, participatory, collaborative, creative, authentic, and engaging (Dunleavy, M. et al., 2008; Fitzgerald, E. et al., 2013). Additionally, AR “blurs the boundaries between two-dimensional and three-dimensional space” (Song, 2022, p. 363). So, after layering and remixing elements in the augmented reality platform, we visited several places that are significant to us, such as the campus

2 Faculty of color refers to academics who identify themselves as members of racial or ethnic groups that have been historically marginalized or underrepresented and who are affiliated with academic institutions.

3 The concept of knowledge of color challenges the Eurocentric epistemological perspective that is based on the beliefs of white supremacy (Harris, 1993). Incorporating knowledge of color is to recognize and value the knowledge that people of color and marginalized communities produce to mainstream scholarship (Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002).

each other's homes, and downtown, to explore how these different locations added different meanings to *GE*. We filmed our visits to some of these places to archive our collaborative digital storytelling process, which kept adding different contexts to the digital collage project. This process showed us the flexibility of locating the digital collage, which enabled us to include virtual objects to coexist with real environments (Azuma, 1997; Sáez-López, 2019). Augmented reality technology allowed us to perceive the existing world through the virtual overlay (Bower et al., 2014; Kljun et al., 2022). The process of generating a mul-timodal collage through AR gave us the means to narrate our stories about our fluid identities (Lim, 2022; Tabieh et al., 2021).

The Multiple Dimensions of Our Identities



Figure 1. Still Image from *GE* in Adobe Aero, Photo Taken at the Penn State Campus, University Park, 2022. Photo by artist.

While we have several identity features that represent ourselves to the world outside, such as our race, gender, religion, sexuality, class, ability, and more, the most significant temporary identity that affects our daily experiences in the U.S. are our identities as international students (Chang & Gomes, 2017). It is the most salient identity that is ascribed to us and one that creates some tension in our everyday lives (Gomes, 2017). So, in our individualized reflections below we take up the notion of being an international student as an indicator to elaborate on the in-between, fluid, and positional states of our identities.

Eunjin: I identify as an East Asian cis-gender female graduate student and an educator/researcher. I am from South Korea, which is geographically located in Eastern Asia. When I was living in Korea, primarily due to my privilege of belonging to the majority group of society, I did not delve deeply into my identities and positionalities. I shared Korean nationality and language, as well as similar physical attributes with most of my colleagues and peers. Also, my prior career experience of teaching elementary grade

students in Korea ensured my social status there—making me more insensitive about the diverse issues generated by entangled identity factors, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class. Coming to the U.S. as a full-time graduate student, I started to recognize the changes in my identities, social status, and feelings of belongingness. I became more aware of the multiple dimensions of intersecting identities and how identities shift throughout time. For example, concerning gender identities, the experiences of an Asian woman are different from that of other races, such as Black, Brown, or White people. Asian women are stereotyped as being docile, silent, unpolitical, obedient, and subservient (Cheng, 2019; Cho, 2003; Lien, 2001; Mayuzumi, 2008). The overly feminine and hypersexualized stereotypes of Asian women reinforce the foreignness of the Asian population in the U.S. and the model minority myth⁴ (Chang, 1993; Museus, 2008). Similarly, Collins (2000) uses the term “the matrix of domination” to describe how intersecting oppressions are generated with power domains involved structurally and intersubjectively, regenerating different forms of oppression” (p. 18).

Burçak: For the past four years, my multiple identities include being Turkish, a cis-gender woman, an international student, a Ph.D. candidate, a becoming art educator/researcher, and an artist. Coming from a country that geographically connects to Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and that values a rigid national identity, I did not put much thought into my ethnicity before coming to the U.S. In Türkiye, national identity has historically been imposed to deal with its citizens’ complexities of ethnicity since the Ottoman era (Genç, 2018). So, in Türkiye, being Turkish has been enough of an indicator of how others perceive my racial identity.

On the other hand, living in a small college town in central Pennsylvania has been making me more aware of how others view my racial and ethnic identity. I occasionally get asked where I am from when I am running errands downtown and talking to people. My name and surname, especially, sound “very interesting” to most. Living here has also been making me aware of the ways I internally respond to others’ perceptions of my identity. For example, the fact that I was coming from Türkiye, a secular and democratic country whose population is majorly Muslim, seemed confusing to some people I intra-acted with both in and outside of the campus. I was already accustomed to people having misconceptions about Türkiye; about how it might be an Islamic state without democracy. I was pretty sure that I was going to get similar reactions in the U.S., given the lack of knowledge about Türkiye. I was once asked by a local man about how my supposed husband would have allowed me to study in the U.S. by myself when he heard that I was Turkish. I also recall colleagues that wished me a happy Ramadan with naïve yet stereotyped intentions – assuming that I would be a Muslim since I am from Türkiye. In short encounters such as these, I started feeling in between my constructed identity prior to being an international student versus how my identity was being framed by others in a stereotypical way. For me, this in-between state has been constructive of a fluid identity that is the becoming of “a process between the person, and their

4 Model minority myth is an overgeneralization of Asian Americans’ high achievements in education and occupational success, which invalidates Asian Americans’ efforts to challenge systemic racism (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Yi et al., 2020).

environment that is fluid, contingent, and negotiated, constantly shifting and transforming” (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014, p. 611). The COVID-19 pandemic, which hit in the second half of my first year in the program, became another factor that contributed to such variability.

Eunjin: Living through an unprecedented pandemic era became another variability, which subjected broad changes in my life with heightened xenophobia and intensified racialized experiences. Also, due to the drastic changes in educational modes all around the world, international students had to face unexpected challenges (Koo et al., 2021; 2023; Zabin, 2022). As an international student, I had to deal with issues such as having risks of the U.S. border closure, maintaining my student visa, quarantining and living far away from families and friends back home, having changes in support networks, anxiety and stress of taking courses on zoom and confronting racist discriminations. Asian international students were put in a more vulnerable position due to racial discrimination and rising incidents of hate crimes that victimized Asians (Americans) in the U.S. due to their intersecting identities. Living outside of my home country amidst COVID-19 time, along with the media exposure, heightened my anxiety, urging me to always stay vigilant of any unforeseen racist attacks or insults. I was afraid to go outside the house and walk in public because I had fears of experiencing racist glares, viewing me as the virus, and receiving comments about going back to my country

Also, taking courses via Zoom was another stress factor as an introverted person who’s not a native English speaker. It felt draining, constantly seeking the listeners’ facial expressions and body language to make sure that I comprehend what they were saying and that my words were conveyed correctly.

Burçak: What affected me the most during the pandemic were the travel and visa renewal restrictions that prevented me from visiting my family in Türkiye for the first two and a half years of my doctoral studies. My identity as an international student became problematic to me due to the fear of losing my visa status if I ever traveled to Türkiye. It was during this time that the feelings of in-betweenness were heightened. While I felt trapped by the restrictions imposed on my international student identity by the pandemic regulations, I also found comfort in my daily routine of living in the small college town that became my temporary home away from home. Consequently, the conditions of the pandemic made me perceive myself as more of an immigrant navigating life in the U.S. rather than as an international student whose motivations focus more on achieving a degree.

Our Teaching Experiences as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) in the U.S.

Our constantly changing and intersecting identities affected our teaching experiences in the U.S. We experienced continuous self-doubts and anxiety, having to teach mostly White undergraduate students as international students of color. We were insecure about our language usage, and we constantly questioned ourselves about our professionalism teaching students as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA). However, the self-reflective processes that we engaged in together throughout our teaching experiences started to help us understand our internal struggles and see the ways in which we oppress ourselves to fit into dominant norms and internalize the oppressions (Yoon, 2019).



Figure 2. Still Image from GE in Adobe Aero, Photo Taken at Patterson Building, Penn State campus, University Park, 2022. Photo by artist.

Eunjin: It was my third year when I first taught an undergraduate-level course as an instructor. While I had assisted in teaching courses during the first two years of my graduate studies, this was my first experience leading and managing a course all by myself throughout the semester. The topic of the course was to discuss issues around diversity, visual culture, and art pedagogy. Even before the semester began, I was nervous about talking in front of students since I was insecure about some of my identity features, such as being a non-native English speaker and coming from a different cultural background. I was constantly worried about how I could present myself more professionally to be validated by the students as a suitable instructor. I was anxious on the weekends just thinking about the course and simulating the upcoming week's teaching in my head repeatedly. The only way to overcome the anxiety was by overpreparing the course by writing a script for the class. I refer to it as overpreparation because, in the classroom, teachers are never fully prepared for every possible situation upon students' responses and reactions.

In addition to my fear of presenting myself professionally in front of students, some topics that I had to talk about throughout the course were another challenge for me. In the course, we had to deconstruct Whiteness and systemic racism, which foreground other systemic oppressions (hooks, 1994; Sleeter, 2001). Bringing out these somewhat uncomfortable topics as an Asian woman in front of mostly White students was intimidating for me. I was afraid that they might judge me as foreign and not eligible to lead uncomfortable conversations on the topics of Whiteness and racism (Mayuzumi, 2008; Yoon, 2019). The process of self-doubt acted as an internalized

oppression, resulting in frustration and helplessness.

Moreover, the invisibility of Whiteness made it harder for me to unpack the conversations (Yoon, 2019). Whiteness is perpetuated throughout structures and processes as normative values that all people are expected to adopt, which privileges White bodies only (Sleeter, 2017). Staying neutral on the issues of Whiteness, or being color blind, masks the White privilege and power (Sleeter, 2017; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). To my frustration, I decided to start by sharing personal racialized experiences that involve microaggression. Derald Sue (2007), an Asian American psychologist, coined the term microaggression and described it as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273). Microaggressions can unnoticeably hurt the victims vehemently. I told them stories about naming, pressures of acculturation that center on White culture, and requirements of standardized English. I shared stories of how my name is either mispronounced constantly or not called at all, and how some people correct some of my accents or pronunciations. Although I felt vulnerable and unprotected having to speak about my genuine experiences, it was the only way to engage some students to partake in the discussion. For them as well, when I spoke out with honesty, I hoped that they would consider the classroom a safe space to talk about their experiences. Nonetheless, with no surprise, some students responded with silence, which could mean that they disagreed with what I was saying or that they were afraid of saying something that would frame them as racists. Despite all, while I find it challenging to teach in the U.S. academia as an Asian woman who speaks English as a second language, my presence could be an act of resistance to disrupt the normality of Whiteness and structural racial and gender inequality in higher education (Rodriguez, 2009; Yoon, 2019).

Burçak: Just like Eunjin, my first in-person teaching experience as an instructor in the U.S. occurred in the third year of my graduate studies. I felt nervous and anxious about having to teach an art education course in English for the first time. My prior teaching experiences in Türkiye occurred in studio-based fine arts courses. So, teaching a class that covers fieldwork for pre-service teachers and art education topics and pedagogy regarding K-12 education was an exciting yet nerve-wracking opportunity. I maintained the existing syllabus that I received from the previous instructors of the course; however, I made some changes by incorporating Turkish artists and art education contexts. Re-crafting the syllabus to include my own Turkish art education experience was empowering. Yet, because of my status as an international student of color, I also felt pressured to diversify the course as an “assumed labor” which was expected of me by the academia (Rouse & Holloway-Attaway, 2022, p. 540). Despite my effort to incorporate my lived experiences in Turkish art education contexts into my teaching of the course, on one occasion, a student interrupted my lecture by reminding me that I should be sharing more of them as it was important for them to understand how different cultures approach art education. At that time, even though it was essential for me to implement my lived experiences in my teaching, I felt confronted. Since the academic fine arts education I received in Türkiye

was based on Western European art, I did not know what else I could add that would fulfill their expectations of me as an outsider (Hendrix, 2011).

My position as an international instructor also made me nervous about leading discussions regarding racism in the U.S. and utilizing examples of artworks with students. I had only been living in the U.S. for a few years, and yet I was teaching American students about the effects of racial colorblindness and the dangers of cultural appropriation. During such discussions, I noticed that the students felt uncomfortable expressing their opinions about such matters. When I shared these concerns with a group of peers in a graduate class I was taking at that time, both American and international students/TAs expressed the difficulties of leading discussions regarding topics of social oppression that White students hear or see yet do not experience (Young et al., 2020, p. 547).

Our teaching experiences made us more aware of the ways in which we position ourselves as art educators in a predominantly White field and institution. We felt foreign and vulnerable while talking about issues of race, racism, and Whiteness in front of mostly White students. We felt stuck between the insider and outsider positions, having to present ourselves as an insider to art education, while the reality is that our voices as art educators of color are not fully represented in the field (Acuff, 2018a; Sions & Coleman, 2019). Nonetheless, we constantly raise our voices and share our lived experiences to ameliorate the White-centered culture and knowledge production of art education (Acuff, 2018b).

Afterthoughts

Our collaborative digital collage-making has been a resistance to generalizations and stereotypes about what it means to be an international student by highlighting the multiplicity of our experiences. We have encountered systemic oppressions such as racism, sexism, and classism based on our differences concerning race/ethnicities, cultural background, and lived experiences during our doctoral studies. We emphasize the differences in our experiences and cut our counter-stories together/apart to embrace hybrid subjectivity and dwell on the complexity and fluidity of our identities (Koehne, 2005). We utilize counter-storytelling in our teaching and our digital collage to challenge the Whiteness and hegemony in academia, such as standardized language requirements, tokenism in diversity, and intersecting systemic oppressions.

Our research through the collaborative digital collage, *Generative Experiences (GE)*, has three implications. First, our study suggests possibilities for multimodal ways of expression to document testimonies of international graduate students' lived experiences. Our digital collage could inspire others to share their stories and address their challenges, hardships, and systemic problems in diverse formats that are not limited to written language.

Second, a collaborative collage-making project like *GE* can be applied in K-12 and university-level art classrooms as it can encourage collaboration and sharing through digital artmaking, which decenters the hegemonic artmaking canon (Smith, 2020). In addition, the collaborative collage process can make students' diverse experiences more understandable through their multimodal reconstructions (Culshaw, 2019). Moreover, through engaging in collaborative digital collage projects, students can make connections between their own experiences and those of their peers (Roberts & Woods, 2018). The process of self-representation through artmaking will help students to build self-advocacy as they negotiate with their environment and identities (Wellman & Bey, 2015). Consequently, the collaborative aspect of the process can highlight the relationality and the uniqueness of students' lived experiences.

Finally, we encourage others to use and explore augmented reality platforms such as Adobe

Aero which can engender creations of space for people to engage with their counter-stories. The augmented reality platform that allows generating, layering, and remixing of the collage elements will enable the flexible locating of the collaborative artwork and the testimonies to coexist, forming alliances among international students of color. As we continue collaborating, generating, and cutting our counter-stories apart (Barad, 2007; 2014) in our digital collage project, we urge more students, scholars, and educators of color to speak up about their lived experiences to combat systemic oppressions that are still prevalent in academia and in K-12 educational settings.

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Friendship as the Bridge for Inspiring Culturally Aware Practices in Art Education

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This chapter is written by two art educators with different cultural backgrounds from Taiwan and the United States. We first met as doctoral students in 2010. Our intention in co-writing this chapter is to highlight our friendship and how the cultural learning produced by our connection has formed continuous, insightful practices in our careers. We revisit our cultural exchanges, critical conversations (Vetter et al., 2020), and continued growth that occurred because of our friendship; additionally, we unpack our progressive journeys of scholarship and teaching influenced by our intersecting identities (Bolding, 2020) and varied cultural and educational experiences.

Our reflections look back at critical conversations throughout our friendship that illustrate many of the critical talk moves identified by Vetter et al. (2020). Additionally, we situate our analysis in the work of Mezirow and Fook, which pushes our reflections from critical to reflexive. Unpacking our experiences together in relation to our professional lives as teachers and researchers provided the motivation to pursue this chapter. We are interested in an explicit critical reflection of our experiences and how our cultural knowledge was and is in play (Mezirow, 1998). “Knowledge is embodied and social in nature” (Fook, 2015, p. 443), which supports critically reflecting together to maintain the social and lived quality. Our diverse, but shared points of view and identities, help us to be more aware of the layers of knowing.

From these deconstructed reflections, we were able to begin reconstructing our knowledge and experiences with greater understanding and clarity, specifically looking at the role of culture and cultural exchanges. Liu (2009) highlighted that diversity in all its forms, including structural, classroom-based, and interactional, has merit for research in higher education institutions; in this chapter, we particularly focus on the interactional perspective and its impact in our classrooms. The critical conversations we had over the course of our friendship relate to the conversations we will have with our students or need to model for our students.

Critical conversations seek to acknowledge and appreciate unfamiliarity to make positive change through respectful, but often challenging conversations (Vetter et al., 2020). Asking questions and sharing are key components of critical talks and genuine friendship. Our concise narratives represent and engage with the tradition of counter stories in critical race theory and encounter stories (Davis & Kellinger, 2014), and Asian Crit theory (Liu, 2009; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Next, we use our individual narratives to discuss three themes. The progression of themes aligns with our friendship and the role of culture in our careers. We conclude the chapter with our collective voice to encourage both immigrant and non-immigrant art educators to consider pathways to expand and refine their pedagogical identity with cultural-enriched scholarly networks.

Theme 1: Friendship reveals and mitigates cultural gaps

LH: As an immigrant, I noticed that it was easier to recognize the cultural differences than similarities in the beginning when I merged into American culture. Switching to a completely new environment challenged me to rebuild a sense of belonging. Every difference I experienced constant-

ly shifted my ongoing adjustment while my life was still full of the unknown. Samantha initiated our connections when we first met in the doctoral program by collaborating to write conference proposals or taking me to visit different towns/cities. These informal bonds were meaningful connections and fundamental to developing openness to different cultures because the friendship served as the medium that helped me interpret and revisit my perceptions of cultural nuances. Our friendship has helped me mitigate the sense of difference - which was an important process for discovering common ground across cultures. This became the foundation for me to be curious and open to differences we experience in cultures; it also encourages back-and-forth dialogues and in-depth discussions. Our friendship builds this bridge to connect our differences to form valuable understandings. It would be easy to judge and shut down when we find others who have little in common; however, our dual roles as friends and colleagues make us remain open to exploring our identities and dispositions related to cultures even after we have known each other for more than a decade.

SG: In reflection, I have to acknowledge that my openness to other cultures was always coming from my privileged position as part of the dominant culture. The depth and purpose of openness and self-awareness of another culture are important for moving beyond tokenism or functioning as a savior. Food and language can be great entry points to begin understanding another culture and determine if it is a safe space for sharing and building the friendship and trust necessary for deeper critical conversations. I see moving deeper as an important part of being an active ally, rather than self-identifying while maintaining inequality (Sumerai et al., 2021) because it allows you to know how to take productive actions that support your friend and possibly a marginalized group. Being part of the same doctoral cohort, a shared piece of our identities, was important for our friendship. Learning more about my friend's culture and individual experiences helped me understand her better as a person and professional. We approached coursework and research differently, despite having some shared training, because of our culture. Our friendship has continually provided support, but also a place to process the role of culture in our lives. Continually being open to different cultures has allowed me to be more understanding of others and more importantly aware of myself.

Our mutual openness to culture helped develop our friendship but was more important for Li-Hsuan to develop a sense of belonging that supported her academic goals. Samantha became aware of the privilege of being a cultural insider and had another perspective that challenged the monolithic view of Asian culture (Liu, 2009) from her American upbringing. Our shared experience as new students allowed us to form a friendship that capitalized on our openness and willingness to discuss culture and its role in our professional lives. Developing friendship requires building trust and a space to ask questions, which Davis & Kellinger (2014) mention as an important foundation or first step of encounter stories. We were able to share our experiences and thoughts as well as ask questions that disrupted stereotypes (Vetter et al., 2020). Honest examinations of power and privilege in our shared experiences helped us better understand our own identities and navigate our path as doctoral students.

In Samantha's own teaching, she has remained aware of the time and trust necessary for sharing about culture or being able to ask questions. She has worked with an indigenous student over the past two years. In the first class, the student has often been quiet and focused. They did not bring their cultural identity into their studio work. However, in their last class together, the student was much more vocal in class with peers and Samantha. Their work had also become very connected to their cultural identity. The degree to which they explained the depth of the cultural aspects of their work varied between students and professors. By the end of the two years, the student had invited Samantha and another peer to attend a gathering on their reservation, a sign that Samantha had effectively and authentically communicated her openness to the student's culture.

Li-Hsuan continues to build a culturally responsive classroom by sharing these internal transitions of cultural-related perceptions so that her students can learn how she develops cultural identities in the United States. Although Li-Hsuan works at an institution that consists of a higher percentage of White students, Li-Hsuan believes that developing such openness and awareness is important because they help pre-service students understand their future K-12 students coming

from different cultural backgrounds. When art educators are capable of recognizing and facilitating culturally responsive conversations in classrooms, students with different cultural backgrounds would feel empowered as they blend into the American cultural and educational system. American students, at the same time, can also develop such openness and generate a deeper understanding of inclusivity.

Theme 2: Role reversal as a cultural insider/outsider

LH: For me, the sense of uncertainty and vulnerability has been a constant, internal journey of balancing as I moved to the States as an international student. There have been disconnections in both learning and surviving when I was trying to navigate my intersectional identities as a cultural outsider. My friendship with Samantha shed light on this journey. When Samantha and I went to Taiwan to present at a conference in 2015, it allowed me to switch my role to a “cultural insider” and be present to experience her cultural shocks, surprises, and adaptiveness. This switch in roles was valuable and inspiring to me because I was in a position to offer hospitality, care, and understanding to a cultural outsider. Throughout the pursuit of our doctorates, not only did we get to experience role reversal through academic activities but also through personal events, such as meeting each other’s families in both Taiwan and the United States. The intersection of our identities helps illuminate our unique experiences through a cultural lens; experiences and stories can inform theory and practice that contribute to positive transformative purposes (Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Vetter et al., 2020). This opportunity to experience being both an insider and outsider gives a meaningful example to process both positions, building our resilience, fluidity, and mutual respect for cultures that are different from our own. We have discovered that when we are able to experience both roles, we further develop cultural responsiveness and empathy which help us apply these cultural-based insights and practices in our classrooms.

SG: I had always been a cultural insider staying in the same midwestern area and only traveling domestically. Li-Hsuan and I presented at a Taiwanese conference that reversed the cultural power dynamic in our friendship. I was dependent on her because of the language, cultural norms, and location. I had imagined being a cultural outsider as an experience filled with wonder and questions. I had never thought about the vulnerability. I didn’t understand what was being said around me or how to do anything. Sure, I could locate the bathrooms eventually, but I wouldn’t have been prepared with my own tissue. There was a vulnerability even in simple moments. It was hot and humid; I was always thirsty and accustomed to oversized American drinks. Our kind hosts would bring me hot tea, but my friend knew I needed large quantities of plain water. Li-Hsuan’s openness and awareness of American culture were a huge support as she guided me through an adventure in her country. She understood how my culture framed my needs and perceptions and used that knowledge to introduce me to Taiwan. She modeled how to balance cultures with her dual understanding. This experience was important for our friendship and expanded my cultural awareness because it gave us related lived experiences as cultural outsiders.

Traveling to Taiwan was important for our cultural awareness and friendship because it allowed our roles as cultural insider/outsider to be reversed. It shifted the cultural power dynamic within our friendship. We gained a greater understanding of each other’s experiences as insider/outsider and the internal balancing that takes place related to identity. With an established friendship, we could critically discuss within and after the moments that confronted the Asianization (Museus & Iftikar, 2013) of Samantha’s previous lived experiences.

This impactful experience has helped Samantha remain aware of the importance of getting students outside of their cultural comfort zones. For some students, this has meant encouraging national and international experiences, but others have not yet explored their own state fully. One year Samantha and her art education colleague took students to a state conference in one of the larger cities in Iowa. Students were clearly excited to be in a city and indicated it was not something they regularly do. Samantha now keeps in mind that students need to experience being an outsider to

varying degrees through a wide range of experiences in order to scaffold the development of their openness.

Li-Hsuan's intersectionality of cultural identities has evolved from being a doctoral student to a faculty member in the United States. As a stronger sense of belonging and support system is developed, Li-Hsuan has realized recognizing her own vulnerabilities is powerful because such recognition informs courageous decisions to reflect on obstacles, to adapt to a different cultural context, and to make changes to build support and community. One of Li-Hsuan's students from her Secondary Art Education Methods course shared her learning experience in this class:

I appreciated getting to know Li-Hsuan on a personal level over the duration of the semester. She is so knowledgeable and full of life experiences. The amusing anecdotes she often tells reflect this. Li-Hsuan was open and honest with us, which involved a degree of vulnerability for her. In being vulnerable, though, she inspired us to do the same, which led to our small classroom community becoming closer-knit and better connected with each other, as we opened up about our own personal experiences. From Li-Hsuan I have learned that one of the biggest strengths that a teacher can have is vulnerability.

Reflecting on Li-Hsuan's life experiences in the United States, being vulnerable can be powerful. Internally, having the courage to recognize her own vulnerable moments empowers her to recognize emotions and seek constructive solutions. Externally, it can open a door to others, including Americans and immigrants, who are willing to understand, support, and build connections, which is reflected in her teaching practice today.

Theme 3: Intersection of cultural connections, teaching, and scholarship

LH: During the second year of my doctoral program, I was assigned to teach a method course that focuses on teaching education majors how to integrate arts in K-12 classrooms. I was excited about this assignment as it was my first time teaching a college course in America. Acclimating to a new culture was a slow, gradual process, yet my teaching took place on a set schedule. I embraced this challenge knowing this teaching experience would be a new learning curve. While my friendship with Samantha continued to grow, learning about her perspectives in K-12 teaching was helpful; these new takeaways helped me conceptualize this new, unfamiliar educational context further. Although teaching in a completely different cultural context with my non-native language could be a life-long discovery, it was crucial to have Samantha's perspectives to bridge early gaps when I entered a classroom as an international instructor. I found it powerful that our friendship encouraged me to explore different teaching strategies and helped me feel empowered to see that coming from a totally different cultural context is valuable rather than a shortcoming. It takes constant adjustments to adapt to a new culture; it could be an ongoing internalization because the external world urges me to continuously modify answers, judgments, perceptions, and behaviors. Through these constant adjustments and reflections, however, I have become more culturally resilient and responsive. As I become more capable of recognizing and managing cultural nuances in the States, instead of being a cultural outsider, I interpret my identity as an insightful Asian immigrant that keeps my uniqueness while embracing this new culture with deeper understanding.

SG: Our friendship expanded my ideas about what art education is when considered from other cultural perspectives. I could see the almost formulaic way Li-Hsuan approached assignments and research. Based on her accounts of school, I knew where this mindset came from. I often struggled to get started because I was lost in the possibilities of how I could do something, which I think

is a mindset produced in American culture. I've always admired how clear and exact her teaching and research are. I will never become Li-Hsuan in teaching or research, but I can choose to consider my work through my understanding of her perspective. This bigger picture helps me understand those who share pieces of her culture or personality or have a better sense of the questions to avoid oversimplification and incorrect assumptions (Davis & Kellinger, 2014; Vetter et al., 2020). I try to entertain more possibilities and do not value my cultural perspective over others. My observations paired with the powerful disruption from our trip to Taiwan have pushed me to be more aware and open to the role of culture in my teaching and research. I believe in a decentralized classroom and welcoming students' knowledge. Our trip gave me a tangible moment to better understand what those beliefs really mean. Our friendship is an ongoing reminder to remain culturally aware and maintain culturally responsive teaching and research practices.

Our teaching and research have been enhanced because of our awareness and openness to culture. In our experience, art education already navigates the complexity of concepts and technical knowledge in works of art, making it well-suited for embracing or analyzing complex identities and contexts (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). We not only welcome cultural differences in our work, but we are also better able to consider and plan for the role of culture. Our friendship provides a place to continue discussing these topics.

Participating in a critique during her first year in Iowa, Samantha was struck by some feedback related to color during a painting critique. She couldn't quite decide why it jumped out to her. Afterward, she continued talking to the student in their studio and felt brave enough to ask if the color choices were culturally driven and therefore not making complete sense to cultural outsiders. The student confirmed that they were cultural, but more importantly significant within their family specifically. This is representative of Samantha's choice to ask students bluntly if something has a cultural meaning that she does not have an awareness of when she feels unsure. She feels this helps avoid privileging a dominant cultural perspective in her feedback.

Specifically in our teaching, having these experiences of role reversals and a sense of a friend's perspective has allowed us to better consider student experiences. When planning, we can identify possible moments for critical conversations or how we need to build a community to eventually engage everyone. Having asked difficult questions of each other in the past, we can try to help guide students through these important learning moments. We have stories to share with our students. This allows us to model how to productively have critical talks through questioning and sharing. Our friendship is just one powerful example from our own lives that has prepared us to support understanding, disruption, and action toward kindness and equity.

Final thoughts

Our friendship as doctoral students provided an important shared space to learn and benefit from each other's cultural identities. Our individual responses reflect our understanding of our shared experiences and how they have impacted our professional careers. Through our ongoing reflection and conversation, we become more open, tolerant, patient, and empathetic to our students' and colleagues' valuable cultural knowledge and identities. Having opportunities to reverse cultural roles and power dynamics is important for gaining respect and a deeper understanding not only of other cultures but also of our own vulnerabilities as cultural outsiders.

Allowing space for our own and others' continuous cultural understanding makes us resilient educators. It has been an enriching journey to have each other's support from being doctoral students to becoming higher education faculty. Our ongoing friendship has allowed us to continue gaining knowledge of the practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) in our teaching, especially related to our own cultural perspectives, as context continually changes with time. Friendship provides an important sounding board for critically examining oneself and engaging in critical conversations (Fook; 2015; Davis & Kellinger, 2014; Mezirow, 1985; Vetter et al., 2020), which is especially important for educators wanting to engage in allyship and create change (Sumerau et al., 2021; Vet-

ter et al., 2020).

Li-Hsuan gained a better understanding of the interconnected nature of her cultural identities shaped and influenced by her immersion in American culture, which in turn developed her confidence as she navigated how the complex layers of identities existed in a new cultural context. Critical conversations in our friendship worked against the loss of power that being an immigrant can cause in the United States. Authentic curiosity of new cultures forms genuine connections which later developed Li-Hsuan's pedagogy in facilitating culturally-responsive learning environments for university students. Samantha was able to think about how she can use knowledge from friendship to resist issues in her own work such as the model minority stereotype (Liu, 2009) or perpetuating unjust systems of power (Vetter et al., 2020). She is also able to utilize her friendship-based knowledge to share stories that disrupt the monolithic view of all Asians (Museus & Iftikar, 2013) by speaking to Taiwanese art or places in her teaching.

We encourage both immigrant and non-immigrant art educators to consider ways to expand their culturally diverse networks. Engaging our curiosity and openness to other cultures from common ground and in shared experiences allows us to find intersections and opportunities for critical reflection and conversation, not only in our personal and professional lives but also in our pedagogical strategies and identities.

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Cultivating Intentional Community through Shared Practice

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Relationality & Intersectionality as a Shared Practice

As modeled by Indigenous practices and scholars, relationality allows us to come to understand the ways our development is intertwined with our human and more-than-human relations (Simpson, 2011, 2017; Harjo, 2019; Smith, 2012). Relationality is not confined to established or long-term relationships, as even momentary encounters may leave lingering impressions. Understanding our development through relational frameworks does not diminish our sense of self; on the contrary, it enables a deep understanding of ourselves and others. Additionally, emphasizing interdependence reminds us of the power and responsibility of our interactions; this is described as relational accountability (Wilson, 2008; Scully, 2021). Relational interdependence predicated on relational accountability prompts us to sustain a critically reflective praxis where we continuously work to understand our positionality relative to one another and ongoing colonial systems of power (Scully, 2021). Liberal humanist notions of individualism have obscured the power of our relational development, yet we have chosen to lean into the power of community because we understand that, given the right conditions and circumstances, this can inevitably change us for the better.

Relational accountability enables us to better understand our intersectional and shifting positionalities in context. While the particular identificatory aspects of each person inform the contextual dynamics of any given group, we are careful to resist falling into an identity politics loophole. Scholars warn against the superficial reduction of feminist orientations that obscure the nuances of intersectionality and flatten identificatory categories (Crenshaw, 2011; Hill Collins, 2019; Tomlinson, 2019; Zhang, 2018); the simplification of identification works to further erase the interlocking structural and material conditions that shape and inform intersectional lives (Taylor, 2017). The co-creation of trusting communities of practice that center on relational accountability is especially helpful in situations in which we may not be able to fully see or understand our positionality relative to systems of power. In those moments, we can rely on our community to help point to intersectional aspects that we may not be able to recognize on our own. This, however, does not absolve the individual of the responsibility for learning and understanding what was not previously apparent. Furthermore, in the spirit of reciprocity, relational accountability must be a shared practice. Sharing this responsibility helps to minimize the burden that is often placed on the few Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) folx in our field to translate oppression for white folx. While we may never fully know what it feels like or means to navigate the world in each other's shoes, we can come closer to understanding our own and each other's intersectional experiences through relational dynamics.

In the section that follows, we will introduce ourselves through individual narratives. These personal stories allow us to situate our positionality relative to one another and our community. We see this practice as emergent and relational. Given that our community of practice is contextual

we understand that the potential transferability of this work is not linear or didactic. Similarly, our teaching practices, while informed by our relational interconnectedness, look and feel differently according to the people, places, and other variables shaping our teaching contexts. As the Combahee River Collective (Taylor, ed., 2017) reminds us, the personal is political, and as such, the lessons learned in the community will inevitably inform our teaching and learning practices.

Contextualizing & Situating Ourselves

I, Paulina Camacho Valencia, was brought to the United States as a young child. My family settled on the south side of Chicago because we had family members who made the move before our arrival, so we had an existing system of support. My family's decision to relocate was based on need more than choice. I'm fairly certain that if the socioeconomic and political factors of our life in central Mexico were different, my parents would have gladly avoided the challenges that came with a life-altering move that involved learning to navigate a new cultural landscape. As an immigrant working-class person of color, I was aware of imbalances of power and the effects of structural racism on the material conditions of historically marginalized people because of my direct experience. Even though I began to notice these systems at a very young age, I did not have the language to name them until graduate school. I want to be clear – my experience is reflective of my specific positionality and does not encompass the intricacies and nuances of other marginalized people and communities. In fact, the colonial systems that created my marginal experiences are responsible for perpetuating competition and assumed hierarchies of oppression among marginalized groups. However, over time and through numerous examples, I have learned to better understand my shifting and intersectional roles and privileges to better align my positionality and work toward transformative justice. This means that I learned to continuously reflect on power as a dominant structure and attempt to move in a way that contextually centers those who experience the most oppression along intersectional axes.

I am Jody Stokes-Casey, a cis-gendered, able-bodied, white woman who grew up in rural Tennessee. Much of my art teaching career in public schools and museums has been situated in the South, and I am interested in the influence of place as an aspect of my identity. From my experience, awareness of race is ever-present in the South, but recognition of the social construct of race is systemically hidden. My race is often rendered neutral because of the normalization of whiteness within the history and culture of the United States. One of the privileges of whiteness is the option to avoid the discomforts of critical engagement with race – white people can navigate through life, including in academic spaces, without being challenged to recognize or address systemic racism. Fortunately, throughout my career and academic journey, I have crossed paths with many wonderful teachers, colleagues, and friends from whom I continue to learn about oppressive, interconnected systems and structures and how to be an ally. I strive to continually situate myself within the spaces I occupy by considering my own intersectional identities within the contexts; however, this does not always happen because it is an intentional practice that works against the permission within systemic white privilege to be unengaged and unaware of my whiteness. It is a conscious decision, but not (yet) a habitual unconscious practice. Remaining aware of my situatedness, as well as recognizing and critically engaging with intersectional identities, shapes how I navigate personal and pedagogical spaces.

My name is Ahu Yolaç. I'm a Turkish woman who lived and was educated in Turkey until I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in the US. Within the context of Turkish culture, I was privileged; this allowed me to learn English and get a good enough education to be accepted into a US academic institution. On the other hand, with my multidisciplinary background, I always found myself apologizing for not being a “real” interior architect, industrial designer, or art educator. In the US, others found me to be an enigma with my “non-Turkish” looks and my lighter complexion. To me, I look very Turkish. I have an accent because English was the third language I had to learn after 12 years of learning and speaking languages that were not my native ones because it was never

good enough. So, I did it all. I learned the language. I was white enough to not be intimidating and minority enough for institutions to be proud of themselves for including me. As a result, I was left confused by the collective effort of dissecting my multiple identities and labeling them in chunks that made sense. Entering a Ph.D. program, I expected to have the same experience – not be diverse enough, not be an art educator enough, not be an English speaker enough. I thought I did not have permission to contribute to the conversation because none of my experiences fit anywhere. However, graduate school could not have been more different from the wonderful community in which I found myself. I was asked to contribute as “Ahu,” without asking for permission, apologizing, or fearing that I would not sound smart enough. This community has respected and shaped me, and it continues to influence my identity as “Ahu.”

I identify as Catalina H Cabal, a Latina/American woman. I am now a woman of color; I have not always been one. While my material personhood may still be roughly the same, my understanding of what my embodiment represents and my ethical and political commitment with such implications have transformed significantly over time and will continue to be in flux. I was born in Miami and grew up in Bogota. Legally I’ve always been a United States citizen. However, *home* to me was the complex articulation of experiences embedded in growing up in Colombia. Upon migrating to the United States in 2013, it was clear that my citizenship would never overwrite my fleshy Latina-American-ness. I quickly perceived my many markers of otherness. From my accent and the racialization of my appearance to my lack of social networks and local resources, I understood that I was a foreigner with a US passport. Simultaneously, I realized that the blue passport that felt foreign represented a huge privilege. Learning with and about the racial politics of the United States, I realized that, during the first 27 years of my life, I never felt like *other* because of my language or my race. In caring about and experiencing intense relationality with my peers, I grew aware not only of my privilege but also of my unavoidable responsibility to recognize and counter the dynamics of othering and discrimination. Thus, *I first became an other. Then, I became a woman of color.* While I was immediately racialized upon migrating, it wasn’t until a few years later that I understood the implications and aligned with that struggle.

While our personal stories allow us to share aspects of ourselves, we recognize that these are fragmented narratives. Even lengthier descriptions cannot fully capture the scope of our lived experience. As we position ourselves as individuals, we also recognize how we are in relation to one another and our extended network of human and more-than-human relations. Our identities are continually shaped by the group’s dynamics. Furthermore, we recognize that the narratives of other members of our group who are not directly involved in the authoring of this text are not reflected here, but we acknowledge them as co-authors of our community.

Towards Achieving Solidarity & Care

Our graduate cohort was composed of MA and Ph.D. students with staggered admissions. We were all at different stages of life and our program. Given the transient nature of graduate education, it can be difficult to build and sustain relational communities. The emphasis on the individual in institutional settings – which, in part, stems from individualist myths of meritocracy – may unnecessarily perpetuate competition among students. This is especially true when, under the semblance of equitable distribution of resources, students vie for the few that are available, such as travel awards and fellowships. Additional factors, such as the pressure to publish, present at conferences, and complete other markers of success within higher education, contribute to the pressure that many students place on themselves.

It became apparent very early in our shared cohort experience that many of us were struggling with varied forms of imposter syndrome as a result of these stressors. The manifestation of this stifling and often paralyzing sensation differs according to intersectional positionalities and experiences. However, rather than continuing to perform the role of graduate students predicated on meritocratic and competitive assumptions that did not align with our sense of self, we took a risk in

deciding to learn to trust one another and lean into relational dynamics and intimate sociality so as to cultivate a generative graduate education experience. In an investigation of imposter syndrome as a public feeling, Maddie Breeze (2018) asks, “What happens if we think of imposter syndrome not as an individual problem of faulty self-esteem to be managed or overcome, but instead as a resource for doing feminist teaching and research?” (p. 201). As a cohort, we were not necessarily guided by this specific question when we began to commit to a practice of deliberate relational interdependence; however, we believe that our community contributes to understanding what it means to reconfigure imposter syndrome from being an individual problem to being a source of collective intervention and generative possibilities. We approached the formation of our community of practice with trust and generosity, hoping that the risk we collectively took would yield understanding and belonging.

To minimize the isolating strain of navigating the Ph.D. journey, we committed to an ethics of solidarity and care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Chatzidakis et al., 2020; Spade, 2020). Echoing Chandra Mohanty (2003), we *achieved* solidarity through the hard and intentional work of resisting the institutional inertia towards individualism and competition. Mohanty writes that such feminist solidarity is fundamental to “practice anticapitalist critique” (p. 7), a critique very much needed within the customary forms and spaces of academic production. As a *practice*, Mohanty emphasizes, solidarity is the intentional work of people who “have chosen to work and fight together...” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 7). With our relational practices, we fight together against the myth of suffering and competition as requirements for rigorous academic work.

It is important to note that our formation and configuration evolved organically. There are significant moments that contributed to the solidification of our community; however, there was never any pressure to participate or rush the process of building trust and opening up to one another through mutual vulnerability. Trust and vulnerability are integral for the development of relational interdependence, but these practices can be difficult to implement, especially in new group settings. We required space and time to allow for these ways of being to emerge. Trust and vulnerability can be especially challenging to integrate within academic settings that tend to center the intellectual mind over holistic, embodied, effectual, rigorous ways of knowing and understanding that are integral to relational dynamics (Brantmeier & McKenna, 2020).

In continuation, we will share examples of both academic and social practices that contributed to the formation of our community.

Sharing & Creating Spaces

One key factor that enabled the emergence of our community of practice was the availability of a shared graduate student office. This space was provided by the university through our program and consisted of cubicles and common areas. The frequency of use varied for each of us according to our schedule. Some students rarely used the office, while others built their schedules and routine around it. The office was fully activated on days when we all attended shared classes or when there were programmatic events. It was in the downtime between our academic responsibilities that we began to get to know each other outside of a seminar environment and build trust. Less formal conversations created opportunities to discuss our shared academic interests and better understand our own and each other’s theoretical attunements. They allowed us to reveal our lived experiences and intersectional positionalities, and this provided openings for the more relational aspects of our dynamics to emerge. The office became our collective workspace, meeting space, and social space. We transformed a section of it into a photo studio to help a peer prepare for a project. We hosted workshops, helped each other outline term papers, and designed collaborative projects. We napped on the couch, stretched on the floor, had desk chair races, and shared snacks and beverages. We were permitted to use the space as we wanted as long as we did not abuse institutional policies, and it played a key role in enabling the formation of our undercommons (Harney & Moten, 2013).

In addition to managing the challenge of working in isolation that many people experienced

during the pandemic, we had the pressure of completing our exams and dissertations. To support each other through this, we began using two relational writing practices: sharing space and workshopping. The first modality we created was an online writing space that was semi-structured and always available. While we were all in separate physical spaces and working on our projects, we were virtually *together*. We used a shared timer to synchronize writing and rest segments, occasionally reminding each other to break and eat. We even selected thematic backgrounds that matched the energy of the day or night. A seemingly simple Zoom meeting, which we affectionately call *the spaceship*, functioned as a platform where we knew we could find a writing buddy when self-accountability seemed difficult, or find words of encouragement and validation when energies were running low. If we ever needed support and no one else was in the spaceship, we would send out what we called *the bat signal*, and whoever was available would jump in to help.

The second modality of our writing practice was collective workshopping. We shared manuscripts that needed feedback and joined forces to focus on one person's work at a time. We initially scheduled recurrent sessions for workshopping in the spaceship. Now, even after we have graduated and are working at our respective institutions, we rely on the bat signal to let each other know when we are struggling with writing or just need an extra set of eyes, and someone will always respond to our call. It is not easy to give or get honest feedback about work that carries intense effort and effect. But, the more we do it, the more robust our relational threads become. We can sustain this important practice because we crafted feminist solidarity during the years of working alongside and supporting each other.

These practices of intentional relationality resulted in the co-creation of our own informal public spaces with their own rules; we refer to these as third spaces, or "...a great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg, 1989, p.16). Within our organically yet carefully crafted third spaces, we began challenging higher institutions and the idea that they should be competitive spaces of isolation. We threw a hat party, during which we made ridiculously ornamented, flower-filled summer hats and toured a small town wearing them. On a different occasion, we went ice skating and ended up with an array of bruises that reminded us of our newfound gratitude for leaning on friends. We always found a way to celebrate birthdays in the classroom, our grad office, a park, or our homes; even during the pandemic lockdown, we continued these festivities by singing under the celebrant's window. Our outings never carried the signs of semi-mandatory grad school social engagements, as we always intended them to be co-constructed and co-owned spaces of care. For scholars like Ray Oldenburg (1989), the realms of home and work are intertwined in unhealthy ways; this is intentionally encouraged by academic institutions to benefit them and reinforce their definitions of productivity. Our construction of third spaces became an intervention for that vagueness and created a well-defined region where we could exist outside of our assigned identities and connected pressures.

We also used virtual gaming platforms to create third spaces and be in an intentional community. Gaming offers an avenue for building trust and support. It is also flexible and accessible in a way that allows a community to easily grow and diversify. After the COVID-19 lockdown canceled the in-person welcome-back party for the new semester of our graduate program, the department pivoted to hold a virtual gathering. We used to play to create a shared experience; through Google Sheets and Zoom break-out rooms, we did trivia, answered "would you rather" questions, and engaged in multi-person party games, like Jackbox Games. While the stakes are relatively low, gaming allows us to learn about how each participant interacts in competitive situations, works cooperatively, and solves problems. Through weekly virtual gaming nights – our preference was Mario Kart 8 on Nintendo Switch – we developed another space of care in which we could practice vulnerability in a low-risk environment. While playing, we could share concerns and seek advice about our art education teaching and research practices. We also opened the space to others in our networks, and our group of gamers grew and evolved. We theorized that, beyond having social benefits, gaming could be used as a pedagogical device. Games offer the conditions and circumstances for building

generative communities, in part because of their inclusivity.

Sustaining. Relational praxes of care, solidarity, and accountability in academia exist in multiple forms, each of which vehemently resists the institutional pressure toward fragmentation. Through things as mundane as shared offices, extravagant hat parties, game nights, and writing groups, we crafted physical and symbolic spaces that enabled our multidimensional growth, both individually and collectively. This allowed us to hack academic spaces and build resources for sustainable participation in these settings. As mentioned, we have continued these practices well beyond the end of our shared graduate program experience.

In Summary

Regardless of whether a group configuration forms under deliberate motives, generative relational dynamics can manifest when members commit to collaborate. The community of practice that we have created does not require competitive markers of success for inclusion or validation. Instead, it provides us a sense of belonging and confers each of us respect for simply existing. The various spaces – physical, virtual, and ephemeral – that we have created allow us to learn, practice, and make together to imagine, shape, and build what we want for ourselves and others. We are each made stronger by this community, which helped prepare us to transition into the new academic contexts in which we now find ourselves as early career scholars. We know that we can always lean on this community and that we can share these ways of being and working with others in new spaces; this is critical to our ability to persist in academia, but we also recognize the importance of translating these practices in other contexts.

We will continue leaning into our critical relationality which centers and celebrates our intersectional identities. We will keep crafting third spaces for ourselves and for other people who share our belief that being with each other in this way can inevitably change us for the better.

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Seeking Refuge in Art: Education as Exploration of Possibility

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Introduction

This chapter is a conversation between an artist and graduate student Lunaz¹ (L) and her professor Flávia Bastos (FB). This chapter is structured as a dialogue that focuses on examining how the authors' identities and experiences have shaped their approaches to art and education. Lunaz and Flávia are international women who come from different generations and cultures, they both moved to the United States to pursue their graduate education degrees, and they also share the experience of resisting political repression in their respective countries of Iran and Brazil. More importantly, from these formative experiences in their home countries, they developed an awareness of the ways in which art can be a tool for disruption, resistance, and refuge, as well as of artists' and educator's potential role in articulating new and more just possibilities and promoting change. Together, they examine how their individual identities and life experiences inform the values that shape their teaching and artistic practices, unveiling how they have learned and lived their own intersectional perspectives in the field of art education. In fact, as two international women who had completed artistic and professional training abroad, their own awareness of how their identities and experiences grounded their contributions was gradual. In many ways, they arrived at a lived understanding of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), by progressively recognizing the ways in which their political and social identities intersected to create different modes of privilege and prejudice, enabling them to navigate and make sense of their experiences in the fields of art and art education within the United States.

They write this chapter together, reflecting through conversation upon their shared and individual experiences. Therefore, the chapter is organized around three themes: (a) starting with self, (b) inclusive perspectives, and (c) creative resistance and transformations. These themes emerged from a long conversation they had in preparation for writing this chapter and are illustrated with art images from and about Iran that not only seek to ground the understanding of the themes discussed but also to promote support for the struggles of the Iranian people. The authors were intentional in focusing on Iranian issues, underscoring the need to acknowledge and bring greater awareness to the current situation in the country when since September 2022 protests have broken out over the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman who died in custody after being detained by the morality police for supposedly violating dress rules (Yeung et al., 2022). The fate of this young woman embodies the extreme violence with which the agency of educated young women is met in a totalitarian society and the trauma such violence creates. Through the conversation and reflections shaping this chapter, the authors seek to unpack, from their own situated perspectives how art can provide ways to resist and respond to these extreme situations, and how artists and art educators can assist in finding ways through art to inspire work and actions that seek to transcend these experiences to sustain hope.

These two themes of intersectionality and trauma-informed artistic and educational practices anchor their conversation and frame this chapter, echoing issues and concerns evident in current art

¹The author uses *Lunaz*, a pseudonym under which she shows work.

education practices. Sauerland (2021) argues that although trauma might be commonly misunderstood as pertaining only to individuals who have endured severe emotional or physical abuse, mental health experts indicate trauma is more frequent and widespread. An estimated 66-85% of people experience exposure to a traumatic event by college age. Described as “America’s hidden health crisis,” trauma is a violation of our beliefs that the world is a safe place. Educators such as Garrett and Chase (2021) have increasingly utilized pedagogical principles specifically aimed at supporting student well-being, such as trauma-informed teaching, to respond to the conditions of pandemic isolation, and rising social-justice concerns. Art and dialogue feature prominently in contemporary trauma-informed educational approaches. Artists and educators who seek to respond to the myriad of significant issues impacting individuals and society are encouraged to consider how trauma-informed art education can promote enduring understandings (Hess, 2020) through listening to each other’s stories. This notion of the promise of narrative to ground agency and promote healing is evident in the focus of this volume and illustrated uniquely in this chapter through the intersectional perspectives of these two authors.

Starting with self

FB: When I decided to leave Brazil for graduate education, my goal was to advance the technical aspects of becoming a better professional. I did not think my identity and personal life experiences would have an impact on my career. My mentor Dr. Enid Zimmerman embraced a notion of mentorship as caring, trust, mutual respect, and friendship (Sabol & Manifold, 2009) instilled in me an awareness that “wherever you go, there we are (Kabat-Zinn, 2021, p. 273), meaning that you always carry your whole self, your experiences, and your heritage with you. Coming to Bloomington, IN in the early nineties, when multicultural education was a focus of art education, gave me a unique opportunity to explore my identity. I have started since to develop language about growing up in a multicultural family, with a Black father and a White mother. My paternal grandmother was a direct descendant of the enslaved people. During his adult life, my father passed for a White man due to his professional accomplishments, appearance, and ambiguous make-up of our nuclear family. It was easier to fit into the racist societal structure of Brazil and to have access to opportunities for social advancement by concealing our Black identity. For me, this meant that when I came to the United States for graduate school and became more educated about race and social issues, I was able to start the process of reclaiming my African roots. I have also become aware that I carry within me the trauma of being a person of Black ancestry in the Americas. These varied experiences of oppression, prejudice, and exclusion are shared among people of color across the world but manifest in particular ways within the Black Atlantic experience. Recognizing “visual and philosophic streams of creativity and imagination” connecting Black persons of the Western hemisphere (Thompson, 1994, p.xiii), their traumatic experiences, and strategies of resistance and transformation has informed my own research and practice in the field of art education.

L: I was born and raised in Iran after the 1979 Islamic Republic revolution and the establishment of a theocratic dictatorship. I had the privilege of being born into a family that cared immensely about human rights and valued arts and literature. From a very young age, I was exposed to different forms of artistic practices that helped me understand how art and literature can give voice to those who have something to say. Growing up I remember hearing the news about artists, writers, and cartoonists being arrested and prosecuted and even losing their lives, and several of them fleeing the country to be able to express themselves freely. In those early days, I was learning about the consequences of expressing oneself freely and the human rights violations in my country (Pen America, 2022). At that time, it became clear to me that art is a powerful tool and artists are a threat to an authoritarian regime. Witnessing and experiencing this collective trauma, I took refuge in art to explore and examine the struggles and pains that many Iranians were witnessing then. I moved to the United States to pursue a master’s degree in fine arts. In graduate school I tried to explore the themes of human connection, empathy, and unity through pain and suffering from the perspective of

Sufi mysticism, which I became familiar with in Persian literature, which is a practice and belief in Islam that “seeks to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God” (Schimmel, 2022). What I found fascinating in Sufism was the essence of it, the unity of all beings, and that one creation is all consciousness and its manifestation in empathy. However, during my first semester, the critique sessions surprised me, as my instructors and fellow students were critical, albeit kindly, of my work despite lacking familiarity with what I was seeking to create. Some of this was expected, as a graduate program is intended to push one beyond their comfort zone. At the same time, the theories behind my work did not resonate with my peers, and it was critiqued from a very ethnocentric perspective; my color choices were questioned, as were the theories and philosophies of oneness that sounded unfamiliar (see Figure 1). My art practice started with the self and a focus on exploring approaches to empathy. However, the experience of my first semester in a new country was marked by the feeling that some of the philosophies did not fit in and that my work did not resonate with some of my peers, and to some extent with some of my professors. This created an urge in me to find a relevant Western theory to support my work, in hopes that my work would be grounded in knowledge that was recognizable and therefore deemed more relevant in this new context. These moments were catalysts for allowing me to gradually grasp the multiple (intersectional) dimensions of my identity (Crenshaw, 1991) and the ways in which my experiences could become a source of strength and inspiration in my work.



Figure 1. Lunaz. (2016-2018). *Silence* (detail). Paper installation, paper, and glue. Courtesy of artist.

Despite their very different backgrounds, Flavia’s and Luna’s experiences as graduate students were marked by a keen awareness that our work in art and art education starts with the self. They honor that “our complicated identities cannot be discussed or examined in isolation from one another. These identity complexities which create our multifaceted range of beings must matter too” (Love, 2019, p. 3). It is the complexity and messiness of identities that are central to Crenshaw’s (1989) coining of the term intersectionality. Love (2019) updated this notion and warns that more than naming one’s identity, intersectionality is an analytic tool that articulates the realities of power, or lack thereof, and their impact on identities. As art educators, we believe that the process of understanding the interrelation between identities and power can be foundational for art and education practices. We also acknowledge that art and education approaches that welcome intersectional perspectives will connect with social justice issues, and the trauma of the past, as well as which we continue to experience today. Therefore, we believe along with Rooney (2020) that trauma-informed art/education practices can be empowering for creating a culture that values moments for reflection, exploration of one’s strengths, and ultimately promotes self-determined growth and transformation.

Inclusive Perspectives

FB: In addition to making ourselves visible, I think about what is not visible. We talk about exploring privilege in our own identities. But we should also be critical of the disciplines in which we participate. What is the hidden curriculum of art and education? The late Melanie Buffington (2019) warns us that Whiteness is a powerful force in education and denounces how Whiteness circulates in an unchecked fashion harming all our students. I would like to think that art, because it involves making, and involves our bodies, our hands, and our minds, could be inclusive, beyond the trappings of Western thought. To me, we must question why in 2023 we are still reading critical theory as foundational to artistic and educational practice. Where are the voices and perspectives from the Global South? Where are Asian or African philosophies of art? When I spent time in Indonesia, I was disappointed to observe that Western philosophies of art are widespread in the art curriculum and that Indonesian perspectives are only included in courses about traditional arts. As an art educator, I am interested in a very inclusive definition of art that eliminates barriers connecting it to everyday life. I wish art to be the opposite of privilege: a right.

L: Diversity is one thing that is very much valued and emphasized in higher education discourse in the United States. However, in my experience, that attention is generally focused on students' backgrounds and on securing equitable identities among the population of students, faculty, and staff, rather than on examining diverse theories and course materials, and experiences. As an international student. I was frequently asked to educate others about non-Western theories and philosophies of art. In these situations, I would share my lived experiences, even if I did not consider myself particularly well-qualified to impart knowledge on these topics. It was not only that I was a student myself, but I felt uneasy to speak for an entire culture. What I was doing was sharing knowledge of personal experience, and while that has value, it was not a substitute for in-depth research or learning from a variety of voices and professionals in the field. In those moments, I wished that the classes we all attended included more diverse lessons and discussions that led to reflection about lingering ethnocentric leanings in teaching and learning practices about art. In other words, I recognized what was lacking was the diversity in theories and aesthetics, which would complement the existing diversity of experience. Curator and theorist, Irit Rogoff (2002) wrote that "in a critical culture in which we have been trying to wrest representation away from the dominance of patriarchal, Eurocentric and heterosexist normativization, visual culture provides immense opportunities for rewriting culture through our concerns and our journeys" (p. 26). Therefore, we advocate for what Acuff (2018) calls *critical multicultural pedagogues*, who can bring missing inclusivity into classrooms. Acuff explains that "a critical multicultural pedagogue may work diligently to infuse and support varying, divergent historical and contemporary narratives throughout their instruction, planned coursework and classroom dialogue" (2018, p. 36). It is important to note that to avoid superficial approaches to multicultural art education, diversity of thought and perspective should be achieved "by 'being' a critically multicultural educator versus 'doing' critical multiculturalism" (Acuff, 2018, p. 36). This could be accomplished by not only including non-Western schools of thought in the lessons to familiarize all the students but also by hiring faculty who specialize in different non-Western schools of thought.

Reflecting on my experience in graduate school, I had the opportunity to find a way to frame my thesis work (see Figure 2), using Eurocentric theory as a bridge to communicate my own experience as well as the collective trauma that Iranians were enduring through a performance piece. Although I was able to incorporate themes and symbolism that acknowledged my heritage, many of the nuances were lost in translation. I realize in retrospect that a critical multicultural educator/pedagogue would have had a great impact in facilitating my growth and development as a culturally rooted global artist and educator.



Figure 2. Lunaz. (2019) *Sheller*. Performance set-up. Courtesy of artist.

We believe as international art educators that the exploration of the complexities of one's identity must expand to include consideration for other ways of conceptualizing art and educational practices. The effort currently underway to decolonize the curriculum is essential for establishing radically inclusive ways to make and learn about art where students and educators feel a sense of belonging and that their contributions are valued. Therefore, a call for inclusive perspectives involves questioning taken-for-granted assumptions about art and art teaching and learning. This is a brave, radical, and exciting project that is best tackled in collaboration. Our experiences underscore the possibilities that lie in radically expanding art and education frameworks.

Creative Resistance and Transformation

FB: I realize that my approach to art education is a response to my own trauma of being a direct descendant of slaves and having grown up during a totalitarian regime (Wexler, Keifer-Boyd, & Bastos, 2022). I have experienced art as a mechanism of resistance (Veloso, 2003). Personally, to unpack these experiences, I firmly believe we must engage in conversation. When I teach, I employ dialogue as the methodology for knowing oneself, as well as for knowing one another. Dialogue represents the possibility of being more mindful and aware because it models a way to uniquely be in a relationship with others. Through active listening and sharing, we transform ourselves and have the potential to transform others. Dialogue requires checking in and making sure we understand--Did I get it right? What exactly do you mean by that? Does that make sense to you? It is constant, and it is how we keep evolving. I also believe that art models the kind of transformation that we want to see in the world. If creativity is about moving an idea from one stage to another, art is about bringing an idea into being in the world. Art demonstrates that we can impact the world with our ideas and our actions. Art unveils the domain of possibility, and it offers a path for resisting and transforming injustice. I come to that belief from witnessing how artists were able to foment hope for a democratic and socially just society during the violent political repression that took place in Brazil when I was growing up. For me, education at large, and art education in particular should help learners understand the human potential to dwell in the state of possibility. I embrace the Freirian (2018) notion that education is a political act that either reinforces or transforms the status quo and I have instilled in all my students to recognize the ways in which we can join the effort for co-creating a more just society. I often ask that students explore their identities and privilege as a source for the values

that inform their actions as teachers and artists. This focus on self-examination has led to critical analysis and transformative action. Lunaz is an example of that, she has during our relationship, more clearly articulated her views, and therefore become more comfortable disrupting prevailing assumptions about art education in the United States, but also engaged with taking a transformational stance about Iranian issues and having an impact in bringing awareness to our community. These are transformative political acts that are amplified through art.

L: As an artist and educator I look at art and art education as a human right, which is informed by my upbringing in a country where believing in freedom of speech could equal imprisonment. Having lived under a theocracy, where the government controls nearly every aspect of a person's life, I have witnessed how art can be a tool in response to threats to social justice and human rights. I have seen how art allows us to see alternate possibilities and can give life to dreams and hope. I look at art as a soft weapon. The impact might be subtle, but it can plant a seed of reflection and be a catalyst for transformation and change.

Since the murder of Mahsa Jina Amini in Iran on September 16th, 2022, the world has been witnessing the creative resistance of Iranians around the world. As Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz (1994) says “art does not solve problems but makes us aware of their existence. It opens our eyes to see and our brain to imagine” (p. 7). Iranian resistance art is a great example of that. Through different media and forms of expression, Iranian artists are creating a conversation around the injustices that take place in Iran, with the purpose of “liberating the colonized from the regimes of power” (Dias, 2022, p.84). Inside the country, under severe scrutiny and oppression, people are turning to art to get their voices and messages out. Some tag the streets with revolutionary slogans, and others write forbidden music and produce other forms of art to display disobedience (Karimi, 2022). One anonymous artist dyed the water in Tehran's fountains bright red (see Figure 3). According to 1500 Tasvir, a Twitter account that's posting daily about the uprising in the country, the work is called “Tehran sinking in blood.” It references the bloodshed of the protesters by the government (Ables, 2022). Another anonymous artist hung representations of nooses covered in blood (see Figure 4) near a park close to Tehran University's campus (Karimi, 2022). Outside of Iran, Arghavan Khosravi, influenced by Persian miniature painting and rich symbolism (see Figure 5), depicts women's struggles and their fight for freedom (Palumbo, 2022). These representations of collective trauma are examples of resistance art that keep the conversation going about revolution for personal and community empowerment while sustaining hope for broad community transformation. Despite the risks of imprisonment and even possible execution for the Iranian artists and citizens still in the country, and for the Iranians in the diaspora the consequence of not being able to return to the homeland.



Figure 3. Anonymous artist (2022). Installation in Daneshjoo Park in Tehran, Iran. Courtesy of artist.



Figure 4. Anonymous artist (2023). Nooses hung from a tree in Daneshjoo Park, Tehran, Iran. Courtesy of artist.



Figure 5. Khosravi, Arghavan (2022). *Our hair has Always Been the Problem*. Acrylic on canvas over a shaped wood panel, polyester rope, steel eye hook screw 31 x 47.5 in. Courtesy of artist.

Final Thoughts

Our conversation unveiled some important threads. First is the connection between intersectionality and trauma-informed pedagogy. Since intersectionality deals with the layered construction of identity and the ways in which we experience privilege and prejudice, especially in today's context it connects with the potential trauma-informed pedagogy to honor the complex identities and experiences of learners and creatives and the many ways in which they experience and process trauma. Another thread is the need for expanding understandings of diversity beyond personal identities to acknowledge multiple cultural, philosophical, and theoretical perspectives framing and affirming these identities. And finally, our conversation asserted the role of art in modeling a method for resistance and transformation that is embodied in the different but related lived experiences of the two authors and informs their own creative and educational practice.

