Discussing the Convergence of Research and the Creative Arts

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Research in New Keys
Shaun McNiff

An Introduction to the Ideas and Methods of Arts-Based Research

The guest editors dedicate their work in this issue to the legacy of Susanne K. Langer (1895-1985), a Cambridge neighbor of Lesley University and a major contributor to the tradition of arts-based inquiry.

The idea of arts-based research is proving to hold great appeal to scholars committed to using the fine arts in systematic ways to understand human experience and to explore new applications of the creative process to areas outside the arts. It is intriguing to envision how artistic inquiry, a process that researchers have for so long tried to explain according to non-arts disciplines, may begin to influence the larger ecology of knowledge and professional practice. But before the arts can realize their potential within this cross-fertilization of knowledge, we must define and establish their unique ways of researching experience.

Advancing the Vision of Susanne K. Langer

Arts-based research builds upon an intellectual tradition in which Susanne K. Langer merits special recognition. Her Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art (1951) is in my opinion the book that lays the most convincing conceptual foundations for our efforts to further the role of the arts in research. Langer’s influence can be attributed to the articulation of one essential idea, that all forms of symbolic transformation are not only basic human needs but they are also fundamental and intelligent modes of conception with each characterized by its unique framework of symbols that cannot be reduced to another system.

Well before the original 1942 publication of Philosophy in a New Key, Friedrich Nietzsche and other distinguished scholars such as the classicist Jane Harrison, Carl Jung in depth psychology, and John Dewey in education, declared that knowing is a transformative process that transcends the limits of analytic language. Langer’s influence resulted from the way she made her arguments within the systematic traditions of philosophy, the arts, and social science at a time when people began to feel empowered to think about all aspects of experience in new ways.

Speaking directly and persuasively to scholars, Susanne Langer championed a more expansive vision of mind. She documented how even studies of knowledge that “regarded mental life as greater than discursive reason” and that made a place at the table for “insight” and “intuition,” ultimately associated these faculties with “unreason” and “incommunicable”
feelings outside the realm of abstract thought (1951, p. 85). Within the philosophical tradition of epistemology, Langer made a forceful case for sensory knowing, perceptual thinking, and the way in which the arts communicate concepts. Like Rudolf Arnheim, who essentially created the psychology of art during the same period within American higher education (1954, 1971), Langer revealed the serious and limiting bias conveyed by the belief that discursive reason was the only road to knowledge.

The significant growth of fields such as the arts in therapy and education has been based upon Langer’s position that people need to express them and transform experience in ways that transcend linear speech and texts. But when it comes to presenting the outcomes of this work and researching artistic expression, there has been a tendency to fall back upon conventional discursive ways of knowing and communicating with others. It is almost as if we do not trust the arts in the area of serious intellectual inquiry and revert to the intellectual assumptions criticized by Susanne Langer, believing that only discursive disciplines such as the social sciences can convey real knowledge. The pattern of reducing artistic expressions to these seemingly more acceptable systems continues today.

As professionals working in the domain of artistic symbols, we have been too quick to explain ourselves within psychological paradigms and research models that do not resonate with our essential nature. When we do not trust and respect the intellectual and descriptive power of our own symbols, how can we expect this from others? Langer describes how “the triumph of empiricism in science is jeopardized by the surprising truth that our sense-data are primarily symbols” (p. 29). It is no wonder that there is confusion about research within the arts-based professions like the creative arts therapies where the attempt to justify ourselves according to social science research methods involves a process of translation from the arts to other symbolic disciplines, far removed from artistic expressions.

It is time to take the more creative phase of action suggested by Susanne Langer’s Philosophy in a New Key. Strongly influenced by music, Langer metaphorically proposes that rather than laboring tediously in the same key, we can play our instruments of inquiry in more imaginative, complex, and intelligent ways. The mind transforms itself and grows more intelligent when new connections are made amongst disciplines and when we exercise faculties other than the perfunctory ones that have held too much sway over our definitions of knowledge. This expanded vision of research embraces mathematics, language, and science, but it also recognizes that the world of symbols is large and contains many other things.

**What We Can and Cannot Describe**

When Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “What you do drowns out what you are saying,” he gave one of the clearest affirmations for what we are attempting to achieve within arts-based
research where we focus on what people do and how it influences others. But please do not interpret what I am saying as a dismissal of the role of language, the very medium that I am using here to advance arts-based research. As we formulate new methods of inquiry through the arts, analytic language is a fundamental and necessary partner. And I want to emphasize how within the realm of language and verbal expression, we also have poetry, literature, and drama, all of which are essential arts-based modes of inquiry. The issue for me is one of recognizing the limits of description and what can be translated from one realm of experience to another. Analytic language has the same limitations when it tries to describe the emotion aroused by a poem as when it responds to a dance. But at the same time the insightful use of language can further our appreciation of these expressions.

From my personal work with arts-based research in over three decades of studio groups exploring how art heals, I have learned that language is not only an essential contributor to the process but it has been the connecting link to people outside the immediate studio environment. Although participants in my studios often say that their deepest experiences in this milieu “cannot be described in words,” I nevertheless continue to do my best to describe various aspects of the work to others and I find that this information supports the overall enterprise. The words I use are impressions of impressions that hopefully generate further impressions and expressions in others. Although verbal descriptions of experience have limitations, it is clear that we need to talk and write about what we do in our arts-based inquiries. I might be proven wrong someday by a new generation of researchers who conduct studies and record outcomes via symbolic transformations that lie completely outside the scope of discursive language and I welcome these explorations.

A realistic appreciation of language as a collaborator in arts-based research is enhanced by acknowledging what it cannot do. Langer described how an artistic symbol is “untranslatable” with its meaning being “bound to the particular form which it has taken” and inexplicable to “any interpretation” (p. 220). She goes on to describe how art’s “worst enemy...is literal judgment” (p. 223).

In my experience, the way in which people have labeled images and reduced them to simplistic psychological concepts has resulted in the equally one-sided declaration that all interpretation is wrong. I prefer to re-visit the process of interpretation as nothing other than our most fundamental way of understanding experience that by necessity makes use of all of our faculties. The interpretive process integrates all of the senses and it is our most basic mode of orientation in the world. The problem Langer describes results from absolute and literal judgments that do not appreciate that knowing is a process of constructive and creative interpretation of experience.

The realization that a musical performance can only be grasped within its particular sphere of expression leads to the question of how language might assist this understanding without misconstruing and damaging the core experience. Words draw attention to particular aspects
of the music, make connections to similar works and patterns in other spheres of expression, identify unique qualities, and so forth. The key to the intelligent use of language in the interpretation of art and other experiences is sensitivity to the interplay amongst symbol systems and the realization that one domain can never be completely contained by another. When conducting research through other forms of artistic expression, language enables us to have the thoroughly human dialogue about what we experience while honoring what cannot be expressed in words. We also appreciate how artistic expressions stand on their own and we return again and again to them, just as we do with another person, for new conversations realizing that meaning will never be fixed or exhausted.

The creative imagination can be defined as a realm where all of the faculties work together and where no one mode is superior to another. Language furthers the integration of expressive modalities and in so doing generates new ideas and insights that emerge from the process of interaction. Arts-based research can also contribute to enhancing the language we use to describe experience. As James Hillman (1978) emphasizes, psychology has relied too much on unimaginative and lifeless academic language. In addition to affirming the place of language in our work, we can strive to use it more creatively, to take a leadership role in improving the language used to communicate the process and outcomes of research.

**Origins of this Project**

I am pleased and surprised by the positive way in which my 1998 book Art-based Research has been received. I ventured into unexplored territory in this book and was prepared to receive little response or even ridicule by those who consider themselves the guardians of traditional research methods. I had the same feeling in 1992 with the publication of Art as Medicine: Creating a Therapy of the Imagination where I used my own paintings as a way of exploring, understanding, documenting, and communicating the process of imaginal dialogue. The response to both books and to Lenore Wadsworth Hervey's Artistic Inquiry in Dance/Movement Therapy (2000) indicates a desire for information about how the arts can be used as ways of researching experience.

Readers of Art-based Research have described the usefulness of the section listing numerous suggestions and samples of possible research projects--comparative assessments of how we feel after working with different media; whether the scale of an artwork generates distinct energetic reactions in the artist and/or a person who perceives the work; the extent to which structural and expressive qualities of images generate corresponding effects upon the people who interact with them; how the quality of responses to artworks determines their expressive impact; comparative analyses of how responding to images through different sense modalities enhances appreciation and understanding; and so forth. Therefore, when Bill Stokes, Editor of The Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice, invited me to be a guest editor for an issue of the Journal, I decided that there was a need for samples of research projects initiated by a larger circle of people, and we conceived of an issue providing brief
vignettes of studies that have already been conducted and others that might be carried out in the future.

With the goal of expanding my own perspective on this subject, I asked Phillip Speiser to serve as co-editor and to take an active role in planning the issue and selecting authors. Phillip immediately suggested changing the term “art-based research” to “arts-based research.” Although I have always approached “art” as a phenomenon that includes all of the arts, in the tradition of the German word, Kunst, I welcomed Phillip’s shift in terminology realizing that it reflects our commitment to all of the arts.

We asked the authors to create examples of projects, and their contributions enlarge the community of arts-based research by presenting an exciting spectrum of research methods and innovative literary styles for presenting outcomes. These varied and thoroughly innovative materials affirm that we have only made the first scratches into this rich vein of inquiry, suggesting that the discipline of arts-based research, like art itself, will spiral into many new phases of creation as increasing numbers of people participate.

"I thank the authors for their contributions and I am especially pleased that our group includes two journal editors who have supported the first phases of growth in arts-based research, Robert Landy, past Editor in Chief of *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, and Stephen Levine, Editor of *Poiesis: A Journal of the Arts and Communication*, who have joined together with Gene Diaz, Bethe Hagens, Suzanne Hanser, Lenore Wadsworth Hervey, Lynn Kapitan, Linda Lack, Vivien Marcow Speiser, Martin Perdoux, Zayda Sierra, Susan Spaniol, Nancy Toncy, Phillip Speiser, and me to create this issue. My doctoral advisee, Susan Fusco, assisted me in editing and organizing the manuscripts and her consultation is greatly appreciated and we are all indebted to Leonardo March for his work in presenting the essays on the Internet. Finally, I extend a special thanks to Bill Stokes for honoring us all with the opportunity to create the last issue of his distinguished tenure as Founding Editor of *The Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice*. And thanks to the new Editors, Gene Diaz and Danielle Georges, together with best wishes for the work ahead."
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Artists, Arts Educators, and Arts Therapists as Researchers
Phillip Speiser

In recent times, the role of the artist in society has been expanded to encompass the fields of education and human services. Since the 1960s, thousands of professionals have been trained in new roles as creative arts educators and therapists. These artists/educators/therapists are changing and transforming the institutions in which they work and the services they offer.

Research in these fields has often been informed by traditional social science and/or case study methodologies. The articles presented in this journal are intended as one small step towards advancing a complementary field of research that places the artist and the creative process at the foreground, allowing methodology to emerge from this experience. The authors are all artists. They are also educators and/or therapists. They each present examples of how they attempt to make meaning out of questions that are important to them through artistic inquiry. All of the researchers are fully engaged in their creative processes. Some explore issues around self and identity. Others deal with effecting change in therapeutic and educational systems or within client/student relationships. In every instance the author’s commitment to his/her particular art form is the guiding medium of inquiry and the vehicle through which the research emerges.

Many individuals in our field have begun to call for the further development of what is now being called “arts-based research” (Kapitan, 2003; Hervey, 2000; McNiff, 1998; Allen, 1995; Limesch, 1995).

Drawing on McNiff’s (1998, p.13) definition of art-based research, we define “arts-based research” as a method of inquiry that uses the elements of the creative arts experience, including the making of art by the researcher, as ways of understanding the significance of what we do within our practice and teaching. As defined in the American Heritage Dictionary, the word “research” means “to study thoroughly.” The authors contributing to this issue of the Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice shape a new vision of what research can be, when the arts are used as the basis for in-depth investigation. They each enter a creative process deeply committed to the discovery of new knowledge and to finding meaning through their particular artistic modalities. They form their own methodologies and set their standards of measurement, each particular to the various arts modalities they use.

The creative arts therapy and education professions are by nature interactive. In order to capture this interaction, the contributors also create their individualized forms of inquiry that reflect the various languages of the arts. Experimentation occurs with the manipulation of
various artistic forms of expression. Personal engagement with the images, symbols, and forms parallels the engagement of the clients and students with whom the contributors work. The ability to embrace connections amongst the three components of self, other, and art is unique to the creative arts therapy and education fields.

My co-editor Shaun McNiff sets the epistemological tone for the following articles offering different approaches to arts-based inquiry by describing how this work is part of a larger academic tradition of authors. He reminds us of the importance of the philosopher Susanne K. Langer and her contribution towards understanding the intricacies between spoken and symbolic language development. The challenge ahead regarding arts-based research is clearly formulated by McNiff’s belief, “that all forms of symbolic transformation are not only basic human needs but they are also fundamental and intelligent modes of conception with each characterized by its unique framework of symbols that cannot be reduced to another system.”

Stephen K. Levine follows this introduction with further reflections on the philosophical foundations of arts-based research. He unravels the complexities that lie ahead for a true “arts-base” for research activity and we are given a clear and concise understanding of how the question, “What is arts-based research?” is located in the rich traditions of Socrates and the ancient Greeks. Levine emphasizes the challenge of understanding the important relationship between thought, symbolic language, and imagination. He describes how “…in the Platonic dialogues themselves, the tension between image and word, imagination and thought, is maintained, not eliminated.”

If art is a way of knowing by doing then clearly arts-based research must follow this tenet of allowing for “knowing” to emerge out of the creative process and finding adequate ways to document this process. Robert Landy begins the presentation of multi-faceted approaches to arts-based research by identifying his core motivation for delving into his “Search of a Form for Playing God”—the need to engage in spiritual dialogue with his children. His research is a poignant example of how the self, other, and language/dramatic arts feed into one another, interacting over many years and transforming the personal realm of experience into the larger universal sphere of belief and meaning making.

Mary Clare Powell demonstrates an original model for arts-based research that allows her own poetry to interact with that of her adult students as they explore the question of what personal changes occurred as they participated in a graduate school Creative Arts and Learning teacher training. Poetry is used here as the modus operandi for guiding the research process and as a means of documenting self-discovery and growth.

The therapeutic relationship between client and therapist is one that has received much attention in modern times. Susan Spaniol explores how art therapy can be integrated into a Participatory Action Research model that brings clients and therapists together in a
nonauthoritarian, nonhierarchical weekend workshop setting. The use of visual art as a collaborative activity is successfully integrated into the model demonstrating how authenticity and community building can be achieved when traditional hierarchies are dissolved.

In the next article, Lynn Kapitan applies visual art towards an exploration of “artist disenchantment” with art therapists. Here the author identifies two goals: to reveal aesthetically the phenomena of artist disenchantment and to transform it. She embarks on a creative process with “other” colleagues and together finds meaning as she also introduces innovative methods for “holding” and “beholding” images.

Gene Diaz and Zayda Sierra introduce a cross-cultural arts-based perspective as they describe their attempt towards influencing the disparities between school cultures and children’s sociocultural realities in Colombia. Working with dramatic play as the medium, they present a systematic approach that leads to curriculum enhancement - addressing the diversity of the student populations in Colombian schools.

The next two contributions from Hervey/Toncy and Linda Lack highlight two inquiries using the medium of dance. Lenore Wadsworth Hervey & Nancy Toncy engage in a creative dialogue as they describe a project carried out by Toncy, with Hervey as supervisor, involving the empowerment of six Egyptian Muslim women living in Cairo, Egypt. Toncy uses the materials gathered from her movement interviews to create her own dance, as a method for further integration between “self” inquiry and “other.”