Flavia, an immigrant scholar from Brazil and the first to earn a graduate degree in her family, has gradually uncovered throughout her professional career the ways in which her presence in higher education disrupted conventional expectations. Her non-traditional background and experiences provide the core values of her approach to mentoring graduate students. She mentors to unveil the relationship between her students' experiences and their research interests, but also mentors to prepare art educators who can lead in the creation of a more equitable and just society in which art is accessible to all. Informed by the theories of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, her work has focused on the potential of art education to inform societal resistance and change.

As an artist and educator in the diaspora, art has always been Lunaz's first step in planting the seed of reflection, transformation, and change. In a recent group exhibition (see Figures 6 and 7) she created a body of work that informs while shining a spotlight on the current *Woman, Life, Freedom* revolution in Iran. In her multimedia installation (see Figure 6), with an emphasis on fabrics, she alludes to the significance of textiles in women's art as well as the rich tradition of textiles in Iran. The installation provided a private and contemplative space (see Figure 6) for the viewers and invited them to interact with the work while tracing the connection between women's movements and the fight for human rights throughout Iran's history. The interactive installation was broken into two pieces. An audio piece, "*Solace of the eyes*," features the life of Táhirih Qurrat al-Ain, the 19th-century women's rights activist and poet of Báhaí Faith, along with a plain fabric on the table. While listening to the audio piece, the viewers were invited to stitch a few lines of good intention in solidarity with the revolutionary women and men in Iran. The second part was an embroidered textile panel titled "*Girls of the Revolution Street*" (see Figure 7), featuring an iconic image of a girl surrounded by poppy flowers, a symbol of hope and remembrance, covering her face with her fist raised as a sign of resistance (Graham, 2023). During this exhibition, Lunaz brought together an intersectional community with a shared experience and interest in women's rights and human rights, in which the participants embroidered poppy flowers on pieces of fabric. In *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (2017), Julia Bryan-Wilson refers to female collective textile making as "a process that might upend conventions, threaten state structure or wreak political havoc" (2017. p.1). With the intention of raising awareness, increasing knowledge, and the hope of fostering positive change, Lunaz uses the enduring power of women's traditional skills as a tool for coming together and connecting, and an act of healing through resistance.

Despite the significant differences in our backgrounds, our interests affirm in complementary ways the role of art and education in promoting change. In this chapter, we have explored how our Identities and experiences support this work and the lessons we have learned along the way. Reflecting on our experiences as international graduate students or educators, we must acknowledge and clearly communicate that the requests to educate others who don't share our backgrounds or experiences, despite well-meaning, created situations of heightened vulnerability when we may revisit aspects of the pain and trauma associated with our experiences with racism, political prosecution, immigration, and disenfranchisement. For Lunaz, sharing her own experience of coming to the United States was a window into the collective trauma that Iranians were experiencing in and out

of the country. As a university professor, Flávia has learned to lean into her intentional moments of self-disclosure to encourage students into a journey of self-reflection and to model radical bravery. Courageous acts of self-disclosure and reflection, such as those discussed here, have the potential to raise awareness of the limits of the prevalent art education practices and promote the kind of critical reflection that can inform change, expanding the ways in which we make, think, and learn about art, and perhaps the reasons for which we create art.



Figure 6. Lunaz (2022-2023). *The Gift*. Exhibition documentation. Courtesy of artist.



Figure 7. Lunaz. (2018- 2022). *Girls of the Revolution Street* (detail). Printed fabric with embroidery, 44x105 in. Courtesy of artist.

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Narrative Research on Two Asian Immigrant Art Teacher Educators: Intersectionality, Pedagogy, and K-12 School Engagements

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Introduction

As two Asian immigrant art teacher educators, we explore how our multiple and intersecting identities inform our teaching practices in the context of our art classrooms and community engagement settings. Using the analytic framework of intersectionality, we aim to clarify the complex interactions between age and ableism, colonization and White supremacy, heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity, xenophobia, and neoliberalism (Morrow et al., 2020). Intersectionality is a concept often used in critical race theories to illustrate the interrelated nature of oppressive institutions such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, and classism (Kay, 2020). We both work as Asian immigrant art teacher educators at a regional comprehensive university in the United States and have been there for over six years. Our university is one of several predominantly White higher education institutions in the Midwest. Narrative research is an interdisciplinary approach that traditionally focuses on personal storytelling, using narrative as a means of representing and explaining personal, social, and cultural experiences (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Intersectionality within narrative research may address emancipation by recognizing and acknowledging the presence of multiple consciousnesses that exist in those whose lived experiences are situated at the intersections of race, class, and gender (Berry & Cook, 2019).

In the first part of this chapter, we explore the identity and transformation of Asian art teacher educators from the lens of intersectionality, which is defined as "the examination of how race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and their combinations, play out in various settings" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 51). In the second part of this chapter, we delve deeper into the strategies employed in our curriculum and pedagogy to address issues related to socioeconomic status, language, gender, sexual preferences, regionality, cultures, ethnicities, and racial diversity. We also examine how our own identities influence and facilitate K-12 school engagements.

We share our teaching stories through narrative research and analyze the data we collected from our individual art and education courses. Typically, we teach art methods courses for pre-service teachers, including those in elementary education, special education, early childhood education, and art education. Finally, we discuss how we navigate our identities in our classroom and K-12 school engagement settings. We begin by sharing our positionality and biographies, as our positionality reflects our worldview, and we believe it is essential for readers to develop a deeper empathy for our intersectional and transformative experiences.

Our Biographies and Positionality

We both teach art education and supervise art teacher candidates at the same university in the Midwest. JaeHan, is a temporarily able-bodied, married Korean husband, and father of three children. He previously served as an elementary school general teacher in Daegu, South Korea. His research interests focus on promoting diversity, equality, inclusion, and accessibility for students through art education. To achieve this goal, he believes that students should not only learn about art genres, techniques, and styles but also understand and evaluate the world through art. JaeHan views art as a process of making meaning and as a way to pursue inquiry (Marshall, 2014). JaeHan has been working at his current university for 16 years and is constantly aware of how his identity is shaped by the intersection of race/ethnicity, class, gender, nationality, and proficiency in English while living in a city in Wisconsin. In school in South Korea, JaeHan was an active student who took charge of class representatives from elementary school to university and was highly regarded by his fellow students and teachers for his caring leadership. However, after immigrating to the US, JaeHan struggled with English proficiency, which made it difficult for him to express his thoughts clearly and convincingly in front of others.

Li-Hsuan was born and raised in Taiwan, receiving her Bachelor of Fine Arts with a national visual arts teaching license and Master of Fine Arts with a focus on Art Education and Art Administration at National Taiwan Normal University. She has K-12 art teaching experience in Taiwan before pursuing her Ph.D. in Art and Design Education at Northern Illinois University in the United States. Her dissertation focused on arts and leadership, investigating the connection between art experience and leadership development. She is currently conducting research in the development of confidence, competence, and resilience through arts-integrated practice and cross-organizational leadership framework that creates mutual success in the university, K-12 schools, and communities. Li-Hsuan has been working at the current university in Wisconsin since 2017. For her, shifting into a different educational, social, and cultural context to pursue a doctoral degree and later teach at a higher education institution in America has been a meaningful journey with a constantly evolving coping system. The intersectionality of complex combinations of factors, including race, gender, value, perception, language, and lived experience, has formed an intangible pathway leading to a growing realization of the fluidity of her cultural identities.

Collaborative Autoethnography

This chapter utilizes autoethnography, a form of narrative research that systematically analyzes the personal experiences of researchers embedded in a larger cultural, institutional, and social context (Kim, 2016). Ellis and colleagues (2011) describe autoethnography as combining characteristics of autobiography and ethnography, in which an author retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences. Collaborative autoethnography (CAE) inquiry refers to two or more researchers examining their collective experiences or cultural phenomena from different perspectives in context (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2023). In this chapter, as Asian immigrant art education faculty members, we analyze how our intersectional identities inform and shape our teaching experiences in a US higher education institution. CAE is considered appropriate in this context. We recount the sense of shame and vulnerability experienced as Asian immigrant art education faculty members through self-reflexivity and self-consciousness (Kim, 2016).

JaeHan's Narrative Classes that are Easy and Provide Good Grades

One day after class, I had the opportunity to talk to a student to get to know her better. I asked her why she enrolled in my 200-level art methods class, and she frankly replied that she needed three credits to graduate that semester, and her advisor suggested she take my class because it was known to be easy and guaranteed a good grade. Similar cases often occur, and every semester students may want to switch from another section of the 200-level course taught by a

White professor to my section. When I asked these students why they wanted to change sections, they explained that my section was relatively easier and less work, while the content in the other section was too challenging to follow, and they could not secure good grades. This word of mouth has caused the section I teach to become consistently overflowing with students, and even after registration is closed, students ask if they can enroll in my section. Although it may be positive to think that many students want to take my course, this also ties into my traumatic experience and vulnerability as an Asian immigrant whose mother language is not English (Kim-Bossard. 2022; Shin et al, 2022).

Initially, I was a very strict professor for several years after I started teaching at this university. During that time, my students complained that there were too many assignments in my class and that I did not give them good grades for their efforts. Their grievances were reflected in my course evaluations, and those who were unhappy with their grades conveyed their concerns to the chair. Some students even continued to send me long emails after the end of the semester, and if I didn't correct their grades, they would appeal to the Deans of Students for a grade change. They claimed that I did not explain the grading process clearly. Through these difficult experiences, I eventually lowered my expectations for students in my class. It's important to me to receive good course evaluations because I had not yet received tenure. As a result, I began to give students better grades simply for submitting their assignments in an effort to alleviate complaints about grades. This situation is illustrated by the experience of another Asian immigrant art education professor, Hyunji Kwon, who had racist experiences with White male students while teaching an art appreciation class for non-art majors (Kwon, 2022). She assigned a task for students to actively participate in her class to promote engagement and progress, and she also checked attendance regularly. As a result, a group of White male students nicknamed her an "Asian Destroyer" (Kwon, 2023, p. 23), which is an act that cannot be justified under any circumstances.

What is clear from these cases is that Asian professors teaching at American universities are experiencing racial discrimination, something their White counterparts do not need to contend with when considering factors such as race, class, gender, and language (Knight & Deng, 2016; Shin et al., 2022). Experiences of racism remain traumatic for some Asian professors, and such traumatic experiences can negatively impact their confidence in teaching, leading to self-censorship and avoidance of interpersonal interactions (Han, 2014). This is particularly problematic for Asian art education professors who often teach liberal arts classes for non-major students. Since these students are not pursuing art or art education as their major, they may not view these classes as significant, and if the professor is Asian, the perceived importance of the class may be even lower (Kwon, 2023). As a result, students may challenge the authority of Asian professors and question the evaluation of their work (Han, 2014).

Resistance to Learning Social Justice Topics

I have been devoted to contemplating and implementing effective methods for teaching social justice through art education. At times, students may question why they are not solely learning about art styles, techniques, and genres in art class, but also about social justice and seemingly unrelated topics (see Anderson et al., 2010; Donahue et al, 2010; Quinn et al., 2012). In response, I emphasize that the primary purpose of art is to comprehend and interpret the world around us. Throughout history, art has been utilized to bolster cultural norms or political power, but it has also served as a catalyst for meaningful change (Marshall, 2019).

Visual arts have long been connected to issues of justice (Donahue et al., 2010). Many artists have engaged the public in social justice questions through their artwork. As the majority of my students will become teachers in preK-12 schools, I integrate social justice topics into student arts-based research assignments every semester (Bae, 2022). I hope to raise awareness of social justice issues in their community and the world among their future pupils in elementary, middle, and high school. In particular, after the murder of George Floyd, I decided to teach racial justice

in my synchronous online art methods class, Art 203 Concepts, Creations and Children, which offers conceptual and technical aspects of visual arts to non-art majors for their future professions. During our online class, I facilitated a discussion of racism and racial justice, specifically police brutality against people of color, by providing works of art created by contemporary artists of color. Each student was then required to select one historical or contemporary event about anti-racism or racial justice for their artwork. For example, students selected themes related to racial conflict through their research, such as the Scottsboro boys who became the motif of the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Sojourner Truth, a female abolitionist, and the Baltimore riot in 2015. Interestingly, I noticed that some White students expressed strong support for law enforcement systems, arguing that these systems contribute to societal security, despite acknowledging the issue of police brutality and its connection to race and racism. This observation highlights the complexities and challenges in discussing racial justice, even in an educational setting.

When professors of color address topics of racism and social justice in their teaching, empirical studies have reported instances of direct and indirect resistance from White students (Han, 2018; Yoon, 2019). Keonghee Tao Han, for instance, teaches a literacy methods class at a predominantly White university located in a small conservative town. In her teaching, she has encountered increased resistance from White students when she incorporates social justice topics into her course content (Han, 2014). This resistance may be attributed to several factors, including her foreign English pragmatics, culturally different pedagogical and interactional styles, and physical and racial appearances, all of which may differ from the cultural tools typically used by White instructors (Han, 2014). Moreover, when White students learn about their racial identity and privilege in the context of social justice discussions, they can develop a better understanding of the sociopolitical and structural inequities faced by others in mainstream educational settings and workplaces (Nieto & Bode, 2018). It is important to note that despite Han's focus on language arts methods for pre-service teachers, her racialized experiences with her White students bear similarities to my own experiences of teaching social justice.

In a similar context, Injung Yoon conducted autobiographical research, delving into how her multiple intersections of identity as a female instructor of color influenced her pedagogy, college-level courses, and interactions with students. Yoon (2019) specifically taught about racism to White students and encountered direct or indirect resistance to anti-racist education from them. Dealing with this resistance made her teaching more challenging, leading to a sense of self-doubt and disconnection from her students (Yoon, 2019). Like Yoon, I also share my own racial experiences with White students, encouraging them to embrace “emotional responses as learning moments” (Yoon, 2019, p. 92). Moreover, Yoon (2019) candidly discussed with her students her own reflections on the process of developing racial consciousness and navigating racial dialogues, along with the emotional responses that accompany this journey. She also provided insights into the possible causes of these emotional responses and referred to discussions by other scholars on the subject (Yoon, 2019). Furthermore, the experiences of two immigrant Korean female professors, dealing with resistance and opposition from European White students regarding the content of racism in their courses, underscore that these issues are not unique to American universities (Han, 2014; Yoon, 2019).

K-12 School Engagements

My engagement with K-12 schools is not very active for several reasons. Teaching and research already require a significant investment of time, and as mentioned earlier, using English as a foreign language and having a weaker understanding of culture means that I must spend more time, money, and energy preparing and researching than European White professors who use English as their mother tongue. Nonetheless, I have often had the opportunity to meet with art teachers who teach art at local schools, sometimes when supervising art teacher candidates or when teaching practicum courses. However, every time I visit schools, I feel strange because I did not attend elementary,

middle, or high school in the United States. The art classes in the elementary schools where I have observed have always been production-centered classes based on the elements and principles of art (Efland, 1976). This seems far from the inquiry-based and student choice-driven art classes that I pursue and teach (Douglas & Jaquith, 2018; Simpson et al., 1998). The results of students' art classes are similar to those of works already decided by art teachers, which have already been criticized by many art educators for a long time (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2002; Efland, 1976; Freedman, 2003). This method hinders students from developing creativity and critical thinking skills (Gude, 2013). In a triad meeting after an art teacher candidate finished her art lesson, I expressed my concern about the predetermined art lesson that focuses on teaching techniques and the representation of the famous artist's style. However, the art teacher's response was defensive, and I felt that the teacher dismissed my opinions because I only teach art education theory at the university and may not be familiar with the scene of American elementary schools. The experience of resistance and rejection of my opinions from others made me even more passive, eventually preventing me from being able to speak my thoughts to them honestly and accurately. But writing gives me plenty of time to think in Korean, and it gives me an opportunity to choose the English words and sentences that form my arguments and thoughts most effectively.

Li-Hsuan's Narrative Is That What People Call Discrimination?

Most non-native English-speaking immigrants know language learning can be an overwhelming struggle for survival by heart. During the first year I moved to the States for my doctorate, I called a customer service number regarding an inquiry about an electric bill. Without knowing relevant terminologies in a different language than Mandarin, our conversation did not go well. The representative became impatient shortly after knowing I had a hard time understanding and communicating in English and yelled: "Go get someone who understands English to talk to me!" That was one of many shocking, helpless moments that made me feel disoriented as an international student. I realized that a language barrier alone can be destructive to one's sense of self, which is the fundamental element for the formation of identity in all aspects of life.

Being different in a new cultural context involves countless amounts of self-doubt and not being able to fit in from a small group discussion in class, eye contact, or order at a restaurant. These moments of impact have defined my vulnerabilities as an immigrant in the earlier days when it seemed impossible to form any sense of belonging in a completely different cultural context. Like those vulnerable moments, pursuing a doctoral degree in a second language not only made me realize challenges in language learning but also helped me recognize the complex nuances developed from the fact that I am different in the color of my skin, language, and country of origin. These complex nuances could be too abstract to synthesize as it almost feels like a microorganism, yet they are too drastic to ignore. It then became clear to me that in order to accelerate academically with this ever-changing nuance of intersectionality, I must be an ever-adapting learner to be ahead of the wave.

Vulnerabilities Bridge Differences and Form Common Ground

Discriminatory moments trigger my vulnerabilities of not being understood fully, not being able to speak out when there is a need, and most importantly, they deteriorate my self-worth. Later in my teaching when I was in the doctoral program and now in Wisconsin, I see the values of those deconstructive moments happening in my early days as an immigrant. I rarely experienced Learned Hopelessness in my academic pursuits in Taiwan; therefore, constantly having those feelings of inadequacy was something I have not dealt with much in the past. This helped me reset my mindset about student learning in White-dominated college classrooms in Illinois and Wisconsin. While my students do not have any language barriers as their instructor, they could feel similar feelings

of incapability in learning art and art education as I do in language and situating in a new cultural context.

I found it important to create a learning environment that allows students to recognize and accept the fact that “being different” than others in class is okay. My goal in teaching is to set up a classroom that embraces differences in everyone, making them feel accepted and comfortable enough to examine their own challenges in learning and can improve from where they are at. Because recognizing our personal vulnerable moments, as they can be often seen as negative or avoided intentionally, I believe that this recognition is essential for breaking through and thriving in any learning. When students are willing to genuinely embrace their own vulnerabilities with courage, these mutual efforts from both me and my students create the common ground that develops a collective sense of empathy that an inclusive learning environment demands. To implement this practice in my teaching, I continuously bring culture as a concept and project theme into my college classrooms. Cultural-based discussions and assignments provide students with space for individual authentic voices and opportunities to learn from different perspectives. Studying one’s cultural heritage gives the whole class a cultural exchange platform for German, Irish, Polish, and Hmong cultures, to name a few. Curriculum design that reflects students’ individuality and creates collective acceptance for others has continued to evolve as I define and examine my own ongoing intersectionality of cultural identities; I want to support pre-service teachers to become more confident not only with self-awareness in their learning but also be intellectually rigorous and culturally responsive because these are essential elements in K-12 teaching.

Cultural Identities in K-12 School Engagements

I started to supervise art education student teachers during the last couple of years in my doctoral program. I remember a conversation I had with faculty regarding that I might not gain the same level of respect as a professional because of my visual appearance, which I am shorter than the average height of most American university supervisors. The doubt I have in my mind regarding the connection between my body image and my professionalism did not completely diminish even after I became a tenure-track faculty member. This concern urges me to dress even more formally than I usually do in university classrooms and has also motivated me to polish my spoken English because of my inner fear that local K-12 teachers would raise ambiguity in my role as a university supervisor. While I never experienced such scenarios in real life, this ongoing self-consciousness still influences my perceptions and behaviors in all professional settings today.

Part of my work responsibilities at the university is to lead an initiative involving a partnership between our university, local K-12 school districts, and a community non-profit art organization. I am also serving on a board of directors in a museum located in a city in central Wisconsin. Through those collaborative experiences with professionals beyond our campus, I have been gladly seeing increasing interest in cultural diversity and genuine curiosity regarding learning about different cultures. While I believe this is just the beginning and it would be a long way until the end of the tunnel, I take it as a positive step for my personal transformation because my voice as an Asian immigrant is valued, and more significantly, the way I define intersectional identities is no longer just learning and surviving in a different cultural context but also offering my cultural perspective as an immigrant art educator to professionals born and raised in the United States.

Coda

We discussed our experiences with pedagogy and K-12 school engagements, and according to JaeHan, discrimination against people of color who are non-native English speakers is deeply entrenched in American society’s cultural, social, political, and value systems (Shin et al., 2022). Similarly, the university where both JaeHan and Li-Hsuan have long worked and taught is not immune to various forms of visible and invisible discrimination and oppression. JaeHan likens these

forms of discrimination to cancer cells in American society, recognizing their presence but also committing to tirelessly combat them. While JaeHan accepts their existence, he is determined to make efforts to eliminate racism and prejudice against people of color through art education.

Furthermore, JaeHan rethinks the significance of creating a safe learning environment for pre-service students. Drawing from Yoon's (2019) study, he agrees that the concept of safety in teaching about race should not be employed to protect White students' feelings, as this can inadvertently establish a space of oppressive colorblindness. Instead, JaeHan believes in providing "a space where students are willing to be challenged and unlearn their colorblind racism, even if it entails discomfort" (Yoon, 2019, p. 94). As art teacher educators, we must critically examine and address the systemic discrimination present in society and academia, and create inclusive and challenging learning environments. By engaging in ongoing discussions, understanding diverse perspectives, and promoting anti-racist practices, we can work towards dismantling the barriers that impede progress in achieving social and racial justice.

Li-Hsuan has focused a lot of attention reflecting on internal shifts and development in her intersectional identities over the course of the past 12 years; she has been using what she has experienced in various cultural and societal contexts to synthesize tangible takeaways that support all students, regardless of their identities and cultural backgrounds, as well as her own growth as an immigrant art educator. Gay (2018) argued the importance of the individuality of students, emphasizing that is closely entwined with their cultural socialization and ethnic identity; she also stated that "decontextualizing teaching and learning from the ethnicities, cultures, and experiences of students minimize the chances that their achievement potential will ever be fully realized" (p. 30). Culturally responsive teaching promotes insightful thinking, more humane interpersonal skills, and "better understanding of interconnections among individual, local, national, ethnic, global, and human identities; the acceptance of knowledge as something to be continuously shared, critiqued, revised, and renewed" (Gay, 2018, pp. 42-43). Because Li-Hsuan has had first-hand experiences of responding to prejudices, biases, and stereotypes in a completely different cultural context, which helped her become deeply aware that such experience can be powerful enough to shut down one's motivation to learn and courage to seek support. Li-Hsuan's overarching goal as an art educator is to facilitate students' transformational growth in college classrooms and beyond in their early careers. This goal has helped her relate personal difficulties and vulnerabilities as a reflective tool to generate a more empathetic and inclusive approach in her K-16 teaching practice.

We firmly believe that the honest and vulnerable stories shared by two Asian immigrant art education professors in this chapter may deeply resonate with other professors and students of color. Through these personal narratives, we aim to foster emotional and empathetic connections across racial lines. Our goal is to ignite a collective effort toward creating a more racially equal and just society in America, a society that has historically been centered on whiteness. By acknowledging and embracing our diverse experiences, we can unite in our pursuit of dismantling systemic racism and prejudice. We envision a society where every individual's voice is heard, and where the contributions and perspectives of people of color are valued and celebrated.

Through these heartfelt stories, we hope to inspire others to engage in meaningful conversations, challenge existing norms, and work together to create a society that truly embraces racial equality and justice. Together, we can create a powerful momentum towards positive change, advocating for an America that embraces diversity and actively works to address racial disparities. Our collective strength lies in our shared experiences, and by building connections and standing together, we can strive for a future where everyone can thrive, regardless of their racial background.

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Feminist Arts Education Heroines: Maker Mermaids, Poet Princesses, Fiber Art Fairies, Weaving Witches, and Unschooling Unicorns

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This chapter explores metaphors of art teacher identities, comparing her/them to a mythic figure. Multiple art education articles note the alchemy of paint mixing and the magic of color (Lim, 2004). The art teacher has also been compared to a magician, wielding a set of carefully curated tools (Szekeley, 2009). Popular YouTube art teacher Cassie Stephens (2014) has published in *Art & Activities* about her fairy tale castles and other magical lessons, which builds upon her powerful YouTube and blogging presence as a theatrical elementary school art teacher who often wears magical-looking rainbow-colored clothing. Even for those of us with less imaginative fashion choices, the art teacher and our unique craft have always been infused with an initiatory sense of wonder, even magic. Our field's historic legacies of artist apprenticeships with masters and gurus of the arts are somewhat akin to nostalgic literature and media about learning magic, sorcery, and witching skills.

The figure of the teacher can be linked creatively and provocatively with both an array of mythic characters and symbols as well as historical figures from the field that loom larger than life and illuminate possibilities for our practice. In this chapter, we (an art educator and art historian) outline some of these roles and representations of mermaids, princesses, fairies, witches, and unicorns in the art classroom. There are both problems and possibilities associated with an art teacher being a purveyor of magic and tricks (Hathaway, 2013). Some, if not all, of these entities, can be or have often been categorized as both magical as well as odd and monstrous too. Metaphorically, a school community can contain both beloved art teachers and dreaded “dragon teachers” who each play into the ethos of fairy tales and the monstrous myths around teaching and learning (Smith-Shank, 2014). For our purposes in co-teaching and bringing this material into the classroom, it is also useful to refer to Cohen's (1996) work on Monster Theory wherein the monster functions as a form of culture relating to spectators' fears, desires, anxieties, and fantasies. While roles and representations may evolve and change over time; mermaids, princesses, fairies, witches, and unicorns are also tied with gendered cultural expectations and generative associations of art, artists, teaching, and teachers. My colleague and I, who serve as university art educators to art teachers as well as community arts educators, will examine the visual culture of these roles. We each also share some of our own related collaborative experiences embodying versions of the art teacher through our teaching around mythical heroic creatures. Specifically, we identify as feminist and anti-racist educators who are also parents. Geographically, Courtney is a solo mother and professor of art education in New York, and Carlee is a mother, art historian, and professor in Virginia. As white educators, we aim to address diverse art and artists and also to problematize whiteness and whitewashing in the visual culture of girlhood.

Mermaids

Mermaids have been depicted in works of art and literature from many different times and

cultures. A mermaid is centrally a chimera, part human and part sea creature. Often depicted on the shore, where land meets the sea, as in Waterhouse's iconic 1900 oil painting, the mermaid can also be an interesting representative of the duality and versatility of art teaching: part artist/of the art world, and part teacher/of the school. Of his joint appointment in visual art and education, the late Stanford Professor Elliot Eisner once commented that he felt less welcome in the art department (2003). In our careers, we have also experienced tensions of this duality, with collegiate art education departments located somewhere between or divided between both art departments and departments or schools of education. The curricula of both graduate and undergraduate courses include lessons and papers in our education courses, and then navigate the world of making art in our studio courses, with the work of the body and mind somewhat divided as well. For example, as an undergraduate student of art and education, I enjoyed but was a little exhausted by the code shifting from the language of the elements of art and principles of design to the discourse of pedagogy, feeling at times like a fish out of water in each setting.

Further, in their earlier forms, mermaids were once sirens of Greek mythology noted for their magical, bewitching voices. This feature too provides a useful metaphor for our work, because although art may speak for itself, the art teacher uses his/her/their voice to frame questions and context about art (and we may work against threats of bias, prejudice, misunderstandings, and omissions in the art world). As art educators, we often can powerfully shape our students' entire vision of the art world through our curriculum, acting as curators.

Along these lines, the mermaid of the 1989 Disney version of *The Little Mermaid* focuses on Ariel's shimmering "trove [of] treasures untold." More interesting than the trappings of her eventual ascension to a princess in the human world via marriage to a prince, this cache of collections was a dazzling installation of antiques and mundane objects curated and juxtaposed according to an adolescent girl's vision and experiences. We have come to see this secret cavern as having the potential as a crucial monument to creative play (such as Ariel's imaginings about the collected objects and their uses). At the same time, many of these treasured objects remain untold, leaving questions about collecting, consumption, and creativity for the shrewd viewer, and for us as art educators. As art educators, we have worked not only with children's treasures in the classroom but also examined fictional hoards of tweens as a form of speculative archaeology, elevating the treasured collections of jewelry, cell phones, charms, toys, and other precious tween objects (see: <https://www.pinterest.com/c0urtneylee/tween-culture/>). For us, this mermaid figure not only raises the possibility of appreciating the objects of others in a new way but can also represent school art educators' partnerships with museums and museum educators to include museum objects in art education.

Princess

More centrally located in the realm of riches, the historic princess stands as one of the few enduring symbols of powerful girls for young people. As Forman-Brunell and Hains (2015) have noted "Princesses are *everywhere* there are girls" (p. xi). As educators, we often observe the pervasiveness of princess culture from various media in classrooms. Despite her sometimes problematic pinkness, the princess stands out as one of the few enduring symbols of powerful, often magical girlhood that young people may consume and represent in the art classroom as interesting and valuable subjects (Weida et al, 2019). Anna Maria Moix's (1997) *Dangerous Virtues* describes a curious fairy tale world in which princesses are aware of and resent being read, and can reform and revise themselves from their fairy tale origins (e.g. Sleeping Beauty relishes coffee in lieu of slumber and spins beautifully without pricking herself). Importantly, princesses have always overtly or covertly represented both power itself and the creative power of the story.

Tracing threads of princesses through books and as book authors and artists, we might examine historic themes from former princesses such as Catherine the Great (1729-1796), who became authors of fairy tales meant to educate young children. This echoes the role of medieval

princesses as “Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture” in Susan Groag Bell’s work (1982). Women brought books, language (vernacular), and culture as they embarked on political marriages and they used these tools of history and heritage to educate their children. Female authorship and representation of female characters through illustration in folklore are also often linked (Ragan, 2009), making princess stories, particularly meaningful models for young women as budding writers and artists.

Relatedly, contemporary fairy tale retellings and illustrations have also been undertaken by educators trained in art, literature, and areas like Waldorf Education - particularly in the case of Martina Muller, who authored and luminously illustrated a 2013 version of *Sleeping Beauty*. The female illustrator role, often figuring complexly as author-illustrator, becomes almost a mother-narrator in adapting tales of “evil stepmothers, enabling fathers, and even more murderous parental stand-ins such as witches, ogres, goblins, and giants” (Handy, 2017; p. 28). Her subversive role restores the maternal figure as a creative and generative force to a space of stories that notoriously have removed women’s creative influence. In this way, princesses are an enduring symbol of storied creativity that we often see dancing precariously yet productively across the pages and canvases of our young students.

Fairies

In our teaching experiences, pink princess preoccupations are often followed by a focus on fairies as young girls mature both as consumers and as creators of girlhood culture. Often, fairy tales also include fairy figures who possess important and subversive knowledge and values around art and craft for the protagonist and/or the reader/listener as well. As a literary historian, Elizabeth Wanning Harries (2004) notes, “Fairy tales provide scripts for living, but they also can inspire resistance to those scripts” (p. 103). For example, *Sleeping Beauty* centers on both the beauty of the tale as well as the irresistible lure of the spindle as a craft tool of the dark fairy. Upon close inspection of the Disney version of *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), it becomes apparent that the spindle itself has been transformed and/or misunderstood, as the part of the spindle Aurora seems to touch would not have even been sharp (<https://followingthebreadcrumbtrails.wordpress.com/2015/01/06/spindles-arent-sharp/>). Perhaps this oversight during an earlier point in history underscores the lost matriarchal influences not only on the craft of spinning itself but also of fairies as powerful females who figure alongside weaving practices throughout fairy tales and folklore. From Rumpelstiltskin and the girl who became a princess for spinning straw into gold, to Arachne and goddess Minerva’s spinning and weaving contest, to the female fates spinning threads of life, spinning can be important and metaphorical practice. Given these thread-like references, the dark fairy Malificent’s prowess in spinning not only thread but spells is of great interest. Further, Aurora is deeply drawn to the spindle as well, with its metaphorical threads of plot that threaten the entire structure of the kingdoms (namely her impending marriage and consolidation of power) both symbolically and literally. Along these lines, the art teacher wields and represents the magical and often obscured myths, histories, and traditions of craft.

The personas and gifts of various *Sleeping Beauty* children’s book versions we have used to teach offer generative, creative images of good and evil fairies as creative female figures who offer beautiful gifts and teachings in ways somewhat parallel to the art teacher as a mentor. In Trina Schart Hyman’s *Sleeping Beauty*, the fairies appear as youthful figures as well as elderly ones. Maja Dusikova’s fairies are difficult to discern among a crowd of other women of the court in long, flowing dresses. Only the thirteenth fairy stands out as a shadowy, grey apparition with white hair and a cloaked figure.

Meanwhile, Erin McGuire’s 2017 version depicts the fairies not as the god-motherly-like versions we have become accustomed to from Disney and similar retellings, but as a rather culturally diverse group of eight elven children beautifully dressed like ballerinas and princesses. Her forgotten fairy, in contrast, is a small dark figure of few words whose hair appears to be made of

leafless dead branches of winter. This dark creature is a sort of nature spirit, a force of darkness and chaos contained in the natural world. The only inclusion of briars in this story is found in the prickly thorns of dangerous shrubs that protect the castle and literally cover it in illustrations, evoking the duality of Sleeping Beauty herself as both rose and thorn. Martina Muller's version features soft flowers on nearly every page and includes the detail that the roses enclosing the kingdom parted for the prince to locate and awaken Aurora. So the fairy is a kind of generative earth goddess, adding nuance to the notion of an art teacher as a fairy or teller and/or illustrator of fairy tales. These fairy tale books are incredible art teaching tools.

Witches

Beyond fairies and sorceresses, witches are also colorful creators and occasional teachers on the margins. As Harvard folklorist Maria Tatar (2014) evocatively asserts "With their witches and woods . . . fairy tales create shimmering visuals, verbal icons—sleeping beauties, skulls decorated with flowers, homicidal birds with jewel-encrusted plumage—that oblige us to 'think more' and 'think harder' (p. 149). Neave (1998) also notes the rich historical connections between women, witchcraft, and weaving. She writes that after the Middle Ages, women weavers were gradually excluded from weaving, denied access to looms, and barred from guilds. The wise woman or witch woman serves as an outsider artist and educator whose vocation is sometimes secretive or even completely disallowed.

In art history, there are notable depictions of the witch as well. Argentinian-born Leonor Fini created a fairy tale-inspired painting for the Mexican actress María Félix, entitled "*Les Sorcières*" ("The Witches," 1959). The swirling black and red churning of the witches on hybrid broomsticks/dousing rods is intoxicatingly dark and less characteristic of Fini's usual luminous style, highlighting how her work depicted various women in many different ways. Such young women figures provide interesting female characters to consider in stories of Surrealism and human experiences of childhood, love, and death. Referencing craft, works like these remind us to consider including images of children in our art historical references in the art room, revealing females as makers and as protagonists.

On this note, the late New York art teacher, Ruth Chew (1920-2010), both wrote and illustrated a youth fiction series centering on girls, magic, and witches. In her books, details such as enchanted pencils wielded by young women protagonists transformed scraps of paper in inscribing them with words, transporting characters and readers to magical inner and outer worlds. These visions of the wise witch woman offer us both a sense of escapism and a sort of nostalgia for earthy, grandmotherly creative magic. So too, Chew's legacy as an art teacher who created enduring, magical children's books is meaningful as it centers the work in the lives of children, like her own daughter who loved witch stories.

Unicorns

Like witches, fairies, princesses, and mermaids, mythical unicorns can be powerful figures often encountered in art education. We have often observed not only children who love unicorns but also our graduate students discussing unicorns symbolically, as another metaphor for teaching art. Our students' love of "unicorn teachers" is often a love of kitsch and nostalgia - with the art teacher as a stand-in for a rare and often rainbowed classroom character who might even wear unicorn-related fashion and accessories. Becoming a unicorn can be a badge of honor for oneself, or often extended affectionately to a wacky mentor or colleague who is rare, like a unicorn. Many gifts for teachers have imagery and/or phraseology that highlights the "unicorn teacher" through new and old aesthetics of imagery, fonts, and messages, often remixed from stylized imagery of a horn or unicorn silhouette. Additionally, a popular coffee mug features a U.S. representative riding a unicorn in front of a rainbow, above the words "I believe in AOC" (LookHuman, 2020).

Meanwhile, the unicorn represents valuable variation in representation that parallels the diverse scope and community of the field of art education itself: from innocence and wisdom to reverence and irreverence, and high art and popular culture. Although unicorns can be seen as symbols of Whiteness and/or White girlhood in some mainstream popular media from Disney and other sources, they also appear as symbols of otherness, including representations of artists, people of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals and groups through fan art, remix, and cult media representations across the arts. Swindle (2011), who writes of the history of Eurocentric views of girlhood and her own daughter's experience on this topic, has categorized unicorns as part of a comprehensive aesthetic and tantalizing hoard of "girlhood." Lamb and Brown (2007) similarly describe how unicorns can be markers of mishaps in marketing schemes. Specifically, the Latina character Dora of *Dora the Explorer* typically is characterized by intellect and athleticism in the Nick Junior show, yet she appears in products with incongruently flowing hair, glittering jewelry, and an inexplicable unicorn companion.

However, both art history and contemporary fantasy art around unicorns can offer art rooms visions of difference as well if we are willing to look, or even go questing for them. Unicorns are creatures from Eastern as well as Western mythologies (Tagliatesta, 2007) featured in bronze statues of Ethiopia (Hunt, 2003), and reflected throughout art history and the visual culture of fairy tales, film, mythology, and even memes. The unicorn symbol can serve an array of different needs as we age, both within and beyond the classroom. We can also use unicorns as points of understanding, linking, and strengthening the bond between educators and their students. The familiarity we feel with the unicorn can be a source of empowerment and nurturing care that is of use to art teachers as a sort of medium. These are important resources for art teachers exploring visual culture.

Unicorns also powerfully symbolize the creative imagination in art and literature (Wriglesworth, 2006), as a sort of blank canvas for the imagination (Elstain, 2005). Unicorns are so central in children's literature that a major journal on this topic is entitled *The Lion and the Unicorn* (often creating research challenges in searching for unicorns as a subject area without merely locating citations to this journal). In examining the incredibly rich visual and symbolic culture of unicorns, our shared sense of classifying and defining them might be categorized as a form of *unicornhood*, a term mentioned around unicorn mythology in philosophical writings (Denby, 2008). *Unicornhood*, in art education, could encompass exploring kinship relationships for art teachers and their communities expressed in terms such as neighborhood, sisterhood, childhood, and adulthood.

Concluding Reflections

Adopting possibilities and personas of witches, unicorns, fairies, princesses, and mermaids can be both privileged and subversive work (and perhaps play) for art educators. These creatures and characters evoke the treasures, spells, myths, mysteries, and magic that are literally and metaphorically just beneath the surface of our work. But we theorize that in such explorations, we might begin to respond richly to the sense of delight, hope, and celebration in young students and their sense of shared rituals of looking and making in the art room. Centrally, we hope that we can encourage our art education community in future explorations of possibilities of handcraft, of the craft of teaching, and of everyday rituals that connect making and teaching to forge a meaningful, even magical identity through art education.

Our own explorations in art and teaching with these mythic, magical figures has been rich and ever-evolving. We began in 2009 with an aforementioned speculative exploration of treasure, inspired by the exciting Staffordshire hoard discovery in England. Fascinated by the medieval loot of garnet-encrusted golden weapons and armor, we asked ourselves *who are today's hoarders* and *what are today's treasure troves*? Imagining hoarders as today's tweens, we collected, crafted, and curated treasures and hoarders and a whole archaeological site and records, using a strange sort of reverse chronological process, adding dust to pristine objects by burying them, then unearthing them again. Our hoard contained precious bejeweled cell phones, glitzy jewelry, and shimmering

pink diaries. We also crafted a curriculum for our students to continue these explorations in their own communities. The timeless and auratic magic of treasure subsequently led us to also explore related topics of golden princesses, through community art workshops with youth. During these workshops, we then observed children's deep and serious interests in unicorns, fairies, mermaids, and witches and how their sense of making art around these topics took on an occult-like meaning that reflected the seriousness of their explorations of rituals of creativity and magic. We continued to research these additional figures, through fairy tales, works of art, works of visual culture, and children's artwork. Each of these magical characters in turn uniquely illuminated aspects of art, education, and particularities of girlhood culture, and they have been cherished companions and guides to us in our careers.

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Jurying International Children's Art: Navigating Intersections of Well-Being Theory, Uncertainties, and Trauma

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While conducting research on children's artistic development for my textbook (Sickler-Voigt, 2020), I chanced upon the *International Children's Exhibition of Fine Arts Lidice's* (ICEFA Lidice's) website in 2014. I felt a deep sense of awe and amazement as I scrolled through its vast collection of artworks by children ages 4-16. Upon closer examination of its creative artworks, I envisioned how knowledgeable educators from Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa, and Oceania honed their students' knowledge, creative skills, and intuitions to create these stellar works in a variety of art media and artistic styles. ICEFA Lidice is a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) partner that derives its annual themes from UNESCO's International Years that children from all regions of the globe can interpret through artistic media—such as “that is where I live, that is me”; education; travel; and “theatre, puppets, and fairy tales.”

During World War II, the Nazis destroyed Lidice, a small Czech village, in retaliation for the death of an SS Soldier—despite a lack of evidence of any Lidice citizens' involvement. With the intent of wiping Lidice off the map, the Nazis performed mass executions of all of Lidice's men and sent Lidice's women to a concentration camp. They murdered the majority of Lidice's innocent children—42 girls and 40 boys a few weeks later at the Chelmno extermination camp. ICEFA Lidice was founded in 1967 after Lidice's reconstruction and has been collecting children's artworks to honor and commemorate the fallen children of Lidice and all other children victims of war.

Moved by its history, the quality of the international children's artworks, and its mission, I contacted ICEFA Lidice's manager with an introductory email seeking permission to research the collection. With continued communications, I was invited to serve as an international juror and began representing the North American continent in 2015. My connections to ICEFA Lidice, the Lidice Memorial, and its people grew even stronger given my jury experiences on-site at the Lidice Memorial. Referencing the analytic framework of intersectionality (Pugach et al., 2019), this chapter describes my involvement with ICEFA Lidice and explains the values of belonging to and serving a greater cause. I analyze the impacts of my three years of physical separation from the jury due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russo-Ukrainian War. This process resulted in my identification of strategies for teaching the visual arts to students experiencing trauma, including refugee populations, and managing restrictive educational policies in the United States that curtail curricular content designed to support students. The comments, reflections, and interpretations within this chapter are my own and present my intersecting roles as an American citizen who grew up during the Cold War years, a white female professor, a juror, a mentor, and a friend. The scope of this chapter is not designed to reflect the perspectives of ICEFA Lidice, its partners, employees, or fellow jurors. Rather, I have chosen to amalgamate my experiences with content from my review of the literature to present broader perspectives and implications as a means to shape educational practices and policies while applying well-being theory, methods for navigating uncertainties, and metacognition, the process of thinking about one's thinking.

Well-Being Theory: Professional Identity and Serving Something Bigger

Seligman's (2011) well-being theory identifies measurable elements of well-being that include positive emotion; engagement; relationships; meaning and purpose; and accomplishment to make relevant connections between well-being and professional and personal identities. Within well-being theory, Seligman (2011) discussed the values of "belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than yourself" (p.17). ICEFA Lidice's broad international scope and its UNESCO affiliation clearly reflect the depth and importance of the exhibition. All jurors volunteer their time and services to participate. I serve on the second round with jurors from Belgium, Bulgaria, Hong Kong, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, and select Czech jurors who serve on both the first and second rounds. Our jury days are long. Traveling jurists stay at the Lidice Gallery's dormitory—eating meals together and participating in cultural outings. During the second round, we judge approximately 3,000 international artworks from up to 80 countries—the first round has narrowed this number from the original 20,000-30,000 submissions. From the remaining 3,000 international artworks, the jury selects the honorable mentions and medals. This process involves analyzing varying cultural perspectives, aesthetic tastes, beliefs about best practices, and how cultural influences and education in art shape children's perspectives on global topics. Jurying the vast collection of international submissions, I have long felt the value of art education in children's lives and perceived jury excitement and like-minded responses in our many native languages when inspirational student artworks were presented before us. These tangible and social-emotional experiences erase perceived divisions (i.e. political, language, cultural) and precipitate feelings of harmony with the global community.

Our jurying occurs next to the memorial grounds at the Lidice Gallery—bridging the gap between the past and present and thereby making the jury experience all the more real. During one of my jury residencies, I met a Lidice survivor Jaroslava Skleničková (2010) who was 16 years old at the time of the 1942 attack and sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Skleničková wrote about her experiences in her autobiography titled *If I Had Been a Boy, I Would Have Been Shot: The Story of the Youngest of the Women of Lidice*. I saw her present a lecture at the Lidice Gallery in Czech, with parts kindly translated by a bilingual Czech national for me. Her lecture was presented in conjunction with juror Martin Homola's photography exhibition titled *My Home: Testimony of Portrait*, which documented Lidice survivors at the sites of their former homes and where they presently live. On the day Homola photographed the memorial grounds, he explained, "Even though 73 years have passed, it [Lidice's history] is still painfully alive" (Sickler-Voigt, 2020, p. 333). Homola shared this sentiment with me after photographing the Lidice Memorial's reverent area on a frosted morning where the massacre transpired and Lidice's former school, church, and homes once stood (Figure 1). Skleničková's and Homola's communications reinforce how Lidice's history remains relevant and its profound losses are not forgotten. I carry even deeper empathy and understanding having witnessed Skleničková's story of survival and by seeing the extent Homola invested himself in capturing aspects of Lidice's history by getting to know its survivors and putting himself in situations of physical and emotional discomfort.



Figure 1. Martin Homola's *Landscape of Pain: Horák Farmhouse Remains* was displayed at the ICEFA Lidice Gallery exhibition titled *My Home: Testimony of Portrait*. Source: © Martin Homola. Courtesy of artist.

Navigating Uncertainties: The Covid-19 Pandemic, the Russo-Ukrainian War, and Restrictive Educational Policies

Preparing to travel to the Czech Republic for the ICEFA Lidice jury in March 2020, our international jury team's plans immediately halted with the COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency that resulted in global shutdowns that included strict travel restrictions. Like many people, I experienced the personal, communal, and global fears of the pandemic—as vaccines had yet to be developed. I also felt the great loss of not being able to participate in the jury, as it had become a substantial presence in my personal and professional life. In line with Seligman's (2011) writing on well-being theory, ICEFA Lidice's jurors and staff consist of qualified participants, who, in my opinion, have developed a genuine feeling of camaraderie and personal and professional satisfaction with the jury work. Czech is the dominant language at the jury table. It was fascinating for me to discover how I formed special bonds and deep friendships without the benefits of speaking the same languages. When experiencing language barriers during my past jurying residencies, multilingual jurors and staff members have translated substantial topics and questions into English and Russian for foreign members. Jurors, like myself, have also relied on body language and smartphone translation apps to communicate. Given the loss of personal interactions during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, I regularly stayed in touch with jurors via social media and emails—longing for the time when we could be together again.

On February 24, 2022, with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters readily available and my concerns about traveling abroad greatly reduced, Vladimir Putin expanded the Russo-Ukrainian War—with the intent of conquering all of Ukraine. His acts have led to human rights violations, massacres, and the targeting of civilians—including children. The United Nations Office Of The High Commissioner For Human Rights (2023) recorded between February 24, 2022, and January 29, 2023, that the Russian Federation's armed attacks have resulted in the killings of 180 girls, and 225 boys, as well as 33 children ... whose sex is yet unknown. Actual numbers are anticipated to be significantly higher as some war-zone areas cannot be accessed. Transpiring on a larger scale, these atrocities against the Ukrainians painfully reiterate Lidice's loss of children's lives, civilian massacres, and great physical destruction.

Nearly 8 million Ukrainian citizens are living as refugees in nations across Europe. Approximately 6 million Ukrainians have been displaced within Ukraine (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023). Additionally, five million Ukrainian children have had their education disrupted (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2023). The impacts of the Russo-Ukrainian War have built on existing educational disruptions caused by

the Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2020. Approximately, 67% of schoolchildren living in a host country are not enrolled in their school systems, overwhelmingly hoping for a timely return home and having opted for online learning with Ukrainian educators (UNICEF, 2023).

News reports have described how leaders from the former Communist Satellite States of the Soviet Union (USSR) and Post-Soviet Baltic States have articulated continued warnings about threats from Russia to the European Union and NATO because they believe their countries will be the next targets of Putin's expansion attacks if he is victorious in Ukraine (Cameron, 2023; Inskeep & Mai, 2023; Kozyrev, 2022; Teh, 2022). I think of the ICEFA Lidice jurors from these nations when I hear these reports. For example, in describing Western Europeans' responses to Putin's threats, Lau (2022) reported how former Polish foreign minister Radosław Sikorski exclaimed: "For years [they] were patronizing us about our attitude: 'Oh, you know, you over-nervous, over-sensitive Central Europeans are prejudiced against Russia'" (para. 4). Similarly, former Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves was called "Russophobic" when he addressed concerns about disruptive cyber-attacks by Russia against Estonia (Lau, 2022). Polish Ambassador Radosław Sikorski briefly summarized his own experiences: "I was born under communism, and I experienced command economy and oppression. And then I lived under democracy and enjoyed [the] freedom of expression" (Inskeep & Mai, 2023).

Growing up in the United States during the Cold War, I have not had the experiences of these leaders and their people. I pondered the civic freedoms I have come to know throughout my life and compared them to the recent introduction of laws designed to remove long-standing civil liberties. As a citizen and educator, I feel deeply concerned about some states' policies restricting instructional content designed to foster students' and society's well-being (PEN America, 2023). These include social justice education (Anderson et al., 2010); equity, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I; NAEA, 2022); and social-emotional learning (SEL; Frey et al, 2019). In 2023, for the first time in my professional career, my intellectual freedom was restricted when I was invited to give a presentation describing how to teach stop-motion animation to students with disabilities to Florida educators. Because my presentation received State of Florida funding, I was informed that I had to remove the term "equity, diversity, and inclusion" from my presentation (Figure 2). Images of my book covers were also censored since my books, which are written for adult educators, had not been vetted by the state. Questioning how to navigate these restrictions on academic freedoms with the aim of supporting teachers and students, I decided to modify my presentation's terminology to communicate its important concepts and simply mentioned my books' titles without showing them.



Figure 2. I designed this introductory slide for professional development on best practices for teaching stop-motion animation to students with special needs. It includes a screenshot of the first stop-motion animation I co-taught and submitted to ICEFA Lidice. The term equity, diversity, and inclusion and the author's book covers were censored due to restrictive educational policies. Artwork: ICEFA Lidice 46th Exhibition. Source: © Author

Well-Being Practices: Adapting and Growing from Uncertainties and Disruptions

The events of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russo-Ukrainian War, and academic censorship have

touched upon my emotions and required my ongoing self-reflection and metacognition to determine how I can transition away from the feelings of confusion and helplessness that have arisen in these challenging and uncertain times and apply concepts of well-being theory to identify tangible educational practices inspired by my evolving role as an educator and juror serving an international organization that promotes peace and commemorates children victims of war. In navigating the well-being practice of adapting and growing from uncertainties and disruptions (Seligman, 2011), I have reflected on what it means to be part of and serve something bigger, how my professional relationships within ICEFA Lidice have broadened into personal ones, and how I strive to share my inspirations derived from my jury experiences with others through research, creative practices, and instruction with the intent of bridging the gaps between theory and practice. These combined processes have resulted in my recommendations for meeting students' needs in times of uncertainty by (a) analyzing best practices and policies for teaching children who experience trauma and (b) fostering care through authentic instruction and comprehensive art education.

Best Practices and Policies for Teaching Children Who Experience Trauma

Children across our planet have been exposed to different forms of trauma that include and extend beyond the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russo-Ukrainian War. Based on the large quantities of children who have experienced trauma, the United States has implemented pathways for schools to become trauma-sensitive schools. Guarino and Chagnon (2018) have developed a training package with supplemental instructional resources to assist school staff in understanding trauma, which they defined as “an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects” (p. 4). Their training identified the types of trauma children may experience, which include: (a) natural disasters; (b) human-caused disasters; (c) community violence; (d) school violence; (e) family trauma; (f) refugee and immigrant trauma; (g) medical trauma; (h) poverty; (i) historical trauma; and (j) racial trauma. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are chronic traumatic events in childhood that include violence, abuse, loss, and neglect (United Nations Children's Fund, 2021). They have the potential to negatively impact children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. ACEs can result in children developing (a) post-traumatic stress disorder, causing them to relive traumatic experiences, withdraw, act out, feel defensive against perceived threats, and become self-blaming; and, (b) complex trauma that affects children's brain development and can result in lifelong consequences impacting their physical and emotional well-being (Guarino & Chagnon, 2018).

The State of Tennessee (2019), where I teach, developed Public Chapter Number 421 House Bill Number 405 to address ACEs potential impacts on students' education:

WHEREAS, by understanding and responding to trauma, school administrators, teachers, and staff can help reduce its negative impact, support critical learning, and create a more positive school environment; and WHEREAS, trauma-informed discipline policies and behavioral interventions can better meet the educational needs of students who have experienced trauma.... (p. 1)

Tennessee's amendment of this act is designed to ensure student-centered discipline that supports students experiencing trauma by establishing clear school and classroom rules and positive behavior supports so that children do not become further traumatized at school.

Contemplating the deep strains, fears, losses, and traumas that have stemmed from the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russo-Ukrainian War and their implications for teaching children

experiencing trauma, I thought about the Cuban and Haitian refugee students and students with at-risk tendencies I taught as a PK-12 art educator in Florida, as well as the vast numbers of border crossings of unaccompanied minors entering the United States. Between October 2021 and September 2022 alone, 127,447 unaccompanied minors were released to sponsors in communities across the country (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). Further reflecting on my prior role as a PK-12 art educator, I recalled figuring out how to support my students who experienced trauma and accommodate their individualized needs while on the job by creating a nurturing learning environment and teaching art lessons that made personal connections to students' lives. Striving to better support my students I studied further details about trauma during my graduate studies and reached out to other school personnel and professionals for guidance. Similar to my own experiences in gaining multiple skills independently, the National Education Association (NEA) (2020) recognized how many educators have had to learn how to problem-solve issues relating to student traumas without support: "Around the country, many school employees use their own resources, time and personal funds to support students dealing with trauma. They are often the silent partner in this whole school movement" (p.2).

NEA (2020) further articulated: "Being inclusive of all school employees ensures shared accountability, vision and support" (p. 2). When school employees feel supported and work together as a part of collaborative communities, they are more successful in meeting the needs of children who experience trauma. In its *Position Statement on Reaching Learners Who Have Experienced Trauma*, the National Art Education Association (2020) identified how art educators can assist students in becoming resilient, gaining effective coping skills, and feeling empowered through meaningful engagement in the arts, by explaining "Visual art, design, and media arts education enables learners to clarify and communicate perspectives, transform personal narratives, and imagine new possibilities when guided by effective art educators, trained in trauma-informed practices" (para 1). With my focus on securing resources to prepare preservice educators for classroom teaching and providing them with diverse teaching strategies to maintain their well-being throughout their careers, it is refreshing to see policies and resources designed to support educators and children who experience trauma. At the same time, the inclusion of social justice education, ED&I, and SEL within the PK-12 curriculum are necessary and should not be censored by restrictive policies because their subject matter offers effective means for students to cope with trauma.

Fostering Care Through Authentic Instruction and Comprehensive Art Education

Authentic instruction (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Sickler-Voigt, 2020, 2023) is a method of teaching designed to encourage and support students as they participate in meaningful learning tasks and social experiences within classroom and community settings. Authentic educators deliver high-quality instruction and build supportive and nurturing learning communities. Students are encouraged to share their ideas, questions, and opinions, as well as make personal discoveries. Authentic instruction works hand-in-hand with comprehensive art education (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Sickler-Voigt, 2020, 2023), a student-centered, holistic approach that teaches about global art in context and uses big ideas—broad topics that address human themes that relate to all people, irrespective of the times, places, and cultures in which people live. The model of comprehensive art education I teach integrates choice-based art education in which educators serve as facilitators who support student decision-making and discoveries during learning processes. Students learn how to interpret issues of social justice, ED&I, and SEL through inquiry and their development of creative works as they study international artists', designers', and craftspersons' artworks and designs and their connections to local, global, historical, and contemporary issues.

Before students can learn through a comprehensive curriculum, they need to know that their teachers care about them and that their learning environment is safe. In my own experience teaching PK-12 students who have experienced trauma, I observed how students might not initially

participate in class lessons. By showing care, working with them one-on-one, and reinforcing the importance of art in their lives, I was able to gain the students' trust so that they felt safe and wanted to participate in class activities. Given my work with ICEFA Lidice and its mission, I also wanted to understand more about how educators are teaching child refugees displaced by the Russo-Ukrainian War. Educators identified how Ukrainian children attending Slovakian schools: "were frightened, in shock, and did not know what to expect" (Gdovinová, 2022, para. 9). Wanting to return home to Ukraine and believing that their refugee situation is temporary, some Ukrainian children have refused to learn Slovakian. One first-grade student did not want to speak and would cry, scream, and fight to express her desire to return to her loved ones. The children's behaviors the Slovakian teachers observed are characteristic of refugees who have experienced trauma. Javanbakht (2022) explained they "endure immense personal, material, psychosocial, literal and symbolic losses, including of family members and loved ones, homes, socioeconomic standing, and memories ..." (p. 2). Refugee children who have experienced war can also develop a poor sense of self-worth and internalize blame for their and their loved one's losses.

Child and adolescent clinical psychologist Daniel Glazer (2023) explained: "Asking questions about their interests, skills and abilities and who is important to them provides young people with a relational experience and context where they are seen to matter and that they are more than the sum of their problems" (p. 16). In support of the first grader who feared going to school and would not speak, her Slovakian teacher took her into her office and sketched a city. She invited the first-grade girl to add to the picture and the girl drew machine guns, broken windows, and the blood she had seen in the war (Gdovinová, 2022). After making the drawing, the girl was able to communicate in class. She experienced her teacher's care and desire to allow her to communicate her feelings about the traumatic events she experienced in Ukraine. The teacher's action aligns with Glazer's (2023) recommendation of using non-language-based approaches—such as the visual arts—to communicate with children and model authentic instruction. Authentic educators, like the Slovakian teacher, learn children's names, interests, and needs. When speaking different languages, they seek resources such as translation apps, interpreters when available, and visual imagery to facilitate understanding.

In addition to recognizing trauma's impacts on learning and students' behaviors and how to treat children with care through authentic instruction and using art as a communication tool, educators need to understand that refugees may not be treated equally. Shmidt and Jaworsky's (2022) research studies on Ukrainian refugees in Austria and the Czech Republic addressed how Whiteness theory established cultural hierarchies and intersections of class, gender, and race have resulted in different treatments of refugee populations. Examples included preferences for educated Ukrainian women, who are more closely connected to Austrian and Czech cultures. Ukrainian women and children were also perceived as less threatening than male Muslim refugees. Shmidt and Jaworsky also witnessed refugee workers referring to Ukrainian Romani (Roma, a traditionally ethnic nomadic group) children as dirty and not providing them with the same quality toys that non-Roma children received. Their research studies:

reveal that reproducing racial hierarchies, a core feature of whiteness, is a multifaceted process that includes the layering and conversion of previously established hierarchies through transforming the intersectionality of gender, class, nation, and race as mutually connected criteria for placing people seen as "others" on different "levels" of the hierarchies and disciplining them. (p.124)

Educators need to be aware of these stereotypes and discriminatory practices towards refugees so that they can take steps to make sure all students feel welcomed and are part of the

group, teach anti-bullying practices, and facilitate supplemental school and community support by experts as necessary.

Lippard and McNamee's (2021) research on Northern Irish perceptions of Syrian refugees living in Northern Ireland found that individuals who had foreign friends were more likely to approve of Syrian refugee settlement; whereas those without foreign friends were more likely to demonstrate hostilities, prejudice, discrimination, and opposition to Syrian refugee settlement. The comprehensive art education curriculum is an excellent resource for students to learn about the world's cultures and collaborate and form friendships with people who may appear different than themselves. Artworks within the curriculum can serve as communication tools that build understandings about diverse cultures and their ways of knowing—even when children may not yet speak a classroom's dominant language or they attend schools that have no or limited diversity. Oral and written art inquiry tasks (aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and visual culture) are resources to prompt safe critical discourse. They invite students to ask questions, learn facts, and share interpretations about the world's diverse peoples and their art. One such example is a comprehensive unit of study on diversity I taught to third graders titled *We Bee-lieve in Our Multicultural Community* (Figure 3; Sickler-Voigt, 2020). The class studied artworks from artists that shared their diverse cultures and ethnicities as inspirations for class discussions, creative journal entries, and the production of individual and collaborative artworks. After studying their class cultures and ethnicities and finishing their work, the students wanted to extend the project and learn about additional global cultures and their art. In addition to teaching with adult's artworks, I advocate for integrating ICEFA Lidice's collections of international children's artworks into the PK-12 curriculum as instructional resources to teach students about children's and adolescents' perspectives and art-making practices from around the world.



Figure 3. Comprehensive art projects are excellent resources for students to study life topics including equality, global diversity, and group belonging. Source: © Author

Fostering a sense of community, comprehensive art education and authentic instruction recognize the values of students participating in collaborative and community art projects. They group diverse students and may also be broadened to include community experts and volunteers who collaborate with the students. Striving to reach collective learning goals, students become responsible for effectively interacting as a team, communicating their needs and ideas, and problem-solving. They see the value of bringing something special to life. These skills spark students' quest for knowledge and understanding as lifelong learners. They learn how to break barriers, build supportive relationships, foster well-being, and demonstrate resilience. These are skills they can utilize and teach others throughout their lives.

Discussion and Conclusion

Applying Seligman's (2011) well-being theory at all stages of their careers, educators can become part of and serve something bigger to help them navigate uncertainties and disruptions.

Guarino and Chagnon (2018) and the National Council of State Education Associations (2019) explained how educators have become stressed and consumed by the hardships and traumas they and their students have experienced. Educators may not know how to effectively manage the off-task behaviors that result from students acting out as the result of traumatic events—like the Slovakian educator did—and need training and support (Guarino & Chagnon, 2018; NEA, 2020). Furthermore, students' trauma can trigger memories of the traumatic events that educators have experienced in their own lives. These triggers can impact educators' mental and physical well-being. Aimed at supporting educators, the American Psychological Association (2021) called upon teachers to check school policies and secure supplemental help from school psychologists, social workers, and counselors. Rather than individual teachers working in isolation, policies, funding, and community and school-wide support are essential so that single educators do not have to tackle the deep impacts of childhood trauma alone. Educators and students can share the many benefits of being part of something bigger through authentic teaching and learning practices embedded within the comprehensive art curriculum. They include (a) participating in meaningful discourse and learning tasks, (b) nurturing acts of care and kindness, (c) applying meta-cognition and collaborative efforts to navigate uncertainties, (d) generating creative solutions, and (e) fostering feelings of resiliency.

When I began studying art education in the late 1990s, I imagined the joys of what it would be like to have a future art classroom and inspire students through art. I had the privilege of teaching children that included refugees, students with at-risk tendencies, and students with special needs. I witnessed firsthand how art serves as a form of expression that helps students process traumatic events in their lives. Being a part of the ICEFA Lidice jury and identifying how the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russo-Ukrainian War, and restrictive educational policies have challenged and broadened my understanding of my work as an educator and juror, I looked to well-being theory (Seligman, 2011) and metacognition (Krathwohl, 2002) as pathways to foster deeper understandings and build implications for education. I called upon the intersections of my identity as an American citizen who grew up during the Cold War years, a white female professor, a juror, a mentor, and a friend. I analyzed my teaching, creative, and research practices and considered ways to impart my knowledge of authentic instruction and comprehensive art education to support students and educators.