Linda Lack immerses herself in a creative process originating in her dance studio, attempting to find methodology that will assist her in sorting through the intricacies between “primary experience” and language. Her research leads her to a movement experience that explores the relationship between performer and “active recipient.”

Arts-based research is used by Bethe Hagens to further the planning of a Symposium designed to facilitate communication between faculties from two institutions that have recently participated in a comprehensive merger. The “research project” slowly emerges as she first builds a Labyrinth and then follows her creative process and allows the Labyrinth to become a central communicative component in implementing the Symposium.

The final three contributions each share a deep personal story as their starting point for embarking on an artistic-inquiry-research process. These processes are ongoing in their lives and somehow mirror or follow the development of each person. Suzanne B. Hanser recounts a painful moment in time, giving birth to her daughter-- stillborn. This event is the motivation for a series of innovative music therapy research projects, which she describes.

Martin Perdoux describes his long-term process of self-discovery through engagement in visual art, sculpture and prose. The starting point of creative embarkation is the discovery in
1982 that he is not the son of his mother’s husband. What follows is an account of personal transformation that slowly unfolds through the shape of visual objects and storytelling.

And finally, Vivien Marcow Speiser & Phillip Speiser present their work-in-progress regarding their ongoing attempts at “making sense” from the “non-sensical” personal realities that they share through their families’ experiences during the Holocaust.

It is my hope that the contributions in this journal will continue to expand the parameters for doing artistic research and that they will stimulate us to continue the discourse. The artist, artist educator, and artist therapist emerge as legitimate researchers using their own realm of expression. Perhaps the next stage of our evolution as a profession will allow the same creative spirit that brought us into existence fifty years ago, to shape our own arts-based system of research, firmly rooted in the principles of creative process and artistic inquiry.

I would like to thank my co-editor and friend Shaun McNiff for inviting me to co-edit this journal. I also thank the authors for their contributions. Lastly, thanks go to William Stokes, editor of the Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice, for his invaluable support and encouragement.
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“What is arts-based research” As soon as we ask this question, we have stepped outside the realm of research itself. The question, “What is it?”, is fundamentally a philosophical question, as Socrates showed. In this essay, I would like to provide a philosophical perspective on the question of what arts-based research is.

In journals devoted to the creative and expressive therapies, we can see many examples of projects being carried out according to established scientific methodology. Whether the studies be quantitative or qualitative in nature, they follow procedures that are methodically established. Often, as Shaun McNiff points out in Art-Based Research (1998), the motivation of these studies is to justify the arts therapies in the eyes of other professionals, to establish that we are “legitimate,” and deserve to be accorded a place at the table of mental health professionals.

The problem with many of the current research projects in the arts therapies is that they lack imagination. They are as dry as dust. They lack the very quality of that which they are investigating – the aesthetic dimension of our work, that which excites us, turns us on, makes our breath come faster: the erotic, dynamic vitality of the arts. Heraclitus said that everything is fire; the world is alive. The task of our thinking should, therefore, be to capture the aliveness of our being, to follow it until it expresses itself in words.

One of the sub-themes of McNiff’s book is the concept of “energy”: the imagination is energetic. Images possess energy, and they demand that we respond to them with the energy of our own imagination. If we try to think the image, we must find an imaginative, energetic way of thinking. Otherwise we will kill it: as Wordsworth says, “We murder to dissect.” And ultimately, in that case, we will turn against thinking itself.

The danger today is that we will take for granted the conventional opinion that “research” means following an established scientific methodology. We will thereby produce studies that no one will want to read and, conversely, we will allow thinking to be defined in a way that will make us see it as a danger to experience. Students habitually speak of the expressive therapies as “non-verbal,” thereby not only neglecting the obvious verbal dimension of the arts (poetry, story-telling, drama) but also showing a fear that to use words means to reduce
the rich, creative field of sensible experience to an arid, logical plain, to turn the living into the dead.

This conception of thought as antagonistic to the imagination goes back at least as far as Plato. What is interesting, however, is that in the Platonic dialogues themselves, the tension between image and word, imagination and thought, is maintained, not eliminated. In The Republic, Socrates bans the poets from the just city, because, in his view, their images distort reality and stir the passions, thereby creating public disorder. Nevertheless, the style of the book itself reveals its imaginative dimension: thinking is carried out in the form of a dramatic dialogue; the main ideas are presented through metaphor; and the entire work ends with the re-counting of a myth that purports to tell about the nature of that which we cannot know by logical reasoning alone. All the Platonic dialogues have an aesthetic dimension. Moreover, they are animated by a passionate and combative (even aggressive) thinking that stirs the reader, making his or her own thoughts come alive. After Plato, this aesthetic, imaginative dimension is largely lost in the Western concept of knowledge.

It is not until Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy that we encounter a philosophical text that is suffused with the imaginative dimension. Nietzsche, trained as a classical philologist, eschewed the scholarly apparatus of his time and engaged creatively with his subject: the “What is it?” of Greek tragic drama – the highest expression, he thought, of art itself. German-language scholarship saw the greatness of tragedy in its language, the articulated expression of an orderly, harmonious way of being. The hubris, or overweening pride, of the hero creates a disorder in the cosmos that can only be corrected by his fall. The speech of the tragic characters is an attempt to restore order to the world.

For Nietzsche, on the other hand, exclusive focus on the texts of the tragedies reveals a failure of scholarly imagination. Only the texts have been handed down, we read them as if they were literature, thereby neglecting the performative dimension which is the essence of theater. If, however, we were to imagine the texts being performed in front of an audience, we would come to understand them in a new way. The role of the chorus, in particular, would appear in its full significance. The chorus does not engage in discourse; it dances and sings. Choral song and dance, far from being an impediment to the “real” stuff of tragedy, the speech of the individual actors, is the very foundation of the art. Tragedy, for Nietzsche, arises out of communal song and dance; the measured speech of the protagonists takes place against this collective, bodily expression.

This vision of tragedy lead Nietzsche to a more far-reaching perspective: he saw the whole of Greek culture, seemingly so harmonious and serene, as a response to a basic experience of the chaos of life. It is because life is chaotic, conflictual, passionate, violent – in a word, “alive” that the Greek tragic artists were able to forge works that embodied both the eros and
the logos of existence. The greatness of Greek tragic drama – and indeed of all art – is in its ability to marry these two dimensions of our being. Nietzsche embodied these two aspects of life in the images of two gods of Greek mythology: Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo, the god of light, of justice, of individuality and rational thought (Socrates – patron, in fact) is contrasted with Dionysus, the god of the underworld, of the vine, of communal revelry, suffering and redemption. The Apollonian and the Dionysian are the two great forces or principles of existence: order and chaos, mind and body, reason and passion, science and art – all the great antitheses of life are embodied in this imaginative conception. The strength of Nietzsche's vision lies not in a rejection of the Apollonian (this was the Nazi's deliberate misreading of Nietzsche's work), but in a realization that the Apollonian is only possible on the basis of the Dionysian, that logos depends on eros, and that we are in danger of creating a world in which the erotic dimension is denied (or rather, since it will not be denied, that there will be what Freud later called a return of the repressed,” that it will manifest itself as a blind and self-destructive passion to master existence by logic, a passion that may yet lead us to the destruction of the earth).

It would be well for arts therapists to keep this Nietzschean vision in mind: if, in our research, we lose the Dionysian dimension of our work, we lose thereby its very foundation. We need to harness the energetic dimension of aesthetic experience and join it to the articulate expression of artistic form. Art is always Apollonian - there is, as the Danish artist and therapist Majken Jacoby puts it, a “necessity of form” but form must have a dynamic basis in order to be alive, to seize us with the power of the gods.

Art-based research, then, needs to pay attention to both dimensions of our work; it must honor the demand for clarity, order, form, meaning, logic, and all the other dimensions of the Apollonian, but it must also embody the passionate, erotic, vital basis of the arts. If we ask, “Is this science?”, we must be clear that we know what science is, that we do not take for granted an Apollonian conception of knowing which would betray the very heart of what we seek to understand.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his great work, Truth and Method, contrasts the methodical procedures of scientific rationality with the capacity of art to reveal a deeper truth about human existence. For Gadamer, truth can never be reached by method. “Truth,” for him (following Heidegger), is not mere correctness of correspondence to a preexisting reality; rather, truth is the uncovering of the meaning of being. Such an uncovering demands that we enter into a dialogic relationship with that which we seek to understand, a relationship in which not only the being of the thing we study, but also our own being comes into question. The experience of a work of art is for Gadamer an archetype of the revelation of truth. To understand the work demands more than a detached objectivity; rather, we confront the work with our own existence in a passionate encounter in which it speaks to us in a way that shatters our preconceptions. As Rilke says in the “archaic Torso of Apollo,” the message of the
work is, “You must change your life.”

A “method” based on the detached observation of an objective state-of-affairs neglects our involvement in what we interrogate and runs the risk of reducing the phenomenon to what we already know. The truth that matters to us is the truth of our existence; to reach it requires that we put ourselves at stake in the enterprise of knowledge. This does not mean that we must be against “science,” the controlled objectivity of scientific method is wholly appropriate to the objects that it interrogates. Otherwise we run the risk of prejudicing our understanding with our own point of view. In natural science, the formation of the object of research explicitly attempts to “bracket” all particular perspectives in favor of an objectivity that would extend to any possible knower, regardless of their point of view.

We can extend this concept of “method” to “human nature” as well; there is no aspect of human life that cannot be studied objectively, quantified and analyzed. And there are many occasions when this is useful to do so. But it is a mistake to think that the methodology of natural science is the solely appropriate one for the study of human beings, for in this case we are what we are studying – the truth that we seek is not only a truth of knowing, it is a truth of being, and we seek it with our whole being, with our emotions and our imagination, as much as with our cognitive faculties – indeed we know ourselves primarily through these non-cognitive (or at least “non-logical,” because often contradictory) means.

Art, as Aristotle said (and as Pat Allen has recently reminded us), is a way of knowing. It is poiesis, knowing by making, as contrasted with theoria, knowing by observing, and praxis, knowing by taking action. This making is a forming. The German word, Bildung, meaning the process of cultivation or education, has the root Bild (image) in it. Poetic knowledge proceeds by way of the imagination; we make forms embodying images that reveal the truth of what we see. This is not the literal truth of representation; art does not re-present, it makes present, and what it makes present, ultimately, (to paraphrase Jean-Luc Nancy) is presence itself – the coming into being of the world.

To base our research in the arts means to engage the imagination in the forming of our concepts and in the carrying-out of the project itself. Not only may the initial inspiration come in the encounter with an image, but the conduct of research should itself be imaginative. We must have faith that the imagination can inform us, that art is not non-cognitive but that it binds together both feeling and form in a way that can reveal truth.
The example of Nietzsche may hold a key. It is not just that Nietzsche is able to conceive of two fundamental principles of existence and hold them together in his thinking; more importantly, he does so by means of the imagination itself. By naming “Apollo” and “Dionysus” as central figures in his thinking instead of saying “science” and “art,” he marries image and thought, the aesthetic and the rational. Unlike Plato, however, he does so within a framework in which both terms of the opposition are accounted for. This is imaginative, passionate thinking – a model, I believe, for arts-based research.

“Art-based research” may be a contradiction in terms, but, as Jacques Derrida might say, “Vive la differance!” This kind of research takes place in the liminal space of the imagination in which contradictions can co-exist. The poet John Keats once said that an artist needs the “negative capability” of being able to live with uncertainty and contradiction without irritably searching for reasons. In trying to understand the essence of art-based research, let us use our negative capability of being open not only to scientific cognition but also to artistic imagination. The result may not only produce a new vision of research but a new conception of our lives as well.
Research-Based Art
Robert Landy

It could be that each of us awakes each morning with any number of research questions circulating around our brains. Some are practical, personal and immediate – How do I manage an emotional wound suffered by my children? Others are philosophical and more subliminal – What is God and how can I engage in spiritual dialogue? In both examples, research can be seen as a search for an answer to a complex question that seems to elude a simple answer, but that also propels the search and re-search.

As an academic, I engage in research in my discipline, drama therapy, in order to raise and attempt to answer difficult questions. Being in an arts-based discipline, I have researched some of the questions aesthetically. And yet, as one attempting to link the domain of art to that of social science, I have also approached solutions to research problems from qualitative paradigms common to anthropology, psychology, and sociology.

I have come to believe that whatever methodological approach we take to research, the origins of the questions are the same—they begin at home, in personal, unresolved dilemmas and questions that keep surfacing as hard as we try to repress them. This paper is about a process that began in 1996 at my kitchen table when my 7 year old daughter announced that a friend accused her of killing Christ. I write this on Ash Wednesday, 2004, the day that Mel Gibson’s film, “The Passion of the Christ,” opened to some controversy. Gibson was accused by some of making an anti-Semitic film that would ignite the issue of deicide, demonizing the Jews as killers of Christ. Deicide entered my young daughter’s life, re-stimulating my own struggle with the same issue, and in response to her story, told to me long before viewing a Hollywood version of the killing of Christ, it was time for me to act.

As a father, I comforted my daughter and her younger brother, assuring them that the Romans and not the Jews actually did the killing. I tried to explain that as much I loved stories and used them daily in my work, when told from a particular perspective they can perpetuate prejudice and bigotry. I had trouble finding the right language to express this thought to a 5 and 7 year old, but I thought they got the point. Although they, too, had trouble finding the words to engage with me, they had no trouble conveying their feelings in another expressive language. Both drew pictures of the crucifixion. My daughter, Georgie, drew a bloody scene, with a mysterious figure poking a sword into the body of the crucified Christ. When I asked her about the drawing she told me: “The guy with the sword is Chinese. He is not me.” It was clear to me that as a Jewish girl, she did not want to bear the burden of deicide.

My son, Mackey, also drew an intriguing and revealing picture. He created a sad figure in a cage, surrounded by images of the crucified Christ. When I asked him about it, he replied:
“That is a Jew and the Jew is in jail.” I reasoned that Mackey subliminally understood the consequences of deicide. The Jew would be locked up and like the pathetic figure in Kafka's “In the Penal Colony,” he would never be able to escape the source of his transgression.

My children's drawings were a revelation to me. I wanted to know more. I wondered how other children would respond to remarks about their religion and their gods. By reassuring my children that they were not god-killers, I hoped that I would reassure myself. But a part of me knew that my words and my sentiments were not enough. And so I decided to search for more information from more children. My first impulse was to take the next plane to Germany and speak to the grandchildren of former Nazis to see if they harbored the kinds of anti-Semitic fervor that led to the holocaust. But I knew that I would hardly be objective and so I slowed down my process and carefully thought through my approach. This was to be a research project and my research question changed from: “Are children anti-Semitic?” to: “How do children see God and why does it matter?”

Over a period of three years, I collected interviews from more than 500 children from all around the world, from multiple cultures and spiritual traditions. Because I could not travel to every locale, I trained colleagues in different cultures to do some of the interviews. I decided not to do the German interviews myself, to ensure some degree of distance. Each interview involved asking the children to respond to the following:

1. Draw a picture of God that shows what God looks like and where God lives.

2. Tell a story about the picture.

3. If you were God in this picture, what are you saying? Are you speaking to anybody or anything? Who are you speaking to? If you are not speaking to anyone, whom might you be speaking to?

4. I am now going to play God and speak the words you just spoke. You will be the person or thing God is speaking to. Please answer in any way you want.

5. Tell me who you are (as the person God is speaking to). What is your name?

6. Can you make up a title for the picture? What is the picture called?

7. Is there anything else you want to say about the picture or about the role-play?

8. (If there are no antagonistic, bad or malevolent characters in the picture, ask the additional question:) Does God have any enemies, anyone who wants to fight God? If so, can you name
them and tell me something about them? If you’d like, add the enemies to your picture.

9. (If you feel that the picture and/or story is not clear or incomplete, please prompt the children with supplementary questions, such as:) Tell me more about the house, the cross, the sky, etc.

10. Do you believe in God? (If the response is a simple yes or no, please ask for more detail.)

I collected the stories and drawings of God and all the responses. In a phenomenological fashion I collated and analyzed the data. In considering the results, I recognized that children living in differing political, economic, and cultural circumstances responded in unique ways, even though there appeared to be many similarities that transcended particular cultural conditions. Given the differences and the similarities and the many contradictions, I decided to present my findings as a list of descriptive statements that exist along a continuum of paired opposites. This is how I saw the children’s views of God:

1. God is visible and invisible, present and absent. God is revealed and hidden, tangible and mysterious.

2. God is a force in nature and a supernatural spirit.

3. God is human and superhuman. God is like me and very different from me.

4. God is masculine and feminine. God is both genders and no gender.

5. God is domestic and homeless.

6. God is in our hearts and in the sky.

7. God hates and God loves. God is punitive and forgiving.

8. God is silent and God communicates.

9. God is one and many. God is whole and in pieces.

10. God is a healer and a wounded being in need of healing.

And, somewhat tentatively, I offered 4 summary findings:
1. God lives. I recalled the old Hasidic saying that God is present wherever people let him in. The children I interviewed let God in. They see the living God not only in the framework of conventional religious traditions but also in terms of a spiritual consciousness independent of institutionalized religion.

2. God is a creation of children and indeed, all of us. Throughout the research, I discovered ironically that it is God who is created in the image of man. In interviewing the children I learned that for many, creating God is a powerful and healing act. This observation has therapeutic implications in that many of the children appeared to be working through concerns and fears about mortality and immortality, war and peace, bigotry and kindness, poverty and plenty as they drew their pictures and told their stories.

3. God is vulnerable and very human. God has enemies. God gets lost and lonely. God works hard and becomes tired. Sometimes God gets weak and loses heart and requires the special power of the child to make him whole again. Not only is man the creator of God, but also the restorer.

4. How we see God is determined by many factors—our age, our religion, our parents' beliefs, our socio-economic and political realities. It is difficult to come to any clear conclusions as to which factors are most and least significant in determining our perceptions of God. But I have discovered, however tentatively, that cultural factors seem to be stronger than religious ones. (see Landy, 2001).

To attempt to put closure on this experience, I wrote two books. The first, *How We See God and Why It Matters* (2001), began as a conventional qualitative research document, with related literature and a careful delineation of my procedures and data analysis. But that approach seemed to belie the personal nature of the experience, and so I wrote a more personal book, engaging with the children's images and responding with my own stories. As such, the book took the form, in part, of an autobiographical memoir. At times it even read like a travel book as I moved from culture to culture, attempting to contextualize the children's stories and drawings.

In the end, the book felt incomplete to me. For one, I wanted a way to directly speak to children. And so I wrote another book, *God Lives in Glass* (2001a), featuring a number of drawings and abstracting a number of stories about the drawings, all from the child's point of view. That book felt more satisfying as it was accessible, less personal and more of an aesthetically-pleasing product, closer to my experience of the process.

And then the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon were attacked on September 11, 2001, just weeks after the release of these books. Again I worked with children through a creative process, helping them to tell their stories and to transform their stories into drama with the aim of transforming their fears into hope. This work, a kind of research in itself, culminated in

The terrorist attacks provoked many feelings. One was that I felt unsatisfied for not achieving my goal of understanding religious intolerance as filtered through the eyes of children. Three days after 9/11, at a scheduled reading, I read the children's words aloud to a small audience in a bookstore, and I thought: How could a figure of procreativity and harmony shine its light equally upon tolerant people and those who kill randomly in the name of their god? The *Standing Tall* experience pointed me back to the creative process as the more appropriate research path toward answering my question. I needed to take the work on children and God down that same path. The artist in me needed to reach my audience in a more immediate way.

Coincidentally, shortly after 9/11, I was asked to tell stories from my books as part of a storytelling series sponsored by the New York University Program in Educational Theatre at the Provincetown Playhouse in New York City. Instead, I wrote a play and performed it with my daughter. In the play, I narrated the story of my search for meaning through the children's drawings and stories and role plays of God. The performance felt better, more embodied and dialogical. It felt powerful to share some of my experience with an audience, but after it was over, I still felt that something was missing. In hindsight I think that it was a more immediate presence. My research process was hardly over even though I had transformed the initial research-based narrative of the book into a play and performed it with my daughter, thereby, I hoped, moving toward the healing of her wound. It wasn't enough, however, to play myself or to play with my daughter. What seemed to be missing was a more direct experience with the figure of the divine. We needed to play with the divine or in some way to embody the divine, and to do so, the divine needed to be present. And so my research question became: how can I make the divine present? The methodology, short of prayer, was to be arts-based. The challenge was to find the appropriate art form.

Although I generally express myself as an artist through writing and theatre, my earliest means of creative expression was through music. Through a series of synchronistic events, I teamed up with a composer, Keith Thompson, and musical theatre director, Greg Ganakas, to create a musical version of the piece which came to be known as God Lives in Glass. The musical was created during the summer and Fall of 2003 and performed by a group of professionals and NYU music theatre students at the Provincetown Playhouse in September, 2003.

While engaged in the process, a deep re-working of the material, I re-captured my passion for music. I did not, however, write the music, but the lyrics and the book. In doing the latter, I abandoned the need for a linear narrative and instead followed the lead of my collaborators toward finding a musical through-line through which to hold the presence I was so desperately searching for. The marriage of my words and Keith's music allowed me to not
just tell the story about God, but in some magical, less literal way, to make God present. My art was writing and shaping images through words and telling stories. I needed to collaborate with those who could give the images rich musical form and shape and texture. One unexpected collaborator was Georgie, my daughter, who added two songs which came to be known as: “Jump Rope Jesus” and “The Buddha Rap.” Our job was simple—we wanted to make audible and visible that which is unseen. We wanted to be able to present not only the spiritual images of children, but do so through the eyes of adults who need so much to be reminded of the wonders of the universe. This felt like important work. And we all jumped in eagerly.

Witnessing a play and its direct reaction from an audience is very different from publishing a paper or a book. The academic researcher in me wants to get the data all lined up and wants to draw logical conclusions and wants to discover some truths about how children see God and why the arts help all people feel better about themselves. The artist in me makes use of the same data—the interviews from children. But it presents it in such a different form—in song and movement, in playful and dreamlike images intended to provoke and soothe and entertain. Or maybe, the academic and the artist parts of me are not so different. Both parts search for a kind of pleasure that comes from creating something new out of something old. Both parts begin that search not in libraries or websites or theatres or city streets, but at home, listening to the children or to the childlike parts of ourselves, the parts that ask the profound and silly questions knowing full well that the answers are only stabs in the dark by adults light-years away from the truth. Both parts search for a presence that is best known by its absence.

_God Lives in Glass_ is not a play about religion, but about the varieties of spiritual experience that can take glorious form through song and story and action. And when the play was over, I realized that with each rehearsal and with each performance, I sat in my seat so full of life that it was hard at times to contain myself. I recalled another such moment toward the end of my academic research process in preparation for writing my books. I took my children with me to the Middle East where I would do many interviews. Somewhere in the Galilee where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, my son drew a picture, unprovoked. It was a drawing of the crucified Christ and had two figures on either side of the cross. Tell me about the picture, I said. And he told me that one of the guys, with a sword in his hand, is a Roman, and he killed Jesus Christ. The other, with a gun in his hand, is a Jew, and he killed the Roman and took Jesus down from the cross and brought him to his final resting place. What a transformation—the killer of Christ becomes the rescuer, the savior of the savior.

After seven years of research on this project, from the pain of my child’s brush with anti-Semitism, to engagement with the expressive drawings, stories and role-plays of children, to the writing of books and plays and music, I can begin to answer my initial, very tentative research questions: How do I manage an emotional wound suffered by my children? I engage
with my children through their expressive language and invite them to collaborate with me as I attempt to transform my own wounds.

And: What is God? Maybe God is the thing that drives all of us—the creative principle which not only gives us something meaningful to do with our hearts and hands and minds, but also keeps us hopeful, engaged in the business of living. Through this god source, we transform the destruction foisted upon us by terrorists, we transform our own impulses to be destructive, by holding fast to the belief that we are artists, daring to make new things out of old, and we are teachers, needing to pass on that method of transformation to future generations. And: How can I engage in spiritual dialogue? Whatever God may or may not be, I have learned that he or she or it is best revealed through creative expression. Once revealed, God, like all ultimate images, can become an object of engagement. One of my favorite songs in the play is called “The Three Brothers.” It is about three Taoist gods who overcome the plague through music and dance. The lyric says this:

*Among the Taoist deities,*  
*These brothers still linger,*  
*They bless the feet of dancers,*  
*And the voices of singers.*

The performers of *God Lives in Glass*, like all performers in theatre as in everyday life, are those who attempt to reach a kind of divinity by embodying the other. They are blessed by virtue of their acts of re-search and re-creation. In creating new life from old, they perform godly acts. And such a performance implies not just playing at, with or for God, but, indeed, playing God.
References


An Arts-Based Approach to Participatory Action Research
Susan Spaniol

It’s about art as a tool for integration, rather than just an activity. The [mental health] culture wants to keep people oppressed and sick and disempowered to differentiate themselves—the whole “us and them” thing….But we’re all human beings, whatever category we’re put into—mentally ill or not, professional or not—and we’re all on this continuum working towards well-being and recognizing our wholeness.

Participant, “Creative Partnerships” Conference, 2001

According to Hervey (2000), the ultimate goal of research in the creative arts therapies is understanding how to best meet the needs of the people who use its services. This paper presents a model for collaborative partnerships between art therapists and the people they serve. It is based on a 2-day conference at Lesley University for 34 art therapists and people with mental illnesses who use the arts for self-expression and recovery, and family advocates (Spaniol & Bluebird, 2001, 2002). The conference combined two modes of action: participatory action research (PAR) and the creative arts. Called “Creative Partnerships,” it was designed as a Participatory Dialogue—a forum developed by the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) in Washington, D.C. to bring together clinicians and those who use their services to exchange experiences, perceptions, and perspectives on mental health services (Bluebird, 2000). Although several Dialogues had been held in recent years, the conference at Lesley University was the first to use art activities to begin to build mutual understanding and envision art therapeutic principles and practices that are consistent with the goals of all participants.

The use of Dialogues to establish partnerships between diverse stakeholders is not new. It is grounded in the Participatory Action Research paradigm established at the beginning of the 1990s by sociologists and researchers who wanted to create knowledge that was directly useful to specific groups of people (Chesler, M., 1991; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991), especially those that experienced discrimination and oppression. The goal of PAR is to empower people to act by giving them a voice and facilitating their reflection on conditions and issues that matter to them. The model regards groups of people—particularly those who are disenfranchised by society—as experts in their own life situations and conditions, with tacit knowledge of how to change their lives in ways that are meaningful to them. Dialogues are consistent with the model of PAR because both approaches are designed as:

- Processes intended to precipitate social change
• Collaborative, involving all stakeholders as participants during each step of the research process, from identifying areas of concern to collecting, analyzing, and presenting data
• Responsive to pluralism, encouraging multiple perspectives by welcoming a broad diversity of participants
• Co-generating relevant knowledge that results in action (Rogers & Palmer-Erbs, 1994; Greenwood & Levin, 1998)

Participatory Dialogues began in 1997, when the CMHS convened an historic 2-day conference of psychiatrists and consumers to share their often-disparate views of treatment of mental illness. An outcome of this historic conference was a recommendation that dialogues be replicated between other groups of mental health providers and consumers of their services.

Artistic activity is consistent with the tenets of PAR because it is by definition action-oriented. It lends itself to collaborative activity because it is often used to identify issues and solutions. Although little research in art therapy is based on this method, it is widely recognized by the field (Carolan, 2002; Deever, 2002; Junge & Linesch, 1993), and its prime value—collaboration—has long been embedded in actual practice. In 1992, Philips described her collaborative approach based on an “essential attitude [of] genuine acceptance of the client as our equal in humanity and creativity” (p. 296). She advocates writing and discussing assessments with clients, and redefines the traditional concept of therapeutic boundaries as maintaining respect and care within a mutual relationship. Making art during sessions has a long and valued history in the field. Art therapists such as Robbins (2001), Lachman-Chapin (2001), and Haeseler (1989) respond empathically to patients by making art during sessions that is attuned to underlying dynamics of patients. McNiff’s approach to making art during studio groups (1992) most closely coincides with the principles of PAR. In his role as “co-painter,” McNiff becomes an equal participant rather than a responder, valuing the artistic resonance that occurs between his own art and that of participants.

Lesley University’s Participatory Dialogue was the result of five months of planning by an Advisory Committee of diverse constituents including artists and clinicians with psychiatric disabilities, an art therapist and other educators, and family advocates. The goal for the first day was to begin to build relationships by sharing experiences and identifying areas of concern. The goal for the second day was to begin to build alliances by sharing discoveries of the previous day and identifying concrete action steps.
Day One: Creating Community through Art

The first goal—building trust amongst people who rarely interact as equals—was accomplished by establishing nonhierarchical relationships and sharing art activities. People were invited to come early, donning nametags that did not distinguish between consumers, family advocates, and professionals. Breakfast was shared at long, communal tables. The conference was facilitated by an art therapist (the author, who coordinates Lesley University’s Art Therapy Program) and a consumer (Gayle Bluebird, who wrote the Participatory Dialogues manual for CMHS). Leadership tasks were shared equally to model nonhierarchical collaboration between art therapists and consumers. However, making art appeared to be the most powerful factor in lowering the traditional barriers between the diverse groups represented.

Drawing materials and paper had been placed about the large room when the morning’s program began. Participants were invited to “mill” about as lively music played in the background. After a brief period of spontaneous smiles, handshakes, and introductions, people were asked to find a comfortable place and draw their hopes and objectives for the conference. They were told to focus on the process and feelings evoked, rather than the end product. Participants then formed groups of four people they did not know to share their art and the concerns it represented, and to compose a single phrase that represented a common goal. Afterwards, each group shared its goal with the larger group, and then individuals shared their art and name without prompting.

Next, a round robin format was introduced, giving people up to 4 minutes to address the role of art in their lives in whatever way was most meaningful to them. As 2 hours swiftly passed, intimacy deepened with the successive sharing of 34 narratives. This high level of comfort suggests that making and sharing art together had helped to overcome the natural reserve between diverse constituents, gradually increasing the level of trust. Several consensual areas of concern emerged from this verbal sharing of experiences and perceptions of the role of art in people’s lives: professional issues, such as language usage and boundaries between professionals and consumers; the importance of spirituality and healing for recovery; and the desire for future collaborations.

After lunch, an expressive therapist led an enlivening group exercise to strengthen connections between people. The remainder of the afternoon consisted of presentations and discussions of ways people with mental illness can use the arts for advocacy and empowerment. Participants were familiarized with a broad array of art-based practices and organizations for people with mental illness beyond traditional art therapy. They included individual initiatives, such as displaying art on internet sites designed by and for people with mental illnesses; consumer-run arts organizations; and programs using art to combat stigma and challenge negative stereotypes (Bluebird, 2001). This information exposed the art
therapists to venues that could expand their clients’ access to the arts, and consumers discovered new artistic avenues for personal growth, transformation, and empowerment.

**Day Two: Defining Needs and Solutions Through Art**

The comfort developed through the sharing of art experiences and resources was evident at the beginning of the second day when many participants arrived with paintings, portfolios, books, and photographs to share with the group. In response to this spontaneous sharing, we began the day with an impromptu exhibition, honoring participants’ developing sense of trust, as well as their creativity.