Writing this chapter and conducting its review of literature assisted me in finding some of the answers I was seeking to move forward during these times of uncertainty. I value the insights taught to me by native and foreign students, friends, and professional peers. My review of the literature has demonstrated how quality educational content and teachers' nurturing behaviors support students experiencing trauma. Regrettably, important teachings designed to help students, including social justice, ED&I, and SEL have been suppressed in some communities (PEN America, 2023). To advocate for their inclusion in the PK-12 curriculum, teachers can benefit from banding together and seeking support from parents, community members, and policymakers. When censorship is in place, in some circumstances teachers may be able to modify certain terminology, as I did during my presentation on teaching stop-motion animation to students with special needs, to communicate important content and emphasize the learning skills that benefit students. As my professional intersections evolve, I will continue to build on my experiences and seek ways to teach and support students and teachers. These acts align closely with well-being theory (Seligman, 2011) and can give teachers hope as they work to support students experiencing trauma using a full range of helpful academic concepts.

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A Way to Arctic Art Education — Intersections of Land, Art and Northern Knowledge

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Intersectionality is often based on the idea that groups of people differ in the number of privileges they have (Crenshaw, 1989). I recognise that kind of thinking in myself as an artist and art educator, often aiming to improve the positions of marginalised groups of people in the North and the Arctic. I share a vision of art educators as agents of social justice and transformation to address the urgent call for equity, diversity, and inclusion in our educational structure and practices (Powers & Duffy, 2016). However, I would like to emphasise that intersectionality in my work has never been an action agenda, similar to intersectional feminism (Collins, 2000)¹, but an analysis of a situation caused by changes in Northern society, and perhaps also changes in art, which naturally has also affected my understanding of art education and its methods.

I have already had quite a long career in the field of art and art education, and throughout the years I have looked at the basics of my activities. In this chapter, I want to highlight a few milestones, some changes in the direction of my career, that an intersectional examination can shed more light on, and vice versa. I hope that my career thus brings its contribution to the discussion on intersectionality in education.

Between Land and School

I grew up in a small village in the middle of the wilderness in Northern Lapland, Finland. The villagers' livelihoods were a mixture of farming, reindeer husbandry, and natural living pursuits like fishing, hunting, and berry picking. The residents of the village were Finnish in identity, even though their ancestors had their roots in the forest Sámi culture. The Sámi language was no longer spoken in my village as it was in neighbouring villages. At that time, ethnic differences were not emphasised. We were all children from marginal, remote villages when we arrived at the central school in the municipality. Some children ended up in a dormitory. I made my daily school travels by crossing two wide rivers. In the central village, we often got into fights; we were bullied. After stressful school days, my forest home was comforting.

I was lucky. The first artist born in Lapland lived in the main village near the school. He picked me up at the school's art education exhibition, invited me to his home, and gave me oil paints. The boy who dreamed of being a hunter and fisherman instead was given an alternative; making art may have been real work since the local artist was a respected man in his community. The school taught things needed elsewhere and aimed to educate me to leave behind the remote village and the ties it gave to land and water. Art creates the possibility of preserving land and water in a new way.

As a youngster, I was interested in nature and landscapes in a different way than local young men normally were. I made drawings and paintings while fishing and working outdoors. What interested me was the marks people left on the landscape: reindeer fences, lumberjacks' cabins, villages along a river, and fishery buildings on the Arctic Ocean. I could experience the narratives infused in

¹ The concept of intersectionality was first introduced to the field of legal studies by black feminist scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), and later Patricia Hill Collins (2000) formulates intersectionality as a critical praxis to determine how social justice initiatives can use intersectionality to generate social change. Since that, intersectionality has been applied in many fields from education, healthcare, employment, economics to politics and activism.

these places and feel how people had found their place amid nature, on this planet, and under this sky. Much later on I met the same kind of interest when collaborating with humanistic geography, anthropology, and environmental humanistic researchers in Northern places.

Crash of the North and the South

I intended to study art education in Helsinki, the only place in Finland where a degree programme in art education was offered at those days. Like all those who went to study in universities, I had to move from the North to the South, from a small village to a big city. I saw several cases where the change ruined young people's identities: they did not return to the North, and their education did not benefit their communities. This megatrend has led small towns and villages to experience erosion in certain social structures and has created a series of recognised problems, including aging populations, decreased cultural activities, and psycho-social problems often caused by the loss of cultural identity (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015).

By organising my studies according to nature's calendar in my home region, I managed to keep in touch with the land and the community where I grew up, even though the distance was about 1,000 kilometers. I earned money to study art by fur trapping, fishing, and picking berries during study breaks and holidays. I did not leave my land, and later I felt that this was exactly how I maintained the trust of my community, which later benefited my role as an artist and art educator working in the North.

I received a modernist art education in the South, which dislodged me for a while from my Northern identity, questioning its significance. At that time, art was seen as a universal phenomenon, with no place for the voice of local people. The basic tenets of modernism are the individuality of the artist, the autonomy of art, and art's emanation from centres towards the periphery. My interest in the North's land and locality was regarded as a sign of dilettantism. Afterward, it is ironic that in an art school where only Finns studied at the time, modernism was seen as universal and global, while in the North it was seen as exclusive and local. People were living, due to their livelihoods and cultures, in border-crossing dialogue (Bastos, 2006) between Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish nationalities and several different Sámi peoples.

As an art student and for a time afterward, I felt doubly marginalised by modernism: I had taken an interest not only in the Northern periphery but in the land as well. I almost stopped making art. As an art educator at the university, new discussions about DBAE pedagogy did not inspire me even when I renovated art teacher training at the Oulu University Education Department according to DBAE pedagogy in the 1980s.

Crossroad of Art and Land

My enlightenment back to art education was thanks to two exhibitions I saw while traveling in Europe. The *MA Space-Time* exhibition of Japanese art and architecture opened my mind, helping me realise the sensitive and aesthetic observations of nature I had learned in my home village. The exhibition provided me with a new perspective on how I might work in landscapes. The experience of space and time in my activities in nature (fishing, hunting, picking berries, and cutting firewood) found their counterparts in the meditative and holistic sensitivity to the landscape found in Zen art. The coordination of body and mind, the aesthetics and existence of moving around in a landscape began to coalesce into artistic activity. It was only later that the examples of American and English environmental art reinforced and signposted a manner that enabled me to approach my environment as art.

The exhibition in Paris of the Italian *Arte Povera* movement opened the way for me to return to the materials and traditional methods of my land. The fish dams, hay ricks, and woodpiles took on a new aesthetic significance. I began to think of the prospect of making the work, the methods, and the skills that these objects embodied, and which I knew well, part of my art. The installations

of *Arte Povera* artists inspired me to exploit the ways of my own culture, using natural materials as a medium in my art.

I became an environmental artist, and since then I have hardly ever worked inside studios or classrooms or used traditional art education materials with my students. Today, there is growing interest in material culture and handmaking skills in art and art education. The trend follows the global paradigm shift known as new materialism, changing the focus of art towards physical locations and materiality from conceptualisation (Fox & Alldred, 2019). Recent educational studies have stressed that materiality has major importance in Arctic residents' childhoods (Rautio & Stenvall, 2018).



Image 1. Mapping ecocultural traditions and Northern knowledge of snow and ice provided a strong basis for planning a wintery environmental art as well as participatory art education projects in Northern villages and schools. Timo Jokela's snow *Daughters of Päiviö* (detail) installation in Levi fell. Photo: Timo Jokela, 1998.

Intersection of the North and Contemporary Art

Place and situation-based pedagogy (Huhmarniemi et al., 2021; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020) and multidisciplinary networking, especially with cultural geography and anthropology researchers, were at the core of my art education activities since the mid-1990. I used my Northern environmental art to inspire local communities and regional stakeholders to collaborate with universities and art education providers. At the University of Lapland, I founded Art, Community, and Environment studies through which students' activities first spread not only to Finnish Lapland, but also to the Sámi regions of Sweden and Norway, and then on to the Indigenous cultures of the Northern parts of Russia.

Even though I understood myself as an educator of contemporary art, I did not take contemporary art to the North as such. Rather, I asked what skills, materials, contents, or problems the North could offer to contemporary art. Today, I can see my activities as cultural revitalisation, which is often discussed in relation to decolonisation, cultural diversity, and cultural vitality. Reconstruction of forgotten skills, creation of cultural continuation, and promotion of cultural pride are some of the common aims and means when revitalising cultural practices and values (Auclair & Fairclough, 2015; Cunsolo et al., 2017). I understood that my work could revitalise local and regional skills, crafts, and ecocultural values and traditions (Jokela, 2018; Härkönen et al., 2018). Revitalisation is also associated with the resilience of the Arctic culture, an ability to adapt to changing nature and culture (Sakakibara, 2017). My background, stemming from the lifestyle of a small, multi-ethnic

Northern village, helped me to find the right land-based material and communicative channels of cooperation, intersectional points, and encounters with the inhabitants of the North.



Image 2. Place-based winter art at the schoolyards of Sami region. Students from Norway (Sabmi) and Finland familiarize themselves with the art and handcrafts of their own culture and use the snow to create a visual identity for the schoolyard. As a form of new genre Arctic art, the winter art experiment was based on ecocultural and Northern knowledge of snow and ice. Photos: Timo Jokela, 2008.

Ecocultural Voices in Multi-ethnic North

As the interconnection between the ecological and the cultural (Arora-Jonsson, 2016) is evident in the Northern and the Arctic, with my nearest colleagues, I proposed to use the term *ecoculture* to highlight the specificities of communities and places (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2022). For example, in Northern Finland, each village has a unique ecological and geographical location, as well as a cultural and social structure. When talking about art activities and developing the contexts of work for contemporary art and art education, besides the land and its material, the socio-cultural aspects in the communities, schools, pupils, and other participants have to be considered more than the artist's individuality. This led to the adoption of community art as part of my working methods in the later 1990s.

As a community-based environmental artist, I met some challenges and wrote the following (Jokela, 2008, p. 6. / first published 2001 in Finnish):

Firstly, the relationship between places, localness and being an artist always entails the dilemma of colonialism and emancipation. Artists must ask themselves if they can really offer something through their art that surpasses the local people's everyday experience and knowledge of place. The artists need also to consider how their own life [experiences] can be incorporated into their art, their conception of art and what they think is of value in art without colonizing the local people and places. Secondly, how can artists give their work a form that will allow the environment and the community to be a productive and constructive element of its artistic content?

And thirdly, as an art teacher trainer, I should ask how to guide future art teachers to plan and realise emancipatory processes without colonializing the communities in which they will work. These questions are basic methodological and philosophical considerations in environmental and community art—choices about the way art is done. These questions are extremely important when working in the North and Arctic with Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups of people in villages and small towns.

In the Northern circumpolar area, the blending of indigenous cultures and other lifestyles is common. This multinational and multicultural composition creates elusive sociocultural challenges that are sometimes even politicised in the neo-colonial settings of the North and the Arctic (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2011). There is a need to discuss the significance and objectives of an ‘Indigenous paradigm’, which is a way of decolonising Indigenous values and cultural practices by ‘re-centring’ the research focus on their concerns and worldviews (Kuokkanen, 2000). One of the main objectives of such a paradigm includes criticism of the Western Eurocentric way of thinking and challenges the traditional Western ways of knowing and researching, calling for the decolonisation of methodologies of Indigenous research (Smith, 1999). Many scholars have considered the Indigenous knowledge system a basis of Indigenous research in the fields of culture, art, and design (Guttorm, 2015), as well as schools in general (Keskitalo, 2010).

These paradigm changes led me to re-evaluate how art is taught in schools and universities and highlighted the aims of a culturally sensitive approach to art education and the objectives of UNESCO for ecological, social, cultural, and economic sustainable development. These objectives incorporate current issues, such as the survival of regional cultures combined with the inhabitants’ self-determination of their own culture, while securing social and economic stability for all communities (UN, 2015). My experiences living in a multi-ethnic region created for me an interest in taking into account intersectional differences and made me wonder whether I represent the ‘Western Eurocentric White man’ myself or instead a ‘Northerner’ or, due to my lack of language skills, a ‘non-status Sámi’ (see Sarivaara et al., 2015). In any case, the Indigenous paradigm affects my thinking in place- and community-based art education in the North.



Image 3. The village community gathered in the middle of the forest for the opening of the participatory public art work *Story of Kirkkokuusikko*. The memorial was connected to the stories of the past, but the dialogue and process involved in making the artwork were current and even political for the locals, whose intersectional background and cultural roots lie partly. Photo: Timo Jokela, 2009

Intersectionality and Northern Knowledge

I had accompanied the Sámi in many ways, both in the land-based living of my home region and later in art and art education action around the Scandinavian North. I had not had to deal with ethnic exclusion while working in the North in Indigenous or multi-ethnic communities. Today, the discussion regarding who is a Sámi, who has the right to speak about matters related to the land and landscape, the cultural tradition of the region, to the education related to it, is loaded. The challenge is a debate in which it seems that certain aspects of critical intersectional feminism are adopted in an exclusionary way, and situations arise in which other groups are now marginalised from discussions about the future of the Northern and Arctic regions. With my art and my art-based research, I have tried to bring the voices of those on the margins to the fore in this discussion (Jokela & Huhmar-niemi, 2022a). This has also required clarification of the concepts used concerning Northern inter-sectional dimensions in art education.

In research, traditional ecological knowledge, Indigenous knowledge, tacit knowledge, and local knowledge are some of the concepts that attempt to account for diverse ways of knowing in rural and semi-rural communities living close to nature (Helander-Renvall & Markkula, 2017; Porsanger & Guttorm, 2011; Valkonen & Valkonen, 2018).

The presence of Indigenous cultures and their blending with other cultures are characteristic of the contemporary Arctic (Chartier, 2007). According to estimations by the Arctic Human Development Report (ADHR, 2007), there are approximately four million people living in the Arctic, including over 40 indigenous groups and languages. Indigenous people make up 10% of the entire population in the Arctic (AHDR, 2007).

Therefore, as the concept of Indigenous knowledge does not cover all the different forms of cultural, traditional, and tacit knowledge of all the inhabitants of the Arctic, we use the term *North-ern knowledge* (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020a, 2020b). The concept of Northern knowledge refers to understandings and knowledge based on the Arctic region's ecocultures and involves common traditions, social systems, and sustainable use of natural resources (Jokela, 2018; Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020a, 2020b). In my activities in art and art education, I have examined how cultural heri-tage (Fairclough, 2009; Fairclough et al., 2014; Smith, 2006) and people's relationships to land and landscape manifest as Northern knowledge and contribute to education and the development of the North's countryside and sparsely populated areas in a sustainable way (Jokela et al., 2022; Vodden et al, 2015).



Image 4. Timo Jokela's place-based public art work *Traces of Huttu-Ukko* at the roundabout in front of the Pyhä National Park's recreation center. The creation of the work was based on Northern knowledge and the subject related to forest livelihoods. Stories were planned together with the locals, and the techniques of traditional wood construction were used in the implementation. Photo: Timo Jokela, 2008.

Circumpolar Intersectionality Meets New Genre Arctic Art Education

In recent decades, my art education activity, emerging from its intersectional foundation of my home village, region, and the Scandinavian North, has expanded around the circumpolar Arctic. I founded the Arctic Sustainable Art, Design and Visual Culture Education network in 2012 under the Arctic University's expanded activities. Now I am working as a UArctic Chair of Art, Design, and Culture.

Rapid changes in the Arctic nature, culture, and environment, as well as paradigm shifts in research and contemporary art, have resulted in the need for changes in higher education (Härkönen, 2021), as well as in formal and informal art education in the Arctic (Huhmarniemi et al., 2021). Culturally sensitive approaches in art education are needed globally (Manifold et al., 2015) and have been promoted in the multi-ethnic North through art-based research (Hiltunen, 2009; Härkönen, 2021). These objectives include current issues such as the transformation and continuation of ecocultures combined with local inhabitants' self-determination regarding their own cultures. In art education in the North, the question concerns not only safeguarding cultural heritage but also rethinking education policy and school curricula. Besides art education practices, the need for decolonising culturally sensitive art education research in the framework of intersectionality (Bastos, 2006; Greene, 2005) is highlighted by multidisciplinary collaborations in the UArctic networks in the circumpolar region.

By introducing the concept of a *new genre Arctic art*, I wanted to consider how socially and environmentally engaged art related to the North and the Arctic can foster education for social justice and sustainability (Jokela et al, 2021; Jokela & Huhmarniemi 2022a, 2022b). New genre Arctic art defines and describes contemporary artistic interventions, public art, and performances that include activism and engagement with contemporary issues. The term is based on the concept of a *new genre public art* that was coined by Lacy (1995, 2008) to define a type of public art that, rather than producing typical sculptures in public spaces, creates participatory, political, and aesthetic events. Racism, poverty, and women's rights were some of the key issues in the 1990s in the USA, and later on, environmental issues such as climate change began to take centre stage in a new genre of public art. In the Arctic region, besides climate change, the extraction of natural resources and Indigenous people's cultural rights are two contemporary issues that interest artists and artist-researchers (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020a). Since the 1990s, these participatory and, to some extent, pedagogical approaches in contemporary art have inspired art teachers and educational researchers to look for strategies that could bring communities together in interactions with traditions and ecocultures (Hiltunen, 2010).

My interest in the new genre of Arctic art has to do with its pedagogical potential to foster decolonisation, resilience, sustainability, and cultural activism. I am interested in examining how new genre Arctic art and education can strengthen the agency to maintain and revitalise Northern knowledge and improve cultural resilience and sustainability. In my work as an artist and art educator, I initiate, produce, and explore art productions that engage with social, political, and environmental issues in ways that connect art, communities, nature, and culture. This calls for an intersectional approach to understand the starting points of Northern communities and groups in a situation where megatrends, changes arising from several mutually influencing factors, meet the group and individual identities of locals.

For me, it is a matter of sensitively recognising situations, not complaining. I hope my approach to art education involves an optimistic view of the possibilities that art education can open

up for effecting changes that support more sustainable societies (Dewhurst, 2014). By building on the existing ecocultures in Northern Arctic villages and towns, the skills and strengths of local people, and contemporary art and international collaborations, this approach represents an alternative to top-down and nationally coordinated curricula and development projects.

In the circumpolar North, new genre Arctic art education acts have also brought out a new dimension, which was especially strengthened during the coronavirus pandemic. Virtual teaching and learning have enabled simultaneous virtual togetherness and hybrid model art education of the Arctic Sustainable Art, Design, and Visual Culture Education circumpolar network (Jokela & Härkönen, 2021). This recent extension of virtual learning spaces has provided completely new opportunities to deal with intersectional spaces and situations related to Northern communities. At the same time, it has created opportunities to explore how art students' and educators' identities have become more flexible and increasingly multiplied in circumpolar, art-based, border-crossing communication (Jokela & Härkönen, 2021). For me, this has opened the possibility of my dream of building a network connecting art educators from Alaska, Canada, Nordic countries, Scotland, Northern Russia, and Siberia. The intersectional challenges I have experienced in my career now appear as resources and, hopefully, a better opportunity to communicate with my network.



Image 5. Photo documentation of series *In the Capercaillies Woods*. In the series, I reflect on my cultural relation with animals and the rapid changing Northern nature in a post-humanistic sense. Snow-installation with capercaillies' tails. Photo: Timo Jokela 2021.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I wanted to highlight a few intersectional milestones from my career as an artist and art educator, which at first detached me from my Northern way of life but eventually brought it closer and closer to what I love. These milestones can be seen as situations in which my intersectional identities intertwine and create overlapping and parallel configurations: as a child of a remote village, a modernist art student, an environmental and community artist, a university teacher, a local and global actor, a Finnish White man, and a Northerner.

These intersectional formations of becoming an art educator have led me into the actions I have performed and hopefully also led my hundreds of students to think about which intersectional factors they will build their own identities and art education practices. Finally, I see intersecting and overlapping social identities as having empowering potential.

Now, as I am about to end my career as an active university art educator trainer, it is a mistake to think that the work is finished in terms of how I reconciled my Northern identities with art education practices. Today, I explore the rapidly changing Arctic through the lenses of posthumanism and ‘knowing with’ Arctic people, as well as other species. However, the posthumanistic philosophy was not initially at the core of my activities: the focus in the beginning, was on environmental aesthetic experiences, more on landscapes, places, and the relationships between people, nature, and cultures. Indeed, the posthumanistic method of art education represents a relatively new approach, which interlinks with ecoculture and decolonial education and highlights intersectional phenomena in a new way. In Northern ecocultures, people have strong relationships with the land, and the Northern animistic understanding of the world includes interactions between animals and people, as well as common fate (Pentikäinen, 2018). In this context, art education connecting Northern knowledge and ecoculture provides an opportunity to consider human and non-human nature as equals. Growing up in a Northern wilderness village as a hunter and fisherman, I can still find remarks of this equality and harmony in my worldview and art education practices.

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Learning About African American Women Artists Intersecting Identities: Critical Conversations Using Intersectionality as an Analytic Tool in Art Education

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Introduction

“African-American women artists, who have fallen prey to both racial and gender misrepresentations, and who have, since the African slave trade began, strained against a dominant and insular culture” (Farrington, 2005, p. 3).

Art historian Lisa Farrington examines the triumphs and struggles of many African American women artists and their artistic evolution from Africa to the modern day. There is a distorted perception of African American women artists as untalented, devaluing their worth in the art world as agents of social change (Farrington, 2005, 2017). Unfortunately, the myth of African women as lascivious, exotic, unfeminine, and grotesque subjugated them to the intersecting oppression of racism and sexism. African women enslaved by White colonizers brought their traditional artistic talents to the Americas without giving the proper recognition reflected in the art world, art history, and art education.

As an undergraduate art major at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, I enrolled in the course *Art by Women*. I was excited to learn about women and women of color artists because the discussion of race and gender was missing in the traditional White male artists-dominated in art history courses. The required course text was *Women Artists 1550-1950* by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin. This 350-plus page text did not mention African American women artists, nor did the White female professor throughout the semester. As the only African American in the class, I could not identify as an artist or woman of color.

After realizing that there would be no critical conversation discussing the intersectionality among women of color, I specifically wrote about African American women artists for my final paper. To find references and conduct my research, I sought resources outside the Pratt Institute library by visiting the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem, New York. I spent days and hours at the Schomburg Center’s archives. I was amazed by all the history and artwork produced by African American women. For example, I learned about sculptor Edmonia Lewis, who was born in 1844 and attended Oberlin College. For the first time, I saw images of Lewis’ neoclassical marble sculpture *Forever Free* (1867-1868). As I continued my research about Lewis, I learned that her two White roommates accused her of poisoning them while attending Oberlin College and that a racist White mob kidnapped and beat her. Lewis’ race and gender were significant factors in being the campus scapegoat for attempted murder and stealing art supplies. Even after being acquitted, she was disbelieved and dismissed from Oberlin College (Farrington, 2005). Many art textbooks show the grandeur of Lewis’ artwork and her sculpting techniques; however, they rarely discuss the effects of racism and abuse she received because of her race and gender.

This course created the assumption that African American women's art, history, and culture did not exist. The absence of any conversation of intersectionality leaves a critical gap in women's art history, art practice, and lived experiences. The information on intersecting realities of race, gender, education, economic status, and social class power structure for many African American women artists was missing from my education. Quickly, I learned that artists who look like me were not a critical factor in studying art. Unbeknown to the instructor, from this course, I became empowered to establish my own identity of Blackness as an artist and a feminist to challenge the racism and sexism in the White supremacist system in art. Lorde explains, "As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences or to view them as cause for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change" (1984, p.112). Lorde's words could explain why the White professor did not mention African American women artists, viewing them under suspicion and separating them as artists. My experience as an undergraduate art student left me feeling like an outsider within the institute (Collins, 2000). This oppression led to mental distress and feeling powerless and unwelcome in the classroom. Critical conversations in the classroom are imperative to expose the invisibility that challenges African American women artists' existence. There is a need to move beyond their artwork's aesthetics and examine their intersecting identities reflected through their gender, culture, community, and narrative that is not always adequately studied or archived. I believe, as an art education professor, the value of critically investigating and teaching art education through a Black feminist lens and following Lorde's (1984) perspective that what is important to me "must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood" in educational institutions (p.40).

It is common for women of color to use intersectionality to define their identity and experiences (Gammel, 2021). In this chapter, I use intersectionality as an analytical tool to examine the theory and pedagogical practices to inform students of African American women's art, history, education, triumphs, culture, community, and lived experiences. I mention the historical legacy of African American women pioneers of intersectionality. Also, I highlight Collins and Bilge's (2016) theories of using intersectionality as an analytic tool. I describe creating a special topic course to honor and teach about African American women artists through an intersectionality framework. Lastly, I share students' reflections and thoughts during and after the course.

Historical Legacy of Intersectionality

The intersecting oppression of African American women has a historical legacy rarely acknowledged and taught (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Farrington, 2005; Tefera, Powers, & Fischman, 2018). Before Kimberle Crenshaw (1989, 1993) coined the term intersectionality to explain how racism and sexism intersect with women of color in academic and legal practices in the late 1980s, there were African American women who described the intersecting oppression of race and gender in education, politics, and class. The idea of African American consciousness of their oppression has existed for decades as scholars have stated, "In previous eras, other Black women, notably, Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper, Maria Stewart, and others openly challenged racism and sexism through a black feminist doctrine" (Wilder, Bertrand, and Osborne-Lampkin, 2013, p. 30). Francis Beal (1970) and Toni Cade Bambara (1970) analyzed the legacy of the intersectionality of Black women's lives that examines racism and sexism, which keep them silent. These women spearheaded the conversions of intersectionality as an analytic tool to address the multi-dimensionality of social injustices that lead to their oppression. Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor (2017) reminds us that the Combahee River Collective (CRC) was created in 1974 to honor Harriet Tubman's raid in 1853 on the Combahee River in South Carolina to describe interlocking oppression of inequalities beyond race, gender, and sexuality to meld identities of African American women's experience. While CRC did not use the term intersectionality, they did "articulate the analysis that animates the meaning of intersectionality, the idea that multiple oppressions reinforce each other to create new categories of suffering" (Taylor, 2017, p. 4). African American women have had critical conversations throughout

history, consistently describing their oppression based on their gender, race, and identity that factors into their daily lives.

In art education, there is also a historical legacy of intersecting oppressions. The exclusion of African American women artists in museums, galleries, textbooks, and teaching resources is a significant component of their invisibility in many academic settings. However, artists such as Lois Mailou Jones, Elizabeth Catlett, Faith Ringgold, Howardena Pindell, Betye Saar, and many more are a few artists who describe first-hand racial discrimination and rejection from schools, scholarships, and art exhibitions because they are African American women and not because of their artistic talent. Many of these women used their artwork as a source of activism to confront racism and sexism, often unexplored in the classroom.

Dallow (2004) analyzed the challenge of intersecting identities for African American women artists stating, “As early as the nineteenth century, black women faced not only the sexualized stereotypes bestowed on them by white America but also the exclusionary practices of feminist organizations and certain standards created by black males...” (p. 78). Judy Chicago started the first Feminist Art Program advocating for women’s rights to attend art classes and exhibit in mainstream galleries and museums that challenged patriarchal discrimination (DeBiaso, 2012). However, one would think that the Feminist Art Movement’s advocacy for the equity of women artists would include African American women. Some African American women felt rejected from many of the opportunities of the Feminist Art Movement based on their race. For example, Betye Saar stated that the White women did not support them and made them feel invisible (Farrington, 2005). In the 1960s, the Black Art Movement (BAM), or the Brotherhood, was criticized for its misogynist attitude towards women and for focusing primarily on male artists (Brown, 1998; Poets, 2014). Even though both organizations focused on a support network, the African American woman was not a part of the conversation. Faith Ringgold (2005) claimed, despite her recognition in the 1960s, “I saw my lack of opportunity as an indication that being a black woman was a major drawback in my career” (p. 161). Throughout history, African American women artists have also demonstrated their commitment to critical conversations about their social injustices and exposing racial and gender bias. A deliberate consciousness of these women led them to openly discuss, document, protest, and create art about their mistreatment. An intersectionality analytical framework is necessary for exposing the legacy of oppression in the arts and introducing pedagogical methods of learning in art education.

Intersectionality as an Analytic Tool

Collins and Bilge (2016) theorize intersectionality as an analytic tool that confronts issues and social problems that intertwine in different ways that incorporate race, gender, sexuality, class, politics, and economics that most African American women use to respond to these challenges. Several definitions of intersectionality as an analytic tool critically recognize and evaluate systemic inequalities that overlap gender, race, and a class of individuals and groups (McKee Hurwitz, 2020; ParlaAmericas, n.d.; Schots, 2021). It is crucial to consider the evolution of intersectionality and how this framework is a form of critical praxis and inquiry that is always under construction to analyze the intricacies in the world of everyday people’s daily lives, as well as institutional and organizational venues (Collins, 2000; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

There are various ways to critically use intersectionality as an analytic tool that expose the multiplicity of African American women artist individual identities. By adopting the intersectionality framework as an analytic tool for critical inquiry in art education, the focus is not only on race and gender but the power dynamics and social justice in art practice. My goal is not to narrow the definition of intersectionality but to adapt Collins and Bilges’ theories of using analytic tools to engage in critical conversations about social inequalities as women artists of color and their exclusion in academia. In this chapter, I use intersectionality as an analytic tool that can be applied in the art education classroom to examine the oppressions of African American women artists

through their artwork, history, education, and lived experiences. There are many ways to transform Collins and Bilge's usage of analytic tools of intersectionality to shed light on African American women artists' dedication to challenging the racism and sexism in the art world; however, I highlight three of their suggested analytic tools.

The first use of intersectionality as an analytic tool describes how social constructs of power structures are correlated. African American women artists were confronted with different rules in applying to art schools, creating and exhibiting artwork, submitting work to scholarships, and joining art-based organizations. For example, Lois Mailou Jones (1905-1998) won first prize for her painting for the Pennsylvania Academy, which they revoked once the school found out she was Black (Farrington, 2005). The rules did not allow women of color to participate in specific competitions regardless of their talent. Second, using intersectionality as an analytic tool addresses the importance of educational institutions in forming and resolving racial, gender, class, and social inequalities. Multiple factors contribute to the exclusion and erasure of critically examining an intersectionality framework in academic textbooks, scholarly publications, and the instructor's knowledge and desire. Administrators ignoring the significance of approving course adoptions or curriculum revisions widens the learning gap about African American women artists. Collins and Bilge (2016) emphasize that many "faculty and students routinely overlook the power relations of using intersectionality as critical inquiry that makes their scholarship and classroom practice possible and legitimate" (p. 32). An effort from art educators is needed to incorporate an intersectionality framework into the art classroom to challenge the White hegemonic educational system.


The third reason to use intersectionality as an analytic tool is to highlight the significance of African American women's history, politics, and identity as a critical praxis. Critical praxis is a significant factor in using an intersectionality framework to learn about everyday life applied to scholarly knowledge and pedagogy (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Much attention is spent on researching intersectionality in sociology and legal studies. The field of art education needs to be more conscious and consistent in utilizing intersectionality as a critical praxis and pedagogy to research the history and narratives of African American women artists. Acuff (2018) reminds us that "this absence solidified the necessity for Black women to develop further theory and praxis that explicitly attended to their unique issues" (p. 204). Acuff highlights the importance of having Black feminist research methodology in art education. Using intersectionality as a critical praxis through a Black feminist lens is a powerful analytic tool for art education. Discussing race and gender can influence students' learning of African American women artists.

Creating an African American Women's Art Course


I am a Black feminist and an assistant professor of art education at a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) in the low country of South Carolina. As I reflect on my limited exposure to African American women artists as an undergraduate art student, I realize that many students I taught needed exposure to them and their intersecting challenges or artworks. Even though there are undergraduate courses in African American Art History, Art History, and African American Women's History, none specifically address the intersectionality of African American women artists' history, plight, and artist practice. Why weren't African American women artists rarely discussed in academia? Lorde (1984) emphasizes that people are reluctant to see African American women "as individuals, as women, as human – rather than as one of those problematics but familiar stereotypes provided in this society in a place of genuine images of Black women" (p.118). Image centering the lives of African American women artists in higher education beyond racist and sexist stereotypes was not presented in most courses. How would the majority of undergraduate students of color respond to a course created that specifically discusses artists who look like them with similar histories and cultures? These negative stereotypes are upheld and solidified as normal behavior rejecting the stories of oppression based on race and gender that are rarely told, heard, or studied.

In the Spring 2022 semester, I created an undergraduate multidisciplinary special topic course, the *History of African American Women Artists*. The purpose of creating this course was to analyze history, critique artwork, and acknowledge intersecting oppression experienced by African American women artists. Also, I talk with and listen to their racial, gendered, political, and economic encounters and what affects their art practice today. I created a flier and advertised the class to instructors in various disciplines throughout the university (Figure 1)

Department of Art



History of African American Women Artists



This course surveys artworks made by African American women visual artists in the United States and abroad. Students will explore how African American women artists have contended with issues of race, gender, and sexuality through the era of slavery, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights, Black Feminist, and the New Millennium. In addition, students will analyze the stereotypical images of African American women in art, such as the Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire. This course will lay the foundation for students' understanding and appreciation of African American women's art and their narratives. In addition to lectures and discussion, the course includes guest speakers and site visits when possible.

Spring 2022
 Special Topic ARTS 390
 Tue & Thurs 12:15
 Dr. Indira Bailey
 ibailey@cla

Figure 1. Flier for History of African American Women Artist. Courtesy of the author.

The class enrolled twelve students¹ from studio art, art education, history, education, and African American Studies departments. My goal was to apply intersectionality as an analytic tool to lead students in rethinking the lives of African American women artists beyond their artistic techniques and brief biographical information presented in Eurocentric art history and art education textbooks. Considering the student's learning needs, I understood my unique position as an African American artist and woman, a significant factor in what and whom I brought into the classroom. My primary focus was on developing a curriculum that raised cultural consciousness on intersecting identities of African American artists that students may or may not have experienced. The official course description read:

This course surveys artworks of African American women visual artists in the United States and abroad. Students will explore how African American women artists have contended with issues of race, gender, and sexuality through the era of slavery, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights, Black Feminist, and the New Millennium. In addition, students will analyze the stereotypical images of African American women in art, such as the Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire. This course will lay the foundation for students' understanding and appreciation of African American women's art and their narratives. In addition to lectures and discussions, the course includes guest speakers and site visits when possible.

I created learning objectives to:

- Introduce students to African American women artists traditionally excluded in art historical surveys and methodological approaches in art history through lectures and guest artists.
- Examine the stereotyped images applied to African and African American women through social and art history.
- Critically evaluate the contexts of artistic practice, focusing on race, gender, and activism.
- Reflect upon the hegemonic constructs of gender, race, and sexuality in a way that deepens our awareness of African American women from enslavement to the present from social, cultural, and historical perspectives.
- Analyze the chronology of African American women artists' creativity demonstrated through their social conditions and political agenda through Civil Rights, Feminist, and other movements in the United States.
- Elaborate on how African American women artists used their art to illustrate their lived experiences through oral presentations and written assignments.

I am reminded that "no major text exists on the art of Afro-American women" (Tefagiorgis, 1987, p. 25). Lisa Farrington's (2005) *Creating Their Own Image: History of African American Women* is one of the few textbooks dedicated to African American women artists and artwork. Other women of color wrote books on African American artists like Samella Lewis, Sharon Patton, Lisa Collins, and Earnestine Lovelle Jenkins. I selected Farrington's book as the required course text because she unearths the levels of intersectionality by exploring the multiple layers of racism and sexism experienced by African American women artists through the era of slavery, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights, Black Feminist Movement, and the New Millennium. Adopting a textbook written by a woman of color was important for students of African ancestry to see themselves in scholarly texts and address the realities of most women's lives (Evan-Winters, 2016; Hooks, 2015). Remembering my lack of exposure as an undergraduate art student, I aim for students

¹ Due to COVID-19, the class was kept to the maximum number of students in the classroom for social distancing.

to understand that African American women are still committed to combating racism and sexism rooted in their experiences as artists.

The Artists

Throughout the semester, I invited five contemporary African American artists, Gwendolyn Black, Nette Forné Thomas, Amalia Amaki, Amber Robles-Gordon, and Alethia Brown, to speak to the class via Zoom about how their race and gender impact their artistic practice and lived experiences. Their stories exceeded what we see, read, and connect with contemporary Eurocentric artists. For example, Nette Forné Thomas (Figure 2), a retired art educator from New Jersey, described the support group for Black women artists in the 1970s called *Black Woman in Visual Perspective*. Thomas emphasized her theme on the female figure, femininity, symbols, and media. She spoke about how her series, *Woman's Struggles*, portrays the duality of women pulling against the resistant force of the "superwoman" concept.

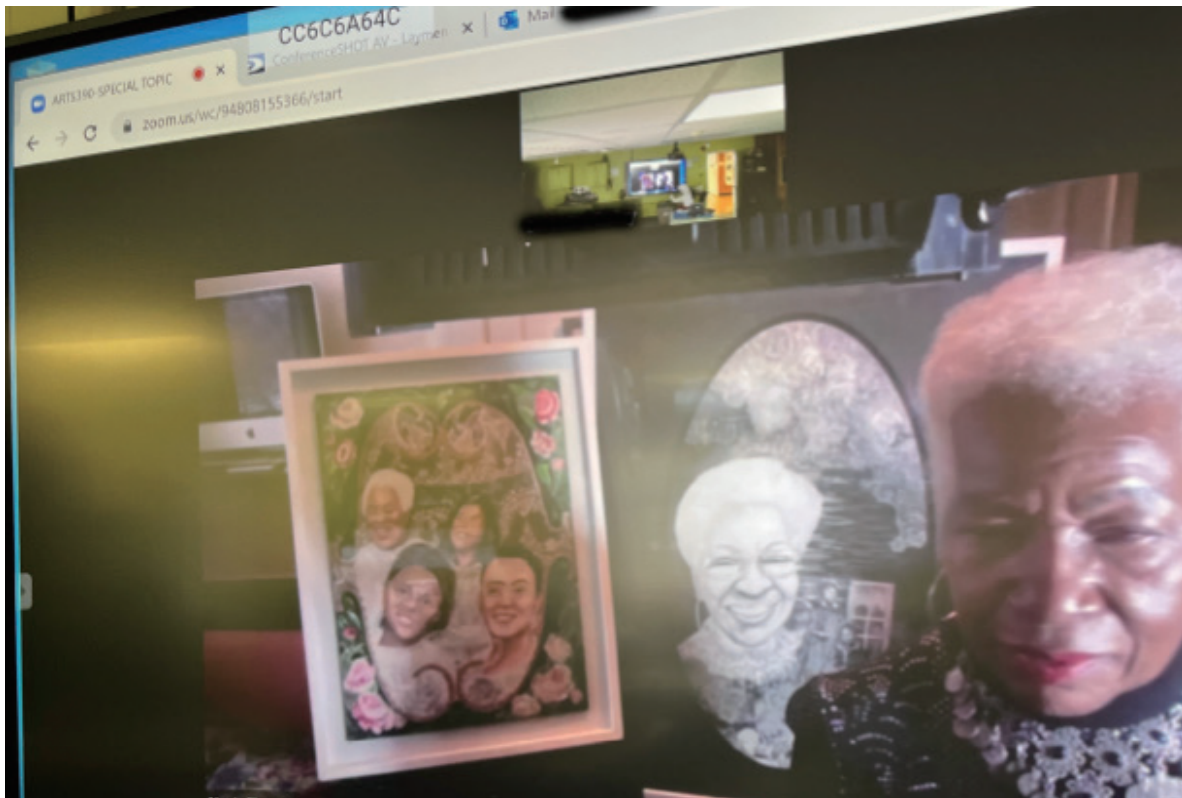


Figure 2. Nette Forné Thomas Zoom class visit. Permission by the artist.

Another example is artist Amber Robles-Gordon, a sculptor and an installation and textile artist. She showed one of her series called, *The Talking Stick Project*. Inspired by the book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, she combined working with wood and the book with weaving textiles through branches. The branches represented Henrietta Lack's DNA, specifically the created HeLa cells.² The installation is about her life and how her cells impacted the world and health care today. One of the sticks is called "Without a Black Woman's Consent," Robles-Gordon talks about

² *HeLa* are cells grown from Henrietta Lack's cervix without her permission months before she died. Her cells were used for research to suppress the genes that caused cancer and "helped develop drugs for treating herpes, leukemia, influenza, hemophilia, and Parkinson's disease; and they've been used to study lactose digestion, sexually transmitted diseases, appendicitis, human longevity, mosquito mating, and the negative cellular effects of working in sewers... Like guinea pigs and mice, Henrietta's cells have become the standard laboratory workhorse." *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Rebecca Skloot, p. 4.

how the stick represents all the women that have had something happen to them without their consent.

Each guest speaker spoke about their lives as women and artists and how their race and gender influenced their practice. They spoke about their artistic techniques; for example, Amalia Amaki showed her artwork inspired by the COVID pandemic and how she uses photography and technology to create images (Figure 3). Gwendolyn Black shared her technique of using tissue paper and paint to create her artwork and how music inspired her processes. Alethia Brown energized students by discussing her African-inspired series through colors, motifs, and fabrics. After each presentation, students asked the artist about their career, inspiration, motivation, and techniques (Figure 4).



Figure 3. Amalia Amaki's class visit, via zoom. Permission of the artist,

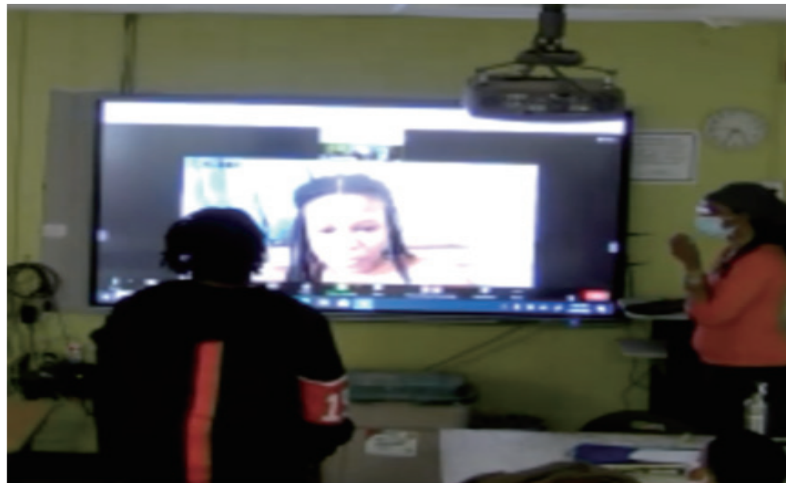


Figure 4. A student asking artist questions in class. Courtesy of the author.

Student's Reflection

As the instructor, I crafted assignments to welcome students to reflect on African American women's experiences and the impact on their lives that they might not have had in other courses. In addition to reading the book chapters and watching artists' videos, I included weekly journal entry prompts inspired by the textbook, guest speakers, and class discussions. For example, one of the journal prompt questions was: How have the stereotypes applied to African women affected African American women today? Students explored their emotions and recorded their reactions to the intersecting categories artists confronted in their online journals and how that affected them.

Student 1³:

In a functional society, citizens should be able to exist without set limitations to the life desired based upon physical attributes, mental framework, and personal belief. However, the existence of African American women as studied [has] endured stereotypes that affect their careers, relationships, and personal image. The relationship between society and black women has created harmful images within the mind of these exact individuals. We can see the use of artistic representation of black women as “loudmouth,” “overweight,” [and] “emotionally erratic” beings, which have become an umbrella for the existence of African American women. (Journal entry, January 20, 2022)

For the second journal prompt, Farrington’s book chapter, “Creativity and the Era of Slavery,” students reviewed and compared African artwork with art produced during slavery and today and reflected on how African American women artists connected with African spirituality.

Student 2:

When African women brought their talent and creativity, they also brought along their spiritual beliefs. Different African cultures have different beliefs which can be seen throughout centuries of many different art forms. These spiritual beliefs can be seen on quilts, sculptures, and even heard in music. When African people were brought to this country they were not allowed to read, so the use of different symbols allowed them to tell stories and pass their spiritual beliefs on to the next generation. These quilts also included a unique use of color, patterns, and some great detail to help one understand the story or the spiritual history of the quilt. (Journal entry, February 5, 2022)

Another journal entry prompt focused on African American women artists overcoming obstacles of sexism and racism in the past and today. Students shared their feelings about the current obstacles of racism and sexism African American women face today.

Student 3:

It is commonly known that African American Women were faced with tribulations due to a combination of racial and sexual discrimination. Compared to how it was decades ago, it has improved. Women do receive exponentially more support, specifically with inclusive/representative advertisements and media in the past few years. However, despite the change, there are still complications for African American Women, which are still driven by racism and sexism. (Journal entry, February 27, 2022)

These entries are only a few examples of how students used intersectionality as an analytic tool to rethink and readdress power relations and social movements. Other assignments included art presentations of contemporary African American artists. One student presented an Afro-Cuban artist named Harmonia Rosales. She showed how Black women artists, regardless of their heritage, demonstrate the duality of being Black and being a woman through their art. She shared the global aspect of using intersectionality as an analytic tool beyond the US.

Throughout the semester, students reflected on how they embraced learning about African American women artists through classroom discussions, journal writing, guest speakers, and assignments; this pedagogical approach differed from traditional art history courses.

³ Student names were replaced with numbers to keep their anonymity.

Student 4 shared:

This course immediately caught my interest, seeing this is an HBCU. I was familiar with taking classes about African American history, but when I saw that this was an art class dedicated to Black women, I felt as if the course was made for me. I left with more information than I could have ever expected throughout the course. I learned about artists I had never heard of before and their struggles, such as Selma Burke. I had no clue that she was a Black woman who created President Roosevelt's face on the dime. When I found out, I was angry with myself for not knowing the facts and that of many other Black women artists.

Student 4 continues to reflect on her own identity:

Hearing about the struggles these women experienced made me want to put myself out there as an artist even more. Nothing in this world is free. I am a Black female artist, and I know nothing will fall onto my lap. I will start putting myself out there more to have my name heard. Thanks to Amalia Amaki, I want to give my art more meaning and create a story behind it, relaying positive messages.

Student 5 replied with her thoughts on the course:

I took this course because it looked interesting to me since black women artists do not get much acknowledgment. Almost everything was something new to learn, I have heard of some of the information before but never really took it in. One example would be chapter 2 or starting on page 42, of the book we used during class, we talked about black women dressmakers and fashion designers, and as a child, I knew that had to be a thing, but I did not know how far back we as black women were involved.

The stories students read and the artist's visits describing their triumphs, struggles, and activism to expose racism and sexism moved them to reflect on their lives. I felt this course helped students approach how they analyze the intersecting lives of African American artists' experiences and artwork differently from what the traditional art history course taught them. They shared their stories of not learning about African American women artists and quickly learned that this course was not a typical art history class. Some of the women in the class realize that their oppression experience based on stereotypes, racism, and sexism is not new, and confronting these biases is still necessary.

Conclusion

Reflecting as an art student and not learning about Black women artists, I realized a significant part of art history was missing from my learning experience. The historical legacy of intersectionality warrants an investigation to highlight that these issues of racism and sexism are not new. As a teacher at an HBCU, it was imperative that I designed a course and developed a curriculum for students to experience a different exclusion of knowledge, identity, and culture than I experienced. For the first time, I felt I could breathe and teach in an environment where my race was not a problem. The *History of African American Women Artists* course centers on African American women artists in a curriculum that explicitly addresses their history and intersecting oppressions.

Inviting African American women artists as guest speakers richly influenced the students' artwork, journal writing, and artists' presentations. I was excited that these women saw the value of this course and agreed to speak to the students. I only can imagine if I had the same opportunity to

learn about African American women artists. I am left to question, if my undergraduate professor had considered the race and gender of her students, how would I have seen myself as a woman, artist, and educator?

I was impressed by each student's enthusiasm to learn about African American women artists in and beyond the textbook. When art educators incorporate intersectionality in their classrooms, they show students various ways of viewing an artist's life not outlined in the Eurocentric textbooks. In rationalizing using intersectionality as an analytic tool in the classroom, I began to offer students a different learning approach to research and analyze art by creating a critical consciousness through a critical praxis to understand that African American women artists are "simultaneously black and female" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p.3). Even though this class was a special topic course, I aim to offer this course as a permanent addition to the university.

The definition of intersectionality is evolving. However, using the analytical tools of the intersectional framework helps to recognize the complex layers of "social inequality is rarely caused by a single factor" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 26). I encouraged the use of intersectionality in the classroom to assist undergraduate students in seeing beyond racial and gender oppression to examine the power relations that intertwine with social status, education, and social economics as distinct categories that affect African American women artists.

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Intersectionality = Duality + Liminality

Or

(Not) $I = D + L$

Mara Pierce

Our stories of existence in the liminality of intersectionality are as deeply diversified as we are individual; yet liminality is where we struggle to hold our ground. In this chapter, I share how existing in that space has built this identity from the moment I received a photographic book as a child, through my formal/informal education, and marriage into the Diné Nation. At the liminal intersection of white Art Teacher Educator/art instructor/curator/arts-based researcher/artist, my practices are profoundly infused with anti-stereotyping, Tribal Nation diversity and inclusivity, as well as responsivity to silenced/invisible Indigenous student needs. Perspectives have arisen from that liminal space where I am cognizant of the life above and below me, and the directions around me, which often result in a handling of my fragility or disregard by others. However, I must always bear in mind Knight's words to me: "You just have to keep doing the work."

To Begin

There can be a lifetime of potential the moment a child picks up a book. As a young girl of nine, my mother gave me a photo book filled with bright colors and beautiful faces of powwow dancers frozen mid-air twisting and turning surrounded by large white, black, and brown eagle feathers. I was entranced with the visuals and the performance of a culture different from my own. I had never seen a person of Native American heritage prior to that moment except for the man my mother brought to my bedside once when I was four years old while I lay in the hospital after my tonsillectomy. It continues to amaze me how deeply that book penetrated my psyche and sowed the seed for learning more about Native American lifeways and cultures. However, there was to be an entire ocean of misinformation for which I was headed before I could get to any place of clarity. To-day, I envision that this could have been anyone's identity construction, but it is mine and serves as the driver for learning how to engender learners to braid their own.

As a critical educator, I believe we must ask ourselves the hard questions. There is indubitably no other way we can hold ourselves accountable than to locate our positionalities, which is engaged through a critical lens. What if, though, it was just a "lens?" We must question the origin of our values and the lessons we teach or identify if we are simply following instead of embodying change. For example, I question where I learned what I learned and why might it be so simple to pass on those understandings to my learners, or whether it creates uncomfortability in them to hear/learn. This is a lesson I gleaned from my intersectionality.

Emerging Complexities

From a critical lens, my identity has been that of a white colonial settler. I am the fifth generation of my family after having immigrated to the United States. To the best of my genealogical research, ancestors on my father's side settled on both coasts of Great Britain while the ancestors on my mother's side hailed from Scotland and Ireland. On the side of mystery, my father's mother, to

whom I was introduced only once, was Native Hawaiian. However, I recently learned that, although she raised him from the age of eight, she was his stepmother. There is also a history of university-educated professionals in my family tree. Racial privilege did not end with my immediate ancestors, but financial privilege ended with my grandmother. When I was born in Maine, my father decided he “could not afford me” (words he revealed to me after he re-established contact during my adulthood). His perspective resulted in my parents’ divorce when I was a newborn. My mother and I moved across the country to live with my maternal grandmother in California. My mother only held a GED diploma, so it took her six years to find an entry-level office position to support the two of us. We moved to her new job in Houston, Texas, and shared a two-bedroom apartment with another woman and her daughter just outside the city limits.

Throughout my grade-school years, my mother and I moved several times from one apartment to another. I have very little reference for what it means to live in or own a house as she was never able to buy one, nor do I own one now. I often reflect on the idea of being raised in apartment units as my conceptualization of “home.” However, not until recent consideration of purchasing a house for my own family had I realized how unprepared for that type of privilege I truly am.

My mother and I shared a single bedroom and bed until I was a pre-teen, and, in retrospect, the security of the apartment complexes was often questionable. In one case, we lived next door to a child molester, and, in another, I was held at knifepoint by an angry white girl my own age. My mother often held two or three jobs to ensure she was able to pay rent, keep us fed, and clothed.

I attended public schools throughout K-12, all with highly diverse populations. For my freshman year in high school, I was bused crosstown to an academically accelerated magnet program within an African American high-density school and spent most of my classes with students who were, I believed, valued for their dizzying intellect, most of whom pushed me to greater academic reaches. Nearly all the teachers were white and highly motivating for the students in the program. Outside the program, I was often the only white participant in school-wide activities such as ROTC and cheerleading. These early experiences helped to construct not only my perspectives but also shape my critical lenses to be able to consider the necessity for socially and culturally conscious pedagogies, as well as fed my intersectional “self.”

Another part of that puzzle occurred very early on when my mother gifted me with a photographic coffee table book for Christmas. On the cover was a line of white teepees nearly silhouetted by a setting sun. Inside the book were dancers in all types of regalia from many different Tribal groups. At that time, and not having been educated on Tribal diversities, all I saw was page after page of glossy “Indian” photos. Nonetheless, my passion was ignited for understanding the culture of an “Other.” I took it upon myself to research Native American peoples (as much as my nine-year-old self knew how to). I spent countless hours trying to find anything “Native American” in the library. Information I found was always framed in the past tense. Consequently, I initially bought into the concept of Native American soon-to-be extinction. Going into middle school, during Social Studies classes, not once were Native populations part of that conversation. By my first year in high school, I was completely frustrated with the lack of class content, even slightly touching on the cultural attributes of anyone other than white people or villainizing African American and Hispanic populations. Midway through the first semester of my first U.S. History class, I marched my tiny five-foot-tall frame up to the teacher – a fully round, extraordinarily tall, toupee-topped white man – and asked, “When do we get to the part about the Native Americans?” He looked down at me from his full six-plus feet of height, smiled a broad, powerful smile, and proudly replied, “We don’t.” I was aghast! My jaw dropped and my mind sped a thousand miles per minute, “What do you mean: ‘we don’t’? Why not?” “Because it’s not part of the Texas curriculum. You don’t need to know anything about that.” My head spun with disbelief and the next layer of my intersectional self was revealed.

After that traumatic educational awakening, I read all I could about modern Native American issues from the public library downtown. Unfortunately, there was very little being reported publicly at the time, which I now understand to be part of the invisibility: absence = erasure. I learned about

AIM and Leonard Peltier. I wrote letters to sitting Presidents to free the man from prison. To me, a white, largely uninformed teenager, it was evident that he was innocent! I did not consider myself an activist, just someone who wanted the truth to be known and white federal politicians not to be involved in Native American life. I finally received a letter in return from President Bill Clinton at the last appeal Peltier would ever have at his disposal. Clinton stated his appreciation for my concern and the support would be taken into consideration during the decision-making process. While my plea was legally meaningless, the letter and all the information I learned along the way were seeds planted toward pedagogical construction with a social justice perspective. However, I had very little knowledge of what to do with this perspective and, practicing privilege, forgot about the potential for any social change at the time.

While serving in the military I began questioning the lack of Indigenous presence in the place where I was living: Southern California. At the time, I did not know what the direction of the questions was or why I was seeking answers. I just knew that I held those curiosities, which, in hindsight, were part of my privilege. I began reading any book on Native American stories and medicines that I could find. I learned later that they had been penned and marketed by non-Indigenous writers. Critical theories had not been a part of any of my educational experiences up to that point and I was not aware that being critical of literature sources was a necessary component of learning about non-western cultures and beliefs. Once I discovered the authors' identities and the liberties that had been taken with the literary content, I became angry at the deception and inquired about how or why they manufactured the misinformation. Eventually, this chase led to my separation from the military as I could no longer see myself serving a government with a history of supporting the American Indigenous genocide.

Today, I know that I was initially failing to hold myself accountable for engaging in an investigation of the books' origins because I was never taught to do so as a person of white privilege. My educators never perceived that I would have the need to employ critical inquiry. Today, I know that it was those holes in my education that hid critical questioning as a practice to know our contemporary world. Today, as a practitioner of pedagogical investigation, I know that continuing denial is unacceptable with no place in the classroom or reliable research.

The visions of the powwow dancers from that first photo book continued to move around in my psyche endlessly. After I left my BFA program, and while working in a bookstore in Los Angeles, I found a flier for a powwow that was open to the public. Ever since receiving the book from my mother I had the desire to attend but felt that, since I am not Native American, I could not go. The event seemed to be too scary or sacred of an event for outsiders. I would not go without an invitation, yet with the flier now I had one. So, I went to the powwow to learn and experience.

One powwow led to another and then another. I met families from Tribal nations all over America. I became friends with dancers, artists, and vendors whom I saw at numerous events. They invited me to further events and then into their private family areas at the events. I committed myself to being present wherever I was invited and spent time serving the elders who were honored at every event. I learned about Native American arts from the artists, cultural practices from the practitioners, and food from the cooks, and took time to simply listen or watch. I was invited to dance during open dance songs, donate giveaways during blanket songs, and developed a new circle of friends – all Native American from diverse locations: rural, urban, and reservation. I made space for authentic voices to fill gaps in the understanding of learning who I was within the global scope, becoming saturated with them, and transformed the growing complexity of my identity. I realized that there were very few other non-Native people aware of this contemporary culture, but I could not conclude as to why at the time.

In 2002, I became homeless in Los Angeles. Attending powwows had become the one constant in my life where I could not give that instability any power over me. I had the opportunity to travel to Window Rock, Arizona for the Navajo National Annual Fair and Powwow. While there I met a Diné man. We wed within weeks of meeting, and I began a new life as a member of the Dine Nation by marriage. He and his family shared sacred cultural practices and expectations with me.

They also shared reasons *they* believed non-Native individuals were not taking the time to learn about non-white perspectives such as theirs, which began with the colonial settler mentality.

We lived on the Diné Nation reservation for four years. We initially supported ourselves by making and selling traditional beadwork. I soon took a position teaching in the Adult Education program at the local Tribal college. They hired me to also teach Art and English. My own education continued with cultural and pedagogical input from staff and other faculty at the college. They taught me to listen to the one group of voices that was going to teach me the most about teaching *their* children: the elders and students. I was invited to serve on the Diné Philosophy of Education (DPE) Committee, which was a group of faculty and staff tasked with ensuring that all aspects of the college were embedded with Diné cultural practices, values, and traditional beliefs. Recognizing the value of that single opportunity to change the way Euro-western education became a permanent part of my Diné students' lives and how it would impact their voices as Diné individuals, I accepted my new role and continued to deepen my intersectionality. Service on the committee became the next step in the river of steps toward my present position on Indigenous Pedagogy, as well as resulted in recognition by the college for my support for cultural advocacy.

I was later invited to join the school's Assessment Committee where I applied my knowledge of DPE to determine the depth to which courses were inclusive of the culturally relevant perspective. I constructed each of my courses, assessments, and curricula through the culturally-/student-relevant paradigm. Nearly every experience in which I engaged at the college and on the reservation became a learning opportunity in seeing more clearly the criticality of inquiry, cultural competence, educational, and socio-cultural significance.

Each performance of my professional and personal identity since then has been imbued with performing ethnographic art-based research. I was inspired by the narratives and experiences behind, around, above, and below me to academically pursue Native American Studies coursework alongside my master's and doctoral degrees in Art and Visual Culture Education. Both my thesis and dissertation were critical deep-dives into educators manifesting cultural competence and student-relevant art lessons in the classroom through first-person cultural voices as key contributors. My purpose has since become two-fold: 1 to eradicate questionable homogenous practices whereby no other non-Native student would ever be in doubt about Native American life, contribution, and cultural importance in historical and contemporary worlds; and 2 no other Native student in public high-density schools would ever experience invisibility or silencing, inside the school or in the larger society.

Most recently, these experiences and growth have intersected with leadership positions through the National Art Education Association's Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion State Liaison program and the United States Society for Education through Art Presidency. Had I not taken risks of vulnerability, accountability, and critical inquiry at each turn of my personal and professional life, my work would still be superficial. Had I not kept asking the difficult questions, listening to those first-person voices that are the most relevant to those students and people we all serve and for whom we must advocate at some of the most challenging moments in our lives as art educators, my vision would still be limited. Had I not silenced myself to listen to those in my Native personal life, privileging *those* voices and perspectives, my words would still be hegemonic. Had I not been persistent in challenging the pushback and ignorance, persistently adhering to my authentic cultural influences and inspirations' words of advice, my teaching and leadership would still be singular.

In my contemporary world, my practices are now deeply infused with anti-stereotyping (DeLoria, 1988, Tribal Nation diversity and inclusivity, and responsivity to Indigenous student needs where visions/voices have been and still are dismissed/erased (Apple, 1991; Blackwood & Purcell, 2014; Bourdieu, 2018; Freire, 2011; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1991; Knight, 2006. In the liminal space where I exist – between two worlds, two perspectives, multiple layered and complex experiential identities – I see that people are still in denial and that they participate in continuing oppressive behavior.

Sparks from Intersectionality

The approaches I take in my classroom as an Art Teacher Educator are perpetually in question considering the aforementioned experiences and my occasionally extroverted intersectionality. My whiteness in mainstream academia has always initially protected me from racism. However, once discovered as a performer of non-normative cultural practices, I will also always be subject to other forms of discrimination and betrayal. Once my intersectionality is discovered, similar oppressions are also imposed upon me. I posit that, through the mirror held to him/her/them, impending identity loss is unconsciously felt by the one who has put forth the initial imposition and defenses go up. Still being seen as an initial beneficiary of white privilege while concurrently non-conforming results in a lack of balance in professional relationships. Outcomes from such connections end in dismissal by others and/or fragility management (Applebaum, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018; Yancy, 2015).

The methods I employ as a studio art instructor do not go uninfluenced. It is crucial, as one who teaches studio artmaking, to not simply observe the goings-on in the world but to include those events and conditions into the landscape of artmaking identity. The experiences that have brought me to this point have informed how I construct the materials my learners employ. As an educator of photography, global artists are part of the visual conversation – global artists whose work is internationally recognized on an equal footing. As a teacher of drawing, learners are required to investigate media, such as charcoal briquettes, that would not typically be sold at the art supply store. The obligation is then segued into a conversation about the cruciality of diverse approaches and perspectives in people based on their backgrounds.

As a curator, I intentionally push/break open the boundaries of spaces *with* underrepresented voices. The voices that informed me how to teach from a cultural perspective continue to speak to me suggesting that curatorial services provided for exhibitions/works of non-white artists should not be performed without those ethnographic voices. How those voices and their life experiences have led them to their contemporary artmaking is significant to understanding invisible perspectives. Thus, working collaboratively is imperative.

Through my art-based research work, collaboration is also critical and necessary. My research work is ethnographic, which demands first-person cultural experience narratives outside of my own. Given the intersectional experiences that now define my own identity, I am honored to make intentional space for that, as well as educate others on how to perform that shift. I hope that my writings emanate these multiple facets given the complexities of where those viewpoints rest and how they may impact educators and learners.

Finally, as an artist, my visuals are the result of that liminal space where the complexity of my individuality exists. I have come to perceive all humans as multifarious individuals through the above lived and perceived experiences: applied collaborations, influences as the outsider/insider, and non-mainstream critical narratives.