The day’s program began with a mural project designed to help people develop concrete solutions to the concerns expressed the previous day. Participants were invited to form small groups with an equal number of professionals, consumers, and family advocates. Each group was given a large piece of mural paper and a range of art materials. Individuals were encouraged to describe their ideal arts environment in the small groups in terms of its people (quality of relationships and use of language), processes (types of art activities and approaches), and place (programs and environments). After this verbal sharing, each group created a large mural illustrating its collective ideal art environment. As each group shared its mural and the solutions it represented with the large group, the dominant goal that emerged was a desire for an inclusive community art center based on collaboration.

As closure for the conference, participants again participated in an open-ended round robin. The issues that emerged clarified and expanded those that had been articulated the previous day:

The role and function of boundaries were dominant themes throughout the conference. It is likely that collaborative experiences during the conference enabled all participants to identify the power differential inherent in the art therapeutic relationship. People wanted to loosen barriers rather than support them, viewing humanity as existing on a continuum of wellness. This sense was summarized by the group name suggested by an art therapist and adopted unanimously: “Artists Without Borders.”

The group recognized that language usage influences how we think about people. It suggested developing a “language of wellness” for writing and speaking about art and mental illnesses in order to unite people rather than segregate them.

Consistent with the concept of recovery as an on-going process, healing and spirituality was a dominant theme throughout the conference. Although the meaning of spirituality was highly individual, there was a consistent theme of building human connectedness through the arts.
Programming preferences varied according to stages of recovery. Participants with psychiatric disabilities tended to value structured art therapy sessions with directives during acute phases of a mental illness, while they yearned for community art studios outside the mental health setting—with good quality materials and consultation if needed—when they were less symptomatic.

The authenticity, intimacy, and honesty of the verbal sharing strongly suggests that art activities have the power to rapidly dissolve traditional barriers between mental health professionals and those who use their services. Consistent with the tenets of PAR, individual and group art making quickly leveled the traditional hierarchy to create a community with a strong sense of shared purpose.

While specific recommendations were long-term ideals, numerous short-term outcomes ranged from the subjective to the concrete. Most of the art therapists expressed gratitude for the opportunity to collaborate with consumers as equals, and several confessed that it was their first opportunity to speak with people with mental illnesses outside a treatment setting. Individual art therapists maintained connections with individual consumers, for example, inviting consumers to present in their classrooms or going to exhibitions together. Two art therapists and two consumers teamed up to facilitate weekly creativity sessions for people with mental illnesses in a veteran’s hospital, providing a model of collaboration for its interns as well as services for the veterans. The author and another art therapist who attended the conference are establishing monthly groups for artists with mental illnesses to meet a range of needs, from providing a sense of community, to supporting people who want to submit art to exhibitions.

The co-facilitators wrote a report on the planning, programming, and outcomes of the conference based on audiotapes and written notes. This report was mailed to all participants for their feedback, and everyone who attended was invited to a meeting for final revisions, reconnecting, and celebrating. The report was published in The Arts in Psychotherapy (2002), and the co-participants presented the conference as a paper at the 2001 Annual Conference of the American Art Therapy Association—perhaps the first time a consumer was a major presenter on a par with an art therapist.

Clearly, the success of the “Creative Partnerships” conference as a forum for PAR was due largely to the power of art to unite and envision. Art making enabled participants to quickly level the traditional hierarchy and relate with authenticity and honesty. The images produced enabled participants to concretize their hopes and dreams related to art, increasing the likelihood that they would become realities.
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Artist Disenchantment and the Collaborative Witness Project
Lynn Kapitan

My research sought to address the function of creative vitality in professional life, particularly among art therapists whose work depends upon it. My focus was on the disenchanted professional coping with a toxic work environment. I used art based methods with two purposes in mind: 1) to reveal aesthetically the phenomena of artist disenchantment and 2) to transform it in ways that would help art therapists reclaim what had been lost. In essence, my research method was that of an artist whose works serve as objects of intense, aesthetic reflection and subsequent creative action (Kapitan, 2003). Disciplined artistic practice is both a way of knowing and a means of discovery. While scientists use research to build models that describe and account for natural laws, artists use research in their seeking to comment on certain aspects of the world and their subjective experience of it, vivifying them rather than reducing them to fundamentals (Gardner, 1973).

I hypothesized that when art therapists artistically engage the phenomenon of their disenchantment, a deep connection with the essential nature of their art form would be kindled. If disenchantment is the result of disconnection, then artistic practice would be an appropriate method for both discovering the roots of disenchantment and transforming them with creative vitality.

The “Collaborative Witness Project” was one of several distinct modes of art-based research that I organized to address these questions. In the method of collaborative witness, my role as a researcher was to listen in a pre-reflective state with no agenda of my own as each of my collaborators told me her experience of the toxic work environment. After an hour or so in this partnership of telling and attentive listening, a natural pause would occur where we shifted to art-making. In silence, she created a visual picture that focused on the essence of her interview story. As her witness, I did the same, drawing from my own internal imagery that was stirred in hearing her story, in order to capture visually what she had told me. Then we exchanged pictures: She looked at the image I made and created a picture in response by silently asking herself “How does this image want to be held?” I did the same with hers.

“How does the image want to be held?” To be held is to be touched with caring and compassion. I chose this question deliberately, for its phrasing allows the dispirited image to be approached as though it were a living entity wanting understanding and compassionate relationship. My collaborator beheld the art image I created from witnessing her story. I beheld the image she had created and asked myself the same question – how does it want to be held? The art work that followed from this contemplative question furthered the witness by responding compassionately, having been moved by it. In that process, the art maker can
see more clearly and respond creatively to something that earlier had existed only as a narrative about a painful experience. The art we created in this mutual encounter also functioned as a living witness to that relationship. To be a witness, in this sense, was to take in the story and to reconstruct the imagery in each other's own mind, forming a narrative that involves the imagery and elements of the disenchantment as well as the source of my partner's knowledge (Kapitan, 2003). This shared, co-created experience uses art to knit a part of the world back together again into wholeness and invest it with new understanding.

To illustrate, one artist, whom I will call Kari, told me she had become disenchanted from having moved in and out of various jobs, with none that valued her unique skills and training as an art therapist. “Wherever I go, it's like I'm banging, banging – I have been boxed in,” she said. “But I am pushing the walls and I'm getting out. That's my goal. That I'll break through. I will not give up and throw everything away or sit in a box with that heaviness pushing down and squashing me. I have given a hundred and ten per cent and I just get stomped on.” Kari created an art work to express the essence of her disenchantment by showing a little person stuck inside a tiny square surrounded by a chaotically charged atmosphere extending out from all around her

(Figure 1). Figure 1 Kari's First Image Witnessing Her Interview Story

When I beheld the image and reflected on how it “wanted to be held,” it seemed to be asking for more space, less chaos, and to have something solid to stand upon (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Lynn's response to Kari's Figure 1

Likewise, Kari beheld the image I created as a witness to her story: it showed what seemed to be the same little person, squashed flat by a heavy solid square (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Lynn's First Image Witnessing Kari's Interview Story

She responded to this image by changing the perspective, giving the person greater volume and form and the strength to lift up the object that had been oppressing her, now transformed into a globe or mirror (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Kari's Response to Lynn's Figure 3

Then I asked Kari to contemplate her first picture again and, together with my witness response to it, create a third and final picture to complete the series. I did the same. This
interactive, art-based method produced a series of six visual images that amplified the spoken words of her interview and created a silent avenue for further witnessing her experience of disenchantment. Coming back to her first picture of the little person stuck inside the chaos, Kari contemplated both my visual response of the upright figure and, implicitly, the memory of the image she'd just created for me of the same upright person holding the object of her oppression now transformed. For her final piece to complete the series, she decided to re-create the circular frame from my picture that seemed to offer her the space she desired. She then placed within the circle an image of a heart, surrounding it with a golden hue (Figure 5). The image rested on a solid ground line that was bathed in blue waters.

**Figure 5: Kari's Final Image**

As her witness, I beheld the image that I first created, of the squashed woman, and then reflected on her response to it, which raised the woman to a standing position, holding a large blue globe. In response, and perhaps drawing from the memory of the image I'd also just created –of the standing upright woman in the glowing, circular frame – now I contemplated how to complete the series. My final picture shows the woman lifting up the globe while at the same being lifted by another person who shares the load (Figure 6). This configuration gives balance and extends the sense of her spirit to a place beyond herself.

**Figure 6: Lynn's Final Image**

With my collaborators' and my allowing presence, from which these pictures were created, this art-based method tapped into the feelings, memories, and images of the toxic experiences described and created a series of art images that was itself both a witness and a transformational act of collaborative artistry. An art image, after all, is not simply a graphic illustration of the spoken word nor a psychological roadmap to be deciphered. It is a material object that mediates the consciousness of its creator. A pure phenomenon of expression not amenable to conceptual interpretation, it is a form of knowing (Schaverien, 1992). As Lipsey writes, images allow us to think silently; they are like 'silent word', or as 'word speaking like image" (1997, p. 52).

Thus, there are many layers of meaning to the images we created in the collaborative witness project. They opened up inner experience, captured the stirred-up toxic memories from what we both had witnessed, and stilled the spoken words of the interview by bringing another kind of knowing and perception into awareness. This in itself can be described as an active, transformational method of art-based research, with findings that were of value to each participant. But as a researcher, I also discovered these images reverberating in my consciousness long after the interview was over and I had begun my art-based data analysis of the entire series of interviews, about a dozen in all. When I returned to study the images in
their entirety, I had the uncanny feeling that some larger, aesthetic truth was still emerging from them. This sense can only be described as knowing there was a deeper, collective story that all the art was pointing to and needing further witness to make the essence of the phenomenon of artist disenchantment in the toxic work environment visible.

I understand the “artist as researcher” as offering an approach to the complexity of truth that has its own logic within an aesthetic matrix of unlimited variations (Robbins, 1998). Artistic practice as a research method is not random, open-ended spontaneous expression. A closer study reveals that artists use a precise tool for creative thinking in the coordination of unconscious mental scanning (intuition) with conscious differentiation (rationality) (Arnheim, 1969). This process brings to the surface what Ehrenzweig (1971) called the “hidden order” in the unconscious; as Jean Paul Sartre wrote, “the imagination gives clarity to perception.” With respect to data analysis in art-based research, the researcher prepares for the illumination of insight while actively engaged and seemingly held captive by a preoccupation long after many cognitively-oriented researchers would have quit or turned elsewhere for verification. Such active intellectual processes force the research concern to deeper and deeper levels of the mind where it can incubate and be infused with the roiling energies of primary process, dreaming, and imagination. Insight emerges out of the sum total of this exceptional interplay between conscious and subconscious processes.

The appearance of what I called the “art-dream story” emerging from the art works we created should not have been a surprise given my research question. In the state of disenchantment, people experience their daily lives as devoid of the meaning that comes from tapping into the mythological level of living through rituals for exploring neglected symbols and emotions (Meade, 1993). The Collaborative Witness Project provided both an encounter with their state of disenchantment and an environment to ritualize its symbols through the creation of art imagery. Campbell writes, “the wonder is that the characteristic efficacy to touch and inspire deep creative centers dwells in the smallest tale as the flavor of the ocean is contained in a droplet” (1949, p. 4). As I describe below, even the most mundane details of someone’s daily work life contributed the material for my collaborators’ participation in a collective act of art-based myth-making and transformation. Such mythic imagery is not manufactured, ordered, or permanently suppressed but is the spontaneous productions of the psyche (Campbell, 1949).

The data analysis which produced the art-dream stories began by surrounding myself with the image series from each witness encounter, reading and re-reading the transcripts from the interview in order to “soak up” the words each of my collaborators had used to describe her experience. I read the transcripts aloud and listened to the rhythm and cadence of the words while gazing at their corresponding art image series. I listened with an open and inquiring mind, and gradually experienced a certain resonance between the spoken words and the silent presence of the images. I took great care not to approach the data with any of my own associations about their meaning, form or structure. As a disciplined, phenomenological inquiry, this required me to 'listen into' and below the surface of the
words and image where a larger, mythic-dream story existed, or so I later discovered. To find it, first I had to clear the perceptual field of the specific content from the narrative told to me in the witness encounter. Having faithfully recorded each interview exactly as it was told to me, I went through the transcripts and substituted ‘x’ for all the particulars. For example, when Kari told me, “I refuse to send out an assessment that is not clear. That’s how I was taught as it reflects on me and that reflects my profession.”

I simplified yet kept its essential structure by writing:

“I refused to send out 'x' if it is not 'x'. That's how I was taught as it reflects on 'x' and my 'x'."

A therapist who wanted a pay raise became “raising the ‘x’” ; griping about a nurse who interrupted a session to dispense medicine became “the ‘x’ came in to dispense the ‘x’.” Free of the everyday particulars yet faithful to the underlying form and structure of the text, the dynamic phenomenon of my witnesses' disenchantment gradually came into visible form as I connected the essential structure of the text to the imagery of artworks we had created. It seemed that by having witnessing the art and spoken words of disenchantment with an open, compassionate receptivity, a mutual vulnerability had flowed between us that allowed this mythic imagery to become organized below the conscious content of our interactions. As these images in turn sought expression, new life came to the imagery of what had been deadening disenchantment in the voice of the art-dream story. Once I 'heard' this mythic voice and saw its specific imagery, I could bring back the particulars of what had been told me, now in story form:

“I refused to send out elixir if it wasn't made from clear water. That's how I was taught. That reflects on me and my kind.”

What distinguishes this process from a researcher projecting her own meaning onto her subject's words and images and calling it data analysis? Careful, receptive attention to the phenomena revealed that there was an inherent order that connected word and image which needed to be revealed, not created. But it was a delicate process. It was hard to hold the creative tension in this act of witnessing the inner landscape of disenchantment and I was especially vulnerable when my own creative impulses were stirred. I could easily imagine “better” endings to the story, for example, specially early in the process when it felt as though I were swimming in the toxins of my collaborators despairing words, magnified by their art imagery, and wanting a quick escape. But any time I tried to impose my own ideas or imagery of what I thought the art was “dreaming“ into a mythic story, it would reject them. Nothing would fit and the story would start to fall apart immediately.

What fascinated me about this method was that once I found the deeper story coming forth from the images, everything – from the myth to the art images to the exact order in which elements appeared in the content of the interview – all clicked together and corresponded
precisely. There is an inherent coherence to art-based research when data analysis proceeds undisturbed by the researcher's own drive to shape its meaning. Whenever I lost this stance toward the phenomena, I would have to clear my perceptions again, start over, and listen more carefully until I discovered these right elements and order and mythic images that knit them together. Then everything would come into place again. It actually felt as though I were listening to a voice before it was spoken, and making a space for it with alert awareness, without rushing to fill the space with my own version of aesthetic truth.

The witness –whether researcher, artist, art, or dreaming image –holds the creative encounter in such a way that continuously opens to the phenomenon of what is, suspending the desire to form it prematurely. It will come to form on its own provided the witness is clear and present. Art-based research used in this way requires an ethical balancing between form and formlessness, and an ability to oscillate freely between these two poles (Robbins, 1998). As one of my collaborators described it, the method of collaborative witness was like the practice of sitting meditation. The inquiry became for her a spiritual encounter that gave her experience of disenchantment greater meaning and a new lesson on which to view her suffering. Putting aside the ego and being led by the art and the story renewed her awe in the creative, transformative process that is always there when we seek to find it. Later, when I returned the art and the mythic story created from the data analysis to my collaborators, all verified its authenticity based on their experiences. One art therapist was moved to tears several times when she read the art-dream story, saying, “There are things here that I had not quite been able to articulate but knew that I had lived through and now they were not only witnessed by another but imaged and written about. It documented and further grounded me and my life, my journey, and the ability of images to facilitate this process [of transformation].”