For Tomorrow

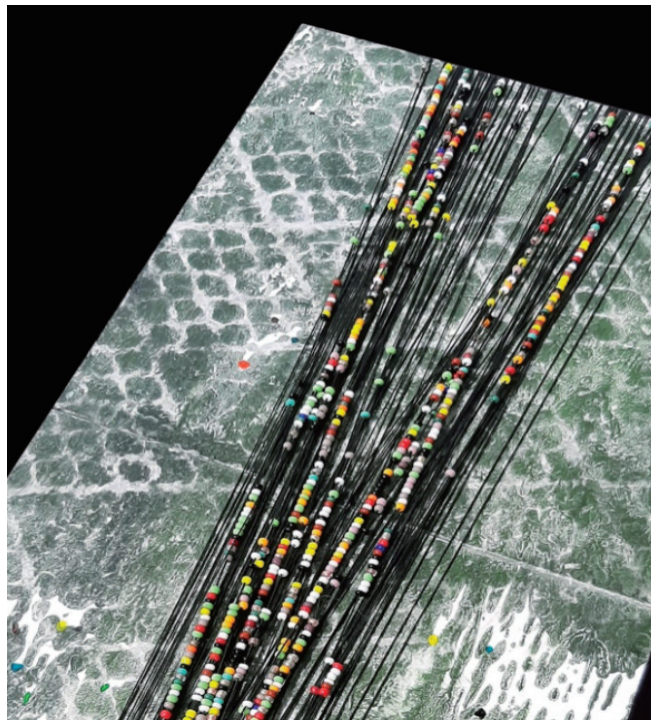
Acknowledging one's own intersectionality is challenging and requires reflection on what is critical for each individual. For some, it may result in terror that identity is at risk. In sum, it requires vulnerability. However, to discover one's own depth of self is a beginning to understand one's personal and professional relationships in the world. This is where I believe the action needs to begin:

- Step 1: Acknowledge injustices committed upon non-normative populations in US History
- Step 2: Acknowledge those continuing actions in our contemporary world
- Step 3: Accept your own continuing role in those actions today
- Step 4: Identify what you *can* change by learning how to change your perceptions and actions; embody and effectuate those changes
- Step 5: Identify what you can change in your curriculum; learn how to change that; manifest

- those changes
- Step 6: Build those changes into your normative behaviors/teachings so that they became the new norms

Drawing an Important Epilogue

When I began writing this chapter, I truly believed there would be a clear-cut, convenient ending. I was wrong. Intersectionality is a messy layered, yet outstandingly informative and driving dynamic within each and among humans. My present obligations and lifeways have demanded that my past be placed under a magnifying glass, revealing that every experience is a contributor to how I frame and apply those experiences today. Nonetheless, I am committed to continuing to develop my own intersectionality, as and well support others' investigation of their own complexities and articulation of those narratives through curricula, artwork, or storytelling.



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Critical Identities: Native Americana

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In this writing, I address the various negative stereotyping that has been used against Native Americans found in the predominately White, Euro-American, dominant culture in the larger society of the USA. The images discussed in this chapter were easily located with a simple Internet search and found on many sites such as eBay and Etsy. As I write this, I acknowledge that I have Native American ancestry and bloodline (Powhatan), but I am not tribally enrolled nor do I speak any Native American language fluently. I was not born nor raised on any reservation but in a rural, White, mid-dle-class, Southern culture. I write from a single voice and do not represent any group. This writing is a reflection of the socio-cultural and ceremonial experiences I have had with various Native American groups, but predominantly with the Lakota on the Rosebud Reservation, the Cherokee of North Carolina, and the Acoma of the Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico.

I will use the term Native American in this writing even though there are other ways groups are self-identified such as First People, Indigenous People, First Nation, or American Indian. I use Native American because I write about my experience with the various groups in the United States where the term Native American is common, albeit objectionable for some groups who prefer to use their original language and not a transposition into English or French. I join with many people who understand and resist the negative Native American stereotyping that occurs in many forms from educational materials to social media and sports costumes.

Of the times I have spent with Native American groups, I was predominately focused on spirituality and ceremonies including learning the procedures to be a ceremonial Fire Keeper, a Sundancer, and a person who conducts Sweat Lodges and Vision Quests. These experiences were taught to me by many Elders, but mostly by the Lakota People on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. My time in the Native American communities exposed me to the social injustice, racism, bigotry, and social and economic hardships in these Native American communities that I experienced first-hand over decades of traveling in Indian Territories to many ceremonies.

Propaganda

It was very easy to find propaganda images designed by the US government and the Anglo citizens of the dominant culture to demean the many Native American cultures. Barry reminds us that “Significance isn’t a kind of core or essence inside things; rather, meaning is always outside. Meaning is always an attribute of things” (p. 39). What was the motivation to create the demeaning image of Sitting Bull, a warrior-leader present at The Little Big Horn? (see The Legend of Sitting Bull smoking tobacco. The Internet link is in the references). It is very easy to see and understand the subjugated position of important Native American leaders as seen which pictorially demonized the famous Hunkpapa Lakota leader Sitting Bull. This image has many layers of meaning. One of the layers that may not be easily understood by cultural outsiders is the sacredness given to tobacco by many Native American cultures. Tobacco has many cultural origin stories attached to the power of the sacred herb which was used most reverently in sacred ceremonies both then, and now in contemporary times.

All image representation is a powerful tool to persuade a viewer to agree with a point of view. Owens found that “Representation, then, is not – nor can be – neutral: it is an act – indeed, the founding act – of power in our culture” (p. 91). Of course, this brings the question, *How is cultural power assigned? How is it understood? How can unwary viewers be swayed to agree with a dominant*

belief? even if it can be classified as historically and culturally false information?

Like all cultures, traditional Native American oral and visual languages are dense with cultural meaning. A Lakota person viewing the image of Sitting Bull would have no difficulty understanding the manipulative context of positioning a revered leader as an ugly demon. But, those outside that culture might find humor or condemnation reserved for the culture that is misunderstood. As Trend stated, “Far from being a neutral carrier of ideas and images, language establishes hierarchies in form as well as the content. It shapes the acquisition of culture” (p. 19), or in many stereotyping situations, reduces the understanding of cultural differences to give the dominate culture superiority.

Education

Nelson Mandela reminds us that the power to change or maintain cultural beliefs is founded in education, especially early education. Even in art classes of the 21st century, stereotyping of Native American cultures is quite common. As I have written in various publications (*The Journey of Awakening; Indigenous Knowledge: Its Role in Education; A Tapestry of Individuality: Weaving Complexion, Identity; Quadratic Pedagogy; An Intercultural Examination of Similarities and Differences of Rituals and Customs of two cultures; Cultural Lenses; Perceptual Changes Through Teaching Others; The Four Directions; The Acoma Experience; Acoma Pottery: First-hand experiences for Art Educators; Clarity of perception: Intracultural understanding through a Native American perspective; The Intersectionality of Understanding Otherness; Elders + Art + Culture; The Hocq'reila Experience*, and, *Sounds of Ceremony: A Visual Essay*), I have advocated for equitable Native American representation in communities, and I have predominately acted as a voice addressing the inadequacy and insensitivity of the dominant culture-controlled educational policies employed in schools. In many 21st-century classrooms and online, it is easy to find simple, one-dimensional pedagogy and curricula using brown paper bag vests with Indian designs, poorly understood teepee designs and construction, and misinformation about Western holidays reinforcing inaccurate Native American representations such as Thanksgiving.

Ubiquitous Native American misrepresentation can be easily found online for Native American costumes, and of course, sports mascots and inappropriate Indian attire. To ensure equity within inclusion when crossing cultural boundaries, educators must become more than just familiar with cultural symbols, icons, and imagery. Teachers must be educated about the breadth and depth of cultural vampirism to be able to determine what is appropriate to present in a classroom. Cultural stereotyping of any group must stop. When deciding about social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI), it is important to remember that diversity is presenting something different in the classroom from what the majority understands. Inclusion is when cultural differences are included in the presentation of information. But, most importantly, equity means that there is an accurate cultural voice to support the cultural content in the classroom. This could be historical facts, images, songs, dances, or literature. The voice must come from within the culture and be spoken by a cultural member, not a story, image, song, dance, or historical fact told by an outsider.

As I wrote in *A Tapestry of Individuality: Weaving Complexion, Identity, and Authority*,

We must all move beyond the histories written by the dominant society. Cultural understanding must be comprehensive and concise, not superficial or anemic; knowledge, histories, and cultures must be exchanged personally—individually. It is through personal interactions that intercultural experiences and the multiple dimensions of people and their rituals and customs are revealed. Cultures are represented beyond what may be discovered solely in photographs, text, or art form. People must interact in direct and meaningful ways before any significant cultural exchange can happen. As artists, we often lead the parade of awareness to demonstrate knowledge, sensitivity,

personality, and our cultural signifiers as we present, discuss, and analyze ourselves through our mirrors and the mirrors fellow artists present. Inter-cultural education not only provides valuable insights into cultures; it also creates an understanding of cultural rites and practices that are personal as well as communal, and this knowledge provides clarity that these cultures must be protected as they are being shared. (p. 6)

I wrote this article from the many years of sociocultural and ceremonial immersion. But, even after years, I am not an insider, but an outsider writing from a long series of personal cultural and ceremonial experiences. This is an account of my experiences told from a single and sensitive perspective.

Cultural experiences

Being immersed in the Native culture on the Rez (reservation) was an awakening for me – I didn't know what I didn't know. Native histories were not taught in my schooling, and no section of US history told an accurate account of the history of Native Americans. But I am an avid learner and I wanted accurate information to provide to my students, so I paid attention and learned a lot. As a by-product of being on the Rez for many years for ceremonial experiences, what I learned has allowed me to present at conferences and publish what I experienced in a first-person voice. I believe it is very important to present an accurate and dense understanding of cultural and historical information about the diversity of Native Americans. It is not widely known by cultural outsiders that the Native Peoples on Turtle Island (USA, Mexico, and Canada) are very different in language, culture, familial relationships, ceremonial practices, and governmental structure.

Perceptions are complicated by language, location, image, and personal histories; there are many biases, stereotypes, and filters developed by what people have experienced, both the good and the not-so-good, that direct relationships and understanding, even if it is historically and culturally inaccurate. As people experience their world, many images are constantly reinforced and become generational icons. One example of Western aesthetics is *The Mona Lisa* (see *The Mona Lisa*. The Internet link is in the references). By association, the image floats in the collective Western cultural consciousness and people can mentally see that painting because of the frequent reinforcement of this icon in typical K-12 art classrooms and mainstream Americana. Through collective cultural agreement, it is re-established each time as one of the most important paintings in Western culture. Most will accept this without thought, analysis, or doubt. As Kallop (1963-1964) noticed, "The trouble lies in reproductions and the present undesirable commercial uses and those which are frankly in bad taste" (p. 120). Similar things happen with the images and histories of Native Americans, especially those reinforced through the narrations of cultural dominance. Most people accept that the photograph of *Geronimo kneeling with a rifle* (1887), (see *Geronimo kneeling with a rifle*. The Internet link is in the references) is iconic and an accurate representation of Native Americans. Like the *Mona Lisa*, it is considered an important cultural image. However, few from the dominant culture realize that the image is reinforced within the dominant culture. Geronimo is not just any Native American, but one specific to the Chiricahua Apache People - and importantly, to the Chiricahua Apache People specific to that time in history, which may differ from the Chiricahua Apache People in today's worldview. The Chiricahua Apache People are much more than what a photograph from 1887 can capture. The Apache culture is dense with its histories, language, rites, and customs, which are shared by cultural experiences rarely understood by those outside the culture.

Deeply reinforced stereotypes

As a reminder of how deeply the biases, stereotypes, and misunderstandings are embedded

in the dominant society's cultural DNA, Galeano stated in the introduction to Gunn's (1989) *Spider Woman's Granddaughter*, that "throughout America, from north to south, the dominant culture acknowledges Indians as objects of study, but denies them as subjects of history. The Indians have folklore, not culture; they practice superstitions, not religions; they speak dialects, not languages, they make crafts, not arts" (p.1).

If a dominant culture wants to use visual propaganda to maintain dominance, the misinformation can be delivered in a variety of ways to a variety of people such as by the means of harmless toys so that Anglo children can play Indian (See *LET'S PLAY INDIAN*. The Internet link is in the references). Since young children are especially susceptible, it is easy to understand how the children and their parents would find no harm in a child's game of playing in another culture without any cultural context or permission. And, it is easy to give a false impression that an Anglo boy represented as Peter Pan would be allowed to wear a traditional feather bonnet reserved for men who have accomplished many noteworthy achievements for their tribal group. It is easy to see that both the cultural misuse of tobacco and the social hierarchy of a traditional setting is a misalignment of cultural truths. The sad situation is that an Anglo parent may not know it is culturally inappropriate, so the child is taught by a Disney animation. According to Rosewood (2020), *Disney's Racist History of Native American Caricatures*, Disney has faced many controversies concerning the depictions of Native American characters in their media productions. The portrayal of Native Americans in children's movies, specifically the Disney films *Peter Pan* (1953) and *Pocahontas* (1995) is not only stereotypical but also dehumanizing and often completely inaccurate. (§ 1)

European invasion

Before European settlers invaded Turtle Island, the present-day United States, Canada, and Mexico there were over 2,000 different languages and cultures on the North American continent – there are less than 200 today. While being with Native families on the reservation, I heard about the abduction of children to be taken away to Indian Boarding Schools like the Haskell School in Kansas where, according to their website, "Twenty-two American Indian children entered the doors of a new school in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1884 to begin an educational program that focused on agricultural education in grades one through five" (§ 1). In these schools, the predominant motivation was to take Native American children and transform them into good, Christian Europeans. It is well known that the children in the boarding schools were prohibited from speaking their first language. Equally disturbing is that when language is reduced or eliminated, so is the culture. According to Native Partnership as noted in *History and Culture: Boarding Schools*,

These schools were part of a plan devised by well-intentioned, eastern reformers Herbert Welsh and Henry Pancoast, who also helped establish organizations such as the Board of Indian Commissioners, the Boston Indian Citizenship Association and the Women's National Indian Association. The goal of these reformers was to use education as a tool to "assimilate" Indian tribes into the mainstream of the "American way of life," a Protestant ideology of the mid-19th century. Indian people would be taught the importance of private property, material wealth and monogamous nuclear families. The reformers assumed that it was necessary to "civilize" Indian people, make them accept white men's beliefs and value systems. (§ 1-2)

I have met only a few Elders who, as children, were abducted and forced into boarding schools. They told me their sad and disturbing stories. A film that could be used to educate people about an accurate history of these atrocities is *The Only Good Indian* (2009) set in Kansas during the early 1900s, a teenage Native American boy is taken from his family and forced to attend a distant Indian "train-

ing” school to assimilate into White society. When he escapes to return to his family, Sam Franklin (Wes Studi), a bounty hunter of Cherokee descent, is hired to find and return him to the institution. Franklin, a former Indian scout for the U.S. Army, has renounced his Native heritage and has adopted the White Man’s way of life, believing it’s the only way for Indians to survive.

The phrase *the only good Indian* is credited to US Army General Sheridan, who reputedly said that the only good Indian is a dead Indian. As these moments are inextricably woven into the Native American cultural DNA, many Native Americans are politically, socially, economically, and environmentally active. Many do not believe or trust the US Government due to a long history of suppression and violence, treaty abuse, misuse of BIA funds and operations, and more.

Perceptions

I have traveled to many places in Indian Country and found extreme poverty with a lack of medical services, clean water, and electricity. When my wife and I traveled to The Pine Ridge Reservation to pray at the Wounded Knee Memorial, which is the site of the mass murder massacre of almost 300 Native Americans on December 29, 1890. The photographs of the horrific event are available in many locations on the Internet. (See Wounded Knee Massacre photographs. The Internet link is in the references).

When we were on the Pine Ridge Reservation, we found people living in unheard-of-in-the-US harsh conditions - it mirrored conditions to rival any third-world country that I have visited. A paraphrase from the article *Poorest Indian Reservations in the United States*,

Buffalo County, SD, the Crow Creek Indian Reservation, has the distinction of being the poorest county in the United States. The racial makeup of the county is 81.59% Native American. Living conditions here are comparable to those in Third World countries. Second-ranked Shannon County, SD, which held the distinction of being the poorest county in the US for two decades, is entirely within Pine Ridge Reservation, which is 94.20% Native American. The third poorest county in the USA, Ziebach, SD, lies mostly within the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation which has 72.29% Native Americans with an unemployment rate of over 70%. Many homes lack indoor plumbing, heating systems, and electricity. Many families don’t have adequate food and clothing. (¶ 1-5)

In *Clarity of Perception: Intracultural Understanding through a Native American Perspective* (2003) I stated, “Even in the twenty-first century, many still perceive a Native American as ‘The Noble Savage,’ or the rebellious member of A.I.M., or the person with feathers and braids, or the person who is somehow removed from contemporary society” (p. 12), and for the most part, I believe this misconception is still true today. Native American cultural misinformation is found in many documents and Deloria (2003) reminds us that

Individuals [Native Americans] appear within this [Euro] history only to the extent that they appear to personalize the fortunes of the tribe. A mythical Hiawatha, a saddened Chief Joseph, a scowling Sitting Bull, a sullen Geronimo; all symbolize not living people but the historical fate of a nation overwhelmed by the inevitability of history. (p. 38)

Before the Apocalypse

The world was flat when early European mariners crossed the Atlantic Ocean and set foot on

Turtle Island. When they came with banners unfurled with new foreign cultures, languages, religions, and diseases, they changed the indigenous cultures and societies of millions. They forcibly changed Native Americans' ideas of spirituality, possession, ownership, inalienable rights, individuality, and perceptions of wealth, ownership, and freedom to direct actions setting one group against and above another. When perceptions are false, simple misperceptions can demean a culture and leave generational scars. Perceptions are complicated by language, location, image, and personal histories. While forcing Native Americans into the mainstream of the Anglo-American way of life, propaganda campaigns exist to demean Native American cultures to the advantage of the dominant culture. Even today, this can be found in the contemporary cultural commodification of Native American culture, especially with mascots of non-Native sports teams who proclaim that they just want to *honor your culture*. Euro-American campaigns of visual, textual, and oral cultural commodification continue to reduce the legitimacy and density of the Native American cultures.

Conclusion

To indicate the breadth and depth of propaganda images I will discuss images easily found on the Internet, with brief narratives. First, I have never visited a reservation where alcohol is sold. Alcoholism on reservations is a terrible situation. According to Rapaport (2018),

Compared with other U.S. youth, these Native American eighth graders were more than three times as likely to use marijuana, 70 percent more likely to drink alcohol, more than twice as likely to get drunk and three times more likely to smoke cigarettes. (¶ 9)

Factors that appear to contribute to a greater risk of substance abuse use among Native American youths than their non-Native peers include racism which conveys messages of inferiority and failure that are often internalized, disruptions in the social fabric of the communities within which they live, and the widespread trauma that diminishes individual, familial, and community ability to cope with the stresses that plague these young peoples lives, Manson added. "As a consequence, many Native American youth are unable to form deep, lasting attachment bonds to the key social institutions within their communities, specifically family, school, and other social elements of their communities" (¶ 15).

Of course, one could assume that the alcohol propaganda images were not designed to sell to the Native American market but to capture the subliminal social factor of a high alcoholism rate among many Native Americans. So, the questions arise: *What is pictured?* and *Who are the beneficiaries?* of the campaign to stereotype Native Americans' high rate of alcoholism? Perhaps, it was a two-phased campaign – one, to continue the stereotyping of an assumed lesser culture, and two, to sell alcohol to as many people as possible – more money for the dominant culture's economic machine. (The Internet links are in the references.)

Finally, there are many demeaning images available through an Internet search. These were and are designed by sophisticated artists dedicated to images to demean Native Americans as a commodification of product design for food products and other tourist-designed artifacts. It is interesting to note the label *Squaw Early June Peas* (See *Squaw Early June Peas*. Centerville Canning Co. The Internet link is in the references) that what I was told years ago on the reservation was that the demeaning word Squaw translates roughly as "without a penis." Clearly, this is a misunderstanding both in language and culture. However, in the book, *Literature of the American Indian* (1973), authors Sanders and Peek straightforwardly asserted that the term s-word exists only in the mind of the non-Native American and is probably a French corruption of the Iroquois word *otsiskwa*, meaning female sexual parts. And, the s-word got its highest claim to defame when Suzan Shown Harjo, a Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee American Indian rights activist appeared on the Oprah Winfrey

Show and said on-air that the s-word was an Algonquin word meaning vagina... (§ 16-17)

In all the many times I have been in Indian Territories for many ceremonies, I have never found a Native American who was not extremely modest with their bodies. To present a female paddling a canoe (standing up?) with minimum clothing is both absurd and demeaning to Native Americans and females (See *Blue Lake Indian River* Fruit label. (see the Internet link in the references).

It is easy to understand the nuance and danger of cultural stereotyping through language and images with advertisements such as *Venison steak very tough if me no get to salt enough* and *Buffalo meat do not taste dandy if me no have pepper handy* (See the Internet link in the references). Since language can be translated as intelligence, poor English grammar represents an uneducated and unintelligent culture. Before the invasion of Turtle Island by Europeans, many Indigenous groups traded commodities. There were well-established trade routes across the USA, Canada, Mexico, and Central America. Trading was common and so were the many languages a Native trader would speak when traveling. But, in this depiction, the Native Americans are unable to use the English language properly, which implies a degree of unsophisticated and uneducated Native peoples than those in the dominant culture – all of which is completely false.

The early Land O' Lakes product design of the Native American woman kneeling in a pastoral scene could have been found in many grocery stores across the USA. (See the Internet link in the references). Overall, the image is not too troublesome except that the Native American woman, wearing fake vertical red and blue feathers on the back of her head, is kneeling in a subordinate manner to present a gift to the consumer. In my experience, vertical feathers are normally reserved for males – females typically wear feathers pointing down, or commonly, women would wear feather fluffs. The only time I wore vertical feathers was when I was Sundancing. This is a portrayal of a submissive Native woman, wearing stereotypical attire, who is posed in a pastoral scene projecting the calm and peace of the Native communities which is difficult to understand after the devastation of the Native culture by the US government, and European traders and settlers. Without having a cultural and historical context of the chaos and abuse delivered by the invaders taking Native land, this image would seem acceptable, which it is not. In fairness to recognize a sensitive move to equity, Land o' Lakes now has a revised image.

In many tourist shops, items of Native American misrepresentation can be found with items pictorially demeaning Native culture through caricature and Anglo humor. One example I found was alcohol shot glasses that were found in a tourist gas station center selling Native American trinkets depicting three very important people in most Native cultures. The caricatures on the glasses were of the Chief who is the leader of a group, who practices leadership through behaviors benefiting the group, the Doctor, unlike in the European culture lived as an equal member of the group being very accessible to all people who needed treatment and there was no charge for the treatment or the medicine. It was considered part of tribal health. The Warrior who protected the tribal life of all citizens, especially women, and children. And, finally in this demeaning triptych of glasses was the Dancer who is a valuable and revered person in the group – a person who conducts ceremonial dances and social gatherings for the benefit of all. These three people, as depicted, seem to be characterized as people adhering to the Anglo description of Native peoples as beaten and downtrodden. They appear simple-minded and not worthy of recognition as people or an important aspect of tribal life (See the Internet link in the references).

As educators, we must understand and support the cultures we find in our classrooms or the cultures we share with our students. As I wrote in *The Journey of Awakening in A Perspective of Multicultural Education and Diversity*,

Together, we can change the misinformation common to outsiders of a culture. We can make sure the information presented to students is dense, accurate, and reflects the truth as told by members of the society – not told the single narrative stories taught through outdated information. Native Amer-

ican tribal cultures have rich, diverse narratives to share. To find authentic information, search the internet for an accurate tribal history found on an authentic tribal website. As with any information on the Internet, verify that it is accurate. There are usually lessons available and Natives to support classroom instructions by non-Native teachers. Just ask. The information is there for you - the conscientious educator. (p 58)

Pedagogy

As a fair-skinned person who does not have the stereotypical physical appearance of a Native person, I have many advantages in the Anglo community as an educated person and teacher. I have never experienced overt racism in the White communities I have visited. However, while on the Rez, I have experienced multiple encounters of racism and aggression from people on the Rez. Only after I acknowledged the families with whom I do ceremonies, especially as a Sundancer, was the aggression abated. It is understandable why the local community would be resistant to an unknown White appearing outsider often seen as a missionary or colonialist in their community. Once the situation was clarified that I was neither and I was not there to rescue them nor change their beliefs, I was accepted into many ceremonies and homes.

How did this affect my teaching? It was a long journey of curriculum development, pedagogical adjustments, publications, and presentations. At one point, at the university and the region, I was incorrectly labeled as the spokesperson for all Native Peoples. I was known as “that Indian guy.” This unfortunately is also common with the Afro-American, Asian-American, and Latino-American communities where one person is seen in the dominant White culture as a representative of all people in that community.

Teaching

Of course, I teach social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) in all my classes, and I share my Native perspectives of sociocultural realism and misrepresentations. Over more than a decade, I have taken many classes to the Acoma Pueblo to work with an Acoma Family.

In this undergraduate course, the students developed curricula from first-hand experiences gained on the Acoma Pueblo and visits to various anthropologically significant sites such as Canyon de Chelly, Frijoles Canyon, and others. Emphasis was placed on historical and contemporary cultural views of Native Americana in the Southwest. The curriculum addressed, from primary sources, the studio processes that reflected Native American (especially from Acoma) aesthetical, critical, historical, and cultural components. On-and-off Reservation experiences in both visual and textual research were the essential components of this course. On-going journal entries, which included visual and textual examples, were required.

The following are abbreviated reflective narratives from students.

Throughout this adventure through New Mexico and Arizona, many aspects registered as foreign in my mind. There were times when our group, and I personally, felt very alienated by the majority of the race, or culture that was surrounding us. Growing up in the Midwest sheltered me from experiences like this, especially in a town the size of my own. Throughout grade school, I had only one or two people in my class who even had a noticeably different skin tone from me. When we were welcomed into Acoma land there were times I felt uncomfortable and embraced it. I took this as a unique and rewarding experience to gain compassion and understanding of how other minority groups feel 100 % of the time.

We must be culturally aware, that way we attempt to understand what is appropriate and respectful for different diversities. Self-awareness and environmental awareness are characteristics we need to value and carry out in everyday life, especially in the classroom. My goal in the classroom as a teacher is to lead students, no matter what their cultural background, handicap, or sexual orientation is, toward the fulfillment of their potential for intellectual, emotional, and psychological growth and maturation. This goal is only attainable if I make it a priority to create a classroom that is free of prejudices against all types of diversity.

Arriving at Grandma's house for the first time, there were many mixed emotions, but not until the third day did I start to understand the magnitude of the diverse setting that we were in. By the third day, more in-depth conversations were had. We talked about wastefulness and the commercially driven world. Also, we were asked about our ethnicity. These situations in which I had felt out of place, made me aware of topics that I usually keep in the back of my mind.

I did not know what to expect when going to New Mexico and Arizona. I was excited to learn about their traditions and develop a better understanding of the culture, but I never thought that I would learn as much as I did. I gained a new understanding of social justice and equality to promote effective learning in everyday practice, as well as the relationships among various historical and current social inequities

Overall, I have learned that I am extremely naïve when it comes to other peoples' cultures and backgrounds. I know what I have learned from a textbook, but that alone has taught me nothing about who these people are today. I have decided that when teaching about a culture, I am going to give two sides of the story - the history of a person or style, along with a modern look at what it is today. I have so many narrow views of places and cultures that I need to wipe my mind clean of what I have been taught because so much of it is wrong. And the most difficult thing is that so many people who are surrounding me have a similar, preconceived idea about what a culture is like because they too were taught the stereotypical ideas that were crammed into a textbook.

This trip let me experience the most diversity I have ever had in person and not from reading a book. There are only so many different people you can meet living in some of the biggest cities in Missouri, however, I have never stepped out of my home state to experience cultural differences firsthand. It was an experience that I would gladly do again. Visiting Grandma and her home on the reservation was a slight culture shock to me, just because of the different living environments and being on a reservation, but it was very welcoming for our beginning time there.

I would have to say the first diverse exposure to Acoma Natives was when Grandma spoke the Acoma language interspersed throughout her English. Later, I found out from Auntie that they were taught the Acoma language as children and that is all they knew. Auntie and her siblings didn't learn English until they attended grade school, and even then it was forced upon them, and also punishment was exercised if the schoolchildren spoke their native language. So, it always brought a smile to my face when Grandma and Auntie spoke to each other because they always used their first language instead of English. This is a strong way to hold to tradition and keep one's culture alive, especially in a culture whose stories are not written, but spoken.

I had always pictured a reservation with absolutely no vegetation, trailers in the middle of junkyards, and drunks lying in the streets. I couldn't even merge these absolutely mysterious wonders with the idea of what a reservation was. They both seemed so outrageous and after visiting them in life I really don't know how I made it through history in elementary, let alone college. But to give myself some credit, I don't believe this was entirely my fault. Schools do a horrible job of truly focusing on

the Native Americans. If they do it mostly surrounds Thanksgiving and has very little to do with the actual Native Americans.

These reflections are by currently employed art teachers who embrace JEDI and share the importance of culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms. It is rewarding for me to know, as a teacher, that the small steps taken on the Acoma Pueblo with many undergraduate art education students over more than a decade have been the first stepping stones for a long journey of Social Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. What we share and teach are important in the moment and into the future.

Endnote

A few years ago, I was visiting my family for a reunion. My aunt and I chatted about her and my Mom's experiences as children raised in the South. As my aunt headed out to the beach, I asked if she wanted to apply some sunscreen. She giggled and presented her 86-year-old smile, held out her very brown arm towards me, and said, "Son, does it look like I need sunscreen?" As she turned to go to the beach, I asked, "Did you and Mom ever get picked on because of your complexion?" She looked at me deeply and sadly and said, "Well, of course," then she turned and headed to the beach. We never talked about it again. But I was stunned. I still am. I must do more.

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Deepening the Identity - Democracy through Visual Art Education

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IDENTITY: Visual Artist

It is an honor and a responsibility to be a teacher and to imagine, to be an initiator of new beginnings; and to act at a beginning is to move towards possibilities. Maxine Greene (2005)

To speak fluently with colors, shapes, lines, and forms was always a challenge for me. Even when verbal communication was the main way of interacting with others, the world of visual images evoked the expression of deeper and usually hidden parts of my personality.

I grew up in the city of Ohrid, listed as a UNESCO world heritage site, with 800 Byzantine-style Christian icons of worldwide fame dating from the 11th to the end of the 14th century. Layers of intensive tempera colors displayed by more than 2,500 square meters of frescoes and icons are the unique testimony of Byzantine arts in the center of the South Europe region. Passing by more than 20 different churches daily on my way to school, in the middle of my play with friends, the palimpsest of rich imagery captured my attention for life. And not the content, but the rhythm of shapes presented and the graduation of tones in the medieval compositions was that which was of the greatest importance to me. They evoke vivid and multi-layered communication with the painters that lived centuries before. Messages that are conveyed in their fascinating works attracted my attention for a long time and gave me the motive to explore more.

Paintings were my first educational booklets. Later, during my Visual Art Academy years, Robert Rosenberg's subtle tonal expressions and tactility, Paul Klee's precision and gentleness in drawings, Mark Rothko's large, floating rectangles of color, William Turner's expressive coloring of the water and the sky guided my interest to learn and to experiment. My curiosity expands to the process of intaglio prints. To create aquatints and etchings with a luminosity of color and subtleness of tones challenged my imagination and my style. My imagination guided me to communicate by means of visual art. This is the place where I recognize my identity as a person. Expressing my ideas in my prints comes first, and the response from the audience is secondary, yet it's still relevant.

Each artwork exists only in communication – in the eyes of the perceiver and its evoked responses. From the philosophical and visual art theory point of view, Saussure's and Ecco's semiology writings guided me in understanding and developing my attitudes on visual artworks' impact.

Broadening Interests

Through my personal research process as an artist with a necessity to draw and paint, my interest expanded to the investigation of the way that art pieces convey a message to others. The calmness of the walls in my studio supported the desire to tell stories about the members of my family, friends, and close landscapes in my prints in an abstract expressive way. But, the meanings of the layers of colors and textures were not always understandable to others, so I started to question myself – how do I make the message more obvious? I started a journey - research about the character and position of the signifier and the signified, that guided my fascination with visual art - its ability to convey meanings and to reflect complex ideas with simple visual elements (Innis, 1985).

As a visual artist, I have experienced that works of art stimulate both emotions and creation – engaging the viewer in a vivid dialogue with the artwork. At the exhibitions where my works were presented, I have been faced with complex conversations evoked by other artists, their human condition, and their philosophical statements and aesthetic standards. Looking at my artwork, digital print with relief, “My beautiful embroidery time”, one of my colleagues referred that she would appreciate having the same design on her dress, while my painter colleague found the meticulous overlapping of the tiny toned circles as a metaphor for the minutes of time which come one after the other just as the ornaments of an embroidery. With their responses, they demonstrated not only their own interaction with the print but also their broad ambiguity.

I have witnessed how the process of interaction with the audience generates the effect of reciprocity when artworks influence the knowledge, understanding, emotions, and mood of the perceiver on various occasions. It is then that my curiosity expanded immensely, making me recognize and experience the energy between the artwork and the perceiver. At that time, the signs of communication that might arise between artworks and the audience became as important as the exhibited artworks. In many cases, communication was lost or it had not appeared at all. But sometimes the exhibited piece remained a topic of discussion for days.

That leads me to the most fascinating understanding - that visual artwork has a significant effect on how one’s mind is framed. All the years of building declarative knowledge about the same topic during my academic education became compressed by simple procedural understanding.

Visual artworks can immensely influence people’s lives, or they can be completely insignificant and unnoticeable. Visual art expression has a strong impact on the development of society as a whole and can be a powerful tool to reinforce public opinions and attitudes (Eisner, 2002; Rolling, 2005).

Realizing this was for me the “Eureka” moment, that the use of the basic visual elements, colors, forms, textures, lines, dots, and tones - visual artworks - can influence viewers’ values.

That was the origin of my interest in visual art education and my desire to contribute to its development. As a Caucasian woman, with a mixed nationality (dominantly Macedonian and partly Slovenian) in the multicultural Macedonian society, an artist and university professor - counted as upper middle class, in order to understand in what way is my identity perceived by others, became essential to have the answers on the questions determined by Cole (2009):

- Am I included in some social, gender, stylistic, art-technique, or motive-oriented categories?
- If so, do I have a particular treatment, conscious or unconscious by others (society groups – family, colleagues, art-critics, art-historians, students...)?
- Can I trust that others (society) have the sensitivity to detect nuanced variations that present my identity in whatever group I’ve been categorized in?

I found that the awareness of the classifications mentioned above is crucial for my creative working process. Sometimes accepting it and highlighting it, and other times neglecting it completely – in an attempt to create a new art statement over and over again.

IDENTITY: Visual Art Educator

Preparations for visual art teaching started during my diploma studies with my elective pedagogical subjects, alongside the painting, drawing, sculpture, and printing classes. The desire to continue my learning in teaching increased as I was completing my master’s degree at the Visual Art Academy in Ljubljana, Slovenia. This led me to start working as a high school visual art teacher in Skopje, North Macedonia, simultaneously conducting the national curriculum and the IB program classes.

That journey of diving into a new discipline, the methods of visual art education, opened to me the philosophical, sociological, and artistic concepts that have an impact on the human cognitive

and affective sphere. I needed to find a strong and clear space where I could express all my doubts and concerns about the importance of visual arts in the life of others.

Living in the heart of Southeastern Europe, in the center of the Balkan peninsula, the concept of my lectures strongly relied on the concept of intersectionality. “Genius loci” or “The Spirit of the place”, understood in a more contemporary way, determined my behavior and opened to me the multiple paths of understanding how gender, personal goals, and social interactions are shaping individual perceptions and values. We are still living in a society where the multicultural student population is strongly influenced by ethnic and social barriers. My working place, the Faculty of Pedagogy St. Kliment Ohridski, provides academic curricula for future preschool and primary school teachers in three languages: Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish. That means that most subjects students are taking in their native language, but in some cases (which include subjects that are under my lecturing) students of other nationalities can take them in Macedonian, choosing me as their professor on the obligatory or elective subjects. Having students from different nationalities that speak primarily their mother tongue made me more aware of various and often contrasting responses based on their cultural traditions. It is interesting to see how students’ cultural heritage influences their daily communication, lifestyle, and (especially interesting for me) their visual art expression. At the same time, they are all part of the same 21st-century generation, with intertwining slang, music preferences, and fashion choices.

To become a preschool or a primary school teacher, students have to receive academic training that makes them competent to create a learning process in all subjects of the curriculum. Among the criteria to start attending the academic subject of “Visual Art Education with Didactic”, the obligatory condition for students is the quality production of visual artworks (individual visual art creations demonstrating 2D and 3D techniques in all standard and age-appropriate levels). Their works have to present a student’s competence and ability to create a meaningful message.

Concerns *Students as Visual Artists*

During the realization of visual artworks, there are many examples where students were successful in finding solutions to art problems. Even when the motive was given in most of the tasks, almost 30% of all students presented formal visual art solutions without deeper involvement in the message that the work should transmit. Students emphasize that including other educational areas in the creation of visual art is needed, but they lack the knowledge and understanding of other social conditions and methods, and how to integrate them into their work.

According to Greene (as cited in D’Olimpio, 2022, p.239) “Aesthetic Education” is an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, and participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them in a meaningful way. When this happens, new connections are made in experience, new patterns are formed, and new vistas are opened.

The practice of teaching visual art, and any subject for that matter, involves answering students’ questions and diving deep into discussions with them. However, in time, I noticed that the majority of explanations stemmed from the student’s lack of knowledge in other, broader fields.

A lot of questions arose:

1. Aren’t artworks sufficient by themselves, and without an intrinsic need for explanation?
2. When is the artwork good enough to evoke communication with the viewer?
3. What are the criteria for establishing communication with paintings and sculptures?

Answers to these questions, which although clear to me, were a definitive pain point for non-artists, especially for students - future teachers confirmed by Sullivan (2002). I discovered that despite the real value of an artwork, it connects more directly and in a deeper way with the ones that had a better prior education. Although this was not a unique discovery, still it had a profound impact on my experience at that time and it showed me the significant effect that the comprehension of vi-

sual artworks can have on an individual's overall ability to respond adequately to social changes in their lives.

This experience led me to adapt my pedagogical approach from an academic teaching-centered to a student-learning method. I began to develop a keen interest in the crossroad of visual art and learning which entails the process of learning through visual arts, metacognition, and culture. I struggled to find the most efficient ways to support students in building their network of knowledge and experiences. Sometimes communication with students was with no intensity regardless of how much I tried to present the most culturally relevant works or introduce the latest visual art educational methods. In other instances, vivid and fruitful discussions with students lasted even longer than the expected time provided for a single unit.

After these fruitful discussions, students often sent me emails, photographs, or drawings to support some personal claims or to show their interest. After reflecting on this, I found that the difference between these two opposite situations was the level of personal engagement of students. As a process of learning the key competencies of democratic citizenship, I gave them a treasure hunt homework with the task to find the activities connected with the keywords: "Children's rights" from the website living.democracy.com. It was surprising that students who had an experience with that issue, either personally or through someone else, gave a significantly more extended or detailed explanation than other students.

They reported situations when children weren't protected from the teacher's favoritism; the damaging information presented by mass media; the parents'/ friends' emotional violence; or when they were not sufficiently supported to express their thoughts, opinions, and their own personality or talents.

Theoretical understandings of the processes of creation of the mind influenced by visual arts offered a space where I discovered that new methodological approaches can be implemented (Gardner, 1983). Active engagements with paintings, prints, drawings, and visual artworks can stimulate students' cognitive processes and reshape their knowledge to fit the new parameters required for continued individual and social growth. In our university settings, this understanding opened the doors of visual art educators' imagination – my own.

Students as Visual Art Educators

During the writing of students' daily preparations for conducting practical work, one of the main tasks for students is to learn and master concepts and methods so that practical work in kindergarten or primary schools can be successfully conducted.

Evaluations of their work showed that in their daily planning students used the most basic approaches even though they had the freedom to implement their own unique set of methodical means. Even when choosing simple motives/themes to illustrate the visual art content or to inspire pupils' expression, the most used options were still life, portraits, and landscapes, and they never or rarely used geometrical, floral, symbolical, mythological, or social motives.

Reflection led me to look at this situation in a broader context:

- If a student used just a few well-known methods/motives in their preparations even though we analyzed more versatile options during lectures, what is then bound to happen when they will start to work at a kindergarten or a school?
- Will they be able to implement new methods to conduct adequate context in each lesson?
- Will future teachers be able to connect the educational goals with the new motives or cultural trends in a meaningful and understandable way?
- Will visual motives dominate the content? And if so, will then there be room only for a formal illustration without deeper meaning?

It's often easy to distinguish the students' nationality if they feel particularly connected with the motive. Students with Turkish/Albanian origins tend to subconsciously cover the surface with details based on the "horror vacui" traditional method, while students with Macedonian origin focus

only on the main forms, leaving the background unsolved, again subconsciously influenced by Orthodox Christian medieval paintings that have a similar approach. My concerns are based on these experiences – no matter what the motive is, because the cultural background adequately influences the visual art statement in students - future teachers.

Asking these questions was the turning point of my discovery that ultimately led to improvements in the curriculum of the subjects that are my professional responsibility. As Greene (2005) stated, the aesthetic frame in education begins with perception, for it is in the world as it appears to us that we look for resemblances, seek out connections, identify possibilities, and go in quest of meanings.

Inspiration through the Visual Art Educator's Perspective

With strong references to Eisner's (2002) work, my teaching at the university became more based on the idea that cultural meanings are moved into the mind, enabling the mind to be embedded in the culture. This claim views cultural identity can be changeable and created by individuals and their experiences in visual arts. When reinforced with new knowledge and experiences they can strongly influence cultural identities and cultural behavior (Ramírez-Verdugo & Otcu-Grillman, 2020).

This goes well with Vygotsky's (1978) claims - that the mind is socially constructed, generated by dialogue with the contextual world. My strong commitment became the implementation of the concept of intersectionality in my work as a visual art educator.

To provide my students with an entrance into the capacities of visual arts in relation to their own social identity, I implemented the content of democracy in my classes. This approach enriched the subject by improving the integration of the visual art content and motives, with the understanding of democratic culture as part of visual art education.

Intersectionality was also used as an approach to respect students' differences, dimensioning my vocabulary, visual art examples, the length of lectures, and especially how I designed the practical work activities.

According to Cole (2009)

the concept of intersectionality as an analytic framework to understand the ways that different social categories depend on each other for meaning and, thus, mutually construct one another and work together to shape outcomes. Intersectionality makes it plain that gender, race, class, and sexuality simultaneously affect the perceptions, experiences, and opportunities of everyone living in a society stratified along these dimensions. This approach explains perfectly well the paradigm for theory and research (that is) offering new ways of understanding the complex causality that characterizes social phenomena. (p.179)

Another aspect that was involved in the methodical strategies was inclusive pedagogy. As stated by Harwood (2009), a key task for inclusive pedagogy, and vital to the politics of inclusion, is to conceptualize differences. Not to avoid or try to polish them, but instead to “release the imagination” and to develop an understanding that the interaction of imagination, thinking, and politics can confirm the importance of identity in inclusive pedagogy. Analyses of students' artworks, daily preparations, and class discussions presented students' hybrid identities and thus corresponded positively with the implementation of intersectionality.

These two aspects guided my pedagogical work and contributed greatly to enabling students

to expand their social discourses through visual art expressions. Simultaneously, in this way, they faced and learned to present stories using their identity. Visual art processes of this kind provided structured guidance for students to contemplate their identity, both individual and collective, the reasoning behind their belief systems, their moral paradigms, and their overall goals, both as individuals and as future educators.

Students who lived in more stable social and cooperative environments were more focused on the aesthetic segment of their visual art solutions. The motives used to present the visual art content of contrast colors and tones were: butterflies, stable pyramidal composition with flowers, colorful styled portraits, expressive sunset landscapes, and the reflection on the floating bubbles. No socially engaged aspect was implemented (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Students' works: visual art content: contrast colors and tones; motive: free

On the other hand, students who had experienced social struggles or injustices often expressed socially structured visual artworks regardless of the visual art task. With the same visual art content for contrasting colors and tones, they presented distorted portraits (reconstructed realistically or symbolically), ghosts, soldiers lying face down, or square-numbered heads of business people. This evidence once again confirms the concept of intersectionality as a tool for understanding with an immense capacity for reflection (Figure 2).

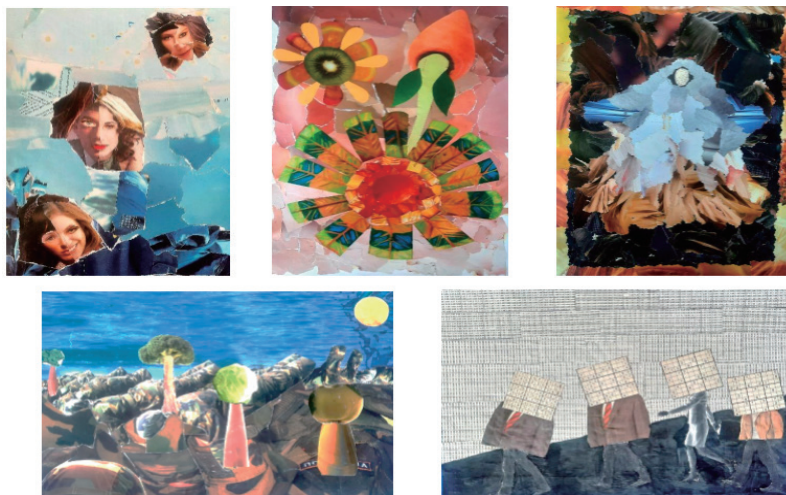


Figure 2. Students' works: visual art content: contrast colors and tones; motive: free

Deepening the Identity - Democracy through Visual Art Education

The chance to widen the curriculum of teacher education with new content was provided with Preparing Future Teachers in the Western Balkans: Educating for Democracy & Human Rights 2019 – 2022, led by the European Wergeland Center. Funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and developed in cooperation with the Department for International Projects in Education of the Zurich University of Teacher Education, the project provided support for higher education institutions and universities in North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia Albania, and Kosovo*. They showed interest in modernizing academic teacher education courses, intending to improve the quality of education for future teachers in the region. The project was implemented together with 12 universities from the region and in cooperation with the Institute for Development of Education in each participating country.

The concept was created based on the detected needs – no systematic information about democratic citizenship was provided in the region. The project leader was Professor Rolf Gollob, a world-known expert in the field of civic education and intercultural pedagogy, from Zurich University of Teachers' Education, Switzerland. I was honored to have the privilege to work together with him and learn from one of the creators of the materials concerning the children's rights content for the Council of Europe.

He shared his knowledge and critical approach, guided and supported me through the entire process. Even though it was my first professional involvement with the democracy content, he made me feel like a partner. During our online work together, through our team's "ping-pong," as Professor Gollob used to say, we joined our expertise – in democracy and in visual art education. Together we created the module "Culture of Democracy through Visual Art Education."

The module represents the structural implementation of the content of democracy in visual art education. The aim was to support the development of contemporary democratic citizenship identity among the students - future teachers. The ultimate goal was to stimulate their competencies in establishing a learning process with democratic standards in their future work in kindergartens and primary schools. Our concept was based on:

1. The core material that is a base for reaching visual art literacy – understanding and critical implementation of visual elements and principles of design in the creation of visual art images;
2. Culture of Democratic Citizenship / Human Rights Education (CDC/HRE) and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, created by the Council of Europe (RFCDC).

We defined extremely precise daily preparations to provide conditions to transfer:

1. The content and didactics of visual art education,
2. Adequate key competencies of democratic citizenship such as Equality, Responsibility, Identity, Diversity and Pluralism, Rules and Law, Rights and Freedom, and Media. This program was introduced to the 140 participants, future preschool and primary school teachers in the period of four summer semesters 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Our methodological approach uses RFCDC to identify the forms of presented democratic culture integrated into students' visual art creations. We supported students' active visual perception and critical thinking to enable them to learn and implement the criteria for evaluation of the subject content. Simultaneously, students learned and implemented the criteria for the evaluation of democratic content by precisely defined descriptors. Democratic competencies were evaluated based on the activities selected from the livingdemocracy.com website (Figure 3).

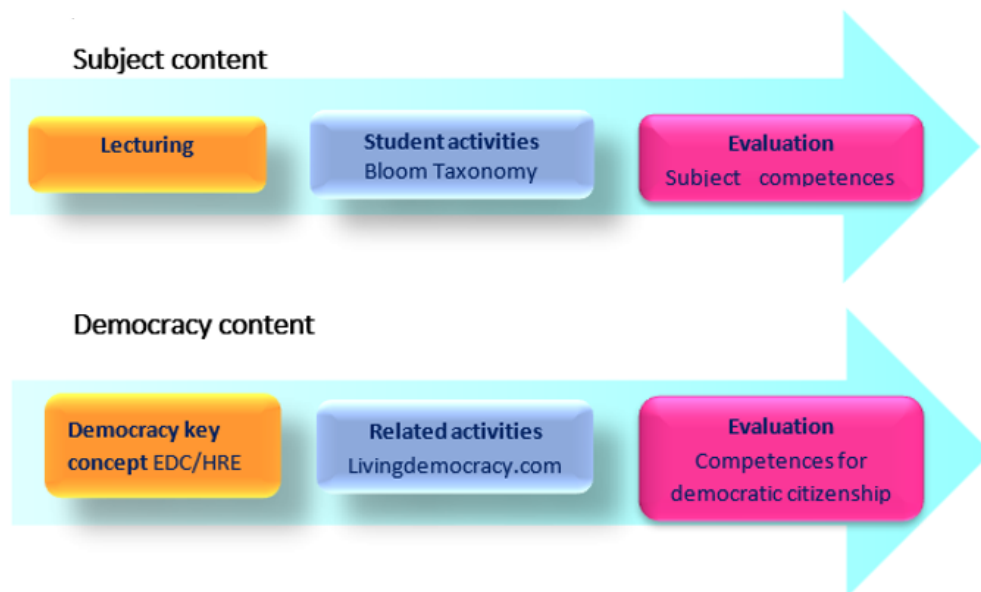


Figure 3. Concept of the semester module “Culture of Democracy through Visual Art Education”

The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture presents a comprehensive conceptual model of the competencies that people require to function as democratically and interculturally competent citizens. These competencies are subdivided into: Values, Attitudes, Skills, Knowledge, and critical understanding (Reference Framework on Competences for Democratic Culture, 2018), accompanied by descriptors describing levels of competence. These descriptors cover only those values, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and understanding which are learnable, teachable, and assessable (Figure 4).

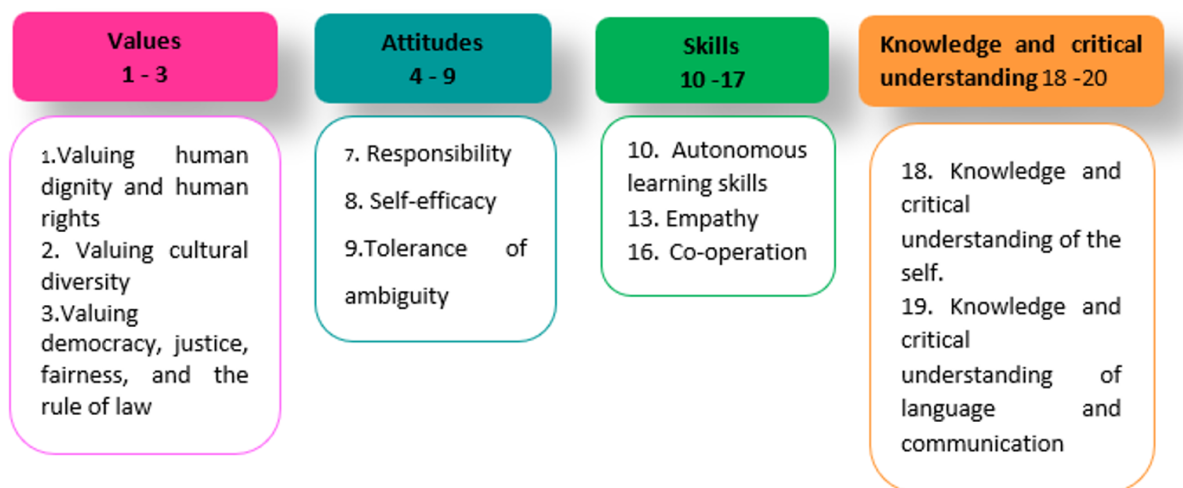


Figure 4. Examples of several competencies in each part (Reference Framework on Competences for Democratic Culture 2018)

The model proposes that, within the context of democratic culture and intercultural dialogue, an individual is deemed to be acting competently when he or she meets the demands, challenges, and opportunities that are presented by democratic and intercultural situations appropriately and effectively by mobilizing and deploying some or all of these 20 competencies (Radford, 1992).

Aims for the Creation and Implementation of the Module

Creating a way to integrate such diverse aspects of human existence in one coherent educational program was a big professional challenge. The specificity of the subject, “Visual Art Education with Didactics” determines the implementation of democratic content in each provided session.

We decided to present the EDC/HRE’s key concepts in each new session and provide an introduction to the culture of democratic citizenship to students.

To the already accredited university curriculum, we integrated the most suitable democracy content. The module and its implementation started in a standard university setting at the beginning of the summer semester of 2020, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was redirected completely online. The whole situation restricted us from organizing practical work for students and evaluating their achievement in a school setting.

Most of the work was done by students remotely, with my constant online support as their professor and with Prof. Gollob as a supervisor for the democracy part. Adapting the current and creating new tasks and homework for students for this type of remote education was an extremely demanding and taxing process.

- We had to create tasks that would challenge students’ intellectual curiosity, not only to learn the material of visual art but also to understand the democratic content.

- We also had to invent assignments that stimulate and nurture students’ creative and critical thinking in the search for solutions. We relied strongly on the Bloom Taxonomy of Educational Objectives to be certain of the level of students’ achievement/learning outcomes.

We aimed to achieve the following. Students would:

- Gain and show knowledge and understanding of basic concepts, terms, and facts in visual art education and democracy.
- Recognize, compare, and implement strategies to best explain the contents at a preschool and primary school level.
- Construct and apply creative solutions for acquiring visual and democratic thinking in a classroom setting.
- Achieve competency to accurately select and create tasks that stimulate the learning of key democratic principles in parallel with visual art content.
- Evaluate pupils’ competencies in acquiring democratic values and visual art culture with the use of descriptors.

Title of the session	Visual Art Education Content	Democracy content Key concepts	Activity / Bloom Taxonomy
Development of Visual Expression in Early Age	Developmental stages of visual expression at an early age in correlation with cognitive, emotional, motor, and mental growth of children	Diversity and pluralism RFCD: C 1 Valuing human dignity and human rights C 6 Civic-mindedness	Select and classify original children’s drawings and paintings in accordance with developmental stages Identify diversity and pluralism in children’s drawings and paintings
Contemporary methods in Visual Art Teaching and Learning	Classification of didactic methods in Visual Art Education	Equality RFCD: C 2 Valuing cultural diversity C 5 Respect	Classify contemporary methods in visual art education and compare with the traditional ones Implement equality in the creation of daily planning

Specifics and Planning in Visual Art Education	Types of planning in Visual Art Education	Responsibility RF CDC: C 5 Respect C 13 Empathy	Select and list plans for various visual art media in (1st or 5th grade) Elaborate understanding of responsibility in the implementation of visual art teaching (students) and learning (pupils)
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Table 1. Presentation of concept for the creation of the module “Culture of Democracy through Visual Art Education.”

Student`s responses

Students were informed about the CDC and how it's going to be implemented in their evaluation. Following each lesson, students had time to reflect on the events that took place in class. After descriptors for their evaluation were shared, they reported being significantly more relaxed during the entire process. Students also noted that the ability to distinguish various descriptors, which were a part of their tasks, helps them to better understand each aspect of democratic citizenship.

As their professor, I was more confident in lecturing with precisely defined time and activities in several structured segments. By implementing the module, my thoughts became clearer, as well as my explanations. Focused on the detection of competencies aimed to be nurtured in students, my perceptive abilities expanded to a new level of evaluation. I have always considered the process of evaluating students' knowledge difficult to perform, but in this case, it became easier and more accurate due to the precisely defined descriptors for each competence.

Name of student/student ID:	xxxx xxxxxx / 11754
Teaching content – Visual Art Education	Harmony of form and texture - grade 4 primary school
Teaching VA theme	Harmony
Sculpturing and modeling with clay Mat.: Clay, cardboard, water, modeling tools	Motive: Identity

<p>AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE: To name and define the concept of harmony in life and in visual arts, to compare various visual art pieces based on the their use of the visual principle - harmony, to identify and elaborate harmonical forms and textures in 2D and 3D media</p> <p>SKILLS: To create 3D sculpture with use of harmonious forms and texture, to demonstrate realization of the technique – modeling with clay.</p> <p>ABILITIES: For perception of various types of forms, recognition/selection of harmonious forms and textures in visual art and in the nature and surrounding, for evaluation of harmonious forms based on different tasks</p> <p>Primary school student`s activities:</p> <p>1. In introductory part of the session: Pupils can name the concept of harmony, recognize various types of harmonical relationship in life and in visual arts, they can elaborate characteristics and show harmonical forms and textures in 2D and 3D media</p> <p>2. In learning activities: Pupils can define the concept of harmony in life and in visual arts, to identify and compare various visual art pieces based on their use of the visual principle – harmony, to demonstrate realization of the technique – modeling with clay and to create sculptures with solution for the task: 3D sculpture with harmonious forms and textures</p> <p>3. In evaluation activities: Pupils will evaluate created sculptures based on the analysis of the implementation of harmonious forms and textures based on the interpretation of the motive: Identity- in the process of modeling in the final creations</p>

Table 2. Example of implementation of democracy content and Bloom`s taxonomy of educational objectives in the student`s daily preparation for the primary school subject Visual Art Education

Students also learned to self-analyze in the time aimed for reflection in each session. They expressed their satisfaction in having the opportunity to respond critically to my performance as part of gaining competencies for democratic citizenship. And in turn, our overall communication became drastically more open, honest, and direct.

Conclusion

Significant changes have been made in the creation of the daily preparations. With the included CDC key concepts, students were more grounded and focused on providing better support to their colleagues.

CDC was not achieved instantly:

For some key concepts such as Identity, there were some notable and passionate discussions among students of different social upbringings and ethnicity. During analyses of a colleague's self-portrait where he presented himself driving a car, a group of students with lower family income argued that it is a fake aspect of identity and found it funny, while others, socially better-positioned students approved it as adequate.

Through their essays, we were able to analyze the particular aspects of democratic competence connected with the student's own experiences. Their statements influenced by an understanding of the competencies for democratic citizenship allowed us to see complex, and in many cases, undemocratic behavior from others. Student Alexandra wrote: "Our responsibility as teachers is to provide a relaxed but encouraging working climate in establishing a constructive communication - meta-communication, on the teacher/pupil/parent relationship." Also commenting on the meaning of responsibility, student Angela stated: "Responsibility is a word that is worth a lot. In today's world of lies and hypocrisy, it is very difficult to be responsible, so it is even more important."

The ability to detect, recognize, discuss, and implement the reference framework of competencies for democratic citizenship alongside visual art educational content enabled students to deepen their own identities, build self-control and self-respect, value cultural diversity, human dignity, and human rights. The implementation of the module for visual arts content, together with key concepts of democratic citizenship, became an intensive refreshment of the subject of Visual Art Education with Didactic. It was rather incredible to witness how important the key competencies became for students. They noted that the use of descriptors enabled them to detect the acquisition of democratic competencies in pupils. The fast acquisition of each of the competencies reinforced students – future teachers' personal growth, and in that way provided an adequate follow-up and evaluation of the process of learning.

The module "Culture of Democracy through Visual Art Education" in its complexity had a profound impact on all of us and made us more aware and significantly more responsible. The possibility to add these newly acquired competencies to everyone's identity is quite remarkable.

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Challenging the Homogenization of Cultural Knowledge Through Craft Integrated Education

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On June 18th, 2022, protests broke out in Bangalore, my home city, and minority groups challenged the removal of representational content and social-justice narratives from state textbooks by the state textbook revision committee. Poetry and prose written by Dalit¹ writers, social reformists, and authors from religious minority groups,² including social justice themes around secularism, gender, and caste equality, have been replaced with controversial upper-caste Hindu content greenlighted by the dominant political powers under the guise of actions on India's New Education Policy. Concerned citizens and minority groups are in conflict with the culturally assimilative forces of dominant political bodies regarding how and what their next generation of children will learn (or not learn) in school.

At the height of the global pandemic, On July 29th, 2020, India put forth a new National Education Policy. Although the response to the policy is mixed, there are renewed opportunities for arts education. Section 22 (NEP, 2020) foregrounds arts and crafts integration as a medium for imparting culture. There is also a focus on a new area termed *Knowledge of India* that highlights the importance of traditional Indian knowledge connected to the cultural and spiritual life of the country (Ramanathan et al., 2022). In an effort to decolonize education, the new education policy amplifies the importance of centering Indian culture in education. Given the inextricable links between art and culture, education must be relevant to local contextual cultures. For over a century, Indian mainstream education has been dominated by primarily Western content, except for some content in History and Social Studies. However, as the protests mentioned above indicate, there is widespread concern that "centering culture," although a good intention, unfortunately through acts of implementation that are politically guided, has become a guise to reinstate dominant and hierarchical cultural values and undermine true diversity and inclusion. This is a complex dynamic and one which needs urgent attention from educators across the country.

Challenges to identity, be it race, caste, gender, religion, and more, are not new issues; we see these challenges echoed across the world. Civil rights scholar Crenshaw (1991), in their articulation of intersectionality and critical race theory, makes us aware that discriminations that might seem isolated and experienced or enacted individually are, in fact, systemic and complexly intertwined. In India, the United States, and other countries across the world, there is a current pushback against anti-racist/casteist, feminist, and other social justice education. This dynamic represents the

¹ The lowest castes of the Hindu caste system have claimed the term "Dalit" for identity creation, alliances, and resistance. Today, this has become an umbrella movement of those who have been politically exploited and socially and economically alienated, including marginalized women from other castes, marginalized Muslims, neo-Buddhists, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, and landless peoples.

² The preamble to the Indian Constitution states that India is a secular country. Six religions fall under a national minority status: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and Jains.

politicization of identity and difference and the seepage of this politicization into education. Race, caste, religion, class, and gender-based discrimination are not equivalent, and some scholars question whether the theory-translation of Critical Race Theory can be applied beyond the United States (Goodnight, 2017). However, the challenge of engaging with difference and marginalization at the personal, institutional, and systemic levels is seen in each, across, and at the intersection of all these “isms.” Crenshaw (ACLU et al., 2022) advocates the importance of talking about these isms in education, making them visible and calling them out, understanding how they function at the systemic level, acknowledging their intersections, and working to change them. How do politically motivated changes in education content and practices perpetuate systemic oppression and community tensions? How does this discrimination impact the way arts education is framed and taught?

Issues of caste, class, religion, and gender inequality continue to challenge India, the world’s largest democracy, and currently, this battle is playing out in education. As some systemic efforts are created to ensure equitable education for all, the implementation of policies often undermines the very goals they try to achieve and perpetuates inequalities despite government or legal mandates (Narula, 2008). At this time when India grapples with its position on the world stage, religious fundamentalism in the local political arena, and a desire to decolonize its education, I grapple with my role as an arts educator who challenges the benign view of the arts/craft within the context of cultural learning in Indian mainstream education. What is the role of culturally relevant and sustaining arts/craft/cultural education in challenging the threat to equity, diversity, and inclusion in India?

In this chapter, I focus on craft education within the larger landscape of social inequities in India, viewed through the lens of the current opportunities and challenges of the New Education Policy (2020). India has over 200 million artisans, who are significant contributors to the economy. However, these craftspeople continue to be marginalized along caste, class, gender, and religious lines and are rarely viewed as contributors to the knowledge economy of culture, science, ecology, and more. The new education policy foregrounds arts and crafts integration as a medium for imparting culture. There is a new and renewed opportunity for integrated art/craft/cultural education in India. Nevertheless, entrenched and false hierarchies such as art over craft, mental over manual work, global market forces over bio-cultural identity, and upper-caste homogenization of culture over true diversity continue to shape how India’s art/craft/cultural integrated education is perceived and implemented. At a time when diverse communities are asserting their rights to be recognized as cultural entities and live and nurture their young in the ways they want to, there is a vital need for a redefinition of culturally integrated education that addresses the urgent call for equity, diversity, and inclusion in India.

Personal Introduction

Culture is ubiquitous; like the water we drink or the air we breathe, it is often invisible because we are immersed in it. In becoming aware of my culture and my identity, I know that culture is far more complex than ethnicity, race, nationality, or gender. Nevertheless, as a young person, these became markers of how I fit in or did not. I became conscious of identity and culture only when I was suddenly outside of what was considered “normal” or came into relations where I was “different.” As education psychologist Bruner (2004) suggests, “The fish will, indeed, be the last to discover water—unless he gets a metaphysical assist” (p. 709).

As an artist and educator, I am now interested in culture knowledge, how it gets rooted, how it stays, how it transforms, how it is leveraged, and how it leaves. However, when I think of my “culture” and what “culture knowledge” I hold, I try to pinpoint one cultural root here and another there and quickly give up. It is one big *khichdi*, as my dad proudly calls it. *Khichdi* is a soul-food mash of rice and multiple lentils colloquially used to denote a tangled yet nutritious, mushy mess. My dad is a Parsi³, from the north of India, and my mom is a non-Brahmin Hindu⁴ from the south.

³ Parsi is a religious minority community of Zoroastrians that sought refuge in India.

⁴ In the current political and religious climate in India, the distinctions between upper and lower-caste Hindus have become more pronounced. My mother came from a mixed-caste background herself. Her father was Kshyatriya, and her

Although I have rarely clarified this, caste and religion are heavy markers of culture and identity in India. Being mixed in some ways gave me a free pass to play outside the bounds of religious caste distinctions. I also acknowledge that this was possible mainly because my family was middle-class. My mother, whose family was from Chennai, spoke Tamil growing up, and my father, from Mumbai, spoke Gujarati. As a family, we finally settled in Bangalore, where Kannada is the regional language, yet English ironically became the shared medium to understand each other. My parents initially chose not to foreground religion or cultural-linguistic specificities, thinking that it would confuse us as children. However, shortly after we moved to Bangalore, my maternal grandparents and paternal grandmother moved in with us, so we grew up in a cultural and linguistic stew, sometimes harmonious and sometimes not. When anyone asked where I was from, what language I spoke at home, or which god I prayed to, I often evaded the question or just responded with, "It is complicated." Early in school, all these distinctions quickly positioned me as "different." It used to bother me, but with much guidance and storytelling from my dad, I began to dismiss the elitism of pedigree, purity, and lineage and identified more with the street-smart mongrel stray dogs we had a string of at home. I became proud of being mixed and, more than anything, challenging purity and embracing a hybrid perspective that shaped my identity, interests, and values. I enjoyed the concept of plurality and attempted to embody it in my life practice.

Growing up, my cultural education took many forms. My architect parents always foreground creativity. Their practice embraced local ecology and vernacular building materials, engaging local craftsmanship and nurturing in me an appreciation for the value of contextual relevance. My grandmothers on both sides equally immersed me in mythological stories from Hinduism and Zoroastrian as they fed me dinner and put me to bed at night. My mother was a beautiful dancer, and from seven to seventeen, I learned *bharatanatyam*⁵ alongside her three times a week after school. Her daily wardrobe of traditional jewelry and handwoven fabrics opened up the world of exquisite handmade traditional crafts. It inspired me to start making clothing and jewelry as a teenager. I was immersed in a fluid mix of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious hybridity, where differences were valued and celebrated.

At 18, when I moved to the United States for college and work, I went from this complex identity mix shared above to just being a singular homogenous - Indian or, more broadly, even a South Asian woman. All my youthful angst seemed to have no place. Numerous assumptions and stereotypes piled on me, along with being marked as Hindu and most likely to work at a tech company in the Bay Area. My choice to be an artist and work in Oakland public schools in the heart of the Fruitvale district of East Oakland shocked my Indian peers. When living in Fruitvale, I did not often correct people when I was mistaken for being Nicaraguan because of the way I looked, and I would pray that my limited Spanish would hold up.

My work as an artist-educator-researcher today has been shaped by this hybrid identity. I believe strongly in interdisciplinary and integrated teaching, particularly in local contexts, through community engagement using practices of arts and ecology. As an artist, I am equally invested in community arts practices as in my practice of artist books, textile work, printmaking, installation, and more. As an educator and teacher-researcher, my work life has been equally divided between the United States and India, working in public schools and museums, running arts organizations, working with school systems at the district and county levels, working with youth who have dropped out of the mainstream school system, and engaging in teacher development and research at the university level.

mother was a Yadhava.

⁵ Bharathanatyam is one of seven Indian classical dance forms and is common to the south of India, particularly Tamil Nadu



Figure 1. Walking Kutch. An aquatint series inspired by an embroidered patch I bought from a Rabari Kutchi woman when visiting her home in 2013. This exchange serves as a seed for a plethora of ideas, inquiries, discomforts, and my deep love for traditional craft practices. Courtesy of artist.

The Problem Space

In 2013, I visited the Kutch region of northwest India on reconnaissance for a craft-education project. I met with a woman from the Dhebaria Rabari tribe who spoke of the embroidery practices of her community. The Rabari are nomadic herders in north-west India, and the women embroidered as they moved with family and cattle across the landscape. The embroideries carried sub-community identity (Frater, 2002a, 2002b), intergenerationally transferred from grandmothers, mothers, and aunts to daughters and nieces. Small composite patches made it feasible to embroider, teach, and learn on the go. Girls used to embroider multiple sets of intricate ceremonial clothing for themselves as part of their trousseau. Over the last 20 years, the state has increased pressures on nomads to settle (Köhler-Rollefson & Kishore, 2021) and send their children to school. Within the community, there is a perception that formal education means “progress” and “modernization” (Dyer, 2001), and the Rabari view school education as “learning to speak the language of power” (p. 252). The embroidering of multiple sets of ceremonial clothing vied for classroom time (Dyer, 2005). So, community leaders (all men) decided to abolish the practice of embroidery for personal use (Dyer, 2005; Frater, 2002a). They felt this social custom weighed them down in tradition and went so far as to impose a fine on girls who embroidered for themselves (Dyer, 2005). Although education for girls is seen as an asset, many Rabari laments the loss of vibrant, identity-filled clothing and shift to plain clothes, which they associate with mourning. Others feel it frees time for formal education and mainstream work, which are the only survival options for their future, as their traditional lifestyle is

incompatible with the modern world (Dyer, 2001). Older women in this community embroider for boutiques and designers but do not embroider for themselves.

As an arts educator, I felt a deep sadness and discomfort hearing this story and reading about it further after interacting with that Dhebaria Rabari woman (Dyer, 2001, 2005; Frater, 2002a, 2002b). It has eaten away at me all these years (Figure. 1). A community tradition, and with it, generational knowledge linked to identity (Frater, 2002a, 2002b), got severed in the service of mainstream education with no dynamic for integrating these two knowledge systems. I want to clarify that girls should get a relevant and meaningful education. However, I am devastated that their cultural knowledge has no value in school and, therefore, no value in their future. I challenge the cultural cognitive dissonance in young people, making meaning between their cultural and educational worlds in post-colonial countries when traditional knowledge is polarized against mainstream “Western” knowledge. Scholars on decolonial aesthetics, Mignolo and Vazquez (2013), amplify this sense across colonized communities where modernity is viewed as Western and has excluded and erased all other forms of knowledge, except as acts of cultural preservation in ethnological museums.

Most urban middle-class Indian children know early on that there is one way of knowing the world through Pythagoras, Newton, and Shakespeare during the eight hours of formal school, and for those whose families can afford it, a completely different way of knowing the world through traditional Indian craft, art, and performance after-school. Without being explicitly told, I learned that school knowledge (read as Western knowledge) was valued more than after-school knowledge (read as Indian knowledge). Senior education theorist Kumar (2007) states, “There are no bridges between crafts and schools, between artisans and teachers, and between India’s children and their national heritage” (para. 2). He bemoans the fact that diverse and local Indian aesthetics surround us and could permeate schools in every community but instead evades them, and ponders what would be required before “our icy education system melts towards crafts” (para. 1).

After 75 years of independence from British rule, mainstream Indian education is still dominated by Western content, philosophy, and practice, which is seen as necessary for India’s position on a global stage. Despite the efforts of stalwart freedom fighters like Gandhi⁶ (Iyengar, 2019; Kawlra, 2020; Sykes, 1988) and Tagore (Kawlra, 2020; Mitra, 2019), the craft and non-industrialized indigenous cultural knowledge they positioned as integral to Indian education for the masses continues to exist at the margins. Although I believe in universal education for all, the one-size-fits-all model of formal education dominated by Western knowledge content and ideology excludes cultural and contextual local knowledge, so much so that many knowledge practices, such as the embroidery practices of the Dhebaria Rabari, are devalued and dying out. Why were these two ways of knowing kept so distinct, and why was one valued above the other? What are the opportunities for bridging a hybrid relationship between these knowledge systems?

My work currently focuses on craft-integrated education to engage with the problem space described above. I am interested in how the tacit, interdisciplinary, and embodied knowledge of traditional craft practices can translate and bridge to integrated formal academic learning in mainstream schools.

Challenges and Opportunities of Craft Education in the Context of NEP 2020

It is important to note that although the traditional and contemporary arts thrive in the socio-cultural milieu in India, arts or crafts education as distinct disciplines have only recently been

⁶ Gandhi’s education experiments, Nai Talim, foregrounded craftwork and contextual education and were critical to his fight for India’s freedom. Tagore, a poet, artist, and freedom fighter, set up the Sriniketan school to build self-respect and self-reliance based on India’s craft traditions. Both had visions of societal transformation, and centering craft in education meant centering the work of the lowest castes. This would be a radical shift in what was valued as knowledge.

mandated in mainstream education by the National Education Policy 2020. Elite schools might have consistent art, drama, and dance teachers. Many schools will have arts and crafts as part of extracurricular activities, even if for short durations of time. However, the consistency of art as part of the formal curriculum is still a distant dream. Consequently, after-school and informal visual and performing arts education are numerous. There is an opportunity to connect and bridge these spaces more deliberately and create links between academic learning and the cultural community arts.

Even with acknowledging these opportunities, there are deeper underlying historical (Mistry, 2023) issues of craft and its position in society that must be critically engaged with. The first is the word “craft” and the concept it brings to mind. The second is crafts’ inextricable link to caste and the resultant mental versus manual hierarchy. The third is the dominance of singular cultural ideologies and their implication on diverse craft and craft-education practices.

The Inadequacy of the Term Craft

The English word “craft” is an inadequate term for traditional creative-making practices in India and other non-western countries. The term craft is used equally to describe children’s hobby work with plastic beads, pompoms, pipe cleaners, an American craft brewer or baker, a European craft cheese or chocolate maker, and an indigenous woman textile artisan in India or Mexico. In these examples, the class, caste, race, gender, and economic dynamics and link to cultural and spiritual knowledge get overlooked in broad Western conceptions of craft. In some instances, there is a sense that craft is connected to the past and is linked to handmade objects and processes using embodied knowledge. However, new do-it-yourself and digitally enabled maker fabrication extends this definition of craft today (Brulotte & Montoya, 2019). Within the framework of global capitalism, craft is part of creative cultural industries (Vencatachellum, 2019). Artisans are part of production cycles with an increased risk of being categorized as labor instead of traditional knowledge holders.

Historically, the distinction in concepts between art and craft emerged during European Enlightenment with the Kantian distinction of “pure beauty” seen as “art” and “purposeful beauty” seen as “craft” (Davies, 2000; Mignolo & Vasquez, 2013; Vyas, 1984). Fine art and liberal arts became associated with the individual, genius, White male artist, while crafts or handicrafts were women’s work, manual hand-work of lower class labor, and creative objects of non-western communities (Pasztory, 2005; Stankiewicz, 2007; Zeglin Brand, 1999). High art (fine and liberal) was seen as a cognitive process, while low art or craft was framed as a manual process (Stankiewicz, 2007). These distinctions perpetuated a hierarchy between art and craft and mental and manual work.

The Industrial Revolution in the West saw a resurgence of craft in the Western world, with the Arts and Crafts movement posing a challenge to industrial making and craft, expressing the tensions between human creativity and machine production (Brulotte & Montoya, 2019). The focus was on pre-industrial modes of production with the focus on hand skill, apprenticeship, and decoration as a metaphor for the connection back to nature (Obniski, 2008). Framings of craft as quaint, nostalgic, novel, authentic, traditional, and heritage further complicate the definition and understanding of the concept of craft and how it is valued/devalued today.

In India, vernacular terms like *kala*, *shilpi*, or *dastakar*⁷ work better than “craft” as they encompass a broader concept of art-craft-design as a unified concept (Vyas, 1984) for creative cultural production. The relationship between people and their bio-regional context results in bio-cultural expression passed down by family generations in narrative, symbolic, ritualistic, and utilitarian forms. Craft is a traditional, tangible cultural expression that embodies contextual knowledge. In the United Nations 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2022), craftwork is interconnected with other cultural practices, such as folklore, music, dance, rituals, and ceremonies,

⁷ *Kala* is a broad and encompassing term for art, craft, and design. *Shilpi* is used for artist and craftspeople. *Dastkari* is a person highly skilled with their hands.

which are viewed as expressions of intangible cultural heritage. The convention foregrounds that these practices are not stuck in the past but are lived practices of communities, passed down through generational knowledge, and connected to a community's context and environment. The creative cultural expression does not distinguish between the terms art and craft, and the categories of utilitarian, spiritual, and expressive. It encompasses a broader making practice focusing on community versus individual creative practices within a cultural context (Mistry, 2023). Nevertheless, the term "craft" is still widely used in India with all its confused, complex, and hierarchical economic, cultural, or educational policy and practice associations.

Caste, Craft, Economy, and Education

The weight of caste (and religion) in Indian society cannot be underestimated; it forms the societal fabric and is a controversial and sensitive pain point in many aspects of social justice work. Craft education reforms that have ignored or attempted to side-step caste have not worked. Furthermore, most mainstream education circumvents any deep critical engagement of caste in education. A World Bank publication, *Poor Peoples Knowledge* (Finger & Schuler, 2004), juxtaposes the exquisite crafts of India valued at over 2 billion US dollars in export in 2000 with alarming numbers of suicide and starvation affecting struggling and exploited artisans of lower castes. The exquisite crafts made by these artisans grace the catwalks of Paris, high-end stores in New York, and the homes of the wealthiest people in the world. However, the contrasting poverty of most of India's artisans continues to persist (Liebl & Roy, 2004). There are many complex reasons for this, but India's long and convoluted caste system is high on the list. There are various descriptions of the caste system from multiple perspectives⁸ that would require a separate paper. However, within this work on craft and craft education, caste is significant because craft practices are associated with the hereditary occupations of certain castes (Anandhi & Kawlra, 2018; Coomaraswamy, 1909; Kawlra, 2018; Tarar, 2011).

Simply put, practices that stemmed from working with the land or animals, such as pottery, leather, blacksmithing, and woodworking, including harvesting and weaving cotton and wool, were practices of the lowest castes. Practices of painting and storytelling in places of worship or from religious texts were typically practices of those from higher castes. Through patronage, politics of power, and colonization, one sees the further valorization of the traditional craftsman and their hereditary caste occupations passed down through generations (Kawlra, 2018) or the vilification of caste and related craft practices as "unclean work," relegating the artisan to menial and dirty (Ilaiah, 2007; Tarar, 2011) and to the edges of society. Craft anthropologists Anandhi S. and Kawlra (2018) illustrate deep-seated conceptions rooted in eugenics that naturalized and legitimized craft-based caste hierarchies, where mental work was seen as work of the elite and higher castes, while craft practices by lower castes were just manual labor. In his education material for children, Dalit activist Ilaiah (2007) illustrates the lack of dignity of labor still experienced by Muslims, Dalit (lowest caste), and Adivasi (indigenous) leatherworkers, weavers, and other craftspeople today.

Historically, there were oppressive periods where upward mobility from one's caste and related occupation was almost impossible. New religions of Buddhism and Jainism and missionary efforts of Christianity offered the potential to extricate one from the grip of caste and, as a result, craft work from its link to caste (Kawlra, 2018). This further complicated and diversified hereditary and identity-based craft practices. At the national level, the discourse of devaluing the body's work over the mind reduced craft to skill and labor, disregarding the spiritual and conceptual aspects of craft and the scientific understanding of the land, materials, tools, and processes. This mental-man-

⁸ The Caste system or the Varna System is seen as a religiously defined hierarchical society into Brahmins - the priestly caste, Kshatriyas - the warriors, Vaisya - the traders, and Shudra - menial labor. Castes and Jati denote numerous sub-groups within the Varna system of kinship, profession, and cultural practices on one end and religiously defined hierarchy within Hinduism on another.

ual split laid the groundwork for how missionaries, craft revivalists, and government schemes envisioned craft education for the “upliftment” of the lower castes in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries (Anandi & Kawlra, 2018) and frames how current craft education aims at “skilling” and “upliftment” of the poor to support a productive economy (Dubey, 2017; National Skills Network, 2021).

“Indianizing” Indian Education

India’s new National Education Policy (2020), section 22, foregrounds arts and crafts integration as a medium for imparting culture. State position papers articulate a section on Knowledge of India (Ramanathan et al., 2022) and highlight the importance of traditional knowledge, passed down across generations and connected to a community’s cultural and spiritual life. While the progressive language of the policy is heartening and advocates of arts and cultural education see this new policy as a renewed opportunity, current state and government actions of rewriting textbooks in the flavor of dominant political ideology (Prasanna & Bhat, 2022; Visweswaran et al., 2009), and the removal of cultural curricular content representing marginalized groups and social justice themes (Prasanna & Bhat, 2022), have raised concerns.

Although government committees articulate an active stance on decoloniality (Ramanathan et al., 2022), there is an intention to reshape a national grand narrative (p. 8) by instilling nationalistic pride (p.11). The consistent narrowing of a diverse Indian identity to a singular national upper-caste Hindu identity (Tore Flåten, 2017; Devy, 2020) has stirred skepticism and backlash against the NEP 2020, with concerns that cultural and education material are used for identity politics (Devy, 2020). This critique cannot be taken lightly. Craft communities are diverse, a colorful weave of indigenous and migrant people of India, many of whom do not identify as upper caste or Hindu and have long been marginalized. Theories on decolonial aesthetics (Vázquez, 2021) advocate for a plurality of worlds and not new universals or polarized ideologies. Therefore, homogenized cultural representation is the very antithesis of socially and culturally relevant craft education.

The Potential for Interdisciplinary Craft-Integrated Curriculum

As an educator, my challenge today is to translate the historical, systemic, and philosophical complexities described above into practice on the ground with students and teachers. How can craft education in India today make invisible intersectionality visible? How does craft education engage in a critical, contextual, and interconnected understanding of the craft as a traditional and contemporary knowledge system while simultaneously immersed in its embodied creative processes as expressions of creative cultural production?

Through my conversations with and observations of artisans in practice, I have become aware of the multiple critical identities they hold as they navigate traditional knowledge within contemporary lived practice. As I meet artisans and observe and document their work, I am aware of specific scenarios, situations, and anecdotes that capture the interconnected, complex dynamics of their practice. I see these as stories, full of potential and as valuable entry points into critical-place-based-craft integrated curriculum design and classroom teaching. The three scenarios shared below are examples of some entry points into craft-integrated curriculum design; some of them have been implemented, and others are still in the design stage. These examples link some aspects of social, scientific, ecological, economic, cultural, geographic, historical, or civic knowledge along with the practice’s affective, embodied, and material experience. The intention is to acknowledge that craft practices are complex, lived, and interconnected knowledge systems that evolve and transform today and are not simply the heritage of the past.

The Silk Road, Then and Now

Karnataka, my home state, is famous for its silk cottage industry, which is in crisis as local silk prices cannot compete with the costs of imported Chinese silk. The village-scale silkworm rearers of Gopalpura are one community feeling the downstream effects of this economic shift. Local cocoon prices are measured with Chinese raw silk prices influencing the livelihoods of small-scale communities in India's villages. This crisis was briefly in the news, and this news coverage offered an opportunity for a group of students⁹ to study the silk-road not just as an abstract historical process of trade, knowledge, and cultural exchange but also to understand how contemporary dynamics of global capitalism have a lasting livelihood and economic impact on traditional silkworm rearers we visited at Gopalpura village on the outskirts of Bangalore.

Although the Silk Road as a topic is often taught to students when they learn about ancient China and India, the context specificity of silk and its contemporary dynamics in India and the state of Karnataka extends this unit of study from learning about the practice of the past to a critical place-based contemporary craft integrated practice, relevant today.



Figure 2. The Silk Road. A collaborative appliqued and embroidered tapestry created by students at the Drishya Learning Center with facilitators Vanya, Sharadha, and Shubha. Photo by the author.

This study looked at the historical, economic, ecological, cultural, and social dynamics of silk in both the local and global contexts. Students studied the ecological dynamics of silkworm rearing, from nurturing worms, harvesting cocoons, and mulberry production to threats of disease and predators. They had already developed a butterfly garden and translated their learning of the butterfly life cycle to the small-scale commercial production of silkworms. They developed a historical understanding of the Silk Road as a symbol for trade, reading about the trials and tribulations of traders traversing the inhospitable landscapes for the trade of special commodities and, in the way, understood how the knowledge of silk production came from China to

⁹ This unit was a collaborative effort designed in partnership between the Drishya Learning Centers for Urban Poor, an alternative education space for children who had dropped out of the government school system, and Project Vision, an education research collective I was a part of at the Srishti Institute of Art Design and Technology, Bangalore. There were multiple artists, educators and partners involved in the execution of this unit of study.

India and our local community. They visited local silk production units in Karnataka to study how cocoons from various village collectives made it through spinning, dyeing, and weaving. They developed an economic understanding of the current silk crises and juxtaposed that with oral histories reflecting the silkworm rearers' class, caste, cultural, and economic realities in Gopalpura. Through this process, students developed a textile mural illustrating these interconnected complexities using scrap fabric.

Shifting Lands and the Ajrakh Dyers

In 2001, a devastating earthquake hit the Kachchh area of Gujrat, and the town of Dhamadka, the heart of the Ajrakh block printing community, was destroyed. Beyond just the buildings, the water in the wells and streams of the town got contaminated, and the iron content of the water increased (Khamir, 2013). This caused black spots on the fabric when the dyers tried to work with that water. The community of Ajrakh dyers decided they had to move for their art form and livelihood to survive and went in search of wells with better water. More than formulas and equations, Khatri's traditional Ajrakh dyers' knowledge of chemistry is sensorial. They can tell you the water and iron content conditions and other contaminants from smell and sight. The economic and cultural drivers to keep their community knowledge and practices alive have led them to find new lands and waters for their work and develop contemporary innovations for water management.

Scenario: The Chemistry of Natural Dyeing

In 2001 a devastating earthquake hit the Kachchh area of Gujrat and the town of Dhamadka, the heart of the Ajrakh block printing community was destroyed. But beyond just the buildings the water in the wells and streams of the town got contaminated and the iron content of the water increased. This caused black spots on the fabric when the dyers tried to work with that water, the community of Ajrakh dyers decided they had to move in order for their art-form and their livelihood to survive and went in search for wells with better water.

Sourced from: <https://exhibitions-khamir.org/ajrakh/adapting>

How and why does the iron content in the well water affect natural dyeing?

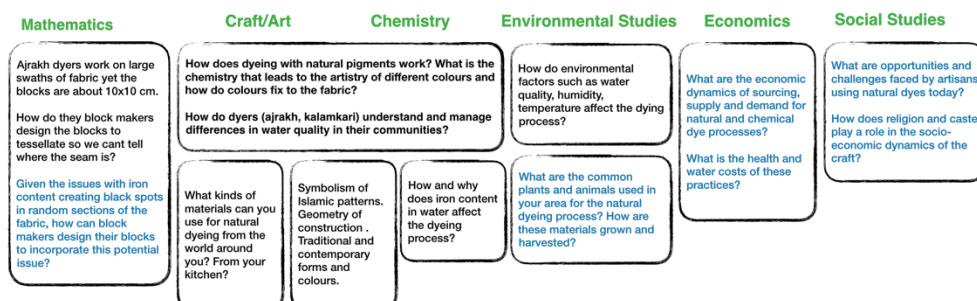


Figure 3. This is an excerpt of a work-in-progress design for a study of the contemporary and traditional practices of Ajrakh Block Printing. Courtesy of the author.

The oral stories of this incident and documentation of the larger practice of Ajrakh were put together in an exhibition, *The Imprint of Kachchh: 500 Years of Block Printing*, by the organization and artisans at Khamir, in December 2013. A study of this incident and an understanding of the larger practice of Ajrakh block printing practices of the Khatri's, a community of Muslim master wood-block printers and dyers, leads you into history, geography, chemistry, ecology, sociology, theology, economics, and the art of dyeing and printing. This incident serves as an entry point into a work-in-progress curriculum design that aims to capture the complexities of the evolution of the living practice of Ajrakh block printing.

From Tholpavakoothu to Pennpavakoothu Puppeteers from Palakkad:

Tholpavakoothu is a traditional leather shadow puppet form practiced in the Palakkad region

of Kerala. Typically, the practice of male puppet makers and performers, the puppeteers perform the Ramayana epic continuously for twenty-one nights at local temples. One family of puppeteers has recently started an all-women's puppet ensemble called Pennpavakoothu. This troupe is led by Rajitha Ramchandra, daughter of Padmashree Ramchandra Pulavar, a master puppeteer continuing the Tholpavakoothu practice for the 13th generation. This troupe is still not allowed to perform at the temple. However, they use their skills, processes, and practices to address women's issues through contemporary puppet productions within their community (Philip, 2022; Rajita Ramchandra, personal communication, February 28, 2023). Although purists have criticized them, the troupe is receiving wide-spread support¹⁰, and this family is challenging caste, religion, and gender segregations as well as circumventing identity politics to teach others outside their community and familial networks to learn the practice and join them when they perform outside the temple. During the pandemic, Rajitha taught girls and women from her neighborhood and brought them into practice, eventually constituting an all women's troupe.



Figure 4. Left. Rajitha holds a contemporary puppet that her troupe uses to raise awareness of women's issues. Right. A traditional Tholpavakoothu puppet of Sita, one of the protagonists of the Ramayana, created by Ramchandra Pulevar's family. Courtesy of the author.

By taking a closer look at the traditional practice of Tholpavakoothu, the changes made by this generation of puppeteers, and Rajitha's own story, one learns how the dynamics of religion, and gender are slowly transforming as the art form evolves and thrives. The traditional techniques of leatherwork, fire as a light source, song, and performance intersect with a deep understanding of puppetry as a way to engage in social critique. One also sees how members of the family hold multiple identities as they continue to traverse traditional and contemporary worlds.

Each one of these stories focuses on artisans who have been marginalized along caste, gender, religious, and class lines and challenges the notion of craft as stuck in the past, which is, unfortunately, how most craft education in India is still approached. The intentional link to the present makes visible the adaptations these traditional art forms and their practitioners go through as the craft continues to thrive and evolve. Furthermore, the learning is not limited to the artistic skills and techniques of silkworm rearing, block-printing, and shadow puppetry that typical craft education focuses on but is critically interconnected with the more extensive cultural, geographic, economic, scientific, sociological, and ecologic nature of the contemporary dynamics of these traditional crafts. Crafts learning is contextually located and taught within a changing cultural context, challenging

¹⁰ Kerala is one of the few primarily communist states in India. The Pennpavakoothu troupe has received media coverage and government support from the Department of Women and Children for their awareness and advocacy work through puppetry. Interestingly, because of its communist leanings, the government is less supportive of the traditional religious Ramayana performances that are widely supported by the temples and follow strict rules of caste and gender in terms of who is allowed to perform and who isn't.

hierarchical, hegemonic aspects of culture.

An Emerging Framework for Critical Place-Based Craft Integrated Curriculum Design

Within a democratic and pluricultural vision of education for all, centering culture has become essential. My current practice of documenting and finding stories and anecdotes of craft practitioners; attempting to hold the interconnected complexities of traditional practice in current times; and building links to manifest this learning in the classroom draws inspiration from the work on culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b), sustaining (Alim & Paris, 2017), and revitalizing (McCarty & Lee, 2014) pedagogies, where culture is not fixed or stuck in the past but is hybrid, entangled and constantly evolving (Acuff, 2015; Desai, 2000; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013; Sleet-er, 2016;). As much as we center culture, the essentializing and hegemonic dynamics of race, class, caste, gender, and other inequalities perpetuated by culture must be made visible and engaged with critically (Paris & Alim, 2014; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Most importantly for communities of color and marginalized communities, culture cannot continue to be projected as a deficit (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014), and the cultural capital of the elite cannot be leveraged to perpetuate further inequalities (Yosso, 2005).

Furthermore, craft practices are embodied (Metcalf, 2000), affective (Hickey-Moody, 2013), and emplaced (Pink, 2011) and intricately interconnected with their environments. Many non-Western cultures center on the human-nature relationship (de Sousa Santos et al., 2008) and foreground indigenous peoplehood (Huaman & Mataira, 2019), which is the interlocking features of the land, language, cultural ceremonial practices, and lived sacred histories. There is a need to relink art, culture, and nature and re-see art education as cultural production (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013) by focusing on the context and conditions of creative experiences for both the individual and the community. Art education as cultural production is essential for craft and craft education because craft continues to be a lived practice in communities but is not recognized as legitimate contemporary knowledge in schools.

These scenarios and narrative snippets above, and others like them, are seeds of craft-integrated curricula currently being developed in partnership with artisans, crafts organizations, and students. The process has been illuminating as each community, and artisan has different ways they want to tell their stories. I am always conscious of the line between making the unseen visible and opening up a sensitive dialogue. As part of this process, an emergent framework and set of guidelines are surfacing as important. These include:

- Engaging with local art, craft, design practices, and the factors that root them in a particular context/place/geography and community.
- Leveraging both deep arts learning and deep learning in other academic areas. Understanding the various interdisciplinary connections of the particular practice being studied (science, geography, economics, social science, mathematics, environmental studies, civics, and more), and using distinct disciplinary lenses while approaching interdisciplinary topics from multiple perspectives.
- Bridging the traditional-contemporary dichotomy to connect heritage and traditional practices to contemporary issues and lived practices or/and trace the history and influences that hape contemporary practices.
- Bridging the skill-concept dichotomy to engage with skills/techniques particular to the art/craft/design practice: technical and conceptual processes in the creation of artwork; and the conceptual, sociocultural themes, vocabulary, and symbolic meaning-making con nected to the specific craft/art practice and products
- Engaging with discourse and debates about cultural appropriation, credit, and consent and acknowledging the multiple complex identities artisans hold.
- Understanding what is sacred to each community and why.
- Understanding social structures that are enmeshed within the particular practice being

explored. Understand systems of patronage, support, networks, dissent, local and global markets, contemporary opportunities, and challenges of the practice.

- Recognizing, documenting, and amplifying non-dominant and tacit ways of knowing

- Making it real, building relevance to students' lives, or relevance to local practices and contemporary opportunities

- Critically engaging with content as not benign but seeing the complex connections between work, study, and life from multiple perspectives and in metacognitive ways.

In conclusion, this process allows for an emerging direction of critical-contextual-craft integrated education in India today. To reiterate, craft is the preview of traditional communities that continue to work with their hands. Many of these communities are marginalized by caste, class, gender, and religion, and their handwork is unfortunately undervalued in mainstream education. In a move to decolonize education and center Indian culture, there are concerns that dominant political forces aim to homogenize culture, versus centering the true diversity that India holds. Critical, contextual craft-integrated education has the opportunity to challenge the homogenization of culture and make complex intersections visible while rooting learning in a cultural context. Craft learning is interconnected and overlaps with multiple academic areas. Making these overlaps visible allows artisans to be valued as knowledge holders in science, history, ecology, and other interconnected knowledge areas. A critical lens helps us understand social structures enmeshed within the particular practice. Furthermore, by building links between critical and affective-embodied learning, we can recognize, document, and amplify non-dominant ways of knowing.

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Embracing between: An exploration of a biracial art educator identity

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Delving into the Space Between

Growing up, I was attuned to the aesthetics associated with my biracial (Black/White) identity – the visuality of being in-between racial categories. Regularly staring at my mother’s watercolor painting of my dad holding me as an infant, I explored the differences in our skin tones. I recall the excitement I felt when visiting multiracial family friends, feeling an unspoken connection. My childhood experiences also involved grappling with not fitting in – not being fully Black or fully White, nor aligning with societal expectations for what a biracial child should look like. Experiencing the othering gaze of monoracial families and individuals was a regular reality when my family moved around our town. It was during my studies in art education that I began to see the potential of tapping into the liminal spaces of being in-between, concerning my identity as a biracial person and as an art educator, as well as the inherent challenges.

In this chapter, through exploring lived narratives, artworks, and art education curricula, I investigate how my experiences and perspectives as a biracial woman have influenced my art educator identity. Using the lens of Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 2009) and an autoethnographic approach (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), I explore how this lived reality of navigating and negotiating being in-between has propelled me to resist, disrupt, and blur binaries, norms, and hierarchies found in art education and society.

The Complexity of Multiracial Identities

Multiracial identities can be seen and felt as existing between, outside of, or beyond racial categories. With all these locations, these identities disrupt traditional racial categories, challenging the belief that these classifications are discrete and static (Cheng & Lee, 2009; Shih & Sanchez, 2005), and violating “prevailing norms of group membership” (DaCosta, 2020, p. 337). The fear associated with this disruption of racial categories was fiercely expressed in the anti-miscegenation law in the United States, which, until it was repealed in 1967, deemed interracial marriage to be illegal. In Canada, where I grew up and am located, the colonization of Indigenous peoples and lands, which continues today, along with the restricted settlement of various racialized populations limited and controlled interracial relationships (Taylor, 2008). While multiracial populations are increasing rapidly in both countries (Gaither, 2015; Shih & Sanchez, 2009; Song, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2018), these histories have had lasting effects on how mixed-race identities are perceived and experienced (Bannerji, 2000; Taylor, 2008). Within these societies, multiracial identities push against entrenched White supremacy by disrupting racial categories. At the same time, multiracial identity representation in census data has been identified as problematic for the tracking of racial inequities (Rockquemore et al., 2009; Shih & Sanchez, 2005; Strmic-Pawl et al., 2018).

As multiracial identities can challenge racial categories and the social systems that employ these categories, navigating these identities can pose unique challenges for multiracial individuals and families (Cheng & Lee, 2009; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). This can include questions of racial au-

thenticity (Campion, 2019; Franco et al., 2016), isolation from communities, neighborhoods, and extended families (Shih & Sanchez, 2005), and social pressure to identify with one racial category (Gaither, 2015; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002). These realities can surface through microaggressions towards multiracial individuals and families – subtle verbal or behavioral cues that communicate hostility, disapproval, or negativity towards an individual or group (Campion, 2019; Johnston & Nadal, 2010). While these challenges are present for many mixed-race individuals, research has also highlighted various positive aspects that can be associated with multiracial identities, such as the ability to be sensitive to and appreciate diverse racial and cultural backgrounds (Gaither, 2015; Kerwin et al., 1993; Shih & Sanchez, 2005, 2009). Contextualized and in-depth explorations of multiracial individuals' personal narratives can shed light on the complexities and nuances of multiracial identities (Williams & Ware, 2019).

My Biracial Art Educator Identity as Counternarrative

Contemporary conceptions of identity emphasize that it is a fluid and complex concept intrinsically tied to one's past experiences and the context within which those experiences occurred (Britzman, 1999; Wenger, 1998). Due to this complexity, exploring the lived experiences of individuals in an in-depth and narrative-based way can be useful in identity explorations (Goodson & Gill, 2011). Furthermore, identity and narrative are intimately connected (Goodson & Gill, 2011; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Lewis, 2011). As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) contended, we “individually and socially, lead storied lives” (p. 2). Williams and Ware (2019) highlighted the need for more research into the lived experiences of biracial individuals using narrative research. Black and Black mixed-race experiences are often explored through a lens of undifferentiated homogeneity (Campion, 2019). Sharing and examining the stories of biracial individuals can highlight the specificity of experiences and the importance of context. Within the field of art education, there is an expressed need for more representation and discussion of multiracial identities, especially centered on personal accounts (Reid et al., 2019; Wilson, 2020).

In the following sections, I explore personal stories that have been essential to my ongoing biracial and art educator identity formation. These critical moments (Delgado & Stefancic, 2022; Mertova & Webster, 2020) are illustrated by key artworks and curricula that I have created during my education and career as a museum and gallery educator, community art school and gallery director, and art education professor. Using a critical race theoretical lens (Ladson-Billings, 2009), I explore some of the ways in which race and ethnicity have played roles in my art educator identity formation (Kraehe, 2015; Reid, 2014; Reid et al., 2019; Wilson, 2014). I intend for these textual and visual stories to act as counternarratives (Blaisdell, 2021; Milner & Howard, 2013) to traditional siloed and static conceptions of race within art education.

Playing with Transgression

During my elementary and secondary education, I lived in Markham, Ontario – a town that sits about 30 kilometers from downtown Toronto, on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe Peoples and of the Haudenosaunee Peoples. With approximately 78% of Markham's current population being racialized (Town of Markham, 2022), it is now considered one of the most racially diverse municipalities in Canada. However, during my early years, there were very few Black and Black/White biracial families in the middle-class neighborhood where I lived. My Black/White biracial family stood out as different. My father, a Black Jamaican who immigrated to Canada in the 1970s, was the only Black person on our street and in the subdivision. My mother is a second-generation White Canadian whose parents immigrated to Canada from Ukraine. My brother and I engaged with our Ukrainian heritage when visiting our maternal grandmother, who lived about an hour away from us. Through food, music, and stories, our dad made efforts to incorporate elements of our Jamaican roots into our daily lives.

Influenced by my mom, who had completed her studies at the Ontario College of Art (now the Ontario College of Art and Design University) when she was pregnant with me and was a practicing artist in my early years, artmaking was an important part of my youth. In high school, I chose to take art classes each year. Nearing the end of my secondary education, I worked on a series of acrylic paintings of people I viewed as peacemakers. Excited to bring my Jamaican heritage into the art class, I proposed to include Bob Marley in the series, as I felt his music communicates messages of peace in an impactful way and he was considered a peacemaker in my home. My teacher made it clear that she didn't agree. She emphatically expressed her disdain for Bob Marley's lifestyle and religion, communicating that this work would not be welcomed in the Catholic school where we were situated. Devastated, I felt my Black-Jamaican identity was being censored. In that situation, I didn't feel that I had agency, power, or a voice. Although I wanted to, I didn't dare resist the teacher. Instead, I conformed.

After completing high school, the first significant artistic act that I engaged in was the creation of the Bob Marley painting that I had been forbidden to make. Although I did this outside of a formal education setting, it felt like an artistic act of transgression – a small but important action. This experience lingered with me throughout my undergraduate work in art history. When I started my graduate studies in Art Education, I found the work of bell hooks and immediately felt an alignment. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (hooks, 1994), I found solace and inspiration. I learned about the potential freedom in transgressing the status quo in education, both as a teacher and student, resisting the trope of the teacher as the sole authority figure and students as bored, passive sponges in an assembly-line model of learning. hooks' call for educators to "open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new vision" (p. 12) deeply resonated and continues to resonate with me.

Around the same time, I came upon the work of Adrian Piper, in which I saw parallels between her practice and the teachings of bell hooks, as well as similarities between her experiences with race, and my own. For me, Piper's *My Calling (Card) # 1*, from 1986, was a revelation. The physical component of the work is a business card-sized piece that is intended to confront individuals expressing racist thoughts and engaging in racist microaggressions. In the writing on the card, Piper, a Black woman who is often read as White first, announces that she is Black. The writing then highlights the purpose of the card, which is to ultimately address, confront, and disrupt racist behavior. The card is transgressive – with it, she pushed against what is typically considered acceptable reactions to racist conduct. In seeing her work, I reflected on my own experiences as a biracial woman, who is often read as White first, trying to find my voice in similar situations. Sometimes I transgress, other times, I am left voiceless due to social power systems at play. In my first doctoral-level studio art course, I created a video piece that connects with Piper's use of voice and transgression in her *My Calling (Card) # 1* work. The black-and-white video, titled *Sticky Situation* (2007), focused on my mouth as I spoke of these incidents (Figure 1). After each story, I inserted one white gumball and one black gumball into my mouth, symbolizing my Black and White racial background. By the end of the 6 minutes, my mouth was so full of this grey mass that I was no longer able to speak, leaving me seemingly voiceless. However, the artwork itself achieved the opposite – it gave me the voice I often couldn't find in those situations. It became a transgressive, voice-elevating act.

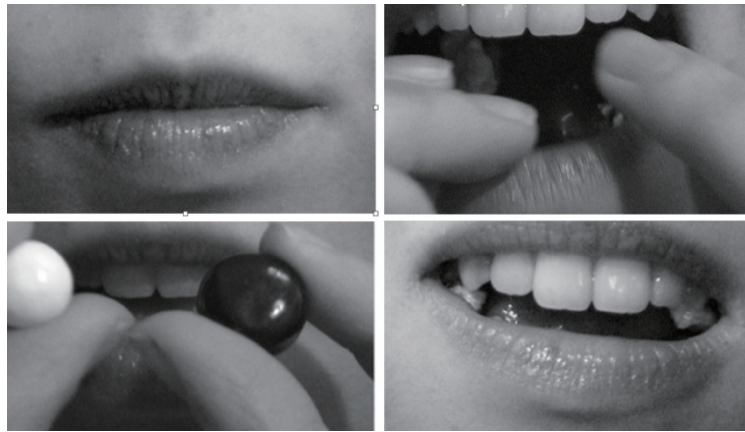


Figure 1. Natasha S. Reid, *Sticky Situation*, 2007. Courtesy of author.

In my teaching practice, I aim for the classroom, gallery space, and studio to be locations for teachers and students to play with pushing against traditional power dynamics, individualism, and disconnection. I incorporate coursework that asks students to play with transgressive educational and artistic acts. One example is an assignment that I developed for some of the museum education courses that I taught at the University of Arizona. I invited undergraduate and graduate students to create and enact artistic interventions at the University of Arizona Museum of Art (Reid et al., 2017). After exploring museum education theory, artists who work with institutional critique, and examples of exploratory and sometimes radical museum education programming, students developed artistic objects, performances, and installations that worked to disrupt traditional conceptions of museums and expectations of museum visitors. Using various tools associated with socially engaged art (Helguera, 2011; Lawton, 2019; Sanders-Bustle, 2019), participatory museum practices (Simon, 2010), and new museum theory (Marstine, 2006), students pushed against authority, boundaries, and the status quo.

When engaging with assignments such as this, students often ask me “Am I allowed?” For example, they have inquired if they are allowed to use tape on the walls, use chalk on the ground outside, or block off certain spaces. In these moments, I draw on my experiences as a bi-racial person who has frequently been disallowed to express part of my identity. As much as possible, I work to create the conditions for my students to transgress boundaries in efforts to envision and enact alternative futures and to apply this to their teaching practices. My goal is for students to shift from asking “Am I allowed” to “How can I make this happen”, which is a more empowered stance. Aligning with my reflections on my experiences as a biracial person, my artistic practice, and my teaching practice, assignments such as the one described above encourage students to find ways to reveal and amplify identities and voices that are often hidden within institutions and societal systems.

Exploring Personal Histories

As a light-skinned Black/White biracial woman, when I refer to my racial identity, it is quite frequently discounted by others. Countless times, I have been asked questions such as: “What are you?”; “Why aren’t you darker?”; And, speaking to a third party, “Do you believe her?” Perhaps some of the most uncomfortable moments are when someone reacts with laughter in their disbelief. With the dismissal of my biracial identity, I have been left feeling silenced and somewhat incomplete. Referring to similar experiences, Adrian Piper remarked:

[T]here was the groundless shame of the inadvertent impostor, exposed to public ridicule or accusation. For this kind of shame, you don’t actually

need to have done anything wrong. All you need to do is care about others' image of you, and fail in your actions to reinforce their positive image of themselves. (1992, p. 58)

Such identity denial (Cheryan & Monin, 2005) and the subsequent negative emotional responses can lead multiracial individuals to attempt to assert this identity and gain acceptance within the group category from which they are being denied (Townsend et al., 2009). I am conscious of the fact that I benefit from White privilege because of my White-appearing features (Waring, 2023). At the same time, there are “collateral consequences of appearing White and light-skinned” (p. 67), including potential racial invalidation and the frequent denial of the impacts of the intergenerational effects of racism.

To counter the negative emotional responses I have experienced with this denial and to tap into and fully embrace my biracial identity, for the past 20 years, I have explored and connected with my paternal family stories in my art practice. One of my first explorations was a video installation entitled *Piecing Together* from 2006 (Figure 2). In creating this work, I learned about and engaged with my late Jamaican grandmother’s identity by interviewing my father. I created a puzzle containing the image of my mother’s watercolor painting of my paternal grandmother. In the installation, a video of the undone puzzle appears on a table and then my hands come into the video frame. I struggle to piece the puzzle together and am only able to do so when my father’s voice is heard recounting stories of my grandmother’s life in Jamaica and Trinidad. While collaborating with my father in developing the audio for this video, I expanded my knowledge of his family and his experiences growing up in Jamaica and Trinidad.

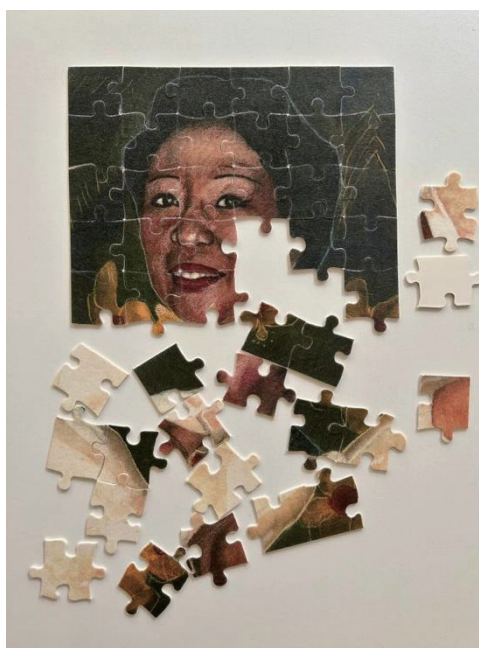


Figure 2. Natasha S. Reid, *Piecing Together*, 2006. Courtesy of author.

Recently, in 2022, I created *Plantain Belt* (Figure 3), which features seven plantains cast in Jesmonite. In developing the piece, I recalled the first and only time that I met my paternal grandmother when she was living in Trinidad. Although I was only three years old at the time, I vividly recall cooking plantains with her – the smells, the sizzling sounds, the yellow kitchen, and my grandmother in a floral dress. In repeatedly casting a plantain, I deepened my connection with my grandmother and my Jamaican heritage.



Figure 3. Natasha S. Reid, *Plantain Belt*, 2022. Courtesy of author.

With both pieces, I further connected with my Black-Jamaican familial roots, which have been challenged through microaggressions. Gathering and revealing these stories through artistic means helps me to counter the difficult emotions associated with and resist racial invalidation (Franco et al., 2016). Narrative plays a central role in my efforts to build a more fulsome connection with this part of my identity, which is infused into my art educator identity. The use of artmaking and story in these explorations have influenced my art education research and teaching practices.

In working with pre- and in-service art teachers and community art educators, I emphasize the importance of examining personal histories to better understand our art educator identities and how these influence our practices. For example, during one class discussion about racial bias in children's popular culture, several students insisted that Disney-produced materials should not be critically examined to preserve the so-called magic of Disney. One student eloquently and emotionally expressed that, as a child, she often asked her parents why the antagonists in one Disney movie looked and sounded more like her and her family compared to the heroes of the film. In sharing this personal narrative, this student immediately shifted the direction of the discussion. Those who were against critical examinations of Disney started to think about the ways in which their personal histories informed and framed their perspectives of the visual culture associated with their childhoods. During this class discussion, memories of the frequent conversations my family would have about racial representation in the media surfaced. Instead of redirecting the discussion, I guided the students to delve deeper into their histories, memories, and biases. My personal history played an integral role in how I guided the conversation, inviting students to explore the relationships between their personal histories and their teacher identities and biases.

Delving into our personal histories can help us understand and refine our curricular and pedagogical choices and positions, assisting us to become more reflexive practitioners. Goodson (1981) emphasized that because teaching is a personal process, it is important to learn "about the person the teacher is" (p. 69). To avoid oversimplification, these investigations need to include educators' personal histories, not just the professional (Alsup, 2006). By reflexively examining our personal histories, educators can "reconstruct our own subjective and social lives" (Pinar, 2015, p. 2), better enabling us to view and engage with the curriculum as a lived experience.

I regularly incorporate personal history explorations into my course assignments. One example is an identity-building project that I developed as part of a pre-service art teacher education course. Using Congdon, Stewart, and White's (2002) approach to identity mapping as a starting point, students explored their personal and professional identities, grounding these in lived narratives. I asked: *How do these identities affect your beliefs, values, and practices as a teacher?* Starting with a cardboard box, students created a structure based on a building that is meaningful to them. They transformed the surfaces to create metaphorical representations of aspects of the private/

hidden elements of their identities on the interior of the building and the public/visible elements on the exterior. This included images from photographs, photocopies, magazines, or other sources, found objects from their homes, and symbolic shapes and colors. Engaging in dialogues with their peers and written reflections, students explored how these lived narratives affect and inform their teacher identities. I have found that arts-based identity explorations such as this can support educators to develop deeper understandings of and more fulsome connections with their teacher identities. This parallels the ways in which my explorations into my personal and family histories in my art practice have helped me feel more holistically and deeply connected to my bi-racial identity.

Questioning and Blurring Categories

More fully embracing my bi-racial identity has also led me to notice, reflect on, and play with being in an ambiguous space of in-betweenness. Multiracialism refers to crossing boundaries delineated by racial categories and the ways social relations are affected by this movement (DaCosta, 2020). I am interested in the space between these boundaries, as these liminal spaces can be employed to blur and question categories. This aligns with Gloria Anzaldúa's (2009) conception of the new mestiza as a category that "threatens the hegemony of the neo-conservatives because it breaks down the labels and theories used to manipulate and control us" (p. 205). She went on to highlight that the new mestiza is:

...a liminal subject who lives in borderlands between cultures, races, languages, and genders. In this state of in-betweenness the mestiza can mediate, translate, negotiate, and navigate these different locations. As mestizas, we are negotiating these worlds every day, understanding that multiculturalism is a way of seeing and interpreting the world, a methodology of resistance. (p. 209)

With Anzaldúa's theory of the new mestiza, those living in-between traditional identity categories can push against these categories. I have come to see the potential of hybridized, in-between spaces and identities as generative sites that can promote ongoing transformation, emergence, and resistance.

I have explored this in my artistic practice. With *This is Not a Contradiction* (2004), I played with questioning and blurring racial categories. This oil painting features a self-portrait with my father's 1970s afro superimposed over my own hair (Figure 4). The afro expands outside of the confines of the frame, which symbolizes the fact that I do not fit into traditional racial categories. With the title of the piece, I proudly assume this in-between identity. In creating the work, I was inspired by Adrian Piper's *Mythic Being* series (1972-1975). For this series, Piper disguised herself and performed as a racially ambiguous man, with an afro, mustache, and sunglasses. With the performances and associated photographs, newspaper advertisements, and posters, which often had thought bubbles and drawings added, Piper blurred and questioned racial and gender categories. As Bowles (2007) asserted, the *Mythic Being* was "[s]uspended between difference and identification" (p. 621), which Piper found to be liberating. This could ultimately provoke viewers to "self-reflexively consider their own assumptions about race and gender" (p. 643). In developing *This is Not a Contradiction*, I also played with ambiguity with the hope that people would question their assumptions about race when viewing the work, as overtly expressed in the title.



Figure 4. Natasha S. Reid, *This is Not a Contradiction*, 2004. Courtesy of author,

In my art education practice, I am also interested in disrupting and suspending assumptions and categories. Throughout my practice in museums and galleries, I have worked to challenge societal assumptions about these locations, working to situate them as in-between spaces. As the Director of the McClure Gallery (2017-2021), a contemporary art gallery in the Visual Arts Centre in Montreal, I worked with the Gallery Coordinator (Thi-My Truong) to develop a monthly pop-up art hive directly in the exhibition space. Art hives are free, open, and informal community-based art studios that encourage group and self-directed creative exploration (Lewis et al., 2021; Timm-Bottos & Chainey, 2015). Folks gather around a table filled with materials to experiment with in a welcoming setting where everyone is recognized as an artist. By situating the monthly pop-up style art hive in the exhibition space, amongst artworks by professional artists, the traditional conception of the contemporary gallery as a pristine space for viewing art is challenged. With gallery workers, artists, and diverse visitor-participants sitting together to make and chat, hierarchies and categories are blurred. In this space, distinctions between high and low art are purposefully shattered. Each month, we boldly pushed against traditional divisions and categories associated with galleries and challenged the public to question their assumptions about galleries, art, and art education.

While most folks who passed by or entered the gallery were excited about this open studio being in the exhibition space, there was some resistance. I recall one person who was visibly disturbed by the setup. The individual said they had intended to experience an art exhibition, not an art activity. The source of their frustration was the blurred distinction between the gallery space and the creation space. Being acutely aware that softening the lines between categories can be a source of tension, I saw this as an opportunity for an intriguing conversation. I shared that I envision museums and galleries as community spaces for debate, creation, blurring categories, and belonging. The individual became interested, and we spoke about the history and future of these spaces. I invited them to consider seeing the open studio space as a place for contemplation and, if they desired, a place for sharing and making. After walking around the space and experiencing the exhibition in a traditional way, the person decided to take a seat at the table, engage in conversations, and even participate in art making. This questioning and blurring of categories that ultimately impede equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization efforts directly links with my experiences and artistic investigations into my biracial identity.

Critical Artistic Explorations of Race and Identity

Examining my biracial identity and some of the ways this multifaceted identity has influenced my art and art education practices has provided me with new insight into how my personal and professional identities inform each other, particularly concerning race. I have infused my lived experiences, perspectives, and knowledge associated with my identity as a biracial woman into my art and art education practices – my biracial identity cannot be separated from my professional identity. In my artistic practice, this has been revealed in how I play with transgression to highlight and push against oppressive and racist expressions, actions, and systems; explore my personal and family histories to counter the effects of exclusion and microaggressions; and question and blur divisive and restrictive categories. As explored in this chapter, my art education practices are intimately connected to my experiences and understandings of my biracial identity and how these appear in my artwork. These artistic and curricular examples are intended to encourage art educators to consider how they could incorporate transgression, personal histories, and the blurring, questioning, and disruption of categories, including race, into their art and art education practices. The textual and artistic stories shared here serve as counternarratives that highlight and emphasize the importance of critically engaging with the complexities and nuances of race and identity in and through art education.

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Intersectionality of Critical Identities: Understanding Classroom Limitations, Teacher Positionality and Debates on Inclusion

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In this chapter, we share our narratives and responses, as Muslim teacher-educators, on diverse social identities, cultural appropriations, and misperceptions of religious minorities during a teacher-training and curriculum development project that centered on six cultural heritage sites in Pakistan. These sites, Gurdwara Sacha Sauda Sahib in Farooqabad, Sheikhpura, Gurdwara Rohri Sahib in Eminabad, Gujranwala, Katas Raj Complex in Chakwal, Bhir Mound and Dharmarajika Stupa in Taxila, Mankiala Stupa, Rawalpindi and Bibi Jawindi Complex in Uch Sharif, Bahawalpur have historical significance in Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sufi Islam. However, these sites remain underserved in a Muslim-majority region. Therefore, we designed the curriculum for a predominantly Muslim-majority community of teachers, students, and parents.

This project aimed to promote tolerance, pluralism, and interfaith harmony by raising cultural awareness and respect for diversity by developing a series of art-based course books for mainstream state school curricula in the region. We designed and led a series of teacher-training workshops to facilitate and equip local teachers to be able to sustain the curriculum. The planning, training, and execution phase also included seven months of mapping of relevant state and private schools and local resource persons around the heritage sites, and the development of resource materials related to each heritage site. The field activities included six teacher training workshops, six site visits, six cultural fairs, and six advocacy meetings spread over seven weeks. The resource material offered creative and artistic outlets and methods of knowing, making, and sharing. The booklets also highlighted common values underpinning the selected sites and integrated topics on heritage education, cultural diversity, and pluralism.

According to the UNESCO Convention on World Heritage, there is an increased recognition of the need for local community involvement, specifically youth, in the conservation and preservation of their cultural and natural heritage. Under the Heritage Education component of the state department, we represented Faiz Foundation Trust (FFT) and worked with UNESCO (Islamabad, Pakistan) as an implementing partner, on engaging teachers and school children in exploring and understanding diverse cultures, faiths, and spiritual practices to safeguard the diverse cultural heritage of Punjab through formal and informal education. Kraehe & Acuff (2013) state that as art educators, we need a deeper understanding of intertwined socio-religious, economic, and political processes that develop educational disparities before we can effectively address the under-served. This term moves us away from perceiving populations holistically and instead draws attention to cultural contexts and material conditions that prevent access of certain groups to resources and opportunities for quality education, including high-quality art[istic] experiences.

During curriculum building, considerable content was censored, turned down, or revised, as it was considered potentially offensive to local Muslim sensibilities. This essay elaborates on the ethical dilemmas and challenges that we experienced, as teacher-educators, due to the discriminatory and conservative mindset of the approving authorities, the locals, especially teachers, and parents, while developing and implementing the curriculum. During the course, we question the assumptions and expectations of creating a curriculum based on pluralism and how this experience allows for

improvisation and a shift of our identities in a hybridized global society. We reflect on the nature of critical conversations concerning religious diversity, class, multiculturalism, place-based learning, and inclusion and elaborate on how it might deconstruct identity formation and catalyze critical thought, image creation, media, and material exploration in creative classrooms.

Interreligious learning is important because of the plurality of religious traditions in a globalized world. An intersectional approach holistically looks at religious differences as well as class, gender, race, colonialism, and so on. It takes account of community accountability, activism, and the arts and rituals as media in interreligious education (Syed, 2020). This case under study looks at intersectionality as an analytical framework for understanding how aspects of social status, religious beliefs, and gender combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege. The framework also seeks to identify factors of advantage and disadvantage in which systems of inequality intersect to create circumstances that lead to misconceptions, stereotypical behavior, and discrimination toward a community or culture (Chiseri-Strater, 1996).

While the project yielded significant tangible outcomes, it also highlighted the challenges involved in engaging schools in heritage education and cultural activities. Although the state proclaimed to be promoting culture, tourism, and heritage, the reluctance of the bureaucracy to take initiatives that might be dubbed as anti-Islamic by vested interests was a hindrance. Restrictions on any kind of extra-curricular activity or student trips meant that it was very unlikely that students, especially in state schools, would be allowed educational trips to heritage sites. In the following discussion, we present our pedagogical strategies and adaptations to deal with ethical dilemmas and accommodate classroom discourses on the multiplicity of perspectives in the region. We tried to find solutions to mitigate the consequences of the stereotypes arising from acute differences in religious beliefs found in schools and their locality. Through personal anecdotes below, we reflect on how these experiences gradually shaped, or continue to shape, our classroom practices, teaching methodologies, and individual identities. We elaborate on the lessons learned from conducting site visits, cultural fairs, and advocacy meetings and offer recommendations for moving forward in culturally diverse classroom communities.

Identifying Teacher-Educator Positionality

This essay takes into account the various aspects of our teacher-educators' positionality and reflects on how social standing, location, philosophical standpoint, language usage, and power influence identity, communication, and access in society. Some aspects of positionality are culturally ascribed or generally regarded as being fixed, for example, religious belief, gender, and nationality. Others, such as political views, personal life history, and experiences, are more fluid, subjective, and contextual (Chiseri-Strater, 1996).

Intersectionality was manifested in different ways in the project. For example, teachers of boys schools and under-funded, secondary girls schools tended to follow a patriarchal mindset and were reluctant to allow girls to perform on stage. On the other hand, teachers of higher secondary girls' schools, who belonged to the middle and upper middle classes and were highly educated and liberal, seized the opportunity to host large-scale cultural festivals, including stage performances by girls, in defiance of the education authorities.

The experience at one of the six sites, *Eminabad*, offered two lessons; to be selective in inviting persons from outside so that inappropriate messages are not sent (e.g. in *Eminabad* the person representing interfaith harmony only spoke about Islam and ignored other religions) and to phrase and articulate sensitively. The question on how to spread the program activities to other schools generated vague answers, so it was changed to the question: "How can you provide heritage education to the students in your school who did not participate in project activities?" This question was much more practical and doable and generated specific responses. Some proactive teachers said that they will organize a trip to the nearby heritage site for students who were not part of the project. They were willing to involve and guide other schools to organize site visits as well. Several teachers said

that they would like to make the cultural fairs a regular event.

Our extended core team of art teacher-educators, who were developing resource kits and materials for students, primarily belonged to urban settings and were teaching students from urban, high-income family backgrounds, using primarily Western scholarship, literature, and contexts (texts, images, language - English). The institutions they were teaching in were resourceful and progressive, often using project-based teaching methods and texts which encouraged art and design making, critical thinking, inclusion, and respect for diversity. However, the students and teachers for whom we were developing resource materials had a lower socioeconomic status. They belonged to rural Punjabi families and were exposed to a rote-learning system of education that emphasized their Muslim heritage to the complete exclusion of their ancient cultural heritage, particularly those about non-Muslim identities. Most of these schools were characterized by a complete absence of art education, which was considered unnecessary and irrelevant.

When we initially created the first draft of the resource material, we had liberal, urban, upper-class, well-endowed schools in mind. The content had to be reworked and adapted extensively to cater to the sensibility and context of rural, underserved schools. Another critical consideration was the conservative mindset of teachers and parents at the sites, who had to consume images and textbook representations of non-Muslim cultures. Translating the material from English to Urdu was a subsequent challenge. The key was to communicate ideas, instead of translating them.

A few more approving authorities also had reservations and were concerned about the development of curriculum and textbooks with the inclusion of non-Muslim content, particularly related to Sikhs. When a lesson about Guru Nanak's spiritual practices was piloted in a school, the head complained that students' parents objected to the teaching of 'Sikhism' in schools. Eventually, this lesson and a lesson on common values in different religions had to be removed from the resource material, as the concept of all religions being equal was considered sacrilegious. On the contrary, there were no objections to the teaching of the life of Gautam Buddha, since the practice of Buddhism is almost non-existent in Pakistan and is therefore considered non-threatening to Muslims.