In Kari’s art-dream story (for complete text, see Kapitan, 2003), all of the images and narrative pointed to the mythic search for the key that would open the door to the clear pool of the Source, her desire. Her role was to produce and give to others the elixir or pure balm of creative expression. She described her vision of beautiful blue, clear water, the source of her grounding and power. The dream she held in her heart was like perfection itself and was unbearably beautiful, made more so in the face of the world’s stark realities. I could trace through the image series, words and feeling, Kari’s desire for healing waters, the perfect embrace, and the promise of transformation that seemed beyond her and longed to be released.

Kari had split her reality between a belief in a perfect place in which to work and all the evil she saw in her surrounding environment, and this compelled her toward illusions of desire, power, and escape that were threaded through her art and story. On one level, her disenchantment seemed a struggle with letting go when feeling driven or crushed by the weight of the past, heedlessly rushing toward a hoped-for future, or awaiting for someone to magically transform her life. On another level, Kari’s story is a familiar one of petitioning the gods for the magic elixir of immortality to ward off the pain of suffering and death. Or
wrestling the magic boon from undeserving, brutish ogres. In her daily life, the myth made perfect sense: as an experienced drug and alcohol counselor, Kari was having difficulty breaking into a field that was controlled by cost-cutting, government-funded providers and their attendant abuses of the system. The essence of her disenchantment arrived in the image of “poisoned waters,” resonating in like manner with the toxic effects of drug and alcohol on any living system, whether individual or organizational. Her story also closely paralleled the spiritual searching behind much addiction, the effects of which she had to work with on a daily basis. Yet the glow of her inner light was strong. Her creative vitality came of her courage to maintain this cosmic standpoint in the face of earthly pains and joys, accepting that the enchanting balance of perfection must be released in order to live her life fully.

There were many universally recognizable themes that emerged from all the art and stories in the project, but the most striking research finding was that the imagery of disenchantment always included the primordial image of water that must reach the soul before perishing of thirst. The unifying theme was that of pollution or sealing off of their creative functioning, disabling their ability to create or act with clarity in the world and making them toxic to others. After completing the series, I turned to professional literature to verify this finding and found many references to the waters of renewal and creative life. Throughout the world's mythologies, the creative force of life is described as a flow: a circulating substance, a streaming of energy or a manifestation of grace. Like the flow of a wild river, we can expect our creative lives to fill and empty with the rise and fall of life's seasons, and this insight that arose in my collaborators when they witnessed their disenchantment. As one art therapist wrote after reflecting on her art-dream story, “I love how the creative process, like a river, shifts and turns along the way. I am reminded that the power of creation opens me to a larger energy.” In witnessing the art and resonant spaces we created together, my collaborators affirmed for themselves that their creative vitality can never be lost. It is always there, filling or colliding with obstacles placed in their way.

Consistent with Braud and Anderson’s (1998) description of transpersonal research, simultaneous roles and functions occurred in synergistic ways in this art-based inquiry. All my interactions were research sessions that provided new information to contribute to theory development. They also were clinical sessions in that my collaborators and I accepted the opportunity to bring to consciousness important issues and give them voice and image. Although art-based methods typically emphasize the researcher's relationship to the image, the intention of this inquiry to use art to intervene and transform my collaborators' experience of disenchantment also places this artistic inquiry in a context of social action. As such, it builds upon and extends feminist and transpersonal research in their emphasis on the sacred, inclusive, subjective, experiential and contextual, transformational, individual and understandable features of the research project (Clements, et. al, 1998; Valle & Mohs, 1998). It honors the plurality of voices with other ways of knowing and offers the added benefit of artistic practice that not only embraces what has been unspoken but also provides
a visual, tangible means for making visible what is unseen, for both the art image and the person who creates the art image. Becoming seen is a powerful means of verifying research and honoring existence.

When opened to the sources of their disenchantment, my collaborators revealed that in losing their connection to the reciprocating force of creativity in their lives, they lose a vital part of themselves. The research process and findings contributed greater clarity for contemplating how the presence and absence of creative vitality affects life functioning among a group of professionals who use it in their daily practice. This art-based research project revealed the phenomenon as multi-faceted with collective and individual, nuanced levels of truth. But over the course of the research it also became evident that the key for resolving the problem was to be able to see it very clearly and use it as a source for creative transformation. For the co-researchers in the Collaborative Witness Project, this realization transformed their relationship to creativity and made possible new attitudes, perceptions, and meanings.
References


Playing for Real: Drama in Colombian Schools
Gene Díaz and Zayda Sierra

Introduction and Context

Colombia is a country of many faces. Caught in a struggle for power and territory, many diverse groups, among them the more than 80 native indigenous groups, the African descendants of the coastal regions, the descendants of the European colonists, and the different mixtures of all, vie for positions of equity and for voices in critical decisions. Amidst a civil war which has endured more than 40 years by many counts, they suffer together the loss of freedom and the confusion of a society caught in an internal imbalance of ideologies and actions, a society of displaced persons and misplaced peace. The guerrilla groups, the paramilitary, and the government forces each claim to offer the people of this country different scenarios and possibilities for relief from the dire consequences of violence, unemployment and extreme poverty, while at the same time creating a culture of conflict, aggression and fear.

Where are the Children in this Culture of Conflict?

Estimates of the number of children who bear arms for the different warring factions other than the army range from 5,000 to 17,000, many of them taken from their homes and indoctrinated against their will. At the same time that these children play the real game of war with sometimes fatal consequences, other children play at school, in their communities and in their homes. What are the social realities that these children experience and, given the chance, how would they depict the different aspects of their lives if they were asked to play for real, to play as if they were depicting their own lives, or their lives as they would want them to be? How do their distinct cultural origins (Afro, Native, Mestizo, Rural, Urban) impact these realities? These were questions asked by a Colombian research team, DIVERSER, during a two year study of seven schools and their communities in the northwest region of Colombia [1]. In this article, we will share an innovative arts-based research process that democratizes and enriches the processes of knowing educational contexts and practices; which is at the same time a pedagogical process that teachers use in classrooms to better understand the lives and needs of their students, and to design more culturally relevant curriculum. We include here the origins and processes of dramatic play, and present some concepts and conclusions that emerged from the communities of study.

Based in concerns of a lack of coherence between school culture (e.g., curriculum content, pedagogy and instructional practices) and children’s sociocultural realities in Colombia, this project was an effort to create educational processes that offer teachers a better understanding of their students’ perceptions and feelings about their world everyday lives. Teachers from different cultural settings were invited to participate in an arts-based,
interactive research project in order to help facilitate students’ representations and interpretations of their family, school, and community’s realities through dramatic play. In addition to the traditional qualitative strategies of participant-observation, interviews and life histories, teachers were also introduced to artistic and dramatic play strategies as other ways to hear children’s voices, and as an active learning process that stimulates cognitive, creative, and social development. After analyzing the depicted realities that the children acted out about their schools, their families and their communities, the teachers, as co-researchers, participated in developing curricula more relevant to students’ cultural contexts and more sensitive to their needs. The main goal in this inquiry process was to improve our understanding, as teachers and teacher educators, of the meaning of cultural pluralism, and to develop educational programs that address the diversity of the student populations in Colombian schools.

Developing an understanding of cultural phenomena through symbolic systems such as art and play requires an interpretive process based in hermeneutics, since the subjective experiences that shape these activities cannot be treated as objective data; on the contrary, our understanding of the world in which we live derives from our own tacit and subjective knowing of this experience. Qualitative research methods from a critical postmodern perspective are grounded in the idea that reality is socially constructed, which means that we are both subject and actors at the same time. This knowing, then, requires a method of acting in the world that is wide-awake, conscious and at the same time generative of new realities, new possibilities (Sierra & Romero, 2002).

In this article we will introduce the research processes and discuss the use of dramatic play in inquiry and pedagogical practices, and include a brief discussion of the results of the study.

The Construction of Reality as Process

The research questions that guided the inquiry were the following:

1. How do students age 10 to 11 represent and interpret their family realities and their school environments within their different cultural contexts, and in accordance with the dimensions of gender, ethnic and social class, through dramatic play?

2. What meaning can we make of the different symbolic representations that boys and girls develop within dramatic play activities around ethnic and social class?

3. What are the implications for the pedagogical processes of school and extracurricular activities that teachers can derive from the artistic representations and interpretations that their students construct in dramatic play? What impact can this knowledge have in the development of educational policies?
After presenting an outline of the research project to directors and teachers of different educational centers, seven educational institutions in the northwestern region of Colombia were selected using the following criteria:

1. The history, traditions and ethnic or social composition of their students offered cultural diversity among the participating institutions.

2. At least one of the teachers in the institution would be familiar with the development of children’s expressive play and art activities, and manifest interest in leading formative processes in his or her school and region.

3. The directors manifested an interest in the proposal and offered support in time and space for its development.

The selection of students was based on availability and willingness to participate. In some cases, the teachers made the selection in accordance with criteria determined by them by the conditions at the site. The small number of students, 7 boys and 7 girls per site, provided for detailed observation of the process of their interactions during dramatic play and follow-up observations at their homes. The selection of pre-adolescents was based in the understanding that at this age: (1) many of the traditions, beliefs and cultural practices of their community have been incorporated, (2) they have acquired the use of a communication tool such as writing, and (3) they posses thinking strategies that allow them to participate in reflective discussions.

**Phases of the Project**

Phase I: DRAMATIC PLAY: A WINDOW INTO THE WORLD WE LIVE IN. Beginning with play activities (nursery rhymes and songs, traditional games and theater) that facilitate interaction among children, students dramatized stories around themes such as: “free topic”, “family”, “school”, “the world that surrounds us”. They also made drawings, wrote narratives or commentaries about the experience. One year.

Phase II: DRAMATIC PLAY: A WINDOW INTO A POSSIBLE WORLD. An exploration of how we would want the world to be (our family, our school, our surroundings) through dramatic play and other activities such as drawings, narratives, and interviews. Teachers formulated pedagogical proposals based in the analysis and interpretation of the contents of their students’ creations. One year.

Phase III: REPRESENTATION AND COMMUNICATION. Evaluation and systematization analysis of the experience. Following the write-up of the research for Colciencias the process has been shared in national and international forums with educational researchers interested in imaginative inquiry and arts-based research. One year (and on-going).
We began this inquiry during the first year of 2000, with four week-long seminar-workshops with the teachers every six weeks. In each meeting theoretical and practical elements of qualitative research, dramatic play and other artistic activities were discussed and practiced. The workshops with the students were two hours weekly, emphasizing dramatic play and discussions, drawings and narratives that included reflections on what happened in every workshop.

The teachers used videos, audiocassettes and photographs to record the activities of their meetings with the students. As well, the teachers and students were encouraged to keep their own field journals diaries, enriched with drawings, with which to construct a portfolio for each community. The teachers cooperated with the university research team in the transcription, analysis and interpretation of the data in order to develop pedagogical proposals based in the data analysis.

**Dramatic Play as Pedagogy and Inquiry**

Different scholars have offered definitions for dramatic play that, although they use different words, all convey similar meaning. dramatic play is the simulative and nonliterate behavior children use to transform the identities of objects, actions, and people (Pellegrini, 1985). Through pretending, children transform the here and now, the you and me, and the this or that, as they creatively construct potential for action that these components of a situation may have (Garvey, 1990). In dramatic play an object is used as if it were another, one person behaves as if she were another, and immediate time and place are treated as if they were otherwise and elsewhere.

Although scholars agree on how dramatic play is defined, theorists do not agree about how the role of dramatic play in children's development should be interpreted. Freud, Piaget, and Vygotsky represent the major differences in the interpretation of play in the lives of children. Even though their interpretations differ, each has greatly influenced understanding of play and has contributed to current thinking about the different levels of development in children's play and the possible educational approaches that might be taken by teachers.

Freud's psychoanalytical theory of play is exemplified in his famous observation of the toddler who, in the absence of his mother, flung all the little things on which he could lay his hands into the corner of his room or under his bed (Herron & Sutton Smith, 1985; Singer, 1973). Thus, this interpretation of play emphasizes how children use it to overcome anxieties or to compensate for things that are absent (Watson, 1994). In The Poet and Daydreaming, Freud (1908/1958) explained child's play as the first trace of imaginative activity:

Every child at play behaves like an imaginative writer, in that he creates a world of his own or, more truly, he rearranges the things of his world and orders it in a new way that pleases him.
better. It would be incorrect to think that he does not take this world seriously; on the contrary, he takes his play very seriously and expends a great deal of emotion on it. (p. 45)

Dramatic play also appears to offer children a unique opportunity to apply knowledge and increase their understanding of known realities at the moment of creating their play-stories. At the same time that children expand their knowledge of reality, they also face fears of those things that they cannot rationally understand or are beyond their personal control. Vygotsky described this as the dynamic interplay of emotional and cognitive elements that develops during play.

Dramatic play is not an ultimate escape from, but a bridge to reality. According to Koste (1978) one of play's functions is to allow children to explore those situations that generate strong feelings in humans. These feelings may concern events like death, birth, or mating where strong emotions like loss, separation, pride, identity, love, celebration, and joy emerge. “The experiencing and expressing of the whole spectrum of human passions is one essential aspect of the all-encompassing purpose of play: to master reality” (Vygotsky, 1933/1976, p. 93).

Because knowledge is not a static phenomenon, but goes from initial impressions toward deeper understandings, dramatic play can also be considered a valuable learning tool. Through their play, children explore and test hypotheses they have formed about the social world. In addition, with the help of their teachers, they can explore new hypothesis, challenge previous assumptions, and expand their inquiry by further investigating those topics or themes that interest them. The link between cognitive and creative development emerges through dramatic play. Children expand their inquiry on certain themes, elaborate from previous ideas, or create alternative realities (Sierra, 1998).

In his book Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood, Piaget (1946/1962) criticized previous efforts aimed at cataloging and classifying children's playful activities by the content and the function of a game or its origin. These classifications, he believed, were dependent on preconceived interpretations that failed to account for the structures or the degree of mental complexity presented by each game. Piaget differentiated among the play activities that children engaged in as exercise-games, symbolic play, and games with rules. These play categories corresponded to his sensorimotor, pre-operational and operational periods of child development.

Vygotsky (1933/1976) viewed play as an adaptive mechanism promoting cognitive growth and language acquisition: “It seems to me that from the point of view of development, play is not the predominant form of activity, but is, in a certain sense, the leading source of development in pre-school years” (p.537) According to Smolucha (1992), Vygotsky also connected children's play with adult creative activity. She summarized these connections as they appear in his theory of creative
imagination as follows:

1. Imagination develops out of children's play.

2. Imagination becomes a higher mental function and, as such, is a consciously directed thought process.

3. In adolescence, creative imagination is characterized by the collaboration of imagination and thinking in concepts.

4. The collaboration between imagination and thinking in concepts matures in the artistic and scientific creativity of adulthood. (p. 50)

In addition to describing and analyzing its internal components and dynamics, a holistic comprehension of dramatic play requires making sense of its possible meanings. Interdisciplinary efforts based in psychology, linguistics, sociology, and anthropology enhance comprehension of this activity. As a very complex human activity, dramatic play’s interpretation is not complete if it is only approached from one of these disciplines in isolation. Pretend play is a process that displays and contributes to emotional and cognitive growth, uses different means of communication (gestures, oral, written), and involves both the individual and the group. Because of its literary, dramatic, and aesthetic components, dramatic play also has implications for artists, especially drama specialists or professionals in theater (Sierra, 1998).