Art teacher-educators should consider the various ways racism, classism, and intersectionality work to build consciousness and shape identity, as these dynamics give rise to the kind of content that is privileged in the classroom. This check of power and privilege is what critical multicultural art education calls for. Teachers, practicing and prospective, should carefully examine their positionality and recognize the implications of their position to facilitate equitable educational experiences for all their students (Acuff, 2014). While writing this account as culturally-sensitive teacher-educators (or aspiring to be one), we were cognizant of self-censorship. Any criticism of patriarchy and misogyny and its disempowering effects on women and girls in the region is often portrayed as an attack on its religious moorings, thereby feeding into the narrative of Islamophobia prevalent in Western societies. We, therefore, had to walk the tightrope of, on the one hand, identifying critical intersectionality of gender, patriarchy, social class, and geographical location, and on the other hand not crossing the red line of being labeled as mouthpieces of religious prejudice.

Dialogue through Play, Community, and Place-Based interaction

Desai (2000) questioned the taken-for-granted view that replacing biased and stereotypic representations with allegedly accurate and authentic representations will fix misunderstandings regarding minorities, foreign communities, or non-White people and their cultures. In one of her study analyses, she focused specifically on the ways authentic and accurate representations are built. She discussed representation's role in shaping and understanding other cultures and its direct connection to power dynamics and dominance and stress, deliberating on the politics of location and positionality concerning multiculturalism. Similarly, this essay also elaborates on how stereotypes and pre-learned misconceptions about foreign religious identities can be subtly addressed through alternate, apparently peripheral, activity-centric, and place-based interactions outside school walls.

There was an enthusiastic participation of students, teachers, and local communities in the

cultural fair, despite the limited time frame, due to the closure of schools and COVID-19 restrictions. The project terms of reference stipulated only 600 students and 72 teachers attended the cultural fairs, whereas, the number of people attending was in the thousands. This meant that a far greater number of students, teachers, and community members were exposed to the ideas of pluralism, interfaith harmony, the value of one's heritage, and ownership of one's cultural heritage than anticipated. Schools reported not having a cultural event in over 6 years, while some said that it was the first *mela* (cultural festival) in their school. They also appreciated the fact that, unlike traditional melas which focus on entertainment alone, the cultural fairs combined entertainment, culture, and heritage education, and contributed to the revival of Punjabi language, culture, dance, music, and folklore. The fairs also generated income for a variety of vendors, including sellers of traditional foods, handicrafts, performing and visual artists (singers, musicians, magicians, etc.), and the amusement industry (Ferris wheel, pirate boat, merry-go-round, trampoline, electric train, swings, camel rides, horse dance, etc.), thus demonstrating that cultural activities can indeed be a great boost to the local economy, especially for small-time vendors.

The fair, site visits, and interactive resource kit yielded unexpected outcomes. A student from *Choa Saidan Shah* claimed that he learned about medicinal plants and the story of *Pandawa* brothers (who are the central characters of the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*). "Before that nobody told us about the history of our area. We never learnt about these things in the schools or course books", (personal anecdote) he said. One female student from *Eminabad* said that she did not know anything about *Guru Nanak* and *Sacha Sauda*. "I also learnt how to treat snake bite using the twigs of a mango tree" (personal anecdote). One student from *Sacha Sauda* said that she learned about Sufi poets and herbal medicines and the medicinal properties of trees. A local Punjabi poet and author shared that it is very crucial to take children on field trips, to the shrines of legendary Sufi poets like *Waris Shah* and *Bulleh Shah*, so that they develop an interest in the heritage sites in their vicinity. The Chairperson, FFT, Salima Hashmi, shared with all people attending the fair that they were lucky to have a heritage like *Gurdwara Rohri Sahib* which is the sacred shrine that marks the site where, according to tradition, *Guru Nanak Dev Ji* lived. He is the founder and first Guru of Sikhism and was born in a village, now known as *Nankana Sahib*, which attracts people from across the world. These visitors will contribute to the local economy. We need to think about who we are, and where we come from. We have been living here for thousands of years. It is not just about buildings, but also our foods, music, and stories that make us Punjabi. We have only taken the first step. You have the talent and capacity to organize such programs independently. If you take care of your heritage, people from across the world will come to *Eminabad*.

Students and teachers were also asked to design and participate in a quiz competition that relied on data from the resource kits. The strategy of organizing competitions of traditional sports also incentivized students and teachers to learn about, prepare, and participate in traditional sports. Both students and teachers found the activities stimulating and rewarding. Participation certificates also enhanced student motivation.

Communication through the Arts (Art, Design, and Craft)

The arts or any form of creative exercise teach students to think through and within a material. It helps individuals learn to say what cannot be said through verbal language. This subtle process of image or experience-making enables us to have unique forms of expression and discover the range and variety of what we are capable of feeling. The position of the arts in the school curriculum symbolizes to the young what adults believe is important (Eisner, 2002).

The rote learning system excludes any artistic intervention, including arts and crafts. Girls in Uch Sharif had learned the art of fine embroidery from their mothers, who sold their products for a nominal remuneration. The female students never displayed these skills in schools, since they considered these practices inferior. This project, on the contrary, encouraged students to create crafts in any medium. One female teacher from Uch Sharif said that girls used to make beautiful handcraft

at home but never shared their skills at school. “We encouraged them to bring their handmade artifacts, *chatai* (mat), and *changair* (straw basket) to school and discussed at length the significance of local design and craft” (A. Rahim, personal communication, November 27, 2021). As a result of a rejuvenation of history and heritage, girls in Uch Sharif produced exquisite handicrafts at school that were later displayed at the cultural fair. Such exercises sparked dialogue, solicited interest and widespread appreciation, and strengthened our commitment to student-led and community-based learning.

Drawing and sketching exercises engaged students and anchored their observational skills. Some of the work produced was displayed at the cultural fair. Perhaps the most significant outcome of the project was to produce artifacts that were authentic and genuine and facilitated directly the creative sensibilities of the students and teachers. This was particularly significant since the project was not able to provide students with any technical support or guidance in art (except facilitation by one visual artist in Taxila). Through this experience, teachers started thinking about the initiation of various clubs, such as a cultural society or art society in schools to inspire and engage students aesthetically. Students were asked to dress up for the cultural fair in their traditional attires. It was perhaps for the first time that students could wear their traditional dresses, sing their folk songs, share their folk stories, dance to their folk tales, play their ancestral games, talk about local sufi poets and heroes, celebrate with home-grown food, and talk about indigenous trees and plants - all in their mother tongue, Punjabi.

One of the sites, Katas Raj, is a complex of several Hindu temples connected by walkways. The temple complex surrounds a pond named *Katas* which is regarded as sacred by Hindus. One teacher from a girls’ school from Choa Saidan Shah shared

When the FFT team met us and introduced the project objective, the teachers were skeptical of learning about Katas Raj’s exploration and preservation. The training workshop changed our perspective. We learnt that Katas Raj has historic and cultural significance, and realized that it is important to convey this message to our generations. (S. Mazhar, Advocacy Meeting, Choa Saidan Shah, November 19, 2021)

Teachers stated that they were criticized earlier for introducing the content in the curriculum by noting that

there was resistance from our colleagues and parents to Shiv drawings and temple sketches. We showed them animation videos provided by the Foundation and shared that we are not promoting any religion, but promoting local tourism to preserve our heritage and promote inter-faith harmony. We educated the community through dialogue. We also told them that we are also showing videos of Uch Sharif (the center of Sufism under the Delhi sultanate, hosting the famous Sufi tomb, Bibi Jawindi) to the students. Since this area is famous for the Katas Raj temple, it is important for students to know. (U. Shahid, Advocacy Meeting, Choa Saidan Shah, November 19, 2021)

One female teacher from Taxila shared that before the curriculum intervention, children only wanted to become pilots, engineers, or doctors. Now they claim to be thinking about occupations associated with the arts and culture. Some students said they wanted to become artists.

Identifying Gender Roles and Interaction

We also observed some antagonistic voices against the cultural fairs, particularly criticizing girls for dancing. However, their voices were muted in the din of celebration and appreciation by the majority of participants. Had the cultural fair not been so successful, the dissenting voices would probably have become louder. The events held in the girls' schools (Eminabad and Rawalpindi) or in mixed-gender schools (Choa Saidan Shah) yielded more audience and fervor as compared to the ones held in the three boys' schools. There were a few reasons for this. Girls were not allowed to perform on stages or participate in the quiz with boys in front of a male audience. The number of girls coming to the boys' schools was very low. Considerable effort had to be made to encourage girls' schools to send their students to the fair, primarily because of the reservations of their parents. Since female teachers and female students rarely received an opportunity of this kind, their response to the fair was far more enthusiastic than that of males, and thousands of girls and women came to the festivals in Eminabad and Rawalpindi.

We also observed that schools with more qualified, highly educated female teachers, including many with postgraduate and M.Phil degrees, were risk-takers. They were more progressive, liberated, and welcomed alternate forms of teaching. They were also open to ideas of pluralism, interfaith harmony, and heritage diversity as compared to male heads and teachers.

Having a female project coordinator catalyzed procedures. She was able to connect with the female teachers, address their concerns, and make them feel at ease. Consequently, female teacher participation outnumbered male teacher participation in the teacher training workshops as well as the cultural fairs and site visits.

Using Expanded Formats of Communication

Social media and WhatsApp played a major role in inspiring and motivating teachers across the six sites. We shared photographs and videos of heritage education classes, preparations for the fair, students playing traditional games like *kabaddi* and *gulli danda*, rehearsals for traditional dances, art, artifact, and handicraft making, food preparation, and visits to each site, in all six WhatsApp groups, corresponding to one site each daily. One team member said that the *Sagri* school 'stole' our idea, meaning that they replicated the *Eminabad* cultural fair, but on an even grander scale. We encouraged promoting such 'stealing.' Subsequently, the *Sacha Sauda* fair, which was scheduled at the end of all activities, benefited greatly from the experience of the other fairs.

Encouraging Self-Learning and Peer-Learning

Through the course of the teacher-training process, we realized the importance of decreased dependency and less reliance on the training process itself. The curriculum content was developed to facilitate self-learning and adaptability of content. We interfered less and did not micromanage because the resource kits and booklets were self-explanatory. They provided sufficient information, yet were flexible and complex enough to stimulate thought and offer flexible spaces to teachers to choose their subjects, study materials, and course pace.

There were repeated suggestions and requests from many heads, teachers, and students at the sites to re-print and distribute additional resource kits to schools so that they could introduce the program to other students, especially high school learners. As the project culminated, schools were able to develop a team of trained teachers and students who were well-versed and equipped to implement heritage education activities. As a result of enhanced capacity building, the teachers developed the ability to transfer their knowledge and understanding to their peers and students in their community.

Dialogue on Interreligious Learning, Pluralism, and Interfaith Harmony: Advocacy Meetings:

We held advocacy meetings to listen to and obtain feedback from students, teachers, and heads of schools regarding the heritage education project, and to explore ways of sustaining heritage education activities in schools that centered on pluralism and interfaith harmony, including expanding the activities to the students and teachers of the participating schools who did not participate in project activities. The participants included four heads, four teachers, and eight students from the four participating schools at each site. In addition, we invited education officials, prominent local persons, and some local media persons to attend and give their reactions after listening to the views of students, heads, and teachers.

We observed some changes in attitudes and mindsets. At the beginning of the course, parents objected to the contents of the book and questioned the introduction of a Buddhist site in the academic course. It was most challenging to educate parents about the significance of heritage to sustain healthy communities. A female Head in Sagri said,

We teach religion in our schools but not the local culture. Multicultural education is essential. The objective was to promote heritage, not Buddhism. We have some of the oldest stupas and other heritage buildings in the world and our children should know. We should take them to Taxila frequently. Your resource material is well-crafted and it conveys the message clearly. The real objective of Buddhism is to promote virtue and achieve nirwan (enlightenment). Like Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism are about being better human beings. This is the heritage of our forefathers. We have to teach children that other religions also teach human virtue. The things they left behind are part of our heritage. Valuing local history benefits the community. (F. Yasmin, Advocacy Meeting, Choa Saidan Shah, November 27, 2021)

A local Punjabi poet and author said that

Sacha Sauda is the land of Baba Guru Nanak, and reminds us of his Sufi teachings, including selflessness and bringing people close to each other. Even though he was not a Muslim, he is considered among the foremost Punjabi Sufi poets. Culture does not make us small, nor is it alien to religion. Both go side by side. Culture brings people closer to each other. (A. Malik, Advocacy Meeting, Sacha Sauda, November 30, 2021)

A male teacher at a boys' school in Choa Saidan Shah said

We used to look down upon Katas Raj because of its association with Hindus. In college days we used to visit the site and write Islamic slogans on the walls of the temple. We never talked about the temple with our students. When I attended the workshop, I realized that Katas Raj belongs to us and our future generations. It is our responsibility to preserve this heritage. The booklet educated us. (S. Ahmed, Advocacy Meeting, Choa Saidan Shah, November 19, 2021)

A female teacher from Choa Saidan Shah shared
Throughout my life, I was told to stay away from people who are not following my religion. After attending the workshop and thoroughly reading the booklet I felt ashamed of my views. Now I preach religious tolerance to my students. I also planned a site visit for my students and supported them to visit a local heritage site. (N. Rani, Advocacy Meeting, Choa Saidan Shah, November 19, 2021)

The head of a girls' school in Choa Saidan Shah concluded with similar thoughts, "The teacher training was excellent. All religions teach a lesson of brotherhood, tolerance, and doing away with prejudices. Katas Raj is not just a temple of Hindus, it is also our cultural heritage. We should protect it." (N. Rehman, Advocacy Meeting, Choa Saidan Shah, November 19, 2021)

Carmody (2010) stated that rapid globalization entails challenges of living together harmoniously at local, national, and international levels. Acceptance and appreciation of the religious faith of the other are crucial. This calls for a kind of religious literacy that is inclusive. Many attempts are being made to do this. However, in the process, there can be a tendency to overstate sameness and downplay difference, therefore often evading the question of truth. Carmody (2010) further deliberated on a need to adopt an approach that recognizes and values differences as well as encourages dialogue towards interfaith harmony, with due attention to the truth claims of religions in ways that enhance rather than undermine the development of the community.

Conversation among individuals with diverse religious philosophies is important. History tells us that inter-religious dialogue does not come naturally. Yet it is vital for a peaceful harmonious world. Participants must be educated if inter-religious dialogue is to prevail. A sound deep understanding of a religious identity may be simultaneously rooted and adaptive, assured and ambiguous—that is, an identity strong and supple enough to contribute to responsible pluralism (Boys, 2010). There is a need to include courses on religion and spirituality, as well as interreligious dialogue... through an examination of three interconnected dimensions; interreligious dialogue, religious pluralism, and religious literacy (Subbiondo, 2012).

This study, drawn from a visual-language-centered education, applies to wider education settings and will interest K-12 and higher education teacher-educators, teachers and academics, equality and diversity theorists as well as visual art practitioners, gallery educators, and heritage specialists. By exploring key elements and characteristics of intersectionality as teacher-educators, we may be able to situate it within research, policy, practice, and teaching and seek to fundamentally alter how social problems are identified and handled to include the breadth of lived experiences (Hankivsky, 2022). We must articulate our cultural locations and positionalities as curriculum builders. Defining our positionalities will influence curriculum, practice, and research (Knight & Deng, 2016). What we include in our lesson plans, why we make certain choices, how we design our teaching methods, what type of data we collect for our research, and how we interpret it – investigating our politics, biases, tendencies, and limitations is essential to deal with questions of ethics and equity. As we widen our teaching experiences, we explore our identity-building as practitioners as well as address important points of tension and synergy and their relevance for visual learning and place-based education. Taking on divergent and atypical teaching paths and working with new and unfamiliar audiences often in alternate classrooms, we learn about how debates on inclusion in terms of religion, class, access, and multiplicity are extended by adopting intersectional theory and critical multiculturalism.

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Working with African American Populations: Stories of Alienation and Belonging by Asian Immigrant Art Educators in the American South

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Introduction

Despite one and a half centuries-long history of Asian immigration to the United States, Asian Americans are still seen as recent immigrants and perpetual foreigners (Desai & Joshi, 2013). Since most stories of Asian Americans have formed in several regions, including the Northeast, West Coast, or Texas and Southwest border areas, stories of Asian Americans in the South have been untold. The legacy of slavery of people of African descent and the dominant Black and White racial binary reinforces the southern states to become an alien place for Asian Americans. However, we want to highlight the presence of Asian Americans as well as their interlocking relationships with African Americans in the South, thereby emphasizing the need of implementing art pedagogical approaches to form a coalition between the two groups.

The first migration of Asians to the American South took place when “Cantonese families of China” as the indentured laborers who were seen as an alternative to slavery during the Reconstruction era (1865-1877; Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum, n.d., para. 8). Chinese laborers in the South were considered a “cheaper, more docile, and “more free” form of labor ... [than formerly] enslaved Africans” in the plantation and sugar industry (Desai & Joshi, 2013, p. 7). By the early 1900s, many Chinese (so-called Mississippi Chinese) lived and worked in family-run grocery stores in predominantly Black neighborhoods (Lam, 2021). The Afro-Asian relationship was collegial, as the Chinese grocery was “a welcoming place for African Americans to sit and talk, pass the time, and find work” (Wilson, 2002, para. 9).

Because Chinese immigrants were neither Black nor White, their status was rather precarious during the Jim Crow era (1870s-1954). A student of Chinese heritage was categorized as ‘colored’ to be barred from attending a White school.

Although the Civil Rights Movement did not sufficiently improve the status of African Americans to become equal to Whites, it benefited Asian Americans. However, Loewen (1971/1988) and Wang (1993) postulated that Chinese immigrants were essentially considered White by 1967, as they were marked as “W” (as in White) on their driver’s licenses instead of “B” (as in Black). In a few decades, as some Mississippi Chinese adopted “near Whiteness” to transition from *colored* to White, they became dissociated from both African Americans and Whites (Loewen, 1971/1988, p. 79).

While the Civil Rights Movement did not fully achieve equality for African Americans compared to Whites, it did bring about some benefits for Asian Americans. The movement propelled the Immigrant Act of 1965, which removed racial barriers to immigration and allowed Asian Americans to migrate to the U.S. However, during the post-Civil Rights era, the emergence of the image of Asian Americans as a model minority formed the tension between Asian Americans and African Americans (Desai & Joshi, 2013; Hinnershitz, 2017). Asian Americans began to develop a reputa-

tion for being educated, hardworking, and law-abiding. Yet, as the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Viet Nguyen claimed, the model minority myth promotes injustice for everyone, as it contributes to White supremacy, links Asian Americans to White privilege, disparages Black power and racial justice movements (Lang, 2020), and pits Asian Americans against African Americans and other minorities (Chin & Pan, 2021).

Despite the emergence of new racial tensions, the groundwork laid by the Civil Rights Movement paved the way for multicultural art education, integrating Asian American histories into K-16 classrooms. As noted by a co-founder of the *Black Lives Matter* movement, Alicia Garza, it is important to maintain interethnic relationships and solidarity movements to address the underlying issue of systemic racism and White supremacy (Demsas & Ramirez, 2021).

We are *implicated subjects*, participants in histories that generate the positions of a victim or perpetrator (Rothberg, 2019). As educators of Asian heritage, we need to learn and unlearn our involvement in histories in terms of how our power and privilege contribute to the regimes of domination and marginalization. We should be devoted to eradicating anti-Black racism through art education and promoting inter-racial and ethnic ally-ship in the field (Chang, 2016a). Our anti-racist strategies will be detailed after our intersectional positions and demographics of our students' populations below.

Intersectional Positions

It is not our intention to represent our racial and ethnic social groups. We acknowledge the diversity and complexity of Asian Americans and Asian immigrants and solely intend to share our stories, similarities, and differences to provide pedagogical implications for the field of art education. We are both Korean American female art educators working in U.S. southeastern universities. We both immigrated (Hyunji in 2012 & EunJung in 1998, respectively) long after "the image of Asian Americans [has] changed from yellow peril to hardworking and successful model minority" (Han, 2019, p. 72) in media and in society since the 1960s. Because we were educated through White dominant pedagogy in doctoral programs and were familiar with the mainstream popular culture, we initially did not question the type of education we received. We thought and acted as if the *American dream* is possible for anyone, and everyone is given the same opportunity to succeed. We were oblivious to racism against African Americans and other minorities, even the ones against Asians.

However, in our doctoral programs (Pennsylvania State University for Hyunji and Indiana University for EunJung), we soon began to realize our status as first-generation immigrants and female scholars of color. With the theory of intersectionality (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991), we understood our positions that comprise the intersection of privileges and disadvantages. We are from privileged backgrounds (e.g., our parents are middle-class and college-educated) and had access to learning English outside of school contexts and resources to apply for and study in U.S. universities for graduate-level degrees. We are educators in higher education with the privilege of selecting teaching materials, grading, determining students' teacher credentials, and publishing our ideas via public venues.

Yet, as non-native English speakers, our jobs that require a high level of linguistic proficiency put us on the spot daily. As Asian women, the combination of racism and sexism comes as no surprise, whether it is direct or subtle and verbal or attitudinal. For example, at the institution, Hyunji has been the target of overt and covert racism by students and a few colleagues. Hyunji also avoids walking on the street because of routine harassment and assault regarding her race and gender. EunJung encounters subtle prejudices or stereotypical inquiries related to Asians from students and coworkers. EunJung sometimes feels judged for some aspects of her characteristics because of her race and gender. Due to the expectation of Asian women to be submissive and cooperative, Asian women became easy targets of harassment, and they have been silenced and marginalized in academia, including leadership positions (Li & Beckett, 2006). Microaggressions also have an impact, as long exposure to covertly communicated bigotry may be harmful to our mental health

(Cuncic, 2021).

Additionally, the model minority myth puts us in a quandary. The assumption of some Asian Americans' successful assimilation into American mainstream culture tempts us to turn a blind eye to racial and related socio-political issues – as if we are White. However, we should remain vigilant about how the model minority myth reinforces the ethnic hierarchy among Asians (East/South Asians versus Southeast Asians) and the racial hierarchy, such as “White-top, Asian-middle, and Black-bottom” (Han, 2019, p. 72), puts us against other minorities. Living in the American South where the legacy of slavery remains alive through ongoing discrimination against African Americans, the model minority myth prevents us from working with other minorities. In this regard, we are determined to position ourselves as an ally to other minorities, refuse to use White-washed approaches to art education, and modify pedagogies to work with African American populations to address the injustices and promote equality in art education.

Demographics of the Cities and Institutions

We both work in the state of South Carolina. Hyunji's institution is a large flagship public university. The student body consists of 77% White, 10% African American, 4% Hispanic, and 2% Asian students (The University of South Carolina Office of Diversity and Inclusion, n.d.). The proportion of African American students (10%) is much fewer than in the city (40%) or state (27%) in which the university is located (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Particularly in the art school where Hyunji works, the faculty is not diverse (87.2% White, 7.7% Asian, 5.1% African American).

EunJung works at a small public university located in a rural area. Almost all students are local and are roughly split into 52% White, 37% Black, and 11% Other (College Factual, 2022). The faculty comprises 76% White, 23% Black, and 1% Asian, with EunJung being the only Asian educator in the Fine Arts Department. The demographics of the city (48% White, 47% Black, 3% Asian, and 2% Other) are similar to the student body. However, racial segregation persists in school districts, churches, and communities within the city, along with racial disparities in poverty, employment, occupation, and access to healthcare. In the city, 41% of Native Americans and 36% of African Americans have the highest rates of poverty, while White (6%) and Asians (10%) have the lowest rates.¹

In the Art Education program at Hyunji's institution, both the Asian American and African American preservice teacher population was almost nonexistent. EunJung, on the other hand, works with a lot of African American Art Education majors. Regarding the insufficient art teachers of color, Lawton (2017) argued that African American students do not have enough role models, portraiture, and narratives regarding them in the field, and, thus, they cannot “see possibilities for themselves in the art [teaching] world” (p. 112). Han (2019) examined how the model minority myth and White racism affect the invisibility of Asian American teachers in the U.S., as the teaching profession is associated with low merit, while teacher candidates of Asian descent fear widespread racism in the teaching field. Below, we will describe our pedagogical strategies by themes to promote the Afro-Asian coalition in art education.

Shifting Pedagogies

When we initially relocated to teach in the South, developing racially relevant courses that link the Southern students' lived experiences, racial backgrounds, and social challenges proved to be difficult. However, learning about Afro-Asian history in the South made us realize how African Americans and Asian Americans are interconnected and how our struggles and achievements are not

¹ By enhancing the standard of undergraduate teacher preparations, the Francis Marion University's *Excellence of Prepare Teachers of Children in Poverty* program raises the achievement of children living in poverty. With a poverty rate of 20% in 2022, Florence's average household income is \$72,922 (World Population Review, 2022).

only for Asian American communities but for communities of all minorities. Although we were initially White-washed, we disapprove of the essentialist Euro-centric view on African Americans and apply pedagogies as follows.

Perception of African Americans

Hyunji: In society, the dominant way of seeing is often racialized and, thus, involves a process of “othering.” This is a view – often a threatening view – through which to perceive others as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself. In the eyes of dominant Eurocentric people, minorities are considered others and defined and labeled as not fitting with the norms. Such a racialized way of seeing, thinking, and doing from the perspective of a White majority is called the “White gaze,” which is often internalized by racial minorities. For example, as an Asian immigrant woman, I tried to keep up with the model minority myth, had been complicit in the ways of viewing other racial minorities as lacking White norms, and had been aware of White spectators when interacting with them. African American scholar Acuff provided an example of the White gaze in terms of how her parents behaved differently when interacting with White counterparts (Kraehe & Acuff, 2021).

To prevent both White and non-White students’ unconscious assimilation into Whiteness via the White gaze, I introduced the concept of the White gaze in my class and promoted students to think about the essentialist view of Blackness, Asianness, and so forth. We discussed stereotypes of different races, how they are depicted in media, and how we can prevent the perpetuation of the White gaze on non-White subjects in art classrooms. For example, I provided students with my teaching examples created in art workshops that I have led for women living in transitional homes (95% of residents were African American). Because the women’s artworks regarding their private and public selves challenge the dominant view of African Americans imposed on them in society and via media and promote versatile and oppositional views of themselves, my students learned how to reject the White gaze in their future teaching (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Alex. (2020). *Pick a side*. Acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of artist.

EunJung: Numerous studies on racial identification have revealed that African American students struggle to understand who they are because their self-concept is shaped by how others perceive them (Kraehe & Acuff, 2021). Love (2019) indicated that “for dark people, the very basic idea of mattering is something hard to conceptualize when your country finds you disposable” (p. 2). African American students developed inferiority complexes and low self-esteem because of racial prejudice, historical segregation, and social bias (Chang, 2020; Taylor & Doyle, 2018; Young, 2013). African American students tend to identify more with their race than as distinct individuals,

largely due to the prominence of negative perceptions surrounding their racial group in society.

While not denying their racial background, I emphasize that they need to address their social, cultural, political, racial, and historical experiences in the arts. I use artworks by African American artists, such as Jacob Lawrence's *Great Migration* and Faith Ringgold's *Tar Beach* among others to highlight their difficulties in education and culture, and socioeconomic deprivation in society. In one project, pre-service teachers studied *The Garbage Man* by John Digger which depicts the harsh living conditions of many African Americans who migrated to northern cities during the Jim Crow era. In his painting, the hunched person is collecting leftover food in his cart, alluding to the crushing effects of poverty and loneliness on African American homeless people. After analyzing the painting on the historical facts, students collaboratively composed a group poem that often emphasizes the agency of African American individuals (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Francis Marion University's Pre-service General Education Majors. (2019). They are working on their group poems after discussing *The Garbage Man* by John Digger. Photo by author.

Learning becomes more meaningful and relevant for students when teaching is connected to diverse issues in their everyday lives. Teaching issue-based art is a way to help students deeply explore themselves and others as intersectional issues of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and social injustice intersect with their lives, concerns, and needs (Chang, 2022). In doing so, students learn how to utilize art as a tool to tell their own stories and a medium for social action and protest.

Experiences of African Americans

Hyunji: White gaze is perpetuated when considering the experiences and achievements of racial minorities. The sociocultural characteristics of minority students that differ from their White counterparts (e.g., racial identification, family-centered, etc.) are often attributed to the reason for their educational failure. This is called the *deicit model*, which ignores a larger educational system and prevalent socioeconomic disparities in society (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and applies episteme-mological racism in education. Instead of seeing the experiences of racial minorities as a lack of so-called White, middle-class experiences, Yosso (2005) emphasized the “array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts ... [used] to survive and resist macro and micro- forms of oppression” as a form of “community cultural wealth” or “cultural capital” (p. 77).

Community cultural wealth or cultural capital possessed by African Americans includes, but

is not limited to, linguistic capital (communication skills), aspirational capital (ability to maintain hope), familial capital (human resources from their extended family or community), navigational capital (ability to navigate institutional racism), and resistance capital (solve unequal problems) (Yosso, 2005). Community cultural wealth is relevant to culturally relevant pedagogy that challenges racism and focuses on minority students' achievements, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Similarly, I have learned that African American women in transitional homes possess their cultural capital. Despite hardships they have had (e.g., unemployment, drug addiction, abuse, incarceration, etc.), they are thrivers who navigate the ways in their life. I encourage the women to brainstorm the type of support they have received from extended family and community and elaborate on aspirations that they have for their life and future self (see Figure 3).



Figure 3. Brittany. (2020). *When you truly love yourself, you inspire others*. Mixed media. Courtesy of artist.

When I teach the community-based art education course for graduate students, I introduce the concepts of community cultural wealth and culturally relevant pedagogy along with these art examples created by the women living in transitional homes. When my graduate students eventually provide art classes at one of the transitional homes as part of their experiential learning, students acknowledge the women's expertise in working through hardships and designed the activity to visualize their cultural capital.

EunJung: Various racial and social justice issues that my African American students experience daily made me reexamine my teaching strategies and consider critically what and how I am teaching. Contemporary theories, including critical pedagogy, guide my teaching practices, enabling me to believe that students have the capacity to explore the complexity of their identities and discover their voices in the arts (Young, 2013). I believe that teachers can create conscious learning environments by understanding their minority students as individuals, honoring their different personal experiences and backgrounds, and encouraging self-discovery (Taylor & Doyle, 2018).

Thus, pre-service teachers are tasked to research contemporary African American artists who address various social injustice topics, such as political brutality, racism, migration, violence, and abuse. When negative racial experiences are addressed and discussed in class, I acknowledge existing and systemic disparities that certain group faces, and provide resources, opportunities, or support based on specific needs as a form of equity treatment in education (Lee, 2013; see Figure 4). Teachers' racial attitudes toward students of color are critical components to understand what it means to respect, understand, and value different cultures that exist in a society.



Figure 4. Smith, J. (2022). Pre-service teacher is presenting her research on the Contemporary African American artist at the 2022 SECAC (formerly the Southeastern College Art Conference).
Courtesy of artist.

African American Artists as Resources

EunJung: When students visited a local museum as a part of classwork, I quickly discovered that African American students are quite engaged in the works of African American artists and are learning about their own cultural, social, and racial origins as well as the issues of civil rights, social justice, racism, and segregation that pertain to our city (see Figure 5). Through this activity, students appreciated artworks by focusing on the racial viewpoints depicted in the work, critically exposed social and political injustice, offered alternative views, and raised affirmative voices to envision a better future (Crum & Hendrick, 2018).



Figure 5. Darius Johnson & Jada Roberson (2022). Francis Marion University's undergraduate students' selfies with the most appealing images were taken at the Florence Country Museum. Photo by the author.

Like the artworks they saw in the museum, many African American artists, including Faith

Ringgold, Kara Walker, Carrie Mae Weems, Kerry James Marshall, Aaron Douglas, Jacob Lawrence, Kehinde Wiley, and others, highlight racial identity issues in their works. African American artists impact attitudes and help people form their identities, especially those who are marginalized in society because of their race. While discussing these works, students shape and re-shape their identities. I strongly believe that using art related to students' experiences is a way to initiate and sustain their learning (Chang, 2016b).

Hyunji: I encourage preservice art teachers to include African American artists' work as examples in their teaching, despite White male master artists-centered art history to which they were previously exposed. In my classes that are for Art Education majors or nonmajors, I include the work by African American artists and artists of Asian heritage when the teaching is not related to race. Because African and Asian American artists' works are versatile and fit any enduring ideas or themes (e.g., power, identity, place, dream, body, etc.), I introduce their work throughout the course and require students to do the same in their lesson plan development. This is related to how African or Asian American art should only be addressed in their History Month (February for African Americans & May for Asian Pacific Americans), but throughout the school year (Kwon, 2022).

Suggestions for the Field

Based on the analysis of our shared and distinct experiences, we suggest that art educators examine their intersectional positions in terms of the privileges and disadvantages that they have as well as how they position themselves in regard to other racial and ethnic minorities. Because Asian Americans have been seen as foreigners in the American South and new racial tensions emerged due to the model minority myth that adds complexity to our perpetual outsider status, it was very important for us to examine our given positions and willful positionings.

Yet, due to our positions as professors, a power imbalance exists between us and African American students or community participants. This may not be seen as an ideal ally-ship or coalition building; however, what we intend for our students is to form a sort of inter-racial and inter-ethnic coalitions with their colleagues and students through the pedagogical transformations.

We recommend that art educators implement pedagogical strategies through which to challenge the perception of minorities, value the lived experience of minorities, and utilize art examples created by minorities, not in a linear order but in a holistic manner. In doing so, art educators can disrupt the histories and social formations of domination and marginalization while connecting to student populations regardless of how different students seem to be from the educator's background.

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Riding the Bus with Racists: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Complexity of the Border

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Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my experience as a White female university educator working on the U.S.-Mexico border and how I have come to understand art education on the border to be a complex space made more complex by language, ethnicity, and bi-national identity. I consider how my progressive education at top research universities, whose art education social justice discussions largely centered around race and racial distinctions between Whiteness and Blackness, is only a starting point in approaching and understanding social justice art education on the border. I consider where my education has failed me and where there remains space for continued growth toward new, more complex understandings of social justice.

I consider my ethnic difference (as a White woman who is also half Jewish) to unpack key differences between discussions of race, skin color, and ethnicity that, despite new, unifying terms like BIPOC, constitute key points of difference on the border. Specifically, I share anecdotal stories of escaping racial slurs and threatening language on my high school bus because my ethnicity is harder to pin down than skin color or race. I connect this to the complexity of addressing social justice from a racial or skin color-based approach, as many of my students identify as White and Hispanic. Additionally, I consider how conversations around nationalism, bi-nationalism, and language create points of connection and disconnection that are complicated by El Paso's situatedness on the U.S.-Mexico border. This paper considers these complexities and how they confront and amend my education with the hope of considering new pathways forward for myself and my students.

My Progressive Education

I attended two large research universities during my post-secondary education. Each had strong art education programs built on mission statements and curricula of social justice. During my undergraduate and master's education in the early to mid-2000s, multicultural education (Wasson et al., 2000) and some discussion of Blackness and Whiteness (Grant, 2020; Knight, 2006; Kraehe, 2015) formed a racial component of this education and third wave feminism constituted the background of most curricular teachings (Garoiian, 1999; Gaudelius, 2000). Issues of gender and sexuality remained largely centered around gay rights and, though one of my teachers in my undergraduate education taught through the movie *Ma Vie en Rose* (Berliner, 1998) (a story of an elementary-aged child who dresses in girl's clothes and is assumed to be transsexual), discussions of cis and transgender were not as prevalent in the vernacular as they are today. I experienced a similar dedication to diversity, equity, and justice in the department I attended for my doctoral studies. Overall, I considered my post-secondary education to be rather progressive in terms of discussions of diversity, equity, and justice, especially concerning the rural Pennsylvania education I had received during high school.

A Different Kind of Education: Learning about White Supremacy from White Supremacists

Both of my parents were originally from central Pennsylvania. Until my parents decided to settle down in their hometown, we moved every few years for my father's job. In the early 1990s, we landed in a small, rural town outside of Williamsport, Pennsylvania. This was my first stint at rural living, and it was quite a culture shock after having lived in suburban and urban centers. Our home was located fifteen miles from our high school along a two-lane highway that wound through lush state forest land. We moved the summer between eighth and ninth grade and I, not yet able to drive, took the bus to and from school. For the most part, I sat by myself listening to my Walkman. When I forgot my headphones or opted not to listen to my music, that's when I would hear them in the back of the bus loudly and proudly telling anyone who would listen to their frightening, unfounded racist propaganda. They never really said much of anything. Instead, they complained about Black people and relished in the use of the N-word or racial stereotypes which they used as a way to build themselves up and to foster camaraderie between them. All were White and male and proudly rural. What was frightening for me was not only what they were saying, but that these were my neighbors and peers and this was the first time that I had ever heard this kind of scary language used in real life and with such brashness.

I had only ever heard this kind of frightening, White supremacist language when sensationalized talk shows like Phil Donahue and Sally Jessy Raphael invited members of the Ku Klux Klan on. These shows and the movie *Schindler's List* (Spielberg, 1993), which I would see a few months later with my family in the theater, caused a feeling of stress that took over my whole body. I knew these people hated me and I felt the totality of that danger. Even though we were separated by the screen, the tension that this created in my body was overpowering. I can still remember how my body felt while watching *Schindler's List* -the tension my muscles sustained for the entirety of the film and the fear I carried frozen in my seat. I hid motionless, frozen stiff like a prey animal caught in the gaze of a predator, unable to act or speak out as if I was one of the Jewish children in *Schindler's List* hiding from the Nazis in the slop at the bottom of an outhouse. This is how it felt to ride the bus alongside them and to hear adolescents of my age use racial slurs as if they were proudly-confirmed members of the Aryan nation on an episode of the Phil Donahue show. I opted to sit at the front of the bus, near the driver and the door.

The majority of their ire was directed toward Black people. Our school was almost all White and there were no Black kids enrolled. It seemed to me that the Black people that they were targeting were from the neighboring city of Williamsport and participated in a state-supported rehabilitation program that relocated Philadelphians to the area. This program had caused concerns about crime and drug abuse in the rural, conservative towns within the county, and the people who had been relocated were derogatorily referred to as "the influx". This also became a kind of code for Blackness and of the (false perceptions of) increased crime and denigration of the city, created by allowing in Black outsiders. My (White) family had also just moved from a larger, eastern city in Pennsylvania, Allentown, to the county, and my brothers and I often wondered what made someone "influx" or not¹

Despite the proximity to Williamsport, few of these kids had any experience around Blacks or anyone different from them. This meant that they were not actually speaking from experience, but instead repeating what they heard from parents or others. There certainly weren't any people of color living fifteen miles from the high school in the tiny village of Barbour's where my family and

¹ Later, my mother, who became a teacher at the same high school I attended, told me that the highly-regarded twelfth grade social studies teacher (being awarded the opportunity to teach the seen as sign of status) and self-appointed Mon-toursville area historian had told her that he didn't regard me or my brothers as influx because, as someone who knows the history of the area, he had identified my mother's family on my grandfather's side as one of the older families from the region. While my mother's lineage has deep roots in the area, it seemed an easy cover up for more nefarious racist attitudes. Simply put, we were not considered influx because we were White.

my peers lived, and they certainly weren't frequenting the fire hall where the slur-slinging kids hung out and volunteered as firefighters

Education on Ethnicity: My Body, my Fear, my Whiteness

To be clear, my fear of these kids was founded on my understanding of White supremacy as not only centered around the hatred of Blacks but also of Jews² and I am half Jewish – something that my mother (who is not Jewish) reminded my brothers and I would have meant that we would have gone to the gas chamber in Hitler's Germany. What I didn't realize was the differences in identifiers that would or would not make me a target. Even admitting today that there are differences does not diminish my fear of White supremacists, but it does help me to understand the levels of exposure and threat to different populations (namely that because of their identifiers, i.e. skin color; Blacks are always already vulnerable). What I mean by this is, even though my last name, Kaplan, is a highly recognizable Jewish last name, the kids on the bus did not see me as different or as a threat. They never directed slurs at me and, although I am sure that they knew slurs like Kike, to the best of my memory I don't recall hearing those terms spoken. What I came to believe (and subsequently told myself as a way to soothe my anxiety over their proximity to me) was that they were not smart or cunning or industrious enough (like true German Nazis were) to even identify me as a threat. I could quite literally hide out from them (like frightened children in the latrine) in my Whiteness.

This return to the vision of the latrine is twofold. First, the image of children in the latrine, like how my body felt watching *Schindler's List*, is burned into my memory and symbolizes the (humiliating and desperate) lengths that threatened people, especially threatened children will go to survive. The second has more to do with the conundrum of looking back. When I look back on my behavior, my cowardice, and my inability to act, to say something, to stand up, and to speak against supremacy's free-flowing diatribes, I feel shitty. I am harsh on myself and my inability to act. I wish my vulnerable younger self would have written a different story, one where I would have acted against nefarious forces and emerged the victor. So that the self that is safely writing this from a secure, unthreatened space could look back and easily claim the space of antiracist action (Bode, 2022; Desai, 2010; Rolling, 2022) rather than wondering how my inaction could be complicit in a White supremacist system and so that I wouldn't have to wonder how my inaction hurts myself and others like me. As I dream of an easy course of action and try to shore up the resolve of "never again", I am reminded that this would not be the last time that I would freeze and not find my voice when White supremacy combined with institutional power and would rear its ugly face. When viewing this pattern, there is something important to consider, to remember about why we freeze, why we can't speak up, why we dare not take the risk: even if it isn't a life-threatening risk, it can certainly feel or seem that way, like an existential threat.

Hiding, Silence, and Inaction

My ability to hide out said more about American White supremacy and differences in color, race, and ethnicity than it did about me or my ability to navigate these spaces. My ability to pass as non-threatening had more to do with my Whiteness and how I looked than my complex ethnic or cultural background. I knew that my facial features, particularly my nose, and chin, took after my father, who had what could be stereotypically referred to as a Jewish nose or schnoz. I am fairer complexioned than my father, who is more olive skin toned, what has been referred to as Mediterranean (whether it is or not).

Given that I could hide from those not looking closely for Jews, I assumed you had to be looking or to have experience with Eastern European Jews to identify me. This was tested during my senior year of college when, during a required student teaching interview, I was asked, "Kaplan,

² This confounding of hatred for Blacks and Jews was exhibited by the Klan members on the shows and other media representations where Jews and Blacks were simultaneously excluded from White society.

that's a Jewish last name³, right?". When I answered yes and was then barraged by a diatribe connecting the Holocaust to this person's crusade against partial birth abortion, I wish I had the wherewithal to speak up. I wish I would have asked, "What does my last name have to do with my interview for student teaching?" and "What gives you the right to compare anything to the Holocaust?" and "What gives you the balls to ask me, a Jew, for permission to sanctify these comparisons in the first place and the second place without any regard for my political positioning?"

When I consider these acts of silence, inaction, hiding, and perceived acquiescence, I think of my students who are often quiet, soft-spoken, and agreeable or described as respectful, compliant (meaning non-resistant), willing, and polite, I am concerned. What does this acumen or set of descriptors imply? I wonder where resistance happens on the border and what the historical and cultural implications for resistance, speaking up, speaking out, or speaking back have been. How have resistance and silence marred or marked the body? How have they shaped culture or influenced dispositions toward authority, and in particular academic authority? I also wonder, then, who are critical pedagogies and acts of resistance for? What do they produce and to whose benefit? I question my positionality and what I would gain (maybe a sense of purpose or self-righteousness) in producing these critical and resistant stances. Who would I be serving, my students or myself? In other words, do my students need these interventions? And yet, my own experience of early adulthood tells me that language and ways of thinking do not merely develop; content and the methods to apply it must be fostered in productive, care-filled spaces. I am not sure that it is ever safe for a single individual to stand up to White supremacy when outnumbered⁴ (like in the back of a bus headed into a rural, desolate area) or under the application of institutional power (like during a student teaching interview that feels pivotal whether it is or isn't), or in a palpably (if not entirely) real space of precarity, but what is important is the support of others with critical language, with resistant thinking, and with viable safe spaces that might produce action.

Learning about the Border and Paso del Norte

That my Whiteness, both my color and race, were seen as non-threatening revealed important concepts that would become more apparent as I began my job at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Namely, that race is not the same as color and not the same as ethnicity and that these conceptions change with time and in context. Certainly, in Hitler's Germany Jewishness was racialized. Distinctions between the master race of blue-eyed and blond Germans were constructed in stark contrast to the darker (sinister) Jew; however, today in the United States Jewishness could be described culturally, ethnically, and/or religiously. What I learned about the largely Mexican American students that are served by the University and who are students in my program and classes is that these labels are complicated and discussion of Whiteness and Blackness, which were the cornerstone of my education on race and social justice would quickly become inadequate and insufficient to address the specificities of the region and of its people.

Institutionalized systems of identification often used regularly in the United States produce a Whiteness (or a Blackness) of sorts within diverse Hispanic populations. Like me, Latinos or Hispanics from this area of the border are often characterized as racially White meaning that in government documents dealing with identity when given the choice they largely identify as White.

3 The identifier of Jewishness through common last name is not unlike similar practices regarding identification of Lati-nos.

4 It is important to note that despite El Paso's majority Hispanic population, it is still in many ways a minority culture. On the American side of the border, English is still the language of business and of education despite dual language programs. Institutional power is not unlike other parts of the country and often success means acculturation. That is not to say that El Paso is the same as other US cities; it is not. Mexican influence and culture comprise the city. Many El Pasoans have settled in the region for multiple generations and families straddle the border. The majority of our students remain in the region when they graduate from our institution. This produces a closed circle of education and a sense of similarity. Many have not experienced the full force of the racialized politics, and their experience of the border and immigration is different from what is being played out in other cities and places where Hispanics and Mexicans are a numerical minority or where cultures clash.

Unlike me, they then chose a secondary box that asks if they also identify ethnically as Hispanic (or Latino). Within that identification are those who might identify as darker or people of color based on the color of their skin and who may still opt to identify as White because they do not identify as Black and are not of African ancestry. Others may present or pass as White, so much so that, like my own Jewish identity, often the only identifier recognizable to those looking for it is a familiar Spanish last name. Anzaldúa (2007) describes these racial border complexities in her poem *To Live in the Borderlands means you*:

are neither hispana india negra españolani gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed caught in the crossfire between camps while carrying all five races on your back not knowing which side to turn to, run from; To live in the Borderlands means knowing that the india in you, betrayed for 500 years, is no longer speaking to you, that mexicanas call you rajetas, that denying the Anglo inside you is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black (p. 216)

The Paso del Norte region and the student population of our university are often described as the majority (80 % or more) and as Hispanic (UC staff, 2022). While the numbered percentage is quite clear and compelling, the term Hispanic can be inadequate, inaccurate, or hazy. It is hazy in terms of what it implies in terms of speakership or common language and what it means in terms of race, nationality, ethnicity, and color (Olivarez, 1998, p. 427). Generally, this term is used to refer to people from regions of the world that speak Spanish and can include European Spanish speakers. However, there is some argument about what is the most accurate and respectful term. Some prefer the term or terms Latino or Latina to refer to those who hail from parts of the world referred to as Latin America which can include the Caribbean, South America, Central America, and Mexico (which is North American). Some prefer the term Latinx, which is most prevalent in academic circles (Salinas, 2020). Some even prefer the term Chicano or Chicana to refer to those who specifically claim identification with Mexican nationality or heritage. Delgado and Palacios (1998) give an ancestry based-definition of Chicano as, “any individual residing in the United States who traces his lineage to Indo-Hispanic or Hispanic ancestors who are living or once lived in Mexico or the Southwestern United States” (p. 285). The term is a reclaiming of a once-derogatory and classist term used by Mexicans to describe themselves; they were at the same time demanding to be considered and called White (Aguirre, 1971). Chicano has been reclaimed colloquially by people located further west in Arizona and California and, even though 80% of our students identify as being of Mexican descent (UTEP, 2022), it is not a term that I have largely heard used or claimed outwardly by those in our region. What I have heard are the ways our university defines our students: Hispanic (as in Hispanic serving Institution or HIS) bi-national, first generation (to attend college- although this also carries other connotations). We do have a Chicano studies program.

It is also important to note that despite common Spanish or Indo-Hispanic heritage and speaking or hailing from a common Spanish language tradition, there are many diverse dialects, language performances, and patois each specific to a people and a context and different from a European performance. Yet, despite this array of performances and traditions, all Spanish speakers have been grouped in a binary logic as that which is not English. Here this logic works much like the logic of Whiteness or the Black and White binary. All patois, despite their locality, specificity, or individuation, are viewed against the monolithic backdrop of English (despite English’s own diverse patois, dialects, and language performances).

I have heard very little about what the people of this region outwardly identify as. As a White progressive educator, it is my stance to try not to label or create a language for others. Instead, I prefer to hang back to try to create a space where individuals can use or create language that affirm their knowledge. What I have found most challenging about this region is that these affir-

mations are often not made publicly. The terms that we professors use to describe our students, I realize, do not come from our students; they often come from the institution and often our students do not resist or speak back to these labels- they often do not resist or speak back at all⁵- which of course reminds me of the times when I as a student in high school and again at the university remained silent.

My Education about my Education: Filling in the Gaps

When I moved here, I had no conception of the differences and complexities of identity politics on the border. I had assumed that, like my university experience, all universities (or at least all (art) education programs) were considering or at least discussing how race, class, and gender produced or reproduced societal structures within the schools (both in pk-12 and higher education). Within the sociocultural programs that I attended, pedagogy was considered contingent upon societal conditions and cultural context. Often this meant that one size fits all approach might not work and that it was important to consider one's identity when entering spaces of difference in education. What I found when moving from a department of art education to a department of art was that these considerations were not necessarily the focus of an education in art. Rather, my new department's approach, philosophy, and mission was one of neutrality or apolitical (something that antiracist approaches examine today for its harmful assumptions) that forefronted the study of art and the importance of studio art making. This approach is not uncommon- k-12 classes here also focus on practices and products of studio making⁶. Along with assuming an apolitical stance, this approach assumes two things. First those methodologies, or how we conduct our practice in art or art education, are neutral or apolitical, and second, that neglect in addressing content might mean that that should be left to the maker and that the development of content is not the place of art education. Even though I see a similar apolitical stance and inattention to content-building or meaning-making development mimicked in the local schools, these are critical areas of art instruction and art education that must be addressed.

I also work in the state of Texas, whose governor and largely Republican legislature, like Virginia and Florida, have recently aimed at education, threatening to eliminate academic tenure, politicizing trans issues including the ability to participate in sports and to receive life-affirming care, banning books, and demonizing the teaching of critical race theory (CRT), an advanced cultural theory about law and not often studied until students enter graduate, Ph. D, or Juris Doctoral (law) programs. This is all to say that the stakes are raised for those engaging with important socio-cultural theory. In my instance, like many others in academia and schools, the stakes are doubly raised because there is an imperative to immediately get it right while wading into new territory and working out new methods. Often this is done with little to no support or guidance from others in our departments, institutions, and government. It may put our jobs and livelihood in peril (Contorno & Maher, February 1, 2023).

Furthermore, this is all complicated by my own privileged and powerful position. Despite the affinity, I feel because both my students and my identities are complicated by ethnicity, we are not the same ethnically. My students largely share the same ethnicity; they are from a region where, despite their national minority status, they are a majority. I am not from that majority. I am not a

⁵ For instance, during our return to in-person learning after vaccines were available and Governor Abbott had reopened the state, our administration created a campaign to promote continued mask wearing called Miners protect Miners. Despite some concern that this was not enforceable, it was not uncommon to hear the same administration and faculty members remark that our student body was the least likely to resist and would comply if asked. Many of the faculty saw our students' compliance in terms of the covid-19 pandemic as a boon for containing the virus as we returned to in-person classes. While their willingness to do as asked meant that many wore masks as we returned, generally, I do not believe that this is without concern. I wonder how this disposition toward academic power serves or disserves this population and what circumstances have produced this acumen.

⁶ Making practices are sometimes supplemented with the study of traditional or heritage-based practices like the making of papel picado, trees of life, or Día de Muertos.

Fronteriza, born physically on the border, nor am I born of the mestizo, a rather defined borderlands culture constituted between two recognized nation-states and languages (Anzaldua, p. 85, 2007). Despite the borderland-like qualities that construct my identity (I straddle White and Jewish culture), outwardly I am perceived as White and as an outsider (in the line at Walmart before I say hola or hello cashiers assume that I am English-speaking). In many ways, especially through my education, I am the institution. I am a Ph.D., I am east coast, and I am White. I am the same institution that has historically suppressed and oppressed Spanish speakers (Kohl, 1995; Perrillo, 2022). I do not share the same customs, cultural practices, or language. I did not grow up eating border food, speaking (border) Spanish, celebrating border customs, or making border art (Garcia, 2018; 2022). I am careful not to confound our identities and to leave spaces to recognize (and celebrate) our differences.

Care and Concern(s) as I “Educate Others”

The subtitle of this paper, *Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and to Love the Complexity of the Border*, a subtitle borrowed from Stanley Kubric’s classic absurdist film *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964), is, like the original title, somewhat of a lie- but then again, that is the point. I have not and probably never will stop worrying about the specific socio-cultural context of the border and how my identity and all the bells and whistles it brings with it (my power, my privilege, or the isolation and awkwardness of my outsiderhood) intersect with the complexities of the border. I will also probably never stop worrying about whether the methods and content that I deliver in my classes serve my students. While worry connotes a bad thing, I believe that the concern, the vigilance, and the care it implies are not. Worry, for me, is about care and carefulness. It is circumspection (Kaplan, 2018; 2020). Like our worry about the atomic bomb, our vigilance, our attentiveness, and our concern, is imperative. Acuff (2022) calls upon the notion of love as defined by hooks as necessary for antiracist teaching. I propose that care, carefulness, and worry are within this vein. They speak of an awareness or an awakening to the possibility of harm, to our vulnerability, to our and others’ precarity (Butler, 2004; 2010; Tsing, 2015).

I believe that there is no right way for every situation. I hope that the methods that I model in my classroom support my students in learning, are appropriate, or even just. I do not have many answers about the right way to approach social justice matters of race, class, gender, nationality, language, color, or ethnicity on the border. I also am suspicious of those who claim to have the answers as though our approaches and actions could be fixed (are not changed over time and are not contingent on a context or individual) and are not made from imperfect humanity.

It is in our actions when we choose a way, a method, or a pedagogical approach (which is by the way the purview of the pk-12 teachers and the academic), that the stakes are highest. Here, in our actions, is when we might make mistakes, or when we might affect change for good or for bad. This is where the risk is; it is also where the potential is. Still, our actions (and in my case, my inactions) have consequences -something my mother would remind me of when my carelessness would result in painful accidents. This is why the imperative to worry is ours to bear; our acts (even our acts made with the intention of love and care) have intended and unintended consequences. This is where worry’s vigilance might shift our thinking away from single acts of social justice to a lifetime or career, in the case of art educators, who are committed to getting it right even if there is no such thing. It is a way of being, one wrapped in the co-construction of care, concern, worry, and precarity.

Loving the bomb and loving complexity also implies a kind of self-care, gentleness, or kindness with ourselves that is implied in the absurdity of the human condition. The absurdity of Kubrick’s film might be a helpful primer on how one might practice care (with a kind of self-care, humility, or humorous compassion) that forgives the impossibility of ever getting it perfectly right. This loving or embracing of the bomb/complexity and the absurdity it implies might free us from our imperative to grasp, to hold tight, or to confine complexity as it resists and wriggles free from

us. Rather, like watchman of the doomsday clock that sits one minute from midnight, we instead must balance precariously on “a thin edge of barbwire” (Anzaldua, 2007, p. 35), caring for those who, like us, are co-constructed in this vulnerable space in hopes that we might be able to embrace the human absurdity that connects us.

My Program, My Classroom

As our program undergoes changes, I think back to my silence, especially my silence on the bus in high school, and the silence that my students often perform (or are perceived as performing). I consider how best to care for them and how the curriculum intersects with the issues of care, concern, worry, and precarity discussed above to manifest in content and practice. I also consider the heroic expectation I have imposed on my former self (of speaking out or resisting) and how, despite my wishes that it was easier to speak out and speak back, my circumspection and my (progressive) practice of listening and allowing students to take the lead in matters of their identity and diversity complicates what I mistake to be easy ameliorative acts of resistance. Instead of being saved by my former self or the future potential of my student’s voice, I focus on the present, the unfolding moments of interaction where we are becoming together or where we co-construct each other and our understanding and where things are tough, or worrisome, or complicated. But also, where things are full of care and concern. I hope that this is what I model for my students (and they for theirs) – a way of being different (or composed in difference (Garoian, 2016)) together.

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Journey to the West from the East: An AAPI LGBTQ+ Art Educator's Perspective

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I am a naturalized Taiwanese American teaching at an urban university in the southeastern United States. My teaching and research have been shaped by my identity, which continuously intersects with ever-changing culture and interacts with society. With 23 years of teaching experience in two countries (8 years as an elementary school teacher in my native Taiwan and 15 years as a university art education professor in the United States), I sometimes found myself lost in the midst of searching for my identity, especially after I became a U.S. citizen in 2015. As a Chinese, Taiwanese, an international student at Penn State University, a U.S. green card holder, an immigrant, and a member of the LGBTQ+ community (Hsieh & Yang, 2021), my identity has intersected with ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, and profession. I now identify as an AAPI LGBTQ+ art educator, researcher, and artist using the pronouns he/him/his.

Journey to the West From the East

My memory of the summer of 2004 makes me smile every time I think of it because it marks the beginning of my journey to the West from the East. I use the overland journey of Xuanzang, a Tang Dynasty monk (602–664 CE) who headed West from the East through central Asia to India to study Buddhist writing, as a metaphor for my own journey. The Tang dynasty oriented itself as living in the East while the rest of the world occupied the West. Today, Tang's association between countries and directions influences my perceptions of the East and the West, and my motivation to come to the United States to study art education coincides with Xuanzang's motivation to travel to India to study Buddhist writing.

I Had a Dream and It Came True

Art has been a constant in my life and my identity since I was a child. I often received compliments about my art projects from my friends, parents, teachers, and others. After graduating from an art magnet high school in the south of Taiwan, I dreamed of living in a large city like Taipei because of its numerous art institutions. Unfortunately, I did not do well on my college entrance exam, so I enrolled in a teachers' college in the south, a region considered countryside with many farms and rice fields. As a college student in 1995, I attended the 18th World Scout Jamboree in the Netherlands. This experience opened my eyes and allowed me to interact with Scouts from all over the world, including people who looked vastly different from me. After the trip, I learned that in order to communicate well with people from around the world, I needed to improve my English proficiency. From that point on, my dream was to travel to the United States and learn things that would have been out of reach had I remained in Taiwan.

I became a general classroom teacher in an elementary school after I graduated from the teachers' college and completed my mandatory military service. During my 20 months of military duty, I was selected—because of my art degree—to work on a team with two other people to design and create a military museum. This project enhanced my interest in museum study and exhibition

design. When I returned to teaching at the elementary level, I planned field trips to museums for my fifth and sixth graders and implemented visual art in my teaching. Two years later, I returned to the university for my graduate degree and learned how to conduct educational and art history research. My graduate school experiences reinforced my desire to travel to the United States to study art education because I read journal articles and research studies written by U.S. art education scholars. I had a dream. “It would be great if I could attend their classes,” I told myself. In August 2004 I arrived at the College Park Airport and checked into the graduate student dorm at Pennsylvania State University. I have no words to describe my excitement. My dream had come true.

I Live My Dream as I Build It

My doctoral study at Penn State was intense, filled with challenges and excitement. My positionality during my time at Penn State was as an international student who wanted to learn and experience American college life as much as possible. I acquired and absorbed knowledge, adopting and applying what I learned from my study, my daily life, and my identity. Interacting with others—most importantly my Penn State professors, classmates, friends, and the entire State College community—I found myself growing tremendously in multiple dimensions. Two years before I completed my graduate work, I knew I wanted to remain in the United States because I had so much more to see, experience, and learn. I went to New York City to view exhibitions, conducted research on instructional resources for teachers at the Museum of Modern Art, interned at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and traveled to various U.S. cities to explore American culture.

As an international student, I was permitted to apply for jobs within one year after I completed graduate school. Because teaching, museum study, and art history have always been my passions, I applied for faculty positions at universities as well as positions for museum educators and curators. In 2007 I was offered an assistant professor position by the School of Art and Design at Georgia State University under a work visa. I moved to Atlanta in December that year and began my university teaching career in January 2008. I identified as an international educator with an East Asian background, sharing my experiences and East Asian culture with my students. Two veteran art education colleagues shared important lessons they had learned from their work experience and guided me in navigating the culture within the academic environment. After teaching for several years, I applied for and received U.S. permanent residence status, and so I considered myself an immigrant working in the States. In 2015, I applied for and was granted U.S. citizenship, and I gained yet another new identity: Taiwanese American.

From international student to Taiwanese American, my identity has changed from time to time and is connected to my sociocultural interactions, sexual orientation, and immigration status. I use the word “weaving” to describe my identity formation (see Figure 1), which has been influenced mainly by the continuous entwining of sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, cultural background, career, teaching, and research. In other words, I actively construct and build my dream as an LGBTQ+ AAPI art educator, researcher, and artist. I currently use he/him/his for my pronouns.

My Identity and My Research and Teaching Practices

On one hand, teaching and research play an important part in my identity formation; on the other hand, my identity affects how I teach and what I research. What I call reflexivity (Hsieh & Yang, 2021) “involves the awareness of a teacher’s own presence and contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the teaching process” (p. 374). Examining my beliefs, judgments, and practices, I explore how my personal perspectives impact them as an art educator, researcher, and artist. Below

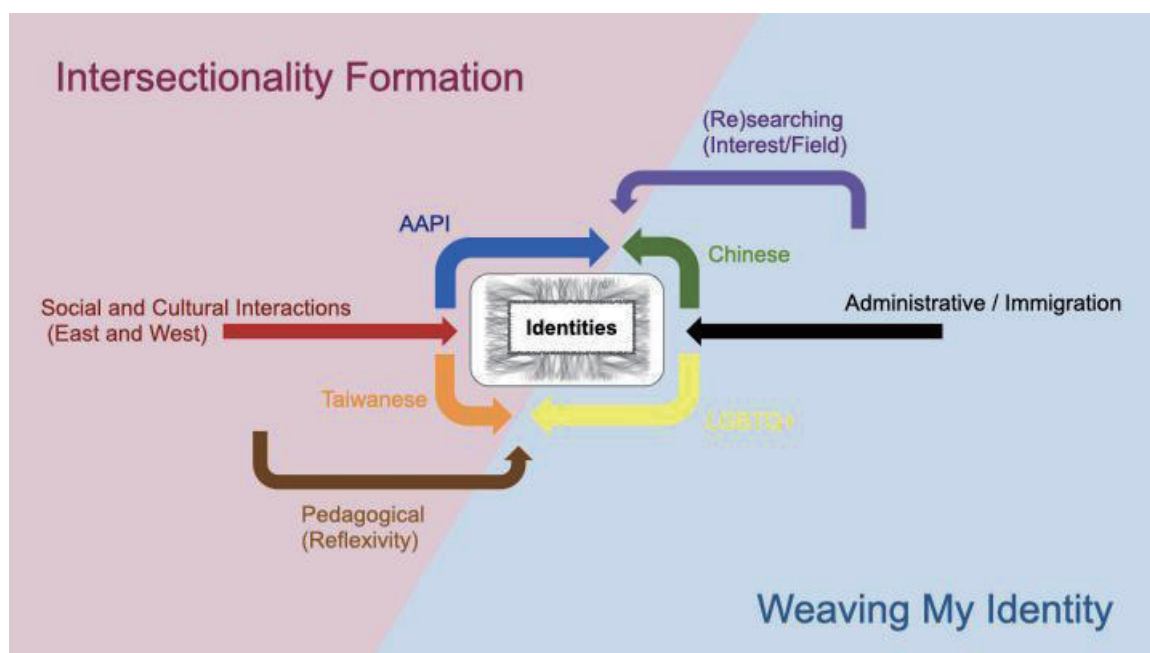


Figure 1. *Weaving Various Factors for the Identity Formation*

I share two projects that I developed for my teaching practice that were influenced by my reflexivity and identity.