Norman Denzin suggests that we recognize any text as “a complex interpretive document involving the writer’s attempts to articulate some set of understandings about a particular situation, cultural form, or social process” (1997, p. 235). This suggestion leads us to the notion that children’s scripts or stories created through dramatic play should be considered as similar to the text produced by a writer: a poem, an ethnographic report, a film, a piece of journalism, or a performance work. Thus, children’s way of portraying characters, their actions and their relations through dramatic play could be understood as an expression of their interpretive practice: “the constellation of procedures, conditions, and resources through which reality is apprehended, understood, organized, and represented in the course of everyday life” (Gubrium, in Sierra, 1998).

At the same time, the reading or interpretation that the teacher or the researcher gives to children’s dramatic play also needs to be recognized as a second form of the text. The text does not have a privileged or correct form of reading since it involves the reader’s own practices, institutional structures, and ideology. That is, the interpreter brings to the child’s play her perceptions that are based on her own experiences and efforts to construct meaning.
Here in resides the core of the crisis of representation and legitimatization that currently affects social inquiry: “how to represent and interpret, with some degree of certainty the multiple meanings that circulate in an ethnographic text,” and “how to judge an interpretation, when all external criteria, or foundational criteria have been challenged” (Denzin, 1997, p. 234).

**Reflexivity And Dialogue In The Interpretive Process**

The call for a continuous process of reflexivity and dialogue as a way to construct meaning through an interpretation of children’s social realities presents the greatest challenge and the greatest potential for pedagogical change. Since the questions and methods of understanding human processes are themselves culturally and historically situated, explanations or interpretations cannot be considered to be pure knowledge, or even claims to truth. Instead, in order to gain an understanding of the research endeavor and of the social phenomenon of learning, we as researchers and teachers need to examine our own roles in the inquiry and teaching processes and those of the institutions in which these activities occur.

This reflexivity requires the process of thinking through and with others. This means that “the process of representing goes hand in hand with a process of portraying one's self as part of the process, thereby encouraging an open-ended self-reflexive dialogic turn of mind” (Shweder, 1992). Thus, reflexivity and dialogue are two faces of the same interpretive coin, and self-reflection develops in the interplay of the self and the other –in the dialogue of the I and Thou. The discovery of the self occurs through dialogue and relationship; “the individual learns of both self and other through a process of interrelating” (p. 134). Comprehension, Denzin adds, is made possible when two speakers enter into a dialogic relationship with one another. “An outside observer has no place in this dialogue. Only by entering into the dialogue can understanding be gained” (1997, p. 38). For example, teachers and researchers to differed on many occasions regarding how to interpret the play-stories that were being developed by the participants. However, through our conversations, reflections with the students, and other inquiries, it was possible to go beyond our initial perceptions and explore other possible meanings of the scenes represented by the participants. Thus, the interpretation of children’s dramatic play requires a continuous process of dialogue and reflection with one’s self, the participants, and other sources that can contribute to our ability to transcend first impressions in order to reach deeper understandings.

**The Opposition Between Work And Play In Western Culture**

The history of the origin of schools in Western society reveals that a large segment of the population has traditionally been trained to provide the labor force, while another smaller segment has been prepared to assume roles of power and leadership. Through schooling, conventional values are used to maintain social divisions as well as the dominance of one
social group over the other (Baudelot & Establet, 1976). One of these traditional values is expressed in the role of work and play for different segments of society. The practice and enjoyment of activities associated with “high” culture such as the arts, theater, music, and literature are acceptable cultural capital for the privileged segment of society. In contrast, time dedicated to play and enjoyment among the working class is judged as laziness and is considered to be the cause of their being in poverty (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). In the past, children of the lower and working class had to work; their play was embedded in their work. Thus, play was typically characterized in opposition to work, as not being serious, but imitative and irrational and the characterization of work was as rational, calculated and predictable. The implication was that work was good and play was bad or, at best, questionable (Sierra, 1998). During the Colonial period, seventeenth-century Protestant New Englanders condemned play as selfish, irrational, irresponsible, and inimical to the development of salvation and a work ethic. From this perspective, “play was understood to be unreal, a pale imitation of reality, inferior as a way of knowing, trivial, useful only insofar as it contributed to the cultivation of rationality, order, regularity, hierarchy” (Finkelstein, 1987, p.17-22). The Spaniards and the Catholic Church brought similar ideas to Latin America. Both Protestant and Catholic traditions had in common the control of leisure and play as a way to dominate common people:

The serious aspects of class culture are official and authoritarian; they are always combined with violence, prohibitions, limitations, and always contain an element of fear and intimidation....Laughter, on the contrary, overcomes fear, for it knows no inhibitions, no limitations. Its idiom is never used by violence and authority [Bakhtin cited in Kellner, 1988, p. 13].

At the beginning of this century during the so-called progressive era, the United States saw the emergence of two distinct forms of school play for two distinct laboring groups. The children of the upper middle-class were commonly invited to play freely and independently. The children of laboring families in the cities, on the other hand, were exposed to physical and mental regulation on playgrounds and in classrooms, the better to prepare them for the drudgery of unskilled labor in factory and on the assembly line. (Finkelstein, 1987) This Rousseauian vision of child-centered education had some impact in the private nursery schools of Europe and later in the burgeoning Montessori movement. But this vision had little effect on the mainstream of schools. “Student initiated activity had little part in the school curriculum. Work was what life was all about. Play detracted from work and did not fit into this essentialist philosophy of education” (Glickman, 1984, p. 262). Different efforts to introduce play into school activities were reversed during the 1980s with the conservative “back to the basics” movement definitively work-oriented and characterized by the preponderance of teacher direction and student passivity (Sierra, 1998).
The Misconception Of Play As Entertainment

Play, as producer of meaning, has become confused with games and pastime, a passive consumption of the entertainment industry, a momentary alleviation from the hard conditions of life. This misapprehension of play as entertainment and passive consumption has become an additional obstacle for the advocates of play. Thus, another obstacle to including play in school life has been its confusion with mere entertainment, a distraction from the “real” and “serious” learning process.

Progressive education’s efforts to include play in the curriculum has been considered “an excuse for laziness, laissez-faire procedures, and even anarchy” (Gardner, 1991, p. 189). Thus, it is important to make the distinction between play and entertainment. As the US became more industrialized during the beginning of the 19th century and production developed as the criteria for civic action, play was seen as essentially unproductive, leisure, recreation, or sport. Between 1920 and 1950 children’s play at school gradually became more and more supervised, regulated, and domesticated, leading eventually to the commercialization of play as we now know it (Finkelstein, 1987; Sierra, 1998).

Dramatic play’s acceptance as a fundamental factor in children’s cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development has been a major event in contemporary psychological and educational research. However, misconceptions about its apparent decline as children grow, the cultural opposition between play and schoolwork, and the misapprehension of play as entertainment have a negative effect on older children’s use of dramatic play to express themselves. A main difficulty for those who advocate the inclusion of dramatic play in elementary and secondary schools results from a social prejudice that play and arts advocates are uninterested in serious learning. On the contrary, what advocates of play and other art forms suggest is that schools need to become places where children can fully develop their potentialities. If play and art contribute to cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development, why would they be separated or absent from curricula? Why not find new alternatives for offering dramatic play and the arts in schools? (Sierra, 1998) Vygotsky If I’m a young person, living in a ghetto amidst poverty and violence, how can I relate to the kind of teaching that takes place in school? Why make an attempt to relate to this teaching? How might I be able to imagine a time when I can experience something different, something possible where, just for a moment my life might be transformed by seeing something other than what I know at that time? Adrienne Rich in Arts of the Possible (2001) writes of the importance of freedom in the activity of creative expression, and the need for freedom to imagine things otherwise:

Most, if not all, human lives are full of fantasy – passive day-dreaming which need not be acted on. But to write poetry or fiction, or even to think well, is not to fantasize, or to put fantasies on paper. For a poem to coalesce, for a character or an action to take shape, there has to be an imaginative transformation of reality which is in no way passive. And a certain
freedom of the mind is needed – freedom to press on, to enter the currents of your thought like a glider pilot, knowing that your motion can be sustained, that the buoyancy of your attention will not be suddenly snatched away. Moreover, if the imagination is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives, perhaps to the very life you are living at that moment. You have to be free to play around with the notion that day might be night, love might be hate; nothing can be too sacred for the imagination to turn into its opposite or to call experimentally by another name. (pp. 20-21)

Interpreting play in the context of possibilities might lead to changes in the way we think about out students in schools.

**Implications For Teachers**

Dramatic play can be a versatile tool for enhancing children’s learning in different subject areas learning. Besides its potential as a learning tool, dramatic play offers teachers a unique opportunity to learn more about their students. With this knowledge teachers can and to design educational experiences relevant to their students' needs. Understanding the different levels of interaction in play helps teachers to know when to encourage students with more or less leadership ability and when to intervene when some students try to dominate the development of the play. The emergence of conflicts should not be avoided or perceived as negative. Instead, teachers should view conflicts as opportunities for students to rehearse their ability to negotiate ideas. Teachers can serve as mediators rather than impose their authority on students to solve a problems on those occasions when students are unable to reach a solution by themselves (Sierra, 1998). The role of teachers during the dramatic play experience is of vital importance. They need to be prepared to raise questions and to challenge assumptions when oppressive relations or cultural stereotypes emerge in the students’ play stories. For example, they can offer much needed guidance when children attempt to solve problems by violent means or by imposing gender or racial prejudices. As teachers use dramatic play in their classrooms, they should remain sensitive to the quality of the relationship they establish with the children. The responsibility to create a comfortable environment wherein children can engage in dramatic play rests with the teacher. That is, the dramatic play facilitators or teachers need to be sensitive to children's creations; to be imaginative and creative in suggesting proposals for dramatic play; to be ready to discern and assess differences in individual and group behaviors; and to have the ability to interpret the content that emerges from the play-stories. Training in creative dramatics and children’s theatre should include strategies to improve teachers’ sensibility and competencies needed to interpret dramatic play (Sierra, 1998).

**Restructuring Relationships Between Teachers and Researchers**

Arts-based qualitative inquiry from a critical perspective, and critical pedagogy, both involve the participation of teachers and students as collaborators in which an engagement with the
process of interpretation demands recognition of how our own perspectives and experiences might interfere with the effort to construct meaning and knowledge. This means that we must include dialogue as a fundamental component of the interpretive process (Denzin, 1997). Dialogue is at the center of the pedagogical process developed by critical educator Paolo Friere, a dynamic process guided by the promotion of communication between teachers and students (Ghiso, 1997). Dialogue is an expression of history and a condition for the development of a humane culture, and as such it is the basis for human knowing and action. The dialogue that was developed between the researchers, teachers and students was based in dramatic play. Examples of creative analytic practice are those which “…connect rather than separate the researcher and the researched; which encourage a plurality of voices and narratives; which affirm a commitment to interactivity that is egalitarian and non-exploitive; and which promote reflexivity as a strategy shared by all participants in the research process” (Jipson, 1997). These same characteristics form a democratic pedagogy in which students and teachers engage in authentic learning experiences together. Through a recognition of the many voices and many faces that our students bring to the process of schooling we acknowledge the need to engage in instructional practices that offer them diverse opportunities for communication and expression. An engagement with the arts, such as dramatic play activities, requires reflection and leads to self-awareness as the many voices each struggle to find their place and their space as they connect with others.

**Reality or Exaggeration?**

Notwithstanding the profound change Colombian society has experienced with the entrance of women into the work place and public activities, the referent of the patriarchal cultural system still prevails in the selection of roles in dramatic play by the various groups of participants. In the dramatic play workshops with the teachers themselves, the cultural vision of the patriarchal family also predominated. The masculine personalities were characterized in the majority of the participating communities with the exception of Catrú reservation, as apparent saviors in situations of domestic conflict (a monk, a police inspector, a preacher), and at the family level, the non-participation of the men in domestic activities, having a “girlfriend” and an excess of drinking predominated. At a young age, it appears that boys and girls have internalized very well the code of honor of the patriarchal regime described by Gutiérrez de Pineda (1989): “This cultural system controls and sanctions whatever conduct that escapes its precepts. [To] the subordinated and totally loyal woman, her ethical escape is sanctioned to the maximum, at the same time granting the prerogative and allowing erotic-affective escapes to the male, [to whom] the right is given for [other] women to supplant the erotic impetus that cannot be satisfied in the normal conjugal life, more disposed to procreation than to pleasure.” (p. 14)

Boys and girls from different contexts signaled that what they represented concerning the family are “things that happen”. A disquieting topic to consider is if the dramatic play scenarios about the “ordinary” simply entertain, or if there is some superficial criticism of the
situations that they present. The doubt remains whether the mere representation of family situations by means of dramatic play is sufficient for one to take into consideration the causes and consequences of the problems presented here. Even if children do not verbally articulate questions regarding roles that have been determined by the culture, and think the problems tackled are unjust and oppressive, there is now an indication of the suspicion of non-conformism. The proposal of dramatic play is enriched if it is included as part of a pedagogical program involving critical reflection and the analysis of diverse situations. Children need access to group discussions of women and feminist perspectives about inequality in the relations between men and women. A gender pedagogy should include, in addition to discussions about the necessity of opening the field of action by and for women – fields that have been open exclusively to male influence -, an acknowledgment of the roles of women and an expansion of the concept of domesticity, one that visualizes male participation in this area of life.

The idea that “The school is the home and the school is the whole environment that surrounds us,” expressed by the Emberá (the Native participants), paves the way for the postmodern constructivist and ecological approach that recognizes in the feminist field of action, elements of a new agenda for the relationship between the social and the natural world. To Shea (1998), the emphasis of postmodern criticism in subverting the agenda of this illustration does not allow consideration of the power and language of other more transformational, visionary and futuristic agendas, especially those preoccupied with trying to help us see our human and natural relationships within more holistic, dynamic, and dialogistic frameworks.

As we consider ways that teaching children in the US and Colombia might lead us to more holistic, transformative, and aesthetic experiences for teachers and students, it is our responsibility to include arts-based practices in both teaching and research. If we arouse students to questioning and making choices by engaging them in the arts, they will discover that learning is really the process of creating; creating new ideas, new knowledge, new choices. Learning, like art, requires thoughtful choices, difficult decisions, and an acceptance of the consequences of these choices (Diaz, 2004).

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(1) This three year project (2000-2002), The Representation of Social Reality through Dramatic Play by Boys and Girls from Diverse Cultural Contexts (La Representación de la Realidad Social a través del Juego Dramático en Niños y Niñas de Diverso Contexto Cultural) was funded by the Colombian Ministry of Culture and the Colombian National Institute of Sciences (COLCIENCIAS). We thank co-researchers: Alba Lucía Rojas, Angélica Serna, Beatriz Vélez, Gabriel Murillo, Luz Angélica Romero and the students, teachers, and schools who participated in this project.
References


Reflections on the Embodied Voices of Six Egyptian Muslim Women
Lenore Hervey and Nancy Toncy

An Artistic Inquiry

Editor's Note: This is a brief description of an artistic inquiry by Nancy Toncy, one of the co-authors of this article. The inquiry began with a series of in-depth verbal and movement interviews with a number of Egyptian Muslim women living in Cairo, Egypt. The data gathered from six of these interviews was used as inspiration for dances that would embody the unique voices of the women, as well as themes that seemed to be common among them. The conversation presented here was creatively constructed by Toncy and Hervey (her thesis advisor) based on many such conversations between them about Toncy's methods, her process as an artist and a researcher, Hervey's interest as witness and advisor to the project, the challenges Toncy faced, and the evaluation of the form in which the findings were finally expressed.

Nancy: I chose artistic inquiry as my research method for several reasons. Movement has always been the form in which I expressed myself authentically. Verbal communication, whether in Arabic or English, has always been anxiety-provoking, never really revealing my truth. Instead words sometimes blocked my creative process. Also, after more than ten years of dance, performance, and choreography, it was only reasonable to incorporate those artistic strengths for this research project. I always trusted my own body more than outside resources for knowing and understanding. Artistic inquiry enabled me to use my body primarily to gather, analyze, and present embodied data. Culturally speaking, Egyptians use body language and non-verbal gestures in their daily communication, so bodily experience was central to my relationship with the women. Finally, since the research question was about the women's experiences in their bodies, the data collected were non-verbal, thus analyzed kinesthetically and presented in a dance to preserve their authentic and holistic value. It was anticipated that the women (the co-researchers) would co-create the project with me by actively participating in some of the research design and procedures.

Lenore: As your thesis advisor, I supported your choice. I knew you were a skilled and expressive dancer. I also knew you would give the project the kind of intensive time, energy, and scholarly commitment that would insure its success. I was excited about witnessing an artistic inquiry process that might result in a solid example of a method that I have been espousing for years. The opportunity to explore the cross-cultural application of dance/movement therapy methods was also too good to pass up.

Nancy: I began with an understanding of artistic inquiry from your research class and book (Hervey, 2000).
Lenore: That included an operationalized definition of artistic inquiry as a form of research that includes any or all of the following in some degree:

(1) Dance-making (or any art form) to collect data, dance-making to analyze data, and/or dance to present the findings.
(2) Acknowledgement and description of the researcher(s) creative processes.
(3) Aesthetic values of the researcher(s) that inform decisions and shape products made throughout the research process.

Leonore, how did your understanding of artistic inquiry change once you got going?

Nancy: It became more internal. I think art is inside each one of us. It became a discovery of the truth in myself; an intrapersonal dialogue/ agitation. My heart had a lot to do with it. It grounded me to the truth of what my body really wanted to say or do in a given moment. It is matter of letting go to your passion. My heart fueled my body/mind with so much courage to dance and make dances; courage to truthfully present myself whether people liked it or not. Before this experience art was only aesthetic -- to please everybody but myself.

Lenore: I remember you saying you had no idea it was going to take so much hard work. What was your motivation for doing this project in this way?

Nancy: Over time my body has taken on personal, cultural, and familial memories, just like anybody else who is born unique but through life acquires characteristics that make her look the same as everybody else. Dance has changed me by filtering out those aspects of myself that are ill fitting and maintaining only those that complete and satisfy me. Today I am not afraid to say and be the truth, to look to my body for wisdom, and to do my own dance. I found myself curious about other Egyptian women's experiences in their bodies, which raised the central question for this study:

“What are other Egyptian women’s experiences in their bodies?” I was interested in the ways in which their dances were similar and different, in the stories their bodies wanted to tell, in the feelings, memories, and images their bodies held and wished to communicate.

In response to cultural and familial norms and values, my mind used to make up stories, and hide secrets in order to live the life I wanted to live. My body only recently began to dance the truth about myself, my self in relation to others and to my culture. As a result, I mistrust others’ verbal self-presentations. I need to see the body move to understand a woman’s life experience and make sense of it. I trust the body. Therefore, my purpose was to give this group of Egyptian women, including myself, an opportunity to talk and dance about their lives. Together I hoped we might create integrity in our minds and bodies, given the chance to be ourselves, to listen, and to dance together. I hoped they could open their hearts and share
their own stories their own way. I wanted my body to move and witness theirs. I believed that we needed a chance to discover each other, to empower one another in order to live truthfully and act autonomously with courage, like Isis did. Culturally speaking, embodiment is very important. We need to communicate via body language to understand, feel, and confront one another. If we only speak we will always remain strangers.

**Lenore:** How would you describe your methods?

**Nancy:** I gathered the data in Cairo, Egypt. The co-researchers were 12 Egyptian women with Muslim heritages, intentionally selected for their diversity of experience, their interest in the research question, and their availability. None were more than acquaintances to me. Each woman who agreed to participate signed an informed consent form that assured confidentiality and privacy of the interview material. I introduced the nature and purpose of the research to each woman, describing the type of information needed from verbal and movement interviews. I also asked for permission to video or audiotape the whole or portions of the verbal interview and/or movement experience.

The interviews were conducted in a large room in a private, urban home in Cairo. The windows of the room were completely covered to protect them from any exposure that might inhibit their self-expression, especially for those who were veiled. I initially interviewed each woman in Arabic to collect verbal data about her experience in her body. Then six of the women participated in one to three dance/movement interviews to communicate the non-verbal aspects of her experience in her body. Within this context, I was a facilitator and witness, limiting my interventions to reflection, gentle encouragement, and open-ended questions about the meanings and feelings underlying the movement experience of each woman.

None of the women initially wanted to be videotaped, so after every interview, each woman was instead invited to hold the camera and record me as I moved. First, the woman recorded my kinesthetic response to her movement. Moving the impulses, sensations, and feelings that I experienced in response to each woman’s dance gave me insight into my unconscious reactions to her material. This in turn led me to understand her experiences and therapeutic issues in greater depth. My somatic countertransference (Lewis, 1984) thereby contributed to both data collection and analysis. Next, she recorded my effort to recreate her dance in my own body. The dance/movement therapy techniques, known as mirroring, echoing, or kinesthetic attunement, leading to kinesthetic empathy, helped me to understand her movement and its message, thus it too contributed to data collection and analysis.

**Lenore:** I think this was one of the most exciting outcomes of your research. Your creative problem solving led to the use of dance/movement therapy techniques in combination with video-recording yourself when the women would not allow themselves to be video-recorded.
As a result you have introduced an innovative and ethical research method for future exploration.

**Nancy:** It also increased the co-researchers’ trust in me and in the research process. The women asked questions, gave me feedback, and made corrections about my movement, thereby giving them a more active, creative, and empowered role in the research. Subsequently, three women agreed to be videotaped in their last movement session.

When each movement experience was complete, I journaled in detail, including all events and my responses to them. Data were preserved in the form of audio-tapes of the verbal interviews, video-tapes of me moving at the end of each session (recorded by the women), video-tapes of the few women who agreed to move, and thorough writing about the entire research process.

**Lenore:** After all the data were collected, how did you transition into dance-making?

**Nancy:** At first I tried picking one movement from 'Y' with another movement from 'R' then adding one movement from 'M' to complete a movement from 'K' etc.

**Lenore:** You used initials to refer to the women.

**Nancy:** Yes. But the process of taking single movements from here and there to aesthetically organize them together based on their flow, matching rhythms, or complementary shapes did not feel authentic to me or fair to the women. It broke the wholeness of the movement phrase and interrupted the meaning it conveyed. I then realized that my focus was solely on the aesthetic presentation, which made me angry at myself, saying: “Who do I think I am, cutting people’s lived experiences like that to satisfy my own aesthetic and artistic values”?

My vision was to choreograph a dance that could truly speak for all our voices, validate the uniqueness of our embodied experiences, and reflect our common themes. So, I went back to the video of the women and started dancing many times with the women to hold and feel the intensity of the embodied material until it internally stimulated me and initiated a creative process. With each revisiting of the data, I studied the woman’s shape, rhythm, use of space, quality of movement, body attitude, and movement vocabulary until I internalized as accurately as I could her kinesthetic language and “reached a visual and kinesthetic saturation” with her dance (Hervey, 2000, p. 61). In this embodiment process, I was also continuously checking back and forth to be sure that my recreation of the dances matched the original versions I had witnessed and experienced. I eventually selected movement phrases from each woman that I felt portrayed a holistic sense of her.

**Lenore:** That’s interesting. In other kinds of research these are called meaning units, or segments of data that cannot be broken down any smaller without losing their meaning.
You presented your first dance at a creative arts therapy conference. It was really a series of vignettes that recreated the women's movements almost exactly. I found it a very deeply moving presentation of their authentic movement, but what was missing was your voice. Your body was simply a medium through which the women spoke. The data was still in its raw form. In order for the data to be analyzed, it needed to become a dance. You needed to bring your aesthetic decision-making to the creative process. How did you finally get to that, while still respecting the wholeness and authenticity of each woman's dance?

Nancy: My challenge became to create a dance that was beautiful to watch yet was genuine to the original data and authentically expressed co-researchers' embodied voices. So, I went back again to witness and move with the videos of the women, but this time I was searching for authentic movement phrases that “came from somewhere deeper, more subjective and more personal,” as you have put it (Hervey, in press). Movement that spoke the truth about the woman's here-and-now reality. Unlike before, I became interested in the completeness of the movement phrase that “conveyed a whole feeling, story, memory, or an image” (Hervey, in press). I realized that if I could dance the authenticity in their movement, beauty would naturally unfold.

I repeatedly moved the selected holistic phrases to internalize their genuine quality. Next, I tried to arrange the phrases in a way that had smooth transitions, and to maintain a beautiful flow so they could talk and dance with each other. Embodying their authentic experiences was exhausting because I was taking in another's conscious as well as unconscious material. I needed some time to recuperate from their movement and come back to my own. I tried to simply breathe, stand still, roll on the ground, or walk in space before diving into another woman's story but this recuperation felt strange to my body because dancing has always been the renewal of my energy. To get inspired, I listened to The Secret Garden, the music that most co-researchers chose during the movement interviews. When my body got filled up with self/others intense emotions, memories, and stories and was ready for a breakthrough, I began improvising my response and creating my own dance that came to flow in and out of the women’s dances.

The process of embodying their authentic movement was illuminating in that I realized that although each of us had our own unique embodied voices, we all sang the same song, therefore some of the common themes we shared were aesthetically presented in the dance. For example, the veil became a central metaphor, representing the wind, wings, lover, boundary between self and others, God, a soothing blanket, and the hijab (the veil worn by Muslim women).

Lenore: The final dance was performed publicly for an audience of primarily friends and colleagues. You used a small proscenium stage, lit simply with warm lights passing over a cool blue veil that looked like it was hanging from the sky, infinitely long, giving it a feeling of
divine origin. You decorated the stage with Arabic calligraphy, lit candles, and burned incense, encouraging a feeling of intimacy, and of Arabic culture. The dance was followed by a conversation with the audience during which they asked you questions and shared their responses. There were several women in the audience from Middle Eastern countries, who understood and identified with parts of the dance.

As an audience member I had a stronger reaction to some parts of the dance than others, and in many cases these were movements that came from your own story. For instance, at one point you seemed to be pulling something out of your mouth again and again, reaching deeper into your body each time. For me this was such a powerful symbol of trying to find an authentic voice; and becoming aware that some words coming out of our mouths are in fact not true statements of self. Often the women’s movements became like a background chorus supporting these very powerful personal artistic statements.

Lenore: What were the most powerful parts of the dance for you?

Nancy: The most powerful was the whole introduction piece. Every movement carried its own story, its own dilemma; carried my embodied voice. I danced about separation, oppression, spirituality, pretension, truth, humiliation, travel, sensuality as powerful. The least satisfying part for me was the end. I knew I wanted to exit as a bride and I wanted to invite other women to dance with me but I could feel that the whole end piece was missing the kind of passion that created the beginning. Yes I exited as a bride, but not the way I wanted to.

Lenore: Yes, I can see that. You were also working against deadlines to perform on a prescheduled date, and start a new job at the same time. I sense that you could have used more time to end it with as much passion, creativity and aesthetic strength as you began it. Creative and research projects often run into these kinds of limitations.

I think your inquiry has a lot of value for the profession in both its content and its form. You have made it clear that the findings from this research are not intended to be generalized to all Egyptian and/or Muslim women. But I found it an opportunity to look through these cultural veils of separation at women whose experiences may be very different from my own, and yet be able to relate pretty easily.

Nancy: I hope that readers and audience members will subjectively derive some understanding through their own personal reactions to the experiences of these particular women.

Lenore: The project also provides a high quality example for other students who wish to use artistic methods of research. The written portion of the project provides a description of your artistic, creative, and aesthetic processes. It is clear to me that the dance of these women's experiences (yours included) revealed essences, subtleties, and flavors that could not have
been conveyed as richly in writing alone. Although the dance could certainly stand by itself, I believe the combination of a brief written synopsis (like an abstract or program notes), the dance performance, and the spontaneous verbal interaction with audience members to be the richest and the most enlightening presentation of these findings.
References


Portals: Primary Experience vs. Translated Experience
Linda Lack

The Implications for Aesthetics, Healing, and Creativity in Dance Theater and Movement Dance Therapy

This Arts-Based Research project has been performed across the United States. A video version of the project is available for personal participation or as a learning/teaching tool. It is, of course, only another kind of “translation” of the actual primary/lived experience of the project. Contact Linda Lack at Two Snake Studios, 1637 S. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA, 90035-4509. Telephone (310) 273-4797.

This Arts-Based Research project explores the differences between a primary or “pure” movement experience and that same experience when it is translated or has words wrapped around the movement. It further explores what the differences are between either of those experiences and “true” dance theater with sound and visuals. The research considers and is interested in the difference for both the person creating the artistic project and those receiving the experience - the audience. This exploration is grounded in an attempt to help define what Shaun McNiff has named Art Based Research, where both the concept and practice are still in developmental form, particularly in the field of Dance/Movement. This Arts-Based Research project has been implemented and refined over the last year and will include still photo images. A video version is available for participation or for use as a learning/teaching tool.

I am a dancer/performer/choreographer, an educator, and a healer/movement therapist. I have dedicated fifty-five years to creating movement rituals, an entire technique, and to allying individuals with the art and practice of accessing Self through movement. I re-entered Academia cautiously, making a commitment to myself, my art form, and to a belief that a Ph.D. in Dance should dance, and further, that it should not deteriorate into an exercise in rationalizing why Art – and Dance in particular – is a worthy endeavor in the community of scholarship. In fact, it is a thrilling chapter in the history of both Art and Academia, for Shaun McNiff has named and finally given formal credence to the possibility and reality of Art and Art-making as Research (McNiff, Art-Based Research, 1998).

In doing so, he has liberated minds, helped revolutionize methods of gathering and interpreting information, elevated and validated the role of the working artist in scholarship, and most importantly expanded possibilities for human understanding. Lenore Hervey has echoed all of this and extended an invitation and inclusion – specifically to choreographers and dancers – by describing and documenting choreography, its process and product, as a
research endeavor (Artistic Inquiry in Dance/Movement Therapy, Lenore Wadsworth Hervey, 2000).

This Art-Based Research project was born from an interest in and an attempt to participate in the pioneering work of shaping what Arts-Based Research is; from my own serious concerns for Dance/Movement as its own way of learning, experiencing and knowing; and for its healthy existence in academic environments where words – both written and spoken – are the dominant culture, and thus the “upper class” of that society, with all the attendant privilege, power, etc. This Arts-Based Research project is an advocacy project. It is also an attempt to create understanding and to illuminate, for those who do not spend time involved in the creative process – What is important about Art?

There is a dearth of Arts-Based Research in the discipline of Dance. Most of the work that exists either dances and then uses reflective writing to reveal important information about the creative process (Cancienne and Snowber, Writing Rhythm, 2003) or poses a question. The “answers” gathered are movement-based and they are the basis for culmination in a creative product (Hervey, 2000, pp. 95-109).

In an attempt to contribute to and expand the scope of Arts-Based Research, I decided to allow the methodology, design, and pedagogy itself to be a creative process, unencumbered by already-existing formulae yet faithful to general guidelines. Within the confines of this journal I will share the etiology and evolution of my approach, the journey toward the design, the design itself, and the results of this piece of Arts-Based Research that continues to work well and hold interest for those participating.

I have never made Art or Dance. I have placed myself in my studio (or in the wilderness for wilderness rituals) and allowed myself to wander, stumble, thrash, fly and wonder at it all. What was The Dance was passed through me and revealed through the act of immersing Self in movement, breath, and in the present-time moment of physical, emotional, spiritual awareness and being. I have always trusted that process (McNiff, Trust the Process, 1998).