The first project was designed particularly to inspire Taiwanese American teens to find their family roots and also express what they experience in cultural conflicts between the East (Taiwan) and the West (United States); the second project was developed for preservice art teachers to respond to anti-Asian hate.

Lesson on Identity, Family Roots, and Cultural Conflict for Taiwanese American Teens

As an immigrant myself I have found that the intersectionality of my Taiwanese culture, sexual orientation, languages (both Mandarin and English), and U.S. K–16 art teaching experiences provide culturally relevant foundations for me to teach first- and second-generation Taiwanese American teens. Because recognizing and appreciating Taiwanese culture and their parents' cultural heritage are important to them, I was invited to develop a 180-minute lesson for a summer cultural training workshop sponsored by the Taiwanese government. A total of 243 Taiwanese American teens from four cities enrolled in this summer workshop in 2022. I traveled to Seattle, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Houston for in-person instruction and interacted with all 243 Taiwanese American teens.

Many teachers are qualified for this task, and I wondered, “Why me?” After the workshop, I learned that my Taiwanese background, K–12 art education teaching experiences, and life in the United States made me an ideal candidate for this project (program director, personal communication, August 22, 2022). The program director told me that the organizers had sought an instructor who knew both the Taiwanese and American education systems, had experience with high school students, and also knew how to integrate Taiwanese culture into mainstream education in the United States.

Because I knew that storytelling can be a powerful tool for learners to explore, express, reflect, and share their untold experiences, I decided to use for this project a critical narrative approach, grounded in critical race theory, narrative inquiry, life history, and autoethnography. In fact, narrative storytelling functions as a transformative approach for culturally sensitive pedagogy and teaching for diversity (Miller et al., 2020). Presenting stories to an audience could inspire others to do the same, especially people of color. Through this 180-minute lesson, Taiwanese American teens were not only able to learn about their Taiwanese cultural roots but also critically examine Taiwan-

ese contemporary pop culture and traditional culture. This lesson guided Taiwanese American teens to explore and share their lived experiences with cultural conflict within their own families. More importantly, while they presented cultural conflicts and challenges within their own families, they also had to propose solutions. Each student created a 3- to 5-minute video presentation and shared their thoughts in audio-narrative form. Students had the option to use any web-based or computer application for creating their videos, such as Powtoon. Analyzing their videos, I found three common topics: food and body type, education, and relationships. Some of their statements appear below.

Food and Body Type

Food and body type were among the top-listed cultural conflicts in Taiwanese American teens' families. They recognized that their parents favored a particular aesthetic for their body type, including slim physique, hairstyles, skin tones, and eyes, which negatively impacted them as teenagers.

Statements shared by the Taiwanese American teens include the following:

"My mother is insensitive toward eating disorders and has a negative attitude toward any body type that isn't slim or ideal."

"Don't eat too much or you will get fat like Americans."

"My parents eat Taiwanese food every day, and sometimes I just want to have pizza. My parents would say that I will get fat eating pizza."

"I love cheese, but my parents told me it will make me fat."

Education

Education was also at the top of the list of cultural conflicts. Most Taiwanese American teens' parents are immigrants who grew up in Taiwan and attended college in the United States. The education system in Taiwan is very different from the one in the United States. Hence, Taiwanese American teens have struggled with the concept of education with their parents.

Here are some of their statements:

"I lie about being a doctor so I don't disappoint my parents."

"I can't play video games because they will distract me from getting straight A grades."

"I get so much pressure to do well in school because they [my parents] said that's my only job right now."

"If I have free time, use it to study."

"I have a high [class] rank and good grades, but this feels like more of an expectation than [an] accomplishment."

"Every time I improve, their [my parents'] standards raised."

"I never received praise for my hard work, only more stress [to] maintain this level."

"The constant comparison [to my parents' Taiwanese friends' kids] hurts my feelings and self-esteem."

Relationships

Within traditional Taiwanese culture, parents usually place considerable importance on their sons' and daughters' relationships, sometimes making decisions for them about whom to date. Well-matched couples in Taiwanese culture often share the same social class and have compatible incomes. Most Taiwanese American teens disagreed with this practice. Here are some statements from them:

"My parents use harmful stereotypes to determine which races I can or cannot date."

"My parents always say that I am too young to have a relationship."

"No relationship before I graduate from high school."

"Dating Asians [Taiwanese Americans] might be easier."

After they presented their struggles and cultural conflicts within their families, I asked them to generate solutions to minimize disagreements. Here are some of their proposed solutions:

"The solution to conflict over education is to talk to our parents about how [a] specific career doesn't equate [with] happiness."

"Acknowledge that academically smart doesn't necessarily mean success."

"Express to our parents that our success need[s] to be acknowledged."

"Communicate with our parents that they need to be aware [of] how we feel and not what they want us to be."

"Parents need to understand everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses, which make them incomparable [to others]."

"Parents need to listen to our reasoning without comparing their own experiences to ours."

"We grew up in different environments [Taiwan vs. the United States], so we have different experiences."

"A better approach to the topic of relationships includes encouraging parents to put aside stereotypes when they meet our friends."

After learning about first- and second-generation Taiwanese American teens' cultural conflicts within their families and their proposed solutions, I felt a sense of relief because they trusted me and freely discussed difficult topics with me. They opened up to me because I shared my personal struggles with them as an immigrant, an artist, and an AAPI LGBTQ+ person. The disconnect between parents and their children occurs largely because of cultural conflict, and I hope that through meaningful understanding and respectful dialogue, Taiwanese American teens can bridge the gap between generations in immigrant Taiwanese families. My intersectionalities and identities bolstered not only my own but also my students' trust in story-telling.

Lesson on Responding to Anti-Asian Hate for Preservice Art Educators

Many Asian art educators and scholars have pointed out the urgency of combating anti-Asian hate and racism due to the COVID-19 outbreak through visual art lessons (Bae, 2022; Bae-Dimitriadis & Yoon-Ramirez, 2023; Cooper et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2023). As an AAPI faculty member in a teacher preparation program, I feel the need to incorporate into my own teaching strategies to combat anti-Asian racism. Thus, I developed a series of lessons addressing anti-Asian racism in the

hope of demonstrating appropriate pedagogies to preservice art teachers. I share one of the three lessons with examples of student work below. In this lesson, I first presented *I Still Believe in Our City*¹ created by a contemporary Asian American artist, Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya, in response to the anti-Asian hate crimes occurring in the United States as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The rabbit hole started with a simple discussion with my friends about a YouTube video about a woman in a village in Africa who was making [sanitary] pads for women because the journey to get them was so far away. I suppose I could have stopped there, but I landed on female genital mutilation (FGM) or female genital cutting (FGC). Very heavy, but the more I read, the more I realized that this is happening to so many young women around the world and [is] deeply rooted in tradition. The more I researched, I found that the communities have the power to end FGM, [it is] possible to shift these social norms, and it's not being discussed. Too much of a taboo topic. Research deepen[ed], and I saw beautiful young women from all areas of Africa who had been victims or voiceless. I wanted to represent them all in the sketch of the African woman. (personal communication, February 11, 2021)

Figure 2. FGM/FGC, *Mixed Media With Collage*, by Meta Cooper. Courtesy of artist.

This particular project encouraged preservice art teachers to explore and research difficult topics as well as to respond to them through the creation of art. Because anti-Asian racism became rooted in people's daily lives long ago (Cooper, 2022; Tchen & Yeats, 2014) and was magnified because of the global pandemic (Yellow Horse & Chen, 2022), my students felt strong empathy when I—as an Asian American immigrant myself—shared my own stories of being harassed on the street. This lesson also created a strong bond between me and my students. Ultimately, my identity as an AAPI immigrant has helped me develop lessons that promote social justice and anti-racist teaching practices.

Moving Forward and Beyond

The journey of my identity formation has not always been smooth. For instance, I struggled with my LGBTQ+ identity when I was in Taiwan because I was an elementary school teacher. I lived a hidden life. Not until 2008 did I fully embrace my LGBTQ+ identity when I became a college professor. I brought LGBTQ+ topics into my teaching practice and discussed teaching approaches with my preservice art teachers that they could use if they found themselves teaching in a conservative school district. In addition, I dug more deeply into the place of Asian Americans in U.S. history as a result of the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I became increasingly sensitive to topics like racial discrimination and social justice in art classrooms.

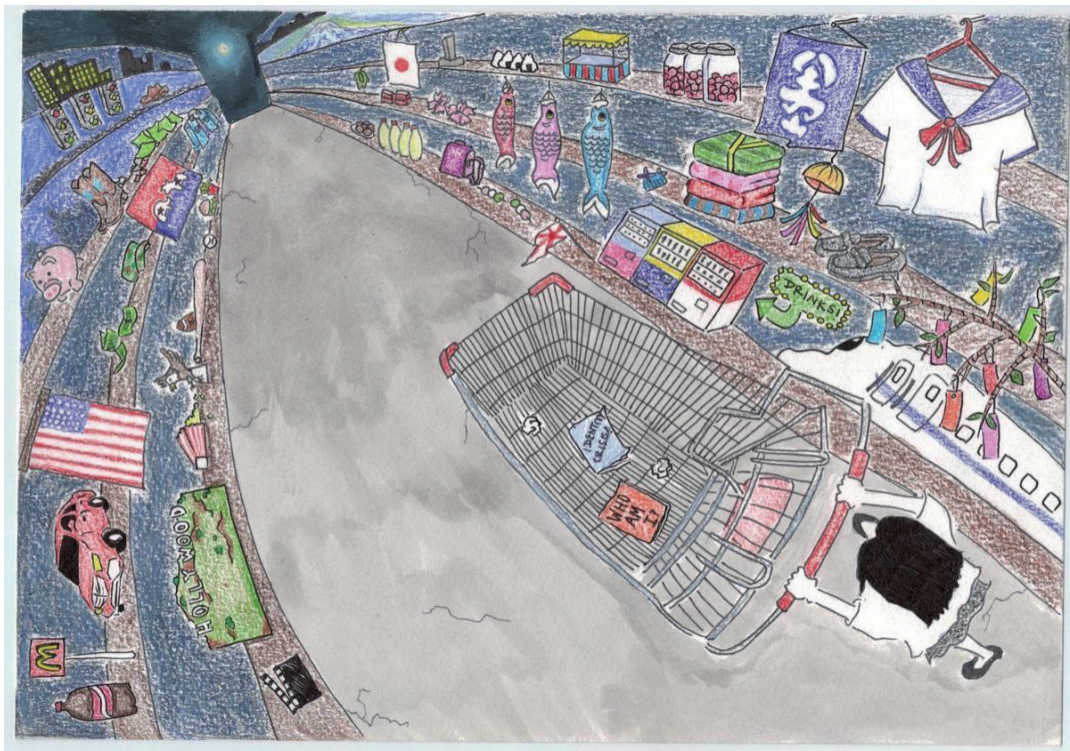


Figure 3. Me as Asian American, *Colored Pencil, 8" x 11," by Lana Nguyen, 2022.*
Courtesy of artist.

(Re)examining my personal and professional journey, I found many joyful moments mixed with sad, frustrating, or disappointing ones along the way (Shin et al., 2022); but overall, I transformed negative experiences into motivation for self-improvement and strength to move forward academically and personally.

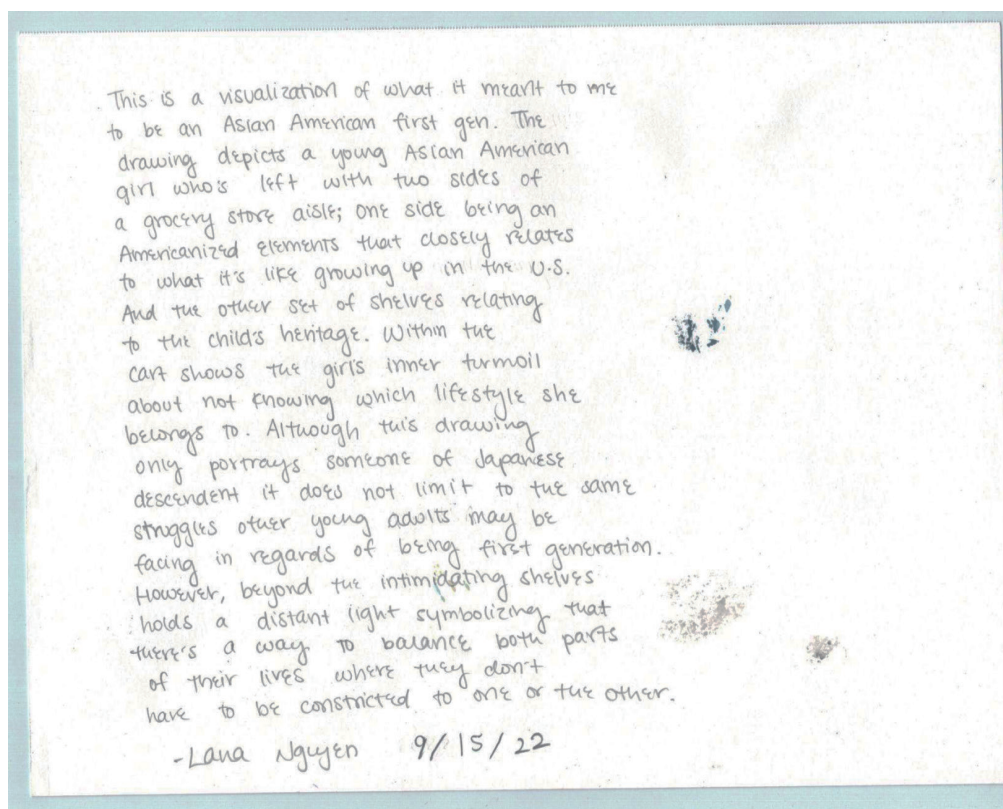


Figure 4. Artist statement by Lana Nguyen, September 22, 2022. Courtesy of author.

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In Search of Identity: Making and Understanding Art through Cultural Metacognition

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The Turks of today are citizens of the Turkish Republic. The name Turk is also used to describe the people in Türkiye who share the distinctive Turkish culture, especially the Turkish language, which all Turkish citizens do not speak, no more than all Americans speak English. Or a Turk can also mean a member of the great linguistic and cultural family of the Turks, a family that stretches from China to Europe, bound together by language and history. (McCarthy & McCarthy, 2003)

Geographically and culturally, Türkiye serves as a link between the East and the West. As a result, for many centuries, the inhabitants of Anatolia, the country's ancestral home, have had to contend with challenges relating to their cultural preferences and identities. Throughout history, different cultures were born and nurtured in Anatolia, the name given to Türkiye by its people. Anyone who studies Türkiye's cultural history will see right away that Anatolia gave birth to a great number of cultural traditions that continue to this day. The diverse population of Anatolia was aided by the region's rich history in developing arts and crafts practices that are distinctive to this region. Therefore, I had my fair share of those influences as an artist and art educator: multiplicity of meanings emerging from Sufi belief systems, references to the ancient Greek literature, middle eastern miniatures of the 15th century, and architectural impacts of several civilizations such as Urartu, Lydian, Carian, Roman-Byzantine civilizations and Ottoman empire.

As an immigrant artist and art educator, I made it my mission to create a constructive teaching and learning environment with immense attention given to topics related to pedagogy, inclusivity, effective use of technology, qualitative research, and globalization. I continued conducting scholarly research that dealt with the role of media in generating cultural stereotypes. Giving presentations and having exhibitions in international venues such as Canada, Japan, Portugal, South Korea, and the United Kingdom expanded the circle I have been building to reach out to a wider audience. Receiving invitations to become part of the world leaders' panel in Canada in 2019, representing the United States in "Art Education Across the Globe: INSEA and CSEA (Canadian Society for Education through Arts) Presidents' Panel" helped me set the parameters as an ever-evolving and contributing immigrant to the arts as I served as the president of United States Society for Education through Arts.

Exhibiting my work in various venues from art museums to galleries provided an opportunity for me to establish a connection with my audience about either finding or creating a common ground in regard to our differences in worldviews, customs, belief systems, diverse histories, and visual languages. Therefore, several of these solo exhibitions were titled "The Meeting Point" for the very same reason stated above. As an immigrant, providing an inclusive environment through my artwork meant to get the audience actively engaged in discussions following multitudes of issues

presented in the artwork. The main purpose of my artworks was to build a bridge between Eastern and Western cultures while dealing with concepts such as stigma, cultural stereotypes, and co-existence.

Being on a study abroad program for seven years in California and Arizona gave me first-hand experiences to adapt into a pluralistic society as I was a native of Turkiye. Having the opportunity to work overseas also gave me an enormous amount of experience dealing with a large number of students that came from a variety of diverse social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. In my teaching, I honored the freedom of expression and civility of discourse as fundamental educational cornerstones.

Different Pedagogies, Different Folks

Through the classroom projects and the research I have conducted, I was able to engage my students to express their opinions dealing with issues of diversity in a pluralistic society. My research interests and teaching philosophy deeply informed the way I dealt with issues related to diversity, coexistence, visual culture, and multiculturalism in the classroom. Visual culture has become one of the major topics in my classroom because the contemporary world of electronics and print media has become so prevalent. Students' interest in newer media such as computer games, apps, smart-electronic devices, and social media helped me transform my teaching strategies and the content of my courses. Because students are constantly involved in visual media, I took more responsibility as a professor to educate youth regarding the contemporary world in which they live.

Before further discussing the variety of pedagogies that I use in my teaching, I would like to give a working definition of what I mean by diversity: Diversity refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, various levels of abilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, geographic region, and more. I strive to reflect the heterogeneity of the United States and of the world community whose ideas and concerns I am deeply interested in. In the belief that the most important learning derives from the personal encounter and the joint work of teachers and students, I, as an art educator and an artist, encourage my students to participate in research, scholarship, and artistic endeavors that deal with issues related to diversity. Both in my teaching and scholarly research, I recognize the need to analyze and address the ways in which social, cultural, and economic inequalities and inequities affect power and privilege in the larger society (Newman, 2022).

Through several projects I developed for my students, I focused on how youth should act, look, and feel based on what they see in visual culture (Young, 2011). Very often in my classrooms, I emphasized how my students needed to be aware that they were the target of commercial and political influences. Visual arts were particularly persuasive in recognizing and deconstructing these influences in order to be better prepared as citizens and develop personal welfare. Through the use of semiotics and deconstruction, I focused on the impact of visual culture on my students to expand their horizon of what arts education meant by raising awareness of the visual environment, placing emphasis on the works of contemporary artists and designers who create much of the visual world in which we live today. Such an approach to teaching meant reviving my interest in student-centered pedagogies, helping prospective teachers to develop strong connections with their students' lives, and raising the general aesthetic level of the entire community (Barrett, 2007). Through multicultural projects, I always engaged students to discuss and understand how denotations and connotations worked to construct meaning out of artworks: denotations being literally what we see in a picture as opposed to connotations being what the words and images may imply or suggest by how they are shown (Barrett, 2002). Through a range of art projects and class discussions, I pushed my students to think from many angles and to grasp that an artwork's meaning can be socially constructed and assigned.

As both an immigrant and a globetrotter, I think that my students will benefit from having

various viewpoints, as they grow more empathetic toward one another. The idea that there is a body of great artworks that is universally recognized is debated and very frequently replaced by the idea that each age views art differently depending on its political and cultural concerns. The need to establish a wide range of viewpoints and the use of cultural metacognition enables my students to develop an inclusive environment in their future classrooms. When engaging with people from other cultural backgrounds, a person's cultural consciousness and awareness are referred to as their "cultural metacognition." It can be characterized as a mental process that seeks to create cross-cultural relationships based on trust that allow for productive partnerships. A higher-order cognitive activity known as "cultural metacognition" goes beyond the simple cognitive process of learning and understanding cultural knowledge (Sharma, 2019).

I believe that all art teachers should be involved with a variety of aesthetic content inspired by Western and non-Western civilizations. Determining the definitions within the aesthetic domain, meaning, and values of art and deciding how art should be approached are core issues of semiotics in my classroom where students challenge the notion that aesthetic values only exist as inherent qualities of the artwork. Postmodern notions about the construction of meaning can encourage students to place artworks in a very rich context (Jonathan, 1982). Deconstruction can raise a number of questions for art criticism:

1. Are there ever-conclusive meanings about artworks?
2. Will the meaning change with every viewer?
3. How are artworks assigned social meanings?

I employ the deconstruction theory in my instruction, which entails mentally disassembling or deconstructing a notion or text in order to identify and comprehend any underlying assumptions. I make sure the students are aware that deconstruction is a sort of analysis and reinterpretation at a higher level and does not imply destruction. The methodology I employ aims to empower the idea that meaning is formed by the spectator and, as such, exists exclusively as an intellectual construct for each individual through the development of pertinent projects and the assignment of tasks that call for role-playing. In order for students to develop a better understanding of an artwork and the context in which it exists, I focus on the following ideas that are pertinent to deconstructionism: a) more emphasis is placed on the spectator and the process of interpretation, both of which call for many points of view; b) the notion that true meaning of art is discovered by experts is not valid; c) interpretation is a creative endeavor, and finally; d) meaning exists as an intellectual construct and is individual.

I strongly believe that the justification, subject matter, curricula, and context are the four main areas under which characteristics of a well-rounded teaching practice can be classified: a) Justification: Teaching art aims to improve students' capacity for comprehending and appreciating works of art from various cultural contexts. This objective calls for an understanding of the theories and contexts of art as well as the capacity to both respond to and create art. The study of art should be a foundational part of general education; b) Subject matter: The subjects used to create the content for education include principally aesthetics, art criticism, art history, art production, and a wide range of other topics, such as folk, applied, and fine arts from Western and non-Western civilizations and from antiquity to the present; c) Curricula: Curricula should be written with sequentially organized and articulated content at all levels. Works of art should be central to the organization of curricula and to the integration of content from various disciplines; d) Context: Full implementation needs to be marked by systematic and regular art instruction on adequate resources. Appropriate evaluation criteria and procedures should not only confirm student achievement but also program effectiveness. The sample projects I discuss in the following section consider all aspects of a well-rounded curriculum and its implications.

Switching Styles

This chapter uses one such project, “Switching Styles,” as an example of my ongoing efforts to utilize cultural metacognition in the classroom. The project aims to give students an opportunity to re-interpret well-known artworks from various cultures by switching their mindsets and worldviews to have a better understanding of “the other.” The students explore possible stereotypes and discuss their responsibility to promote respect for diverse points of view. They are encouraged to discuss terms such as cultural identity, appreciation as opposed to appropriation, inclusivity, and acceptance to develop sympathy for beliefs and practices that are different than their own. The students chose two different artists who have two distinctly different styles of creating artwork. They are asked to choose two master artists or designers that represent two different cultural identities, worldviews, time periods, genders, or gender expressions. A sample list of artists and designs is provided though students have the freedom to propose two artists of their own choosing:

1. Chinese Watercolor Painting and American Abstract Expressionism
2. Middle East Miniature Painting and Futurism
3. Baroque Art and Cubism
4. Contemporary African-American Art and Renaissance Art

In this project, students are engaged in discussions to identify and address issues such as micro-aggressions and various approaches to distinguish cultural appropriation from appreciation based on sample scenarios. Before starting the project, the following questions are discussed in the classroom:

1. What role does the identity of the artist play in either creating or assigning artworks that won't be perceived as cultural appropriation?
2. What are the misunderstandings of cultural appropriation as opposed to cultural appreciation?
3. Can the term “cultural appropriation” set limits on the intellectual freedom and self-expression of an artist?

For example, art historians such as Jackson Rushing stated that Pollock was inspired by Indian sand painters who created temporary works of art as part of a religious ritual as well as the notion that art making is a spiritual process. Although Pollock witnessed Indian rituals as a child and historians later argued that such rituals played an important role in the development of his artistic process, he stated that his interest in Native Indian art was subconscious, as he did not deliberately draw upon American-Indian artistic process or subject matter to create his own identity as an artist. Through constructive exchange of ideas and views, students understand cultural appropriation occurs when members of a dominant culture borrow customs, attire, symbols, and language from a minority culture and use such aspects outside of their original context. When the employment of these elements goes against the wishes of those individuals from the original culture, controversy results. In this project, students discuss how to assign art projects that won't be seen as cultural appropriation and whether it is indeed feasible to distance oneself from cultural appropriation because the “seen meaning” by the audience in visual arts can take on many different forms. As an outcome of the postmodern movement in visual arts since the early 1980s, we, art educators, know now that the social and cultural contexts enable both artist and audience to determine what a work of art is. Given the right situation and theory, anything can be art and anyone can be an artist. As George Dickie stated, an art object like “Brillo Boxes” was perceived as art if accepted by museums and gallery directors and purchased by art collectors (Freeland, 2002). This project is charged with the idea of how an artwork can be defined and executed differently by artists from different cultural backgrounds and time periods.

The biggest dilemma among students in this project is about how we can build connections when some of our inspirations can be labeled as cultural appropriation as opposed to cultural appreciation. Another common point of discussion for students is to determine how they consider certain artists that give cultural references as collaborators rather than appropriators. Students differentiate

an appropriator from a collaborator based on if an artist exhibits disregard toward a relevant culture or its members by using specific imagery or ideas without permission. Finding or building a common ground as an immigrant has been one of the main missions of my life as we often advocate and cherish our differences while rarely appreciating our similarities.

War Through Magazine Covers

Another project I developed to get the maximum involvement of my students in employing metacognition to discuss and understand cultural stereotypes is titled “War Through Magazine Covers.” The purpose of this particular project is to use cultural metacognition through reflective thinking about intercultural interactions to provide opportunities for successful cross-cultural creative collaborations as well as cultural appreciation. Such an approach in cultural metacognition requires the students to become active investigators rather than passive learners. This project focuses on the fact that understanding and appreciating a cultural identity that is different from our own is a vital experience for becoming strong advocates and practitioners in art education.

In this project, students examined and analyzed the magazine covers on war and terrorism through the use of semiotics. They also were asked to explore how images and words could be transmitted into creating meanings that reflect cultural differences as well as developing stereotypes. The project consists of two parts. The first part required students to analyze magazine covers that dealt with war and terrorism. Definitions of the keywords in this project were culture, nation, coexistence, and stereotype. Surveys were given to the participants who were art education majors at the undergraduate level. Classroom discussions and hands-on projects followed the surveys. Feldman’s method of art criticism was used in this study: description, analysis, interpretation, and informed preference. First, five magazine covers were projected without the text. Students were not given any prior information on what covers to be projected. Participants answered a set of questions. Second, the same magazine covers were projected with the text. Participants answered a second set of questions. I played the role of a facilitator to guide the student discussions. Students turned in their anonymous written answers to the following questions after viewing magazine covers without the text:

1. Describe what you see on the cover?
2. What do those images/symbols mean to you?
3. Is there evidence that the images/symbols on the cover have cultural connotations?

After projecting the magazine covers with the original text, students had to answer the following questions in an anonymous written format:

1. Describe how the text changes the meaning of the images and symbols?
2. Is there evidence that the text on the cover has cultural connotations?
3. What does the text along with the images and symbols on the cover communicate to you?

Students were encouraged and engaged in discussions after completing the surveys about their interpretations of the possible underlying messages in those magazine covers. Discussions focused on what possible cultural stereotypes may have been created through the covers of popular news magazines. The majority of discussions emphasized how some of the stereotypes were created intentionally by news media coverage while misinforming the public about particular countries and their people. Viewing the results of their own survey and discussing key elements of what constitutes a stereotype was eye-opening for my students. The second part of the project asked students to create their magazine covers based on a specific topic of their choice in regard to cultural stereotypes. Participating students were asked to create their own magazine covers on war, armed conflict, terrorism, and/or cultural stereotypes. They used collage mixed with painting. They were free to use any images they wished to communicate their ideas.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The participants of the project, “War Through Magazine Covers,” learned to build aware-

ness of how media can create cultural stereotypes and to welcome acceptance for diverse groups of different belief systems, lifestyles, and customs while acknowledging external and internal personal assets for bridging the gap between different ethnic groups. Higher education can be instrumental in increasing awareness and sensitivity toward images and representations of minority and ethnic groups and can influence levels of inclusivity that students display and convey to the public if we can use our own experiences and perspectives as part of a wider spectrum of ideas we teach in classrooms.

Developing a well-rounded knowledge and set of skills in regard to cross-cultural competence is a necessary challenge as it helps us to identify, not only our own prejudices and biases towards BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), but also to create equitable environments for underprivileged people in our classrooms and communities. Recent changes in the very fabric of our society due to a major pandemic and social injustice will eventually pave the road for a more inclusive world. Social and cultural contexts enable both artists and audiences to determine what art is. Given the right situation and theory, any act, idea, or object can be perceived as art. However, controversy emerges when such usage of these elements is against the wishes of members of the originating culture because of misrepresentations of their values by reinforcing harmful stereotypes.

This chapter aimed to shed light on the following post-modern assumptions such as how certain groups in any society are privileged over others and all thought is mediated by power relations. Another assumption is that some education practices tend to reinforce systems of race, class, and gender discrimination.

The recommended solution to the issues stated in this chapter is to encourage both practicing and prospective art teachers to develop their abilities to understand and appreciate art from various cultures of the world. Such an approach needs to be advocated and implemented with the intent to provide ethnic and artistic role models and exemplars as a connection between students' diverse backgrounds and that of the dominant culture. I believe it is possible for art educators and prospective students to develop inclusive excellence through developing a wide variety of teaching materials and relevant activities and using a wide range of teaching strategies to promote cross-cultural understanding by identifying differences and similarities within and amongst cultural groups. Classes, as part of general education, should aim to develop confident students who are comfortable and familiar with major aspects of the disciplines of art, who are able to express ideas with art media, who read about art and criticize art, who are aware of art history, and who have a basic understanding of issues in aesthetics.

The content in art courses should be driven from a broad range of the visual arts, including folk, applied, and fine arts from Western and non-Western cultures and from ancient to contemporary times. For a better selection of artworks, we may want to ask the following questions in the determination of contents that are worthy of study in classrooms: a) In what ways is this subject matter significant to an organized field of knowledge? b) What can be done to make this subject matter interesting to the learner? c) In what ways does this subject matter contribute to the growth and development of a democratic society? Although these questions do not cover all considerations, they may be helpful for an inclusive content selection. Students should not only encounter works of art from various cultures, but also learn how these works relate to the societies, belief systems, traditions, worldviews, and technologies making up the contexts in which they were produced. Analysis of a wide selection of artworks may provide access to many concepts that are fundamental to understanding art in a broader context.

Students need to emerge with an integrated view of the visual arts based on learning experiences offered in their classrooms. Integrating ideas can be used to build connections with other disciplines. A variety of social and cultural conditions, for example, can be considered in order to understand specific artworks through metacognition.

In order to evaluate student progress and the efficacy of the teacher in art classes, relevant evaluation criteria and processes must be devised, stated, and then put into use. The educational objectives of such an approach should emphasize learning art using differentiated teaching, as this is

crucial for gauging students' progress and program performance. Art teachers and educators would not be able to assess the quality of student advancement in relation to the efficacy of their instruction without such criteria and procedures. The outcomes of all learning activities and the processes need to be evaluated since they yield information on how well students are learning. To obtain data for assessing student progress, a variety of assessment instruments can be employed, including portfolio reviews, questionnaires, interviews with students, instructors, administrators, tests, and checklists.

In order to reach excellence, inclusivity should be a key component of any effective teaching and learning environment. The ability of an institution to carry out its academic mission can be improved by inclusivity. With the goal of preparing students for participation in a society that is becoming more complicated and pluralistic, inclusivity attempts to extend and deepen both the educational experience and the intellectual environment are critical. The process of putting forward and testing ideas via clear and respectful communication can be modeled by the pluralistic learning and teaching environment. By effectively utilizing the talents and abilities of every student to engage with creativity and to establish their future leadership, they need to develop educational excellence that truly integrates inclusivity that foster respect between individuals.

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Respectfulness in Diverse Identities: Learning Through Art, Experience, and Self-reflection

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Introduction

I spent the first 30 years of my life in Korea, where I received my education and grew up. For the past 10 years, I have been living primarily in the USA and Morocco as a mother and as an artist. More recently, I have embarked on a new journey of studying as an art researcher at Penn State University. Throughout my life, I have had a varied range of experiences, including teaching elementary students, working at a gallery and museum, and creating artwork. These experiences of being conscious of the stimulation between self and the external world, combined with my identity as a middle-aged Korean woman and a foreigner living in the USA, have greatly influenced my personal teaching philosophy, research interests, and the themes that I explore in my artworks.

As an artist, I explore deflected prejudices, shaped perspectives, and new perceptions in my inner world constructed by facing interactions with the external world. I reconstruct my inner world as a way of reflecting on these perceptions. As an educator and researcher, I focus on how authoritarianism, capitalism, and social structure can be challenged to enhance students' voices and engagement as creative agents in their active learning and definers of their own identities.

Personal experiences

I have grown up in diverse circumstances, occupying various positions and geopolitical locations as a woman, Asian, daughter, student, worker, mother, and educator in unique cultures, including Korea, the USA, Morocco, and several other countries. Through these experiences in dynamic dimensions of diverse circumstances, I have come to realize that not only race, gender, age, culture, and power positions but also the norms of mainstream and internalized hegemony are the fuses to create identity construction, which is a way of thinking and learning that influences behavior, attitude, lifestyle, and many other factors.

Throughout my experiences in the public schools of Korea and the U.S. and international schools in Morocco, I noticed similarities in the institutionalized system of curriculum-based art education, systematic power hierarchy in structure and relations, and national histories of colonized and colonizer relations. My personal perspective on these educational systems, structures, and power hierarchy was not just influenced by my intersecting identities, but rather by considering power relations from social, cultural, political, symbolic, and economic views included.

Through the lens of critical theory in oppression and microaggression, which refers to the power of institutional and structural discrimination (Sue et al. 2019), particularly as connected to power relations, my experiences provide strong examples to consider the institutionalized power of a dominant group's ideology as a moving territory and how it affects an educator's power position, environment, and students' learning.

Korea

Korean culture creates many unique circumstances of oppression such as androcentrism, rankism, ageism, a system of corporal punishment, appearance supremacy, meritocracy, and conservatism. In my experiences from a young age, I have also been inherently building up a distorted identity and personal lens through which to see the world. Even though I had lived to accept this cultural role and vulnerable position, I always felt something wrong and unfair about the dominant society's view and projection of its expected role toward me. However, I wasn't brave enough to have my voice with the excuse of my position related to my social roles and uncertainty about my thought affected by culture and environment that only valued and welcomed a person who followed the dominant flow. Speaking out often resulted in being labeled as picky, wild, violent, rebellious, high-tempered, and too sensitive, which made it more difficult to express myself. Twenty-five years ago, I was even considered an overreacting feminist and pessimist.

I specifically had intense experiences with a student-teacher relationship from a young age which was characterized by the dominant system of highly memorization-oriented, one-directional, skill- and techniques-based, and predetermined-result education. Concerning art, we functioned within a highly Westernized teaching approach, including materials, curriculum, perspectives, and evaluation standards. We even learned about artists and artworks that the Western perspectives acknowledged as mainstream and occupying a high level of civilization. Historically, Korea was invaded by many countries and even accepted the Western culture as a high-quality civilization through missionaries during the period of being recognized as a developing country after several wars. I often wondered whether the schools and colleges in the USA learn about famous Korean artists and whether the USA recognizes the Korean famous artist at the same level as famous Western artists. It affected my whole life-learning paradigm, and creating my own story was a challenge when I went to college to become an artist, where I struggled to break free from predetermined patterns of thinking and creating. For several years of predetermined training in elementary, middle, and high school, I had never thought of independently creating something. I realized that it was not only my problem, but rather a problem of what I was exposed to and how I experienced a pattern of world, society, education, and ideology.

What I was witnessing as an art student was something that I have continually experienced in another way since I became an art educator and which I still continue to see. I have had experience working with children and counseling parents in a private art research and education facility. Working with students and parents gave me a chance to observe and explore several cases of relational phenomena and the effects of interactions. There were two types of parents and students. On one hand, some parents came to this facility to improve their children's creativity and self-directed learning by considering their identity for cultivating their cognition, confidence, and problem-solving skills, having the pleasure of creation, and finding and enhancing their capability. On the other hand, parents came to this facility to develop their child's drawing and technical skills to follow the school curriculum well and not fall behind in art class at the school. Those children showed very different patterns of interaction and behavior during the artmaking process in and after class. The first type of child liked to express their thoughts and initiatives while interacting with materials and environment without a teacher's direct direction and intervention. They also happily and spontaneously planned the next class by themselves. The second type was passive and did not know what to do or what they wanted to do. They waited for the teacher's directions. It took at least a month and sometimes up to three months to break out of this paradigm for elementary students.

At this point, I raised the question, "Why are their learning patterns different?" From my experiences in this art research and education facility, the students not only became influenced by education in the school curriculum but also by their parents. In Korea, the school is the center and source of education for children, and because of this, private art facilities exist to make students follow the public school curriculum. This phenomenon is perpetuated by "systemic forces in education that diminish opportunities for meaningful professional development" (Ploof & Hochtritt, 2018, p. 38), constraining parents' perceptions and ultimately shaping and affecting construction of students'

learning paradigms.

This dimension of constructed identity in intersectionality reveals the importance of exploring students' positionality, the consequences of teachers' teaching controlling students' learning, and the range of alternative possibilities in the process of creating art. Art education should promote liberty, equitable expression of diverse perspectives, and the recognition of individual capabilities and identities. By pursuing these ideals, students can break free from rigid teaching approaches, oppressive structures, and dominant ways of thinking, ultimately becoming independent and reflective learners.

The US

The institutional power structure in the U.S. meant that schools were started by settler colonizers who excluded and eliminated indigenous peoples' culture, life, and property under the name of the perspective that indigeneity is inferior, primitive, and needs to be civilized. Through these rationalizations and justifications, White/Western settler colonization has built up an empire within the area of land, economics, education, law, politics, culture, and so on (Grande, 2018; Rury, 2012; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2013). Grande (2018) discusses the structures and processes of settler colonialism reinforced through the spectacle of how they rationalize and justify historical knowledge, symbolic privilege, and the axis of oppression of indigenous peoples under the name of democracy and neoliberalism.

Even though the time since those beginnings has changed, I saw this first-hand when I worked as an assistant teacher at various elementary schools: all the art teachers were White women, and the teaching environment was very much curriculum-based and teacher-oriented as I had learned through reading art education history. Even though the art teachers are graduates of not only art college but also art education majors, they were still simulating and following the traditional standard school's curriculum. Sue et al. (2019) mention "the ideology of white supremacy that justifies policies, practices, and structure which result in social arrangements of subordination for groups of color through the power and white privilege" (p.130).

As bell hooks (1994) states, the "learning process is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students" (p. 13). It is rather more about the development process of integration of one's actions, cognition, experiences, and interactions, controlling one's reflection and expression, and constructing one's knowledge as an independent learner. In order to achieve this, individuals need to be aware of the perspectives of the identity formation cycle to become healthy, independent learners.

In one particular classroom experience, I observed how the teacher showed students a sample of what they were going to draw and simulated how to draw it. Then, every student mimicked the image in the same steps. Looking at the result, I couldn't distinguish between individual artworks because all the pictures were the same as if they had been printed. Working to create a space where all students feel seen, heard, and valued, the structures and processes of settler colonialism, White supremacy, and dominated teacher and learning paradigm must be recognized and challenged in order to create a more equitable and just educational system for valuing diverse cultures and experiences.

Morocco

Historically, Morocco was colonized by France from 1912 to 1956 and is a king-ruled state, therefore those power relations and effects are still ongoing. I experienced a Westernized teaching approach, structure, dominant ideology, and people's internalized power relations during my time in diverse circumstances in Morocco. In particular, the intersectional circumstances of culture, society, and politics at the international school in Morocco had diverse power hierarchies based on

gender, race, religion, and age. Even between the same gender, microaggressions were prevalent because of the internalized ideology of dominant, universal, and objective knowledge from society. In the school environment, I noticed students continually experience those invisible dynamics unconsciously, which are then internalized and constructed, and they will reproduce the distorted and unbalanced identity and view of the world.

During my time at the international school, I observed that the highest-dominant group in internalized consciousness was the White group from the West. All the teachers and the principal were White and from the U.S. and England, and I personally experienced discrimination when I was replaced by a White English man without a college degree and made an assistant, even though I was hired as an art teacher through the official route. The principal who held the top position in the hierarchy favored him over me due to his personal relation, social and cultural position within the Moroccan community. Despite these challenges, I had an opportunity to observe and learn how the administrator used power inequity and how this teacher affected students' learning experiences, knowledge construction, and mental health.

For instance, in one activity around drawing family, focusing specifically on the father and mother, the teacher instructed the student to take turns and draw on the next person's work to make a cycle, but one student expressed anger by drawing violent images (knives in parent's hand with blood) on every other student's drawing when it turned to him. When other kids had their turn drawing, some of the girls started to cry and scream. The class went into chaos all of a sudden, but instead of productively mediating, the teacher started to instruct the students to divide the colors into bad and good and link their associations to either mother or father. From this, I couldn't figure out what the teacher wanted to teach and what he wanted his student to learn. I also observed that the teacher failed to consider each student's identity and status when designing the curriculum, which made it unsuitable for some students and for group projects. Through this experience, I witnessed how the skewed power hierarchies at play in this institution operated and profoundly affected teaching, learning, and the overall school environment.

Practices As an artist

My experiences within interaction sparked me to explore these social prejudices, constructed perspectives, dominant norms, and reproduced perceptions at the societal, community, and finally individual levels. My artworks (See Figures 1 and 2) reflect these experiences and concepts, incorporating self-reflection, layers of consciousness, and the detection of distorted lenses constructed by experiences and challenging these social lenses.

I am working on drawing a 'mirror project' using a real picture and retouching through Photoshop. I focused on the visual coalition between reality and consciousness, rethinking the barriers, and conversing about perspectives on both sides of the barriers. In this series, the mirror is a significant metaphor (i.e., medium and object), representing the infinite world of imagination and the conscious mind. I have incorporated mirrors into my artworks to express the invisible world that exists beyond appearances and to highlight the ways in which our perspectives are shaped by the barriers we encounter.

For me, the mirror is not just an object that reflects our physical appearance; it also represents the invisible identity that exists beyond what we can see. By using mirrors as a metaphor I hope to challenge our perceptions and encourage viewers to see beyond the barriers that often separated us from one another. Through my art, I aim to create a space for dialogue and reflection, encouraging viewers to explore the complex layers of consciousness that shape our perceptions of the world.



Figure 1. 2021 *Photography & Photoshop Series of Perceived Identity*. Courtesy of author.



Figure 2. 2022 *Photography & Photoshop Series of Perceived Identity*. Courtesy of author.

As an art educator and researcher

I believe that an individual's identity, perception, and exploration of the world are constructed through their experiences and interactions with external stimuli and people, especially from an early age to adolescence. Therefore, my teaching strategies explore how to embrace and include their diverse identities for enhancing the awareness of diversity and balance inequity and injustice in the classroom. I encourage students to first explore themselves and develop a balanced intersectional lens to see the world without distorted, internalized, or dominated ideology perspectives. This helps to achieve self-initiated learning and experience the frequency of positive feedback about identity to improve agency, identity formation, and active learning cycle.

At this point, I would like to discuss how and what instructions and curricula can be applied with considering students' mental and emotional development, self-expression, and identification

and what ability the teacher needs to develop for supporting students in this way. I have been thinking about the importance of how challenging authoritarianism and capitalism, as well as educating teachers on collaborative assessment, could be a key factor to elicit students' identity, enhance students' voices, and engage them as creative agents in their active learning. This view can be developed by exploring students' and teachers' positionalities, the consequences of teachers' instruction on students' learning, and the range of alternative possibilities in the process of creating art.

bell hooks (1994) discussed the matters of dictatorship, authorization, the well-being of mind, soul, and body and the value of a voice in the classroom through engaged pedagogy. According to this model, teachers and students need to escape from a rigid teaching approach, oppressive structure, passive learning style, and dominant ways of thinking. Rather, teachers and students need to pursue liberty, the equitable right to express their thoughts, recognition of diversity in creation through art education, and the realization of one's capability, which is the ability to develop, regulate, reflect, and be independent by oneself.

Reflecting on my experience teaching first-grade students in Morocco, I realized the importance of flexibility in the curriculum to allow for individualized learning experiences. For example, Figure 3 shows how I encouraged students to make 3-dimensional space and create their own space. However, one of the students kept using materials in ways that were not related to my direction but also without disrupting the class. I sometimes hesitated to stop him and bring him back to my curriculum, but I allowed him to explore his own ideas, thought that he might have some reason, and didn't want to force him to do what I wanted him to do. This student wanted single pieces of paper to make the wall even by himself. Making the wall even was more important to him than going to the next step of the instruction along with the rest of the class that I wanted. At the end of the class, he came to me with excitement that he did it by himself, even though he hadn't followed the instructions. This satisfaction and confidence are rooted inside him rather than perceived from my teaching. I thought that he knew what he wanted; his goals were not to disrupt the rest of the class, but he just wanted to solve the problem by himself, how to maintain his patience, and willpower for his own learning. I think that he was learning every moment in his own way; he might have wanted to accomplish the task by himself and to be on the route of his own development. At the end of the semester, I also had a conversation with his father, and I heard that he had been having a hard time adjusting to the prejudicial view of the teachers (as if he had OCD), which caused him to have difficulty performing the school tasks. Through this experience, I observed that the teachers' timely judgment and adaptability with risk-taking, which listens to and focuses on students' needs, intersect identities, and voices, can be an alternative way of approach to art education.

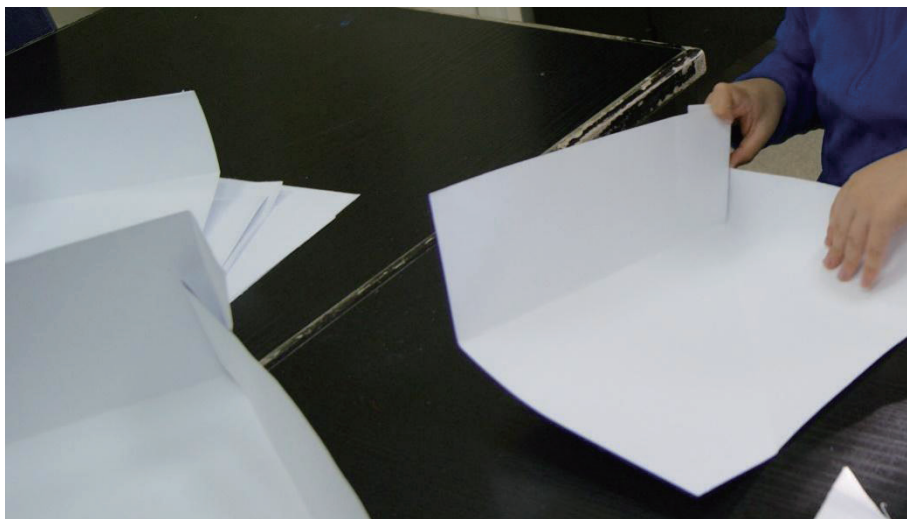


Figure 3. *3-dimensional space creation.* Courtesy of author.

The other moment that I realized the importance of curriculum flexibility by a teacher was after experiencing an awareness of students' visible disturbances and difficulties. One student struggled in the process of depicting from observation of real objects the students had made. So, in the next class, I changed the curriculum to shadow practicing to enhance their observation skill. The student's first depiction wasn't able to draw the curve of the animal's tail, but after practicing, the student became able to draw the curve of it. Through this experience, as a teacher, I realized that the ability to catch students' potential and challenges related to their diverse dimensional identity in a moment is significant for their proper development in art education.

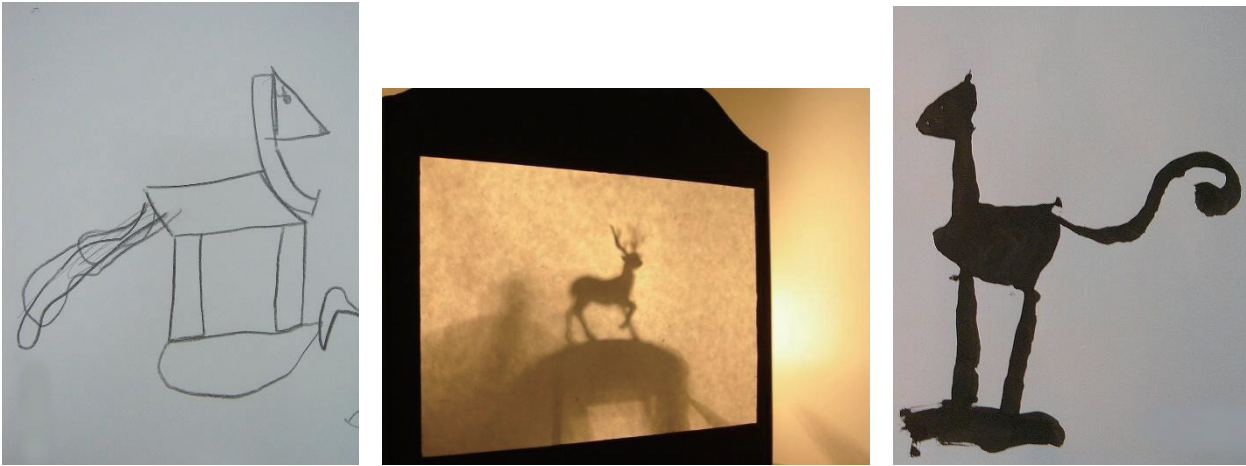


Figure 4. *Observation drawing practice -> Shadow practicing.* Courtesy of author.

Conclusion

Art, as self-expression, is a creation where, like identity, there is no one answer and standard that we must follow. A standard perspective might build barriers and prejudices for students and make students hesitant to create their own expressions since they know that there are certain rules and structures that they must follow. It can limit an individual's autonomy, including their imagination, pure emotion, perspective, creativity, and thinking rooted in their identity. According to Bell (1997), social justice is the concept of fair and equitable opportunities physically and psychologically for personal activity, and it is closely related to the power paradigm and oppression. Historically, social justice has been studied in close relation to autonomy, positionality, and the pedagogy of the oppressed. As educators, we must be aware of positionality and power and strive to give students the space and autonomy to explore their creativity within their own control zone. This can be a crucial step toward creating a healthy and balanced environment.

Through my personal experiences and teaching practices, I have come to understand the importance of improving the approach to students' art-making and validating the significance of their unique voices based on their identity in their creative expression. As Freire (1970) notes, oppressors need to recognize their own status in order not to fall into the trap of dogmatic education. I believe that by rethinking the relationship between social, cultural, and political ideology and teaching practices, we can enhance students' learning environments and facilitate their development as artists and critical thinkers.

In conclusion, by recognizing the authority and ability of students in decision-making, educators can transform the art education curriculum and perspective towards art creation. This collaborative approach empowers students to build their own learning experiences and embrace their critical identities in the art-making process.

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“Daddy is the First”: The Intersection of Guilt and Happiness as a Doctoral Student Mother

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Introduction: Where is Mommy in your Drawing?

It was a late Saturday morning when my four-year-old daughter, J, was drawing a picture. Markers and papers surrounded her small play table and the living room floor. While lying on the couch, wrestling with fatigue due to recent sleepless nights, I asked her what she was drawing. She shortly answered in Korean, “people.” Since she had just started to figure out how to draw people a couple of weeks before, I suddenly became curious about her drawing and came nearer to her table. When I pointed to several figures and asked her, “Who are they?” she proudly answered, “Here, daddy is the first, and me, J, is here. You know what? This big one is Ms. E!” Hearing the name of her favorite pre-K class teacher, I cut her off and hastily asked her, “Then where is mommy?” She then pointed out the small head of a figure and said, “This is you, mommy! Oh, I have to finish drawing A.” Even before finishing drawing my body, she shifted her attention to the edge of the paper to finish the sketch of her best friend. I was the third person she mentioned, prioritized after her favorite teacher in the drawing. I was disappointed but not surprised since we, my family, all know that J is a papa’s girl who spends most of her time with her stay-at-home dad. However, a host of ‘should’ questions simultaneously arose in my mind: should I feel sad that I was only ranked higher than her best friend? Should I feel guilt or shame that I was not the type of mom who would be the first person she drew? Preoccupied with these questions, I could not process or understand my emotions. Instead, I simply stared at my head in the painting, floating alone (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. My daughter J’s drawing (2022). Courtesy of author.

In the last decade, the field of art education has seen a rise in scholarship dedicated to exploring the experience of motherhood among educators (Poling et al., 2012; Springgay & Freedman, 2012; Trafi-Prats, 2018). Scholars have illuminated latent narratives of motherhood and further criticized how visual culture represents a narrow definition of motherhood that is based on an idealized, White, cis-heterosexual, able-bodied consumerist model (Eisenhauer, 2010; Keifer-Boyd & Smith-Shank, 2009; Richmond, 2011). However, the perspective of graduate student mothers, particularly East Asian doctoral student mothers, and their interstitial relationship with cross-cultural definitions of motherhood, is still scarce in the literature. Graduate student mothers in U.S. society frequently experience high levels of stress due to their multiple roles. They often feel guilty and ashamed about not being able to devote an enormous amount of physical, emotional, and economic resources to childcare (Brown & Watson, 2010; Prikhidko & Haynes, 2018). As illustrated by my brief account, my everyday life as a South Korean doctoral student mother is closely intertwined with a multitude of emotions, such as guilt, shame, and self-doubt about not being my daughter's primary caregiver and failing to achieve a work-family balance.

In this chapter, I aim to critically interrogate the rhetoric of work-family balance for women, as well as stereotypes surrounding East Asian doctoral student motherhood in both U.S. and South Korean societies. Connecting feminist researcher Catherine Rottenberg's (2014) criticism of women's "felicitous work-family balance" to my own struggle, I further interrogate how the work-family balance myth has pressured doctoral student mothers into seeking this impossible standard of "balance"—and then feeling guilty for being unable to achieve it (p. 146). Additionally, by examining the stereotypes of tiger mother and wise mother/good wife, this chapter will demonstrate how the gendered, racial stereotypes about East Asian doctoral student mothers affect my cross-cultural lived experiences in both the U.S. and South Korea.

Resisting such stereotypes, I redefine motherhood as becoming-un/balanced, an ongoing negotiation with various duties as I (and other doctoral student mothers) develop an idiosyncratic, unique maternal subjectivity. Artist Annie Hsiao-Ching Wang's artwork series *The Mother as a Creator* (2001-2020) helps to substantiate and visualize such a definition of motherhood. I then reconsider children's family drawings as a source of feminist knowledge, challenging the prevalent use of such drawings as a means of evaluating mothering or familial relationships. Through an exploration of my intersectional identity, this chapter ultimately proposes that doctoral student mothers should dismantle the idealized work-family balance framework, as well as stereotypes of racialized motherhood, through art teaching practices. By critiquing stereotypical maternal images in visual culture, and highlighting maternal counter-narratives, art educators can work toward discovering alternative motherhoods alongside our students.

The Neoliberal Fairytale: Superwomen and Work-Family Balance

In contemporary neoliberal U.S. and South Korean societies, women's work-family balance has been defined as a set of universally assigned tasks for working mothers who want to succeed in both the professional and familial aspects of their lives (Brown et al., 2021; Cho et al., 2015; Rottenberg, 2014; Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). *Superwomen* (i.e., women who are both good marital partners and mothers, as well as successful professionals) have been depicted as examples of a liberal feminist solution to the inequality that women encounter in their workplace. According to the feminist scholar Rottenberg (2014), such superwomen strive to achieve a "happy equilibrium" between their professional and family lives (p. 152). Rottenberg critically notes that this idealization of "felicitous work-family balance" is a neoliberal capitalist fairytale that is, in fact, highly unattainable in the real world (p. 146). She also argues that such a myth of work-family balance often places working mothers into a never-ending trap of self-improvement, since women are often made to believe that their "failure" to achieve work-life balance results from a personal choice to neglect one of their duties, rather than from systemic inequality and lack of care networks. This myth of the superwoman can then lead to substantial feelings of

anxiety and guilt, as working mothers blame themselves for their perceived failure to achieve and manage an ideally happy, “well-rounded life” (p. 158).

Rottenberg’s (2014) assertion is based on feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed’s (2010) criticism that “happiness” as a positive affect works in a neoliberal society as a “social good” that justifies certain ways of living as desirable (p. 572). In particular, the normative ideal of work-life balance often represented as a White, middle-class style of the good life, pressures all women to pursue it as the sole route to achieving happiness (Ahmed, 2010; Rottenberg, 2014). The pervasive notion of work-family balance, in this context, further reinscribes normative White, middle-class motherhood within the cis-heterosexual nuclear family as the only desirable form of motherhood (Rottenberg, 2014). Paradoxically, striving for such an ideal forces women to exert a Herculean effort in creating work-life balance. This pursuit of balance also situates women in a gendered division of labor within their family structure, consequently impeding them from imagining alternative social and spatial relationships within family and work settings (Rottenberg, 2019).

While I have shown how the neoliberal *superwoman* is an unrealistic expectation that traps women in burdensome domestic and professional responsibilities, I now turn to evaluate how the social obligation of the happy work-family balance affects my own life as a mother and doctoral student in art education. Drawing from Rottenberg’s (2014) and Ahmed’s (2010) criticisms, I further connect feelings of guilt and shame about my own motherhood and work-family *imbalance*. In the following section, I argue, based on my personal struggle, that the enforced neoliberal ideal of work-life balance can potentially harm the mental health of doctoral student mothers, particularly when they strive for perfection in both their academic work and their roles as mothers.

Bad Mother: Work-Life Imbalance as a South Korean Doctoral Student Mother

I am a South Korean doctoral student mother who studies and teaches Art Education and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at a White-dominant university in Pennsylvania, United States. Although I first started my journey in the U.S. to support my husband’s studies several years ago, my husband and I changed roles as I began to work and study for my career in higher education. Accordingly, my husband became a stay-at-home dad who handles much of the domestic labor in our household. My family thus does not align with the traditional gender roles inherent in both South Korean and U.S. societies. The idea of being a doctoral student and mother at once, with a stay-at-home husband, is somewhat rare in the U.S.; this combination is even rarer still in many South Korean communities, due to more stringent gender roles in the country (Lee, 2017). None of my South Korean doctoral student friends have stay-at-home husbands—but I have seen many opposite cases in which a woman quits her job, moves abroad, and becomes a stay-at-home wife to support her husband’s studies or career, as I did earlier for my husband. While the South Korean government has significantly expanded parental leave policies for both genders in recent years, the inflexible work environments and the prevailing male-breadwinner model often pose challenges, making it difficult for South Korean women to effectively utilize these policies and maintain their employment (Oh & Mun, 2022). Due to the widespread assumption in South Korea that women are responsible for household labor and childcare, women frequently relinquish their careers in favor of supporting their families (Lee, 2012). Furthermore, as their partners pursue their own careers and due to a lack of support systems within their educational institutions, many of my friends and relatives, who are also South Korean doctoral student mothers, have faced the difficult decision of either living apart from their children or discontinuing their studies. Even if they continue their academic journey in higher education institutions in the U.S. and Eurocentric societies, they often end up sending their children back to South Korea so that other family members can care for them. As a fellow mother experiencing a similar dearth of support networks, I empathize with these challenges—but I also carry a certain amount of guilt. Compared to my colleagues, I experience a relative amount of privilege, with a supportive partner who enables me to focus on my career in higher education while keeping my family close.

Despite my relative privilege, I still encounter some challenges under the dominant ideology of work-family balance. In both U.S. and South Korean contexts, I have found that my pursuit of doctoral studies has often been interpreted as a selfish decision that takes advantage of my husband's career sacrifice. My husband and I never agree with such misunderstandings. As a feminist educator, I am proud that our family is constructing new democratic gender roles. Sometimes, however, I face a strong inner pressure to prove myself as a superwoman to avoid further criticism or guilty feelings about being a busy, *bad* mother. To pursue both academic success and mothering, I have had to sacrifice my well-being, hobbies, and personal relationships outside my family. As an international student with no prior experience studying in the U.S., I have sacrificed many nights of sleep to keep up with coursework assignments, conference participation, and teaching responsibilities. Additionally, I wake up early each morning to play with my child and ensure that she maintains her Korean language skills while she learns English at her pre-K school.

For a couple of semesters, I was under the impression that I had achieved a great equilibrium between my work and family. However, the realization soon dawned on me that I had overlooked an essential factor: my own self. The stark reality of my burnout, a state wherein I had lost touch with my emotions and was devoid of joy, sadness, or even anger, made me confront this oversight. Despite the rosy promises of happiness and fulfillment that I believed would come with achieving a healthy work-life balance, I found myself merely going through the motions, feeling nothing. Whether I was with my family or not, I felt neither fully awake nor fully asleep. Only later did I recognize that this mental state, a consequence of societal pressures, is a common issue among many East Asian international doctoral student mothers (Koo & Nyunt, 2022). By the end of my third semester, I finally decided to give up attaining a work-family balance. I put my mothering duties aside temporarily, and my husband took on more childcare responsibilities. Making such a painful decision generated a windfall of self-blame, as I grappled with the notion that I had failed to maintain the equilibrium that only a superwoman could accomplish. Had I, in fact, become a *bad* mother?

After a few weeks, some of the numbness lifted as I regained parts of myself as my husband graciously stepped in to shoulder many of my roles. I found myself catching up on early morning sleep, a change from my routine of playtime with my daughter. I filled up my days with exercise routines and walks, a significant shift from my previous responsibilities of cooking and helping my daughter in her journey to sleep. Gradually, my daughter adapted to this change, too: she has become a papa's girl, who is more attached to her father and draws her mother as a small, distant head in her artwork. Even though my decision was an inevitable result of surviving in higher education with very little support, feelings of guilt and shame linger for me. In the current neoliberal fabric, the work-family imbalance was my only choice.

Between a Tiger Mother and a Wise Mother and Good Wife

Upon reflecting on my struggles, I realized that the idealized work-family balance described by Rottenberg (2014) was not my only challenge. My struggle, in fact, had several more layers, interwoven with cross-cultural conflicts surrounding the concept of ideal motherhood (particularly given my intersectional identities). In particular, I came to understand how the stereotypes of *tiger mother* and *wise mother and good wife* have slyly enveloped me, throughout my life. The idealization of East Asian motherhood is closely related to racial-colonial stereotypes within dominant narratives of good childrearing (Hamilton, 2021; Lo, 2014; Matoo, 2022). As such, the stereotypes placed on me are based on the racial, gender, and occupational stereotypes about my South Korean cis-heterosexual female motherhood. Although Rottenberg (2014) argues that women of color may experience more tension under the framework of work-family balance due to racism and sexism, she does not further explore women of color's experiences. Thus, in this section, I examine how racialized cross-cultural gender stereotypes cause East Asian mothers to negotiate between multiple identities in a way that Rottenberg's framework fails to capture.

Tiger Mother

In current U.S. society, East Asian American women's parenting has been stereotyped as that of a tiger mother. Based on Amy Chua's (2011) book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, tiger mothering refers to a strict, micro-managing parenting style that prioritizes children's academic achievement and success. This notion of the tiger mother parenting style entails pervasive stereotypes of ultra-competitive and overachieving East Asians and further leads Asian and Asian American mothers to be considered as forever "foreign" compared to "real" White Americans (Poon, 2011, p. 146). Since the negative connotations of the tiger mother trope are already well-known, no one has ever asked me directly if I pursue that kind of motherhood. However, when fellow mothers of my child's mostly White classmates ask me for information about pre-K or Kindergarten classes and extracurricular activities without establishing any other mutual intimacies, I sense that they hold certain assumptions about me: *Asian mothers know best*. They expect me, as an Asian mother, to possess heightened awareness about educational information and extracurricular opportunities that will facilitate my child's academic or artistic success. When I explain that I lack information and, more importantly, the time to collect it due to my work, they often display a bit of embarrassment and disappointment, as they realize I do not conform to their expectations of a tiger mother who fervently prioritizes her child's education while pursuing her own career, akin to Amy Chua.

Although I vehemently disagree with Chua's parenting style and highly oppose her justification of emotional violence in her micromanaging style, I should state that I partly understand her fear of Asian immigrants' "generational decline" in mainstream U.S. society, which is the main orientation of her pursuit of the tiger mothering style (Chua, 2011, p. 19). As is popularly known, U.S. society and education systems have always endeavored to assimilate Asian families into White-centered U.S. culture using the model minority stereotypes (Rhee, 2013; Zhou & Xiong, 2005).

Meanwhile, Asians have simultaneously been considered "forever foreigners" regardless of their level of assimilation due to the long-standing "yellow peril" stereotype (Zhou, 2004, p. 36).

As a result of these conflicting stereotypes, Asian Americans often experience the emotional burdens of assimilation and the pressure to pursue self-improvement under the racialized hierarchy that dominates neoliberal U.S. society. I have to admit that I also have experienced certain anxiety about my child's assimilation into U.S. society. For example, I worry about her English language speaking skills, literacy, and cultural knowledge. I try to support her academic growth in the U.S. while resisting the pervasive tiger mother trope.

Regardless of such historical backgrounds—in which Asian mothers' anxiety about exclusion and failure is understandable and common—the tiger mother trope implies a derogatory model of the typical East Asian mother. This model highlights violence in East Asian motherhood and the perpetual situatedness of the Asian family as a pervasive yellow peril that invades the social hierarchy in the U.S. (Tran, 2022). While this stereotyping of East Asian motherhood uplifts the "maternal model minority" that raises compliant, successful citizens, it simultaneously reemphasizes the superiority of White-U.S. motherhood and degrades Asian children's academic competence as merely a product of parental violence (Thoma, 2014, p. 47). For this reason, people's expectations that I am a tiger mother place me in a difficult position of in-betweenness, at the intersection of American motherhood and East Asian motherhood. I often feel pressure to prove my mothering competence by passionately supporting my child's education, without ever appearing obsessive (so that my child's competency will not be seen as an intimidating yellow peril to her peers). Intertwined with the logic of work-life balance, I find myself trapped in a similarly constraining balance between the logic of American and East Asian motherhood.

Mother Educator as a New Wise Mother and Good Wife

While I am often stereotyped based on my racial identity as an East Asian woman in the U.S., South Korean people often judge my motherhood mainly based on my gender and occupational

identity as a former public elementary school teacher and mother pursuing a doctoral degree. In South Korea, teaching elementary school students has been one of the most consistently sought-after jobs for women. Being a public elementary school teacher holds out the promise of work-family balance, given its perks of shorter work hours, longer paid vacations, job stability, relatively low gender discrimination, and guaranteed leave (Kim, 2003). Yet, the most salient reason that women end up in these careers stems from the cultural belief that a teaching career is compatible with motherhood: the job guarantees maternity leave, childcare, and familial care-related leave without any disadvantage in one's future career (Kang et al., 2019). As most married women in other professional fields in South Korea often experience very limited occupational choice, even to the point of being unable to return to work after childbirth, the short work hours and guaranteed leave policies of a teaching career are significant advantages to women educators (Kim, 2003; Oh, 2018). I have to admit that I partially chose elementary school teaching as my career in my early 20s due to such advantages.

Ironically, this privileged compatibility between motherhood and teaching often becomes a detrimental trap that forces women educators to accomplish a larger share of labor in both their workplace and family. A historically idealized model of womanhood, the “wise mother and good wife (*Hyonmo Yangcho*)” (WMGW) is a pervasive ideology that intensifies the burden placed on women educators. The WMGW model highlights traditional female virtues that sustain a harmonious family environment, incentivizing women to take full responsibility for childcare, education, and material-emotional support of spouses and in-laws (Choi, 2009; Seo et al., 2020). Although the traditional WMGW model in South Korea idealizes a stay-at-home mother who commits herself to domestic labor, neoliberal capitalism in contemporary South Korea has updated this model in significant ways. Namely, today's WMGW not only enables her children to become successful in pursuing prestigious higher education, but also perfectly fulfills all professional, domestic, educational, and societal roles (Park, 2022). Women educators, as an ideal example of the new WMGW model, have often been indirectly forced to spearhead household labor, manage their kids to become academically successful and assist the family financially by pursuing careers in teaching (Kang et al., 2019). Such expectations lead to the false belief that teaching is an easy job that can comport with motherhood and that it is not an ambitious career.

Accordingly, my position as a doctoral student mother currently taking a long leave of absence from my elementary school teaching job—with the support of my male partner—often creates some cultural tensions when I meet other South Koreans. Although no one ever directly criticizes me as an unqualified mother, many of my Korean acquaintances in both South Korea and the U.S. frequently ask me questions (with worrisome looks) about the wellness of my family and our caregiver roles. I understand that such questions derive from a sense of care for our family; however, I sometimes feel offended, since their questions strongly imply that my choices break the status quo of ideal motherhood in a negative way. I also clearly sense that such questions are based on adherence to traditional gender roles and implied criticism of women who intensively pursue careers. Interestingly, my husband never received such questions when I took a leave of absence from my work to support his studies and nurture my baby in the U.S. several years ago. People around us at that time just considered his choice of career change as a well-deserved future investment for the family and praised my choice to support his study as the ideal decision of the new WMGW. Such tensions keep forcing me to linger upon their skeptical questions about my qualifications as a desirable mother.

The racial and gendered stereotypes regarding East Asian motherhood, the South Korean woman educator, and the accompanying cultural tensions in both U.S. and South Korean societies show how dominant narratives of the ideal working mother can oppress and burden Asian and Asian-American working mothers in the U.S. higher education system. While each stereotype has its unique characteristics, there is at least one significant similarity between all of them: such stereotypes all fit comfortably within neoliberal interpretations of motherhood, in which women must achieve an unattainable balance between work and mothering, professionalism and

domesticity, and even between various categories of their identity (in my case, East Asian-style mothering and U.S.-style mothering). This interpretation places pressure on East Asian mother educators like me to constantly ask self-blaming questions and to conform themselves to stereotypes while striving to attain the balance between the conflicting ideals that others expect them to embody.

Redefining Motherhood as Becoming-Un/Balanced

As my aforementioned experiences show, my pursuit of balance paradoxically caused my self-confidence to collapse, while also perpetuating my self-hate and self-doubt. Upon reflection, I realized that the first step to resisting gendered and racialized narratives of motherhood was to dismantle the dominant narratives of East Asian motherhood. Rather than relying on saccharine images of work-family balance, I started to reframe my motherhood as becoming-un/balanced. My conceptualization is based on philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (1987) concept of "becoming," the transformative process that occurs as individuals move between deterritorialization (liberating ourselves from the confinements of structured spaces) and reterritorialization—i.e., finding new spaces and systems in which to reposition ourselves (p. 238).

As a dynamic and continuous process, I believe my motherhood lies in intentionally choosing to be unbalanced: constantly re-negotiating my priorities while pursuing my own professional and personal goals is one of the best ways for me to reaffirm my values and beliefs as a feminist mother, educator, and scholar. Through this becoming un/balanced, I am always in the process of finding new agential spaces where my motherhood, and of course my selfhood, can exist comfortably beyond the desirability of work-family balance.

In exploring this concept of becoming un/balanced further, I can look beyond my personal experience to find reflections of such motherhood through the artist Annie Hsiao-Ching Wang's works. Her photography series, *The Mother as a Creator* (2001-2020), showcases an East Asian mother scholar's process of becoming un/balanced. Intentionally staging the artist and her son taking photographs of each other over the years, the artist illuminates the multifaceted social roles of mothers in this series. As a Taiwanese doctoral student mother in art at a White-dominant U.K. university, Wang aims to challenge the patriarchal notion of the sacrificing mother (Wang, n.d.). Instead, she shows how she fulfills her selfhood while taking on both maternal and scholarly responsibilities. In some media coverage, her work has been depicted as showing that she can "fulfill her sense of self while maintaining a good and meaningful relationship" (Ong, 2021, para. 11). Although this interpretation is partially valid, it may risk flattening her series into another success story of an Asian superwoman under White neoliberal patriarchy. Rather, I want to give more attention to the subtle fractures that she intentionally reveals in her photography, exploring how she embraces such fissures as an integral part of her own unfinished motherhood-in-becoming.

In her photograph, *Working Hard* (2006), Wang is shown working on her laptop while her son draws with crayons and paper (see the work on the left in *Figure 2*). She cranes her neck backward to look downward at her son, but is not actually seated facing him; her hands are on her laptop on the messy desk with papers. Her body and head point in opposite directions, and she frowns slightly. Through this visual language, the photograph challenges the typical image of a *happy* working mother who perfectly arranges her time and effort equally to satisfy both work and family responsibilities. Instead, the image illuminates how imbalance is an ongoing state in her motherhood, presenting the dilemma of a doctoral student mother grappling with both roles. Such tension is amplified in the next photograph, *Moving and Uncertain* (2010), which she took four years later (see the work on the right in *Figure 2*). Wang now wears her doctoral gown, implying that her doctoral study was accomplished, but her son is standing partially over her, his face and body exuding defiance as he clutches his paper airplane. Based on his grimacing expression, we can assume that he might have been less than willing to take a photograph with her at that moment. We can further imagine how their relationship sometimes entails uncertainty or conflict. Wang does not cover up such tension, and even stages up her son's defiant facial and bodily expressions in her

photography. This representation challenges the normative notion of motherhood and sheds light on the fluctuating nature of being a working mother-scholar.



Figure 2 *Working Hard* (2016, left) and *Moving and Uncertain* (2010, right) by Annie Hsiao-Ching, Courtesy of artist.

Capturing moments of conflict and uncertainty, Wang's photograph series shows the potential of documenting working mother-scholars' everyday lives. She reframes motherhood as an experience that entails ever-changing fractures, precarity, un/balancing, and dilemmas. Further, she illuminates how motherhood encompasses various conflicting emotions, such as frustration, pleasure, and uncertainty. As her son grows in her series, viewers can see how Wang's motherhood is accordingly in-becoming between her various responsibilities and societal roles. As a successive photo series, this project provides the whole contextualization and interplay of Wang's becoming between the past and present. The past photos—which appear mystifyingly as both mirrors and framed photos in the background—function as “a visible anchor of the present, and the present is continually recontextualizing the past” (DenHoed, 2019, para. 2). These background photos even compete with the foreground, as memory invades the present and viewers find themselves unable to discern what counts as background and what counts as foreground in these compositions. Wang's work is an active assertion of herself as a mother-scholar-artist, eliciting fruitful conversation about East Asian motherhood caught in the crosshairs of White-normative neoliberal society. Ultimately, her work offers pedagogical counter-narratives of motherhood in becoming un/balanced and may serve as an existential companion to those facing this situation.

Moving Toward Feminist Knowledge Construction of Motherhood in Art Education

Based on the reconceptualization of my motherhood as becoming-un/balanced and the clarifying example of Wang's artwork, I realized that I should move toward embracing my everyday un/balanced moments of fracture, conflict, and dilemma in my art teaching practice and research. In the spirit of resisting the perpetuation of the superwoman trope, I should actively acknowledge and value my in-betweenness as a guilty mother and unhappy intellectual worker, as the yellow peril and the model minority, and as the WMGW and selfish student mother. Acknowledging these conflicting and complex experiences can serve as a foundation to build a collective practice with other mother educators, including doctoral student mothers, thereby enriching alternative narratives

of motherhood in our field. To combat forceful inscriptions of the happy work-family balance ideology and racialized motherhood in visual culture, mother educators should openly analyze our own experiences, incorporating auto-ethnographic and autobiographical moments in our teaching and writing.

This imperative to resist normative motherhood can manifest in various pedagogical and scholarly practices. For example, educators can incorporate critiques of stereotypical maternal identity within visual culture, engage students in discussions surrounding alternate forms of motherhood as presented in works of art, and encourage students to create art reflecting counter-narratives of motherhood based on their lived family experiences.¹ Such practices will likely challenge students' dominant understandings of the ideal working mother and invite them to contemplate the necessity of dismantling such stereotypes. The goal of such practices is, ultimately, to transform our educational spaces into vibrant hubs of feminist learning, underscoring the vast potential of motherhood. In our scholarship, mother educators can engage in memoir writing and arts-based research that illuminates the oppression we encounter in our everyday lives. Through this research, mother educators will ideally investigate the ways in which artmaking informs the reframing of our own experiences of motherhood within our teaching and research practices. As scholars, we would also do well to critique the limited attention given to various forms of motherhood in scholarship on art and education, particularly with regard to cross-cultural and intersectional experiences of motherhood in our field.

As a specific starting point, I suggest we begin with our children's family drawings as a focal point in constructing feminist knowledge about mother educators' unique motherhood. Many researchers claim that children's drawings effectively describe their social interactions with adults, thus providing a symbolic illustration of their perceptions of relationships (Harrison et al., 2007; Solomon & George, 1999; Wesson & Salmon, 2001). As my opening anecdote shows, children's family drawings can sometimes be perceived as an intimidating metric that harshly grades working women's competence in mothering. Yet, if we leave behind the frame of idealized work-family balance and our own internalized shame, we may interpret our children's drawings anew, retrieving feminist knowledge of motherhood in children's art. As mentioned before, in my child's drawing, I was merely a head floating alone at a distance from her. Initially, I interpreted this choice as her emotional distance from me due to my failed work-family balance. Reflecting on her drawing with Wang's bodily gestures in *Working Hard* (2006), however, I realized that my child might have wanted to draw my floating head, which is often tilted towards her and smiling, rather than my whole body, which is always bound to driving, reading articles, attending zoom meetings and classes, and grading students' assignments. The floating head in her drawing may be an active acknowledgment of how I have cared for her through my ways of mothering in the midst of my hectic, unbalanced everyday life. Her portrayal also reminds me of how my child has taken pride in me for being an educator, as she cherishes the teachers who care for her throughout most of her day. In this way, when we leave behind the visual and conceptual framework of a normative work-life balance, new feminist knowledge emerges: our everyday fractures and becoming are valued in a fresh sense by our kids through their drawings.

Thus, as a feminist doctoral student mother educator, I perceive a crucial need for graduate student mothers to confront the neoliberal narratives of the happy working mother with our active redefinition of motherhood. Our motherhood is not a fixed identity but is rather always in the process of becoming, messily negotiating various emotions and social expectations. In particular, amplifying the voices of doctoral student mothers of color can further dismantle the intertwined oppressions of racism and sexism in neoliberal academia and society. Retracing our experiences and crafting our motherhood with our extended definition in teaching and scholarship will, I hope, lead art education toward a more equitable future.

¹ There are many women artists who challenge stereotypes of motherhood and expand our understanding of diverse motherhood through their artwork. Annie Hsiao-Ching Wang is just one of many inspiring figures in this regard. I suggest further exploring artists such as Billie Zangewa, Flo Oy Wong, Deana Lawson, Janine Antoni, and Kate Kretz.

Coda

In the nighttime, I often read J a picture book while we are lying on her bed together. After tickling my hand and giggling during my reading, J reached her hand around my breast and gave me a big hug. Such a sweet hug is always the best reward for my tiring day. Then she whispered in Korean, "Mom, I really like that you are a teacher. I know, mom, you are a teacher." When I replied, "Really?" she soon answered in her sleepy voice, "Sure! But mom, could you please tell daddy to come here and go to bed with me?" I nodded at her, switched turns with my husband, and went back to my study room while listening to my inner voice: Yes, I like being a teacher, too.

In this chapter, I have shared my struggles with resisting neoliberal ideologies of women's work-family balance. Such ideologies oblige working mother-educators' universal happiness, while also reinscribing racialized stereotypes of East Asian motherhood. Although I reimagined my own motherhood as becoming-un/balanced, my aim is not to posit one ideal pathway to becoming a good doctoral student mother. It is not necessarily a better choice for a woman to prioritize work over family or vice versa. Instead, I highlight the significance of art educators' resistance to the neoliberal ideology of work-life balance, in whatever form such resistance may take. Despite affirming the uniqueness of my un/balanced motherhood, my daily life as a doctoral student mother is, admittedly, still messy and fraught with tension. Amid my generally fulfilling days as a working mother, there are moments when I find myself plagued by guilt, torn between spending playtime with my child or slogging away at my computer. Then, on another night, I am gripped by intense anxiety while reading her bedtime story, as it dawns on me that I have missed a significant proposal submission deadline.

As my experiences show, an individual affirmation alone cannot fully reconcile these conflicting effects of guilt, anxiety, and happiness. Therefore, art educators must ensure that the active affirmation of working mothers is not coopted into yet another neoliberal image of female empowerment that functionally burdens women with finding individual-level solutions to collective problems. Instead, based on feminist knowledge of non-traditional motherhood, art educators should seek to dismantle normative assumptions regarding women's happiness, family, and motherhood that pervade our visual culture and broader society. From there, art educators can begin to combat the socioeconomic injustices that perpetuate gender and race inequality within and outside of the art world.

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Metamorphosis of Identity- Oppressions Expressed through Visual Art Rather Than Orally

Nausheen Iftikhar

The unraveling of my identity, its transformation, and development throughout my life as a woman, artist, art educator, and art researcher have been considerably impacted by colonialism, radicalism, Eurocentrism, White supremacy, globalization, and standardization phenomena. The theoretical frameworks used for this essay are Ecofeminism, Critical, Identity, and Social Identity Theory, adopting the lens of the intersectionality of gender, culture, social identity, social media, class, and status. My experiences, my adolescent students' experiences, and created artworks through this struggle have been reactionary to androcentrism, ethnocentrism, colonialism, consumerism, social and ecojustice within the digitized globalization phenomena that came into existence but were only understood after prolonged critical reflections and time.

Despite coming from an educated and progressive family in Pakistan, the development of my self-identity was engulfed by the patriarchal social structures of a post-colonial society. The male chauvinist patriarchal social structure of Pakistan that was/is struggling between post-colonialism, radicalism, globalization, and the new world order had and is devastatingly impacting my identity as an adult, artist, and art educator. I strive to identify with the modern West while simultaneously trying to recover and reclaim the rich history and culture, indigenous knowledge of my roots, namely the development of a cultured and pluralistic Islamic identity in the Indian Sub-Continent, a culture whose knowledge has been manipulated and erased by colonization. I have gone through a process of realization of these incongruencies throughout my schooling in Pakistan and the United States. These last decades were also crucial because I witnessed the rise of Islamophobia and White supremacy after I returned from the United States. After years of self-reflection and developing a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between me and the politics of knowledge production that imbricates the West at the center and relegates the rest to the margins, I have developed an agency to identify with what constitutes me and my belief system in response to debates pertaining to post-colonial identity and decolonization as a discourse.

I have taught adolescents aged 13 years to 19 years, mainly O level and A level Art and Design syllabus for Cambridge International examination in private schools of Lahore, Pakistan, for over the past two decades. The development and transformation I have gone through have enabled me to identify how to engage my students in confronting their truest identities through critical self-reflection during ideation, conceptualization, and creation of a response to art. Adolescents must become aware of their real individual and social identity to constructively participate in meaning-making through their artworks and effectively address the challenges posited in a world rapidly moving towards digital production and dissemination of knowledge, including art.

I reflect upon the journey of studying as an artist for my Undergraduate Program in the USA, then working and becoming an art educator immersed in a similar androcentric social order in Pakistan. According to Bailey (2019), "Androcentrism refers to the propensity to center society around men and men's needs, priorities, and values and to relegate women to the periphery. Androcentrism also positions men as the gender-neutral standard while marking women as gender-specific" (p. 307). While interpreting my artwork, I have realized that it has begun to reveal a more

honest and lucid picture of my identity, which not only syncs with my beliefs that I may not have disclosed vocally due to fear of direct conflict with the status quo, but it also allows me to become a better art educator. I am able to effectively identify, discern and assist students who are at crucial stages of development in their life and require the kind of guidance that took me years to assimilate and attune with myself.

While working with adolescents, I have found similar encounters where they use the visual art studio practice as spaces of autonomous engagement which is expressive of their identities closest to themselves. For example, a male student who confided his disinterest in bodybuilding, unlike his brothers, for which he was mocked, used art-making to express his struggle with body shaming. Students 'holistic needs to find and express a sense of self and belonging' are achieved through art education (Manifold, 2017, p. 362) which I found to be true as their artworks are more reflective of their self and belonging despite the existence of immense oppressions, and encounters outside the art room.

According to Hogg (1995), "Identity theory is principally a microsociological theory that sets out to explain individuals' role-related behaviors, while social identity theory is a social psychological theory that sets out to explain group processes and intergroup relations" (p. 255). Over the years, I have seen adolescents struggling with multiple role-related behaviors, for example, as a son in a patriarchal society, a Muslim daughter in a radical society; a non-macho, kind-hearted, and sensitive male teenager; an academically struggling student with exceptional artistic abilities not valued for, and an immersed social media user who identifies more with the Western developed world who aligns with White ethnocentrism and feels a misfit identified as a Pakistani. I find this superficial connection of one's identity extended into anxiety which only gets pacified by escaping to the developed world. Even the escape doesn't materialize in achieving one's truest identity because it cannot exist in denial of one's socio-cultural belonging.

Social identity theory 'is intended to be a social psychological theory of intergroup relations, group processes, and the social self' (Hogg, 1995, p. 259). These intergroup social relations give rise to the celebration of diversity, which Nieto (2009) repeatedly brings within the realm of Multicultural Education (p. 86), which affluent adolescents educated in Pakistani private schools are unable to identify with because they are only taught standardized Western dominant education that insinuates devotion to White supremacy and discourages mingling with other social classes. Standardization has been scripted into the psyche of non-White and former colonies/post-colonial nations by Western industrialized and globalized economies. This has given precedence to homogeneity, monocultures, sameness, and uniformity rather than diversity. For example, a student who grew up playing with Barbie dolls as a symbol of affluence and acculturation with Western modernity wanted to explore her relationship with this toy in her artwork. When we started discussing 'Barbie,' she was encouraged to explore her primary surroundings, engage with multiple social classes and settings, reflect on this idea, and explore toys used by different Pakistani social classes. Over a period of time, her views became more nuanced and evolved. I began to witness the transformation of her childhood idealization of Barbie into an anti-feminist symbol. During the course of her research, she came across a variety of diverse toys, not just dolls used by girls from other social classes within Pakistani culture like bull carts, clay figurines, wind wheels, etc. It was these exercises where I encouraged meaning-making through art that allowed her to become conscious of her truest identity as an educated, independent teenager whilst simultaneously rejecting uniformity and monoculture in the form of a 'Barbie' as a doll which all girls in her circle must play with in order to validate their identity as being progressive, i.e., part of the westernized elite in Lahore. This research also helped her develop a counter-narrative to the singular belief in the supremacy of the modern West, which is, unfortunately, encouraged in private schools offering O and A levels. Although this observation and its relevant debates are beyond the scope and ambit of my research for this paper, at the moment, I cannot help but reflect on this dilemma as an art educator: Who in the UK is devising, producing, and disseminating syllabi for countries that were once former colonies? Are they aware of current debates on decolonization that have emerged in recent years? If a small

exercise in self-reflection grounded in research and discourse about South Asia can produce such robust results, then why are these discourses and approaches not incorporated into teaching methodologies, grading processes, and teacher training workshops? Are these redundant methodologies not evidence of numbed power structures that are still in place so that hegemony over minds and hearts can be maintained in former colonies?

The quest for identity can be seen as a rejection of homogeneity, evident from each artwork's uniqueness, where diverse colors of humanness are constantly cherished. The diverseness projected through an artwork becomes a possibility with a true understanding of individual and social identity within and outside one's cultural and social setting. I also try to identify the self through acknowledgment of diversity within social groups, to transform the phenomena of escape due to identity crisis into a knowingness of one's self and others through my students' conscious use of art to express ideas. These unique ideas expressed in artworks in this essay evolve through the lens of feminism, social justice, and critical theory.

The theoretical framework for this study specifically employs the lens of ecofeminism and critical theory, which explores the androcentric dominant thought where women and nature are considered as givers, and men, Pakistani as well as the corporate investors, as the taker. Although, according to Bloodheart and Swim (2010), "the treatment of both women and nature fluctuates from benevolent protection to utilization and control, what remains constant are belief systems that group women and nature together and support men's supremacy over both" (p.187). This quote helps me recall a time in the Pakistani art world when there were greater expectations of society and patriarchal families of women and girls to create art that is benign and only beautiful. I remember a time when art critics in the late 90s labeled my artwork as being a sort of a misfit or too religious or controversial. Although the contemporary Pakistani art scene is very different now the expectation to create 'pretty and beautiful' art remains embedded at the school level, which includes primary, secondary, and matriculation/ O AND A level/ High school education.

Critical theory connects inequity and oppression of the marginalized with social relations through capitalism, globalization, hegemonic corporate hierarchical order through standardization, and malpractices historically exercised through colonialism (Mills, 2016, p. 45). As an educator, by using Freire's model of pedagogy, which challenges the social structures to empower the oppressive, I made students produce profound outcomes as fearless voices.

According to Willis and Richards (2020),

Developing courage is one of the difficult but beautiful aspects of discovering one's identity. When students are willing to go into uncharted territories, their courage to explore is enhanced. Their identities become more solid through their courageous adventures, which are supported in our safe-space classrooms. (p. 81)

Androcentrism, Social Justice, and Feminism are explored through the 'Burqa I and II' by Nausheen Iftikhar. (Figure 1). Adopting the Feminist lens and questioning radicalism by simultaneously using Islamic teaching under the light of The Quranic verses, I explored my own identity within my artworks. Calligraphy and textual symbolism became critical elements in my art, which helped me explore my beliefs and identity through Islam, Pakistani culture, stories of my family, elders, grandparents, people's struggles, and the carving of Pakistan through the partition of the Indian Sub-continent in 1947.

My identity is informed by a desire to attain equity, active agency, and autonomous freedom at home and with family. However, these desires are diminished within the noise of the social structure, but they manifest themselves through my artwork.



Figure 1. *Burqa I and II* by Nausheen Iftikhar. Stitched fabric, screen print, leather, metal, and fiberglass. 2016. Courtesy of artist.

In the series *Conceal and Reveal- Sculptural and Interactive Art work's* exhibition at Zahoor-ul-Akhlaq Gallery, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan, 2016, I attempted to transform the symbol of the *Burqa* as being representative of suppression into a form of *concealment*. The series of installations in mixed media was an allegorical depiction of a *Burqa* (Full body veil from head to toe used by some women in some parts of the Indian Sub-continent) and an octopus. Concealment here is understood as victimization, repression of identity, and more. The debate that I want to initiate is whether it is an ordinary woman going about her business or a suicide bomber (male or female) engulfed in a *burqa*, either way, they become the victim and prey. In the form of concealment, the *burqa* is seen as being an equivalent of a predatory and violent entity, it also carries connotations of terrorism and conservatism/dogmatic religion both in the West and even within certain social strata of Pakistan. Weighed down by such heavy metaphors and ignorant assumptions the *burqa* in my work becomes octopus-like. The octopus's head and its tentacle's visual similarity were used in sync with the image of the *burqa*, allegorically, in these artworks.

Frequently discussing 'Who we are?' in class, under a critical lens, I use this example to reflect on my agency and identity, how I lend its voice, and challenge my current social identity which was overshadowed by the social construct/fiber of society. It allows me to appreciate the privilege and empowerment I have been given. As a result of this critical self-reflection, I was able to 'see' my students' struggles. Debates regarding the formation of gender identity in a patriarchal society helped me empathize with my adolescent male students too, particularly those who confided that they felt like misfits when masculinity was selectively and solely equated with toxic male chauvinism in their surroundings. My students and I both found that art had the capacity to grant us agency which society could not; their marginalized voices could be spoken and heard through their art.

Women's Empowerment/ Self-Empowerment is explored through the 'Garden of Peace' by Dia Ahmad Khan. (Figure 2).



Figure 2. *Garden of Peace* by Dia Ahmad Khan. Pencil sharpening, liquid glue, and acrylics on board. 2022. Courtesy of artist.

Dia, a 15-year-old adolescent, also my daughter and student, shows apparent signs and aspirations of women's empowerment and self-empowerment that are evident from her idealization of non-traditional role models in a Pakistani television drama. Dia embraces and identifies with them, going so far as even to memorize the lyrics of their soundtracks. What is evident from this observation is the fact that an environment that encourages equity and agency allows children to instantly recognize it as such. This optimism and unconcealed self-belief is evident even in her interaction with me. She repeats three times with a louder gesture, "Strong, Strong, Strong" on my question of how you think women are. At another point, she says, "I don't think that I will lose or something; I just think that I can win and I am not a loser" (Dia, personal communication, 2022). Children's stories "located in the mass media and then moved into their personal life stories across national locations" (Medina, 2010, p. 55) resonated with me as I experienced her going through a similar transition through time, space, and place, as suggested above. While Dia worked on her art as she was listening to her favorite song from a Pakistani drama where the dominant theme was women's empowerment. This empowerment was depicted in her artwork by writing her name, Dia, in capital letters with pencil sharpening positioning it prominently over a copper-painted surface.

Dia says as I speak to her regarding her artwork, "...pieces of peace are creating flowers, and then after that, some of the pieces are creating light which means Dia." Dia in Urdu means a clay

lamp lit with oil literally and is used as a metaphor for light. At another point, she says, “I also wrote my name with pencil sharpening.” Using pencil sharpening usually, a discarded or meant to be disposed of as art material is the result of a kind of confidence achieved through self-belief that was reinforced verbally, musically, and mnemonically: it fueled a kind of intelligence that encouraged agency, thinking out of the box and spontaneous decision-making. It was the use of “an existing material [used] with fascination...” (Iftikhar, 2020, p. 63) besides becoming a conscious effort to recycle and address EcoJustice. Through EcoJustice, we are constantly reminded that “humanity is a part of nature, not separate from it.” (Ludlow, 2010, p. 43) which needs to become a part of our socio-ecological identity.

In her reflective journal, Dia wrote, “The flowers with lights (pencil sharpening) are glowing and shining. The portion at the end is the soil (painted with copper acrylic) on which is written Dia, which means light, so that is why everything in this ‘painting of peace’ is glowing and shining” (Dia, 2022, Journal writing). According to Willis and Richards, ‘it is through these multiple ways of knowing that we become conscious of the subtlety and stratification of our own truths’ (2020, p. 82).

In the ‘Garden of Peace’, the inclusion of text (her name) as support with images became the central image. This prompted me to re-examine the relationship between text and image in her artwork from childhood through adolescence. According to Iftikhar (2020),

Beginning with the feeling of the materials of exploration to an expression of ideas, social interaction, and learning through the experience of interaction with the surroundings and distant world to the discovery of self and abandoning of isolation,... reveals the insight through the language of art even unrevealed to her mother. (p. 66)

The placement, color, emphasis, media used, and meaning of her name, DIA, reflected her empowered self-identity through interpersonal metafunction. The interpersonal metafunction is the connection between the creator and the viewer. As Kress and van Leeuwen suggested, “what the producer utilizes (framing, colors, focus, etc.) in the image to deliver the meaning properly to the viewer” (as cited in Ramadan, 2020, p. 3), which may never have surfaced in the absence of autonomous space for art creation.

Colonialism, Feminism, Consumerism, and Social Justice are explored through *Colorism* by a student. (Figure 3).



Figure 3. *Colorism* by a student. Watercolors, and acrylics on paper, 2021. Courtesy of artist.

Critical literacies consider language to not only exist as a way to read, write, teach, and communicate, as used in Figure 3 but to understand the world through its social and cultural context by identifying the element of oppression conducted by the dominant culture. The “growing gap in economic and social well-being among social groups” (Foster et al., 2019, p. 2) is due to hegemonic, Eurocentric, ethnocentric, reason-centric, and androcentric thought. This gap that education should have narrowed has been widened due to the interpersonal metafunction employed in advertisements and social media. The constant brainwashing of the adolescents, urbanites, and communities exposed to many advertisements within the global world suggests that the third world and indigenous communities are coerced into accepting First-World problems and needs as their own. Pakistani students from affluent, privileged classes impacted by globalization probably know more about the developed world, K-pop, and Anime than the ground realities of Pakistan, which became the prompt to start one of our conversations in class.

A female student wanted to explore colorism as an idea for portfolio development, and she mentioned Black Lives Matter. After a discussion, I asked her if she identified victims of colorism around here in Pakistan. She responded in the negative. So I asked her to look around in her own space and reflect on personal experiences, family, and friends, and that we would continue with this dialogue in the following class. The student in question had only watched media advertisements and shows produced by the West. Therefore Colorism and beauty standards as oppression was an idea that had only been explained to her by White/colored people living in the West; she was unfamiliar with local debates pertaining to Colorism with respect to post-colonial identity. To my surprise, when she came back to class the next week, she was shocked, confused, and saddened by discovering the existence of these oppressions right under her nose in her own family. As we spoke, these contradictions started surfacing one by one. The challenges of social injustices girls face due to colorism, and White supremacy, inculcated in the psyche of the Indian Sub-Continent as apparent through fairness products – corporate capitalist consumerism reinforced and brainwashed through media advertisements became the starting point for her portfolio. We, with brown skin, also became affected by the term Banks (2009) uses, “assimilationist ideology” of the globalized world which needed to be addressed through the “ethnic revitalization movement” under multicultural education and awareness (p. 9).

Globalization has contributed tremendously to human and non-human standardization and homogenization, which has been accepted as a norm under consumerism and commodification. Within the pretext of globalization, marginalized ethnicities and communities have become more vulnerable to oppression through ethnocentrism. “Homogenizing women’s experience” (Gaard, 2011, p. 35) is suggestive of furthering the suffering of women through enhanced oppression under ethnocentrism because diversity is neither understood nor appreciated. Shiva (1993) suggests, “Destruction of diversity and the creation of monocultures becomes imperative for capitalist patriarchy, which promotes ‘monocultures, uniformity, and homogeneity’” (p. 164). This is evident through the rampant use of beauty and fairness products globally. In Figure 3, the student shares her narrative of media influence on the psyche of young women. She uses clippings from news reports, advertisements, and social media on fairness products as a televised image replaced with a woman’s head which becomes a blatant response challenging White supremacy within the Western dominant globalized consumer world.

Identity, Social Identity, and Feminism explored through *‘Defragmentation of the self’* by a student. (Figure 4).



Figure 4. *Defragmentation of the self* by a student. Graphite, water color, acrylic on paper, 2020.
Courtesy of artist.

A male student narrated that he is uncomfortable with his body; he is mocked for not being athletic, macho, or muscular. Unlike most boys his age, he does not play video games and instead writes prose and poetry and is passionate about art. He narrated that he is accused of being too caring and empathetic with females and lower social classes. Such instances result from discussions on ideas for art creation at length during art lessons. He confessed that he is insecure about his body and social identity. As a child, he enjoyed playing with dolls, a pursuit that is considered taboo and socially discouraged. The student created a body of work that explored defragmentation and body shaming. Patriarchal structures often perpetuate stereotypes and binaries; I realized that that is probably why it had never occurred to me to consider that boys, even those belonging to a privileged class, might struggle with their bodies and a sense of belonging and identity.

The artwork he created bravely battled and manifested his inner confusion. “Children construe their world through undisclosed fears with such ease and control in their favor” (Iftikhar, 2020, p. 63). In his artwork (Figure 4), he deconstructed himself physically to re-piece/rebuild himself anew and bring his truest identity to the forefront. He painted the torn and fragmented remnants of a doll which can be seen in the background of Figure 4, as a final departure from his undeclared and undisclosed identity. According to Willis and Richards (2020), “we must explore and discover the largest and smallest aspects of ourselves that demand a place in our imagery” (p. 82-83), drawing the torn defragmented pieces of the doll became the ‘causal’ decision in the respective student’s imagery.

Another adolescent confessed that he did a Google survey with his friends and peers and other boys his age regarding insecurities about their bodies and he was astonished to get a positive response from a sizeable number. I was shocked and taken aback as well. It made me realign my positionality regarding the assumption of gender in an androcentric social structure.

Gender, Class, Status, and Inequity are explored through *Bhimbri* (dragonfly) by a student. (Figure 5).



Figure 5. *Bhimbri* (dragonfly) by a Student. Watercolor and acrylics on paper, 2019.
Courtesy of artist.

An 18-year-old male student, empathetic towards young girls of lower social and economic class aspiring to acquire education living in a marginalized, socially unjust androcentric society wrote, designed, and illustrated a storybook. Figure 5 depicts the main character, shown as a drag-onfly aspiring to fly but with frail wings, from the violence and inequities of society. He successfully illustrates the absence of what Raihanah (2009) highlights as “equality leading to freedom and opportunity” (p. 67) for all socially marginalized.

The metaphoric use of the dragonfly as a weak element of an ecologically endangered non-human dependent on freshwater body in this series draws the viewers’ attention towards ecofeminism. The art brings beauty to critically engage an ethical and empathetic view of the human and non-human world through EcoJustice education much needed for healthier and happier communities (Foster et al., 2019, p. 8). At the same time, Freire’s critical pedagogy suggests that transformative powers provided in education can enhance students’ learning, eventually contributing to social change (Billings, 2015). Figure 5 possesses the transformative powers to address the discourse of modernity.

According to Gaard (2011), “the Mother Earth metaphor and the uses of restoring truncated narratives and contextualizing ethical decisions in analyzing what might appear to

be compelling issues among various oppressed groups (women, indigenous communities, non-human animals, workers, immigrants, the environment)” (p. 37) is expressed by drawing the analogy between a teenaged lower class girl to a fragile dragonfly who is helplessly fleeing from the patriarchal oppressions by the student in Figure 5. Women and nature are inherently givers and will take care of themselves, and man is the taker; this thought is prevalent in the non-feminist traditional androcentric view, while the elite feminist’s tilt towards homogenization of women and ethnocentrism and lack of indigenous understanding creates a gap between the two strata. Under consumerism and globalization, the gap between humans from marginalized classes, social structures, and educated urbanites has widened. The “growing gap in economic and social well-being among social groups” (Foster et al., 2019, p. 2) is due to hegemonic, Eurocentric, ethnocentric, reason-centric, and androcentric beliefs. The student’s recognition of this critical issue as a part of his voice to challenge social inequities is depicted through several hands in different clasping positions reaching out to clutch the fleeing *bhimbiri*.

The diversity that blooms from cultural and social differences cannot be detached or muted from a human, let alone a learner. Gay suggests that culture is inseparable from the humanity of each learner (as cited in Crother, 2015). Our artworks bring forth diverse socio-cultural differences that explore self-identities by critically reflecting on the producers and the viewers. These identities seek autonomous space to reveal themselves in their truest sense.

My students hoped to create meaningful artwork through imagination within the “dynamic space created as a dialogue between the artist, the artwork, and the audience, which provided the knowingness needed to understand complex interrelational ecologies and cultural systems” (Foster et al., 2019, p. 7). “Ordinary marks and choices made are meaningful thoughts and feelings which children express as important ideas” (Iftikhar, 2020, p. 61). These thoughts and feelings are representatives of who we are. The truest identities of artists, adolescent art students, and art educators, which seem to shy into our immediate, digitized, and global social cultures, find freedom of visual dialogue through intrapersonal and interpersonal metacognition within the autonomous space of our art.

In this essay, I have delineated how my own desire to refashion a stronger self-identity pushed me to establish intrapersonal communication with regard to my art practice. I used my artworks to critique certain societal power structures and undergo a journey of self-realization. My newly fashioned identity also gave me agency as an art educator. Conscious of the societal and post-colonial structures in which I had to operate and navigate, I still proceeded with a teaching methodology that would lend agency to my students’ marginalized voices and make them conscious of their immediate surroundings. Art-making and meaning-making for my students and I have meant that they have stepped out of the boundaries defined by their patriarchal structures by critiquing them and recognizing their suppressed voices. Art as a creative expression can therefore ascribe new meanings and give voice to their unrealized and suppressed identities in a post-colonial society where history, memory, and culture have been systematically subjected to erasure; this opens up debates about how far I can push these boundaries and devise methodologies for studio-based art education which can help unpack dilemmas of the self and society. Ultimately I hope that my methodologies can help students destabilize polarizing narratives and binaries of the West and the Other, White supremacy and homogenous cultures, and hegemonic narratives that free, creative expression can transcend.

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American Dream in A Shadowbox: On Racial Trauma, Identity, and Arts

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Introduction: Narrative-Informed Teaching and Learning Identities

The teacher's narrative has been recognized as a reflective practice for meaningful professional development. From conceiving an idea to designing a coherent lesson plan, the teacher's narrative serves as a supportive tool. Whether it is through self-talk, diary, or monologue, these recorded ex-periences provide teachers opportunities to question, assess, justify, and clarify goals, expectations, strategies, and learning outcomes (Ford, 2016; White, 2021). Reflecting on instructional practices affirms teacher identity, inviting teachers to collectively apply relevant educational theories and conceptual frameworks, critically examine, predict, strategize, and discover purposeful teaching and learning experiences. As teachers experience constant adjustment and adaptation, navigating their professional identity, personal identity, and cultural identity (Chien, 2023), they also gain self-growth in the process of becoming aware of their own revelations and reflections during and after curriculum development.

Likewise, students' narratives provide invaluable information for teachers to determine if a lesson has reached its goal. The narrative approach invites students to look inward and motivates them to seek opportunities to engage and contemplate ideas and perspectives. A narrative approach is especially important when addressing topics related to identity and traumatic experiences (Cooper & Cooper, 2023). The freedom and openness of a narrative approach, where participants can select, filter, reshape, and take charge of the direction of their personal memories, helps to reduce their anxiety, fear, and pain. Blending autobiography and fiction, it is in this ambiguous but creative state that students can confront and regain their strengths and well-being.

Therefore, this chapter provides a glimpse of what prompts an instructor to design a transformative art project as a safe place for pre-service classroom teachers, and how making art facilitates trauma-informed experience to elevate students' understanding of self-identity. To better illustrate, two authors, Yichien, an instructor who designed the art project, and Rosa, a then pre-service classroom teacher who completed this project, reflect on their thinking through narratives and dialogues on the topic of the American Dream, identity, and diversity through trauma-informed art experience.

The structure of this chapter includes three sections: The teacher's narrative from Yichien, the student's narrative from Rosa, and discussion and suggestion. The teacher's narrative opens with Yichien's past traumatic experience and how this experience became a motivation for her to design an arts-based, trauma-informed project—the Shadowbox Project. Yichien will describe how she considers theoretical and pedagogical applications to frame the learning process. The second section features Rosa's narrative to retrace how she responded to and solicited ideas for her creation. The third section provides analytical information and suggestions from this experience.

A Teacher's Narrative

Yichien's Narrative: The Making of A Lesson Plan

Prelude

As the knife inches toward me, all I could see was a distorted I ♥ NY print on my plastic bag. They barked some words, but I was too frozen to register. Silenced by the blade, I cowardly let go of all my possessions. The door opened. "Chinese" "Bitch" echoed as the door closed. I was by myself again, feeling grateful that they left all the books on the floor. I reached out to fetch my Chinese-English dictionary. I had carried it everywhere since my arrival. For it was a gift from my dad and I needed it to survive. I looked at the cover, then took off my jacket and slowly gathered my belongings. The jacket became a cradle, wrapped dog-eared pages, books, and the dictionary. I left the G train and walked toward my street, for I had a midterm tomorrow. It was 1994, two months after I began studying at Pratt Art Institute. My English was broken, my American Dream of becoming a museum curator lay shattered.

As the effects of Covid 19 continue to fuel political and racial tensions, it is difficult to witness how we, as a society, respond to a global pandemic with escalating hate crimes. Despite efforts in advocating and practicing social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, society still has little room for acceptance. Many school boards across the United States propose bans on controversial topics such as human rights, gender justice, and migration, followed by waves of censoring teaching materials. Such proposals spread at an alarming speed that further suppress students with marginalized identities.

Almost three decades later, as I began to prepare for the integrated arts course in the summer of 2022, the memory of that fateful night suddenly flooded in. Flashbacks of other racially charged traumatic incidents gradually unleashed muffled anxiety, confusion, fears, and self-doubts that I have carefully neglected over the years. Facing the complexity of emotional turbulence, as an immigrant, I began to ponder the following questions:

How do one's identity, ethnicity, and cultural heritage play a role in pursuing the American Dream? How does my past traumatic experience affect how I navigate and transform personal and social situations for change?

I thought of my students, who are mostly first-generation Latinx. Coming back from isolation, I am concerned for their social-emotional well-being. I would like to help my students raise awareness of trauma and emotional safety to counter stress caused by conflicting, controversial, and unsettling sentiments. As I began to brainstorm an integrated arts learning experience, it was clear to me that helping students to address the complexity of identities for acceptance and inclusion became a fundamental learning goal. These thoughts further motivated me to incorporate trauma-informed approaches to emphasize resilience and strength to address topics related to the American Dream, identity, and diversity.

Trauma-informed Approach

The uncertainty of Covid-19 and shifting instructional methods only made many educators become more resilient and flexible to help their students readjust to the challenges. Pica-Smith and Scannell (2020) stressed the need to provide psycho-social support to sort through unfamiliar

dynamics and complex emotions in the classroom. Trauma-informed pedagogy centers on human experiences, embrace authentic responses, welcomes vulnerability, and creates multiple pathways for better communication.

Artmaking, a non-verbal communication means, has long been recognized as a safe space for internal dialogues for makers to express and make sense of traumatic experiences and their lingering effects (Kay & Arnold, 2014; Wexler, 2004). Each artistic behavior or artistic decision, from the choice of materials to the techniques, can be interpreted as a direct response to help makers cope with unfamiliar surroundings (Chien, 2023) or untangle the complexity of a traumatic experience. To some extent, traumatic experience shapes artistic visions (Abramson & Abramson, 2019), and, in return, the artistic process can be viewed as mindful practices, providing mind-body experiences that further foster makers' self-growth, self-care, and self-awareness. Mindfulness practice facilitates creative processes to strengthen social engagement (Graham & Lewis, 2023). I believe that trauma-informed pedagogy through artmaking supports social-emotional learning, in which students practice self-reflection through the mindful learning process. Therefore, incorporating trauma-informed pedagogy through art became the basis of the Shadow Box Project.

The Shadow Box Project

I realized that shadow, the word bears the meaning of obscurity, being hidden, and concealed. It stands for the opposite of light, positivity, and optimism. Despite its negative connotation, one cannot deny its inseparable companionship to light. Such is true in art where shadow creates a depth of space, accentuates moods, and is often associated with conflicting moral values (Evil, deception, and falsity). In this vein, shadow stands for a well of knowledge that awaits us to reveal and discover. The aim of the Shadow Box Project is to encourage preservice teachers to exploit multiple perspectives on their own American Dream to redefine identity. To do so, I scaffolded elements of storytelling, personal narrative, visual metaphors, and data visualization for students to consider. To help students open up, as a class, I invited my students to meditate, traveling through time to pinpoint selective personal or family experiences before reframing their stories or constructing personal narratives. hooks (2010) reminded us that although individual stories provide limited perspectives, they "enchant and seduce" (p. 50) because telling a story and remembering a story not only help learners think critically to self-reflect and connect with one another but the process of self-actualization also transforms the storyteller. Indeed, sharing personal stories is a powerful way to expand our perspectives. By telling and listening to each other's stories, it shapes a community that values diverse voices. However, when discussing race and identity, it is important to be cautious and aware of the limitations and dangers of any given story and narrative. To help my students understand that possible hidden messages and agendas may misdirect, misinform, or misinterpret the meaning of the stories, I introduced Bell's (2009) four categories: stock, concealed, resistance, and counter stories. We discussed how different types of stories impact our perceptions of society. For the purpose of the Shadow Box Project, we focused on the entangled relationships between stock stories and concealed stories. We concluded that being widely accepted by the mainstream; stock stories are dominant narratives that may suppress opportunities for alternative perspectives. In comparison, co-existing but unknown to the public view, concealed stories are in the shadow, waiting to be heard and discovered. To unearth, documenting oral history and personal narratives is a primary method to collect new data to bring concealed narratives to light. This method builds a contextual foundation to further support students' creative process through arts-based pedagogy for the Shadow Box Project.

Arts-Based Pedagogy

Arts-based pedagogy encourages learners to utilize visuals as ways to comprehend, advance, and construct new knowledge (Wilson, 2019). As Justice (2017) noted "learning comes from relational actions with materials—doing knowing" (p. 39), to articulate and transform from ideas

to materials, from materials to artwork, is a process of meaning-making, which requires constant interpretations and reinterpretations. As students attend to complex and controversial topics related to identity, arts-based pedagogy allows students to welcome embodied knowledge as well as fluidic happenings (Cooper & Cooper, 2023). The self-reflective and transformative creative process helps students actively explore, navigate, associate, disassociate, and reposition with integrative perspectives. In the Shadow Box Project, preservice teachers needed to create a visual representation in a shadow box to reveal hidden stories. I laid out three arts-based stages to facilitate students' creative process — research and analyze, infer and reflect, and create and present — to encourage students to examine and analyze given context and visual representations related to social identities. The following is a brief description of each creative process:

(1) Research and Analyze

At the research and analysis stage, students collected a variety of data, such as interviews with family members, assembled photographs, memorabilia, recipes, and road maps, and researched related historical events, as foundations to further clarify their story angles. Once they made decisions on a theme, they streamlined their stories by referencing literacy components such as characters, settings, plots, points of view, conflicts, and solutions.

(2) Infer and Reflect

In the second stage, infer and reflect, I introduced the use of visual metaphors and symbols to translate and illustrate their stories with unique meanings. In addition, they are encouraged to apply data visualization to expand interpretations for meaning-making. The use of data visualization acts as an alternative language for preservice teachers to drive social awareness. For example, Ai Weiwei used 9,000 school backpacks to represent the number of children who perished in the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake. Office for Creative Research's winning piece, *We Were Strangers Once Too*¹ (2017) strategically placed the immigration data to pay tribute to immigrants who contributed to the cultural vibrancy and the development of New York City. These artworks are powerful reminders that data visualization can reveal patterns and strategically connect visual metaphors for critical knowledge. Inspired by these artworks, preservice teachers critically reexamined their data, made visual relationships, and inferred their findings through visual metaphors to further support their storytelling.

(3) Create and Present

During the third stage, create and present, students wrote a monologue or personal narrative to highlight several critical moments in their life in a shadow box. As life is a theater, these frozen-in-time reenacting scenes serve as gateways for students to articulate tones and expressions.

The Shadow Box Project spanned four three-hour studio sessions with additional outside-of-the-classroom time. Some students shared their dream of becoming a teacher; some highlighted family traditions; and some retraced their journey coming to the United States. Many students shared their Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) stories for the first time. Rosa Perez's work was one of them. To understand the impacts of the design of the Shadow Box Project, I chose Rosa's work and her voice as an example to tell a coherent story.

A Student's Narrative

Rosa's Narrative: The Making of the Shadow Box

"He canceled DACA." These are the words I heard about a month after just submitting my application. What does this mean? Did I make it through?

¹ Images of the artwork and related information can be found via <http://arts.timessquarenyc.org/times-square-arts/projects/at-the-crossroads/we-were-strangers-once-too/index.aspx>

Nobody can have it? What does it mean for those who didn't? What will happen to my family? It felt like a personal attack against me and my community. I couldn't understand why someone would want to do something that could change lives in such a negative way, attempting to purposefully strip them of their dreams and opportunities. My lawyer reached out to me and shared that I made it through. "De puro panzazo," referring to how I barely made it. I squeezed my butterfly wings through and in the process, I also started to catch sight of my wings starting to strip apart. Little did I know that this would be a glimpse to the rollercoaster of a journey as a DACA recipient.

As I was growing up, I experienced being labeled due to my documentation status, I felt unwanted. I never thought about the need to share because of fear. When Dr. Cooper introduced the Shadow Box Project, I was given the opportunity to talk about my identity and my journey. I had so much to share. As I cleared my thoughts, my mind and heart felt a sense of joy and excitement because I can tell my stories by using symbols, textures, and colors. I know my story will be embraced just as I will welcome others' stories with open arms.

My Status, My Identity

On June 15, 2012, President Obama announced Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), allowing undocumented individuals who came to the United States as children to obtain temporary and renewable work permits without deportation. Located in Eastern Washington State, where agriculture contributes a majority of the regional economy, relies on seasonal or contracted farmhands, which are predominantly Latinx. On September 5, 2017, President Trump rescind DACA, ending legal protections for 800,000 Dreamers (Romo et al., 2017).

DACA, the namesake, is something that I associate with opportunities, but it also represents pain and sadness at the same time. It represents the opportunity for employment and protection from deportation. It also stands for the pain and sadness of how the qualifications leave out so many people, how no new applicants are accepted at the moment, and the financial and mental burden of renewing it before the two years end. The complicated application process and changing policies leave out so many DACA hopefuls, "regardless of the ensuing Congressional decisions about DACA students, the vast majority of the undocumented do not have DACA" (Banh & Rodovic-Fanta, 2021, p. 12). For example, a month after my brothers submitted their applications, the process was *paused*, and they were not able to be granted DACA due to Trump ending the legal protection soon after he took office. Although my brothers are able to continue higher education, they have no legal status to obtain jobs, let alone pursue their American Dreams. What does this mean? Despite their hard work, the reality shows them no clear path to secure their future without social security. This uncertainty has impacted my family negatively. Suarez-Orosco et al. (2011) expressed that "the implications of growing up in an unauthorized family span a variety of developmental contexts shaping multiple outcomes, including psychological well-being, mental health, physical health, education, and employment" (p.462). The shifting decisions on DACA make us, the Dreamers, feel vulnerable, mocked, and played without warning.

As much as DACA has become part of my identity, DACA doesn't define me. I am a proud DACA recipient, a "Dreamer". I am proud of where I come from, where I was born, and all the dreams I plan to accomplish. However, having a DACA status is like wearing a small bandage over a wound. A bandage constantly ripped off, not letting the wound have any chance to heal properly. As if pouring salt over the wound, there's always a *survivor's guilt* that comes with having DACA. I wish I could split my DACA card into three to share with my two brothers. I want them to have the same opportunities I have.

My Shadow Box

Instead of using one box, I decided to retell my family stories in three connected boxes (Figure 1). Each recaptures an important life experience or critical moment in my family history. The first scene is about my dad's life as a child (Figure 2). My father had a traumatic childhood due to the death of his father. Life was challenging growing up in a remote part of Mexico with his mother and five other siblings. To capture the mood, I constructed a tiny home surrounded by dark clouds and my grandfather's tombstone.

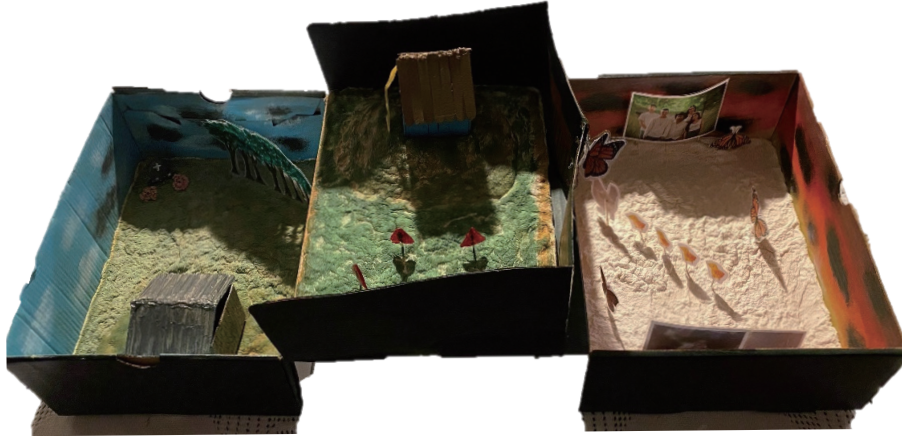


Figure 1. *My American Dream in A Shadow Box*, by Rosa I. Perez, 2022, Mixed Media.
Courtesy of artist.



Figure 2. *Dark Clouds and Grandfather's Tombstone* by Rosa I. Perez, 2022, Mixed Media.
Courtesy of artist.

The second scene is a blue house located in a remote part of the Michoacan, in “la sierra” (mountain area), where I spent the first four years of my life. I used hazard symbols to symbolize rising crime rates. As danger was getting closer to home, my family decided to immigrate to the United States (Figure 3).



Figure 3. *A Little Blue House; Danger Closing In*, by Rosa I. Perez, 2022, Mixed Media.
Courtesy of artist.

In between scenes two and three, I emphasize the border between Mexico and the United States (Figure 4). Several Monarch butterflies try to squeeze through the wires and holes in the wall. I painted the wall dark red color specifically to represent the dangers, challenges, and lives that have been harmed or lost at the border. It is the color of pain—tears and sweat mixed with blood drops.

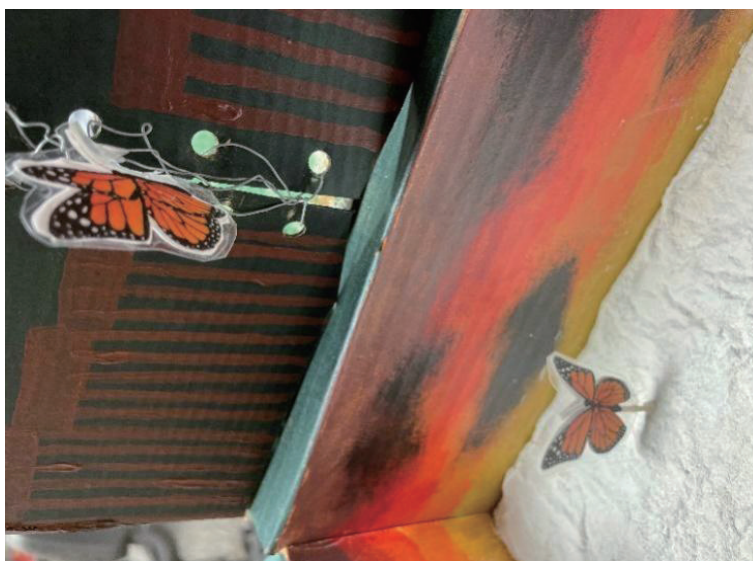


Figure 4. *Monarch Butter lies and the Tall Red Wall*, by Rosa I. Perez, 2022, Mixed Media.
Courtesy of artist.

The third scene describes my early years living in the United States. My family went through a difficult time due to my mother's passing. I used an array of family pictures to show the traumatic change in family structure. A rooster (my dad) leading four young chicks (me and my three siblings) represents the hardships my dad went through to raise his four children in a new country. He didn't speak the language and was barely making ends meet during a time when he was getting paid an average of \$7 an hour.

Discussions

Connecting Visual Narratives with Metaphors

The Shadow Box Project invites preservice teachers to creatively pinpoint and articulate a selected experience to retrace their stories. Some visual symbols have personal or familial significance, created and maintained from one generation to another. In essence, the use of visual symbols proactively bridges viewers' sensory perceptions. One student mentioned a preserved wisdom through generations of women in her family. As a tradition, young women would receive a bottle of perfume when reaching adulthood. The perfume bottle in her shadow box is a reminder that despite hardships in life, one needs to practice self-caring. Another student placed oversized rolling dice to highlight a special bond between her and her great-grandfather, who invented a family board game, *The Horse Race*. The object and the stories behind them pave the road for my students and their peers to connect with each other.

The use of visual symbols expands one's communication with others and helps convey invisible and complex messages. Rosa adopted widely accepted visual symbols to associate her identity. For example, the Monarch butterfly's annual migration to the North makes it a natural symbol of undocumented immigrant children. The images of Monarch butterflies became a united front for Rosa who shared similar experiences, challenges, and struggles with other DACA recipients. Monarch butterflies become a part of their shared identity. Another symbol was the border wall that was painted in rusted red with tears that one could only see up close. The wall referred to Trump's build-a-wall pledge, building massive barriers at the Mexico-US border, as gatekeepers for people who want to pursue their American Dreams. While the punched holes represented hope and the wire represented attitudes that appear to want to close the hopes and dreams, the wall also represents the division between her homeland and the United States. The red tears represented the sadness of leaving, the dangers, and the lives that have been lost at the border. Other examples of symbols in her work are the walls in the shadow box. In the first scene, the walls were blue skies and white clouds with a black cloud. This represents the happy childhood memories of her father and his sense of community with those who surrounded them. The black clouds represent their challenges with poverty and the death of her grandfather. The walls in the third scene are a sunset that is the background with black clouds. This is to represent the death of Rosa's mother and the impact of it.

Seeing Lights through the Shadow

As the instructor, Yichien is surprised by her students' artistic and emotional responses to the Shadow Box Project. It allowed students to listen and learn more about each other's life events. Besides Rosa, there were many DACA Dreamers who shared their journey to the United States. Many of them admitted that this is the first time they felt safe expressing their fear and anxiety. Many choked up with tears when talking about survivors' guilt, hardships, language barriers, stares, alienation, and challenges of fitting in. A preservice teacher used a pair of giant sunglasses to remind herself that it is with her parents' sacrifice, commitment, and hard work that she is able to see opportunities in her future. She realized that despite facing difficult circumstances, it is up to us to see things through different lenses and shades. Some showed gratitude to those who have lent a hand in the process of readjusting to a new country. Some looked at family heritage, cultural identity, and the value of life in a different light. For example, a student shared a family tradition. He and his siblings received watermelon seeds from their father when they started their own family. The watermelon seeds signify hopes for a new life and not forgetting their agricultural roots.

The Shadow Box Project has brought light to affirm Rosa's identity. In the process of making the artwork, she felt as if a spotlight was following her family's footsteps but also casting a shadow on their journey. The shadow is the hardship, frustration, and challenges related to DACA. We know it exists, but we do not talk about it. The shadow box shone a light on her through research and open dialogues with her family, which in return, helped her to embrace DACA as her identity.

Conclusion: Never Give Up the American Dream

For Rosa, receiving a DACA status has impacted her American Dream. When she was younger, her American Dream was simply to be successful, support her father, and own a piece of property. Now, her American Dream has shifted, longing for a day to be treated as a human, as an equal, with decency and respect. As a Dreamer, she sometimes feels that her hopes for the safety and security of her family's future are merely dreams. At the same time, she is afraid to one day wake up and realize that this American Dream is nothing but an illusion.

The Shadow Box Project allows Yichien to grow a deeper understanding of her students. Students' narratives and visual representations facilitated discussions to bring compassion, understanding, respect, and care for each other. Although the American Dream may be shattered and challenged, a moment of togetherness bonded by art and narratives helps to recharge and remind each other how strong and resilient we could be.

Instead of shielding students from discussing traumatic experiences, educators can take a proactive approach to establish supportive networks to help unpack muffled anxiety, stress, and physical harm through integrated arts sessions and narrative sharing. Creating a learning environment that is filled with openness and togetherness will help students embrace and welcome their own identities. Strategically using question prompts to facilitate dialogues. Invite students to share their identity stories. Encourage students to listen and understand how their own and others' American experiences transform how we perceive our society. It is essential to give students a voice, a chance to connect their past and present experiences, and a place for them to share triumphs, challenges, and vulnerability. These teaching and learning experiences will help them build self-awareness, self-confidence, and social awareness.

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