I did the same with this Arts-Based Research: I allowed myself to be immersed in the utter discomfort – a very universal discomfort, frustration, and sometimes even distaste, of the Artist, when required to explain, define, or put words to Art:

The only valid thing in Art is the one thing that cannot be explained. To explain away the mystery of a great painting would do irreplaceable harm, for whenever you explain or define something you substitute the explanation or definition for the image of the thing.

–Henri Matisse
I spent movement/studio time wondering about the dichotomy between the lived or primary experience of Dance and the worded and written world of Academia in which I had also immersed myself. I decided to “turn in” a dance instead of an assigned paper for an important Ph.D. seminar. I tore up seven blank pages; I performed the piece. It was a bold exploration of the effect and responses I would have from both faculty and seminar participants. I intended it less as a political statement, more to make the point that Dance is a language of its own. I had unanimous acceptance for my “paper,” profound understanding for the point I was making, and the most difficult, strange, un-graced dance I had ever created in a lifetime of making dance. I sustained the only serious performance-related injury of my career while presenting it.

Somewhere in this process of stumbling through the wilderness and floating at the outer edges of Arts-Based Research, a generous and wise faculty member, Don Shapiro, suggested that I look at the moment when humans begin to speak.

It is a moment when there is a schism within Self, a schism between lived/primary experience and translated experience. Here may be the schism between Body and Mind. There are dramatic and profound losses when words are born and we become estranged from primary experience and our important ability to access it.

At first glance language appears to be a straightforward advantage for the augmentation of interpersonal experience... But in fact language is a double-edged sword. It also makes some parts of our experience less shareable with ourselves and with others. It drives a wedge between two simultaneous forms of interpersonal experience: as it is lived and as it is verbally represented. (Stern, p.16)

I maintain that that loss is not necessary, that it is the Artist who can exist in both worlds, who can help connect and reconnect others to the world of primary experience, who can mine this particular source of natural human wealth and information.

How then could I portray this information, understanding, and my concern for what I see as the minimization, disinterest and indifference to primary experience that is surely the basis of making and receiving Art?

I have created a piece of Arts-Based Research that addresses these issues and for many provides re-entry into the lost practice of primary/lived experience. There are three sections: The first is fifteen minutes of pure movement in silence except for the sound of physical grunts, breath, spit and sweat that comes from the physical labor of passion and angst. The movement material is partly autobiographical, with attention to that which is universal to most artists; it is political, emotional, physical, and sometimes endeavors to portray the spiritual. The second section is a rerun of the exact same movement with words wrapped around it. It “Explains” what was happening in the first section. The third section is an excerpt
from a mask-dance drama and ritual that authentically represents what I consider to be my Art. Like the first section, it is lived/primary experience.

This piece of Arts-Based Research is a fifty-minute solo that took six months to create and three to “live inside of,” as dancers say. Before the piece begins I explain what I am going to do and how the three separate sections will follow one another. I ask each person to try to remain present with me, physically and emotionally, as I move. I pose the question: “What is the difference, for you, between the primary experience and the translated or worded experience???”

At the end of the piece everyone is invited to “answer” or respond in any and all ways they choose – movement, silence, drawing, speaking, noise-making – anything. At this writing, the piece has been performed five times, for a spectrum of people ranging from those with little Art exposure or experience to high-level functioning artists.

I am deeply grateful, and of course it is satisfying that the piece is received by so many as an interesting piece of choreography and a fine performance, for I believe that it is important that Arts-Based Research endeavors to maintain similar aesthetic and quality levels as Art that is presented to audiences. However, it is the personal and individual responses and what we are learning – all of us who have been involved in this research – that are in fact the point. Reactions to the piece are surprising, stunning, often passionately intense; and usually wonderful art is made. The piece has also created forums for important reflective discussions that go on for months after a showing of the piece. It would be impossible to share, within the confines of this small article, the totality of what we have gleaned from the project, but some of what has emerged is the following.

Art, the creative process, is a primary/lived experience. Certainly the making of Art is, and I believe that most artists hope that the receiver, audience, viewer of a work of Art is engaged in primary/lived experience while participating with that which is made. During the shaping of this Arts-Based Research I learned that I could not dance thoroughly or authentically from a “lived” place while trying to speak at the same time. I could not really live, dance and translate simultaneously; I could make primitive noises and body-based noises, but it was not possible to produce communicative language as I know it while I moved. Given that fact, I recorded my own voice and words and danced to them in the second section. Still, I was not able to live inside the moment of embodied experience, for language, my own voice, translations, definitions and concepts actually yanked me away from primary experience. At that point in the process I realized why the piece was not what dance-theater and ritual are truly about – I had initiated the piece knowing that I would wrap words, sentences, language/ideas around the movement; that presupposes that I was already dwelling in the land of translation. The intent, phrasing, emotion – even composition – of a piece of choreography does not have a subject or verb, a period at the end of a sentence or thought. The beat of the heart, the rhythm of breath, the cadence of a human being's body physically
lifting and falling, the contraction and release of muscles, the exquisite joy of flying from and falling back to earth are primary/lived events, and it is actually impossible to construct the multi-dimensional layers of primary experience into sentences, paragraphs, words written or spoken. The piece is a tough and demanding performance experience, but what is really interesting is that the possibilities for injury are always greatest in the worded section. I must work to remain in true lived experience while hearing my own voice. The dis-ease and disgrace of the worded section prompted the inclusion of the masked dance ritual – no worded, languaged, theoretical experiences went into the making of or goes into the performance of this section. It is what Dance Art, or at least Art that is most satisfying, is for me.

It is interesting that the folks who participate, immersing themselves in this project, also feel that the third section is what speaks to them and moves them most deeply; and responses are always very primary – howling, weeping, utter silence or simple, poignant gestures of appreciation. It is very rare for anyone to address the question. Instead, for most people the piece seems to function as a portal or opening into accessing primary experience – it evidently gives permission to the viewers or participants to delve into their own lived experience and to remain there, both when watching the piece and in responding or replying to it. The worded, sentenced question becomes irrelevant and pales in relationship to the need to express, celebrate, share, participate and remain in primary experience.

Poetry, intricate paper sculpture, drawings and dances are made. Art is a language of its own and most people respond in the language of Art. This project lends support to a new current of thinking: Art should be taught and experienced in its own tongue, certainly not in a detached and foreign one (Kimball, Four Quarters of the Earth, 2004). I wholeheartedly agree.

Each time the piece is shown there are people who access and bring to conscious awareness what seems to be important “Self” information and they are willing to dance it, show it, shout it. There are cathartic experiences triggered by the piece and its non-verbal statement that primary experience is worthy, useful and important human experience. The piece seems to give access to and permission for expression of important Self information that would otherwise be ignored. Some of the responses are dramatic self-realizations and epiphanies, while others are simple but meaningful statements. “thank you for showing me how beautiful I am” (Lossi, 2003). These kinds of responses support what we know, that primary/lived experience – Art – is wonderfully useful in therapeutic, developmental and healing work (McNiff, Art as Medicine, 1992).

Yet another thematic group of responses falls into the category of education (both learning and teaching) and curriculum research. They are epitomized by the following message: “I am in a field not related to arts-based research, but the presentation was for me a ... consciousness – changing experience because it taught me more about how to approach my own research with openness to the 'Essence of the truth in the data' and with more creativity” (Williams, 2003). Each showing of the project produces multiple suggestions that
the piece should be experienced by students and faculty of Art and Communication departments; by communities exploring interdisciplinarity; and by policy makers inside and outside of Academia.

Lastly, but most compelling and deeply satisfying for me personally, is that this Arts-Based Research project proves over and over to be a channel into accessing how to approach, enjoy, understand, and embrace the experiences of both making and receiving Art.

“In a short fifty minutes we access aesthetic understanding...the impact is primary ... this 'aha' is an opening for new understanding of both self and other, of epistemology, complexity, silence, layering...” (Kimball, 2003). Or the scientist who, after experiencing the piece, stated that she would never sit in a dance concert again without “participating.” The varying forms of thanks the piece has received remind me that Art is a gift – a gift we give ourselves when we make Art, a gift we give to others who receive it.

This project began as an exploration of Arts-Based Research in the field of Dance and as a celebration of Art and Dance; it began as an attempt to underscore what is important, for everyone participating, about the act of making Art. It evolved into a tool for accessing primary/lived experience, for deepening our understanding about our capacity for, and the value of, primary experience that is the stuff of Art and the creative process. Society at large and Academia in particular do not encourage, foster, nurture, or even offer many experiences in primary/lived experience. That neglect of an important part of human experience distances us from a valuable part of our humanity. Participation in the land of primary/lived experience offers wonderful and expanded possibilities for information that in turn have profound implications for individual self-knowledge, education, aesthetics and healing.

To practice art is to enter into something dubious. Dubious in the sense that either fragments of the universe have fallen at your feet and you must make something of them, or numerous haphazard elements have been given to you by other people called artists and you must now reinterpret them...realize the scope of these thoughts by presenting art simply as a thing to be practiced rather than studied. Ed Ruscha (2003)
References


Labyrinth of Light
Bethe Hagens

Metaphor for a Learning Community

“Professor” shouted Harry, seizing Dumbledore’s arm. “Quick! Do something!”
Dumbledore looked down at Harry with a patient expression. “Do something, Harry? Your very formulation exposes the vacuity of your intellectual premises. One does not do a thing; one engages with a processual framework that is continuously negotiated at the margins of meaning and action...”


One of the things about art-based research is that you don’t necessarily set off one morning and say, “OK! I think today I’ll start an art-based research project!” You might only realize in process that you’re doing one; or when someone labels your work that way; or in retrospect when you look at what’s materialized and sit back with a grin and think, “This is good. This is really good! Look at all those metaphors!!”

And so... In the Beginning, I decided to set a cobblestone labyrinth into my front lawn over the septic system drainage field. I had found a neat trick on the internet for drawing the “classic seven-path” pattern from a geometric “seed” (shown at the left). This graphic seed generates a whole set of other ancient designs, and I was smitten. I immediately set to work with a butcher knife to cut 4” wide strips in the sod and a pancake spatula to remove them. I planned then to lay stones in the concentric troughs. (http://www.lessons4living.com/drawing.htm)

On the awful morning of September 11th, the second Trade Tower collapsed just as my labyrinth’s cobblestones slid from the delivery truck onto my driveway. For the next ten days, I ignored the television and worked from dawn to dusk out in my yard. Children in the neighborhood immediately began to help me lay in stones, and they soon established a ritual of running to the center, stretching out their arms, making a wish, and then running out again. Sometimes as many as eight or ten of them would be racing around the labyrinth at once, and they reminded me of the tigers in Little Black Sambo...their fears melting into butter for pancakes. (http://www.sterlingtimes.co.uk/sambo.htm)
About this time, my university “acquired” Vermont College with great fanfare and talk of “rejoining the clans.” The merger, of course, proved to be quite difficult. The two schools seemed mired in incompatible plans and protocols. Both are primarily distance education oriented, and the main Union campus in Cincinnati is a thousand miles from Montpelier. About a year and a half into the process, I was in Vermont having drinks and dinner one beautiful spring evening with a new dean and new colleague, and we realized that we would all be on-campus at the same time for several days later in the year doing our separate activities. We got to thinking that we could hold some events in common. Light bulbs went on. I ordered a second caesar salad. We’d call the time period an all-university Symposium and, by just being together, begin to break down some of the barriers we were all experiencing. We needed a theme, and I suggested Thresholds. The dean, a poet and political scientist, suggested Margins and Thresholds. My colleague, a lesbian activist, liked that a lot. (Later, we settled on Margins, Boundaries and Thresholds because it had a nice ring, and the Alumni Office added Creativity Across the Disciplines).

Another normally more staid dean joined us at the bar. He is an organist and I am a violinist, and we literally started jumping up and down when we realized that the Symposium could provide a venue for us to perform in the magnificent College Hall with its restored pipe organ as part of our jobs! We’d invite everyone in the Union Institute & University/Vermont College community—alums, current students, faculty, staff—to come to Vermont. Fall foliage festivities already planned in town would only augment whatever we came up with. Why, we’d invite our star alum, Shaun McNiff, as keynote presenter. We couldn’t fail. The path was already laid out. There was no sense of urgency, no purpose other than to be together. We decided then and there to bypass the tortuous maze of cross-institutional academic process and review by offering the Symposium without any overarching academic or C.E.U. credit attached. Something in me said, “This is going to be a piece of cake.”

Why I didn’t turn and run is beyond me. If there is a hallmark of my own art-based research, it is that whatever it turns out to be, it will not be a piece of cake. But my anthropologist heart begins to pound—I really do like the liminalities and possibilities of creating new community connections—and my adrenalin soars. I can’t stop working and I keep going until I get sick. . .or, until the art-based element kicks in and I shift gears.

It’s both more frustrating and more exciting for me when I move out of “my own work” and into a project such as the Symposium which must be collaborative. In the kinds of projects I like, a point-person is often needed, and I am usually willing to take on the role because it seems so simple. Inevitably, after the initial excitement, the realities of what I have taken on and what others can or cannot commit become painfully obvious. In the case of the Symposium, loyalties, budgets, space, maternity and sick leaves, external academic program reviews, and a litany of other obligations brought what could only be called a stunning groundedness to our path. I think my largest contribution to the event was simply assuming that it would happen and continuing to project that belief even as our planning mechanisms
seemed to grind to a complete halt. A detail would be set in place, and then a staff lay-off or position transfer would occur. Everything would be wrapped up on a mailing, and then an objection would arise from an as yet unidentified oversight administrator in an office that had just been created. As often as we’d circle the troops to celebrate completion, we’d be back at the beginning. It wasn’t so much a matter of taking wrong paths, it was simply walking the same one over again and again and again.

By summer, Dark Times had descended. The collaborators were weary and needed a break, but I still couldn’t stop. The pattern is so familiar to me. I eat dinner at my computer, skip my daily walks, use more under-eye concealer, slog through the details (e.g. confirmations, incompatible LCD hookups, lost space reservation forms, angry faculty who will not pay for their rooms if They don’t have to), and climb in bed with my students’ dissertations. I am seriously Tired.

And then, out of nowhere, It appears! This time It is on my friend’s coffee table—in a book. I take a weekend off from conference planning and do a crash course on It. I’m in ecstasy imagining doing It—and I can ONLY do it if the Symposium happens. This realization re-energizes my process and my vision of the event, and I have another “this will be a piece of cake” experience in the Great Chain of Art-Based Being. I will build a labyrinth during the Symposium at the Vermont College campus, and it will be so beautiful!!! I think no further. There is no other reason.

I return to Symposium planning a changed woman. Part of me moves into the technicalities of labyrinth construction: the cheapest supplies; the best design; safety and durability issues; locating a site; the possibility of snow. . . I never question that it will happen. The labyrinth creates itself before my eyes as I immediately eliminate candles (my boyfriend imagines the long skirts of wispy Vermont ladies flaming in the night) and settle upon rope lights, only to realize that the power I need could trip a circuit breaker and shut down the electrical system in the main hall! These considerations exactly mirror other Symposium processes in which I am engaged (tight budgeting; competing demands for choice program spots; scrambled communications between me in Kennebunkport and cafeteria, facilities, and housing staff a thousand miles apart; uncertain space availability), but I still don’t see that they are one circuitous path and not a maze.

I make repeated trips to the beach to practice drawing labyrinths in the sand and then several to Montpelier to stake out a site and press the geometric seed onto the ground in powdered lime. A month before the symposium, I lime the complete pattern and discover I will eventually need 568 feet of rope lights. Lay-offs at school have been rumored, and the cost of the lights astounds me. I buy them and think of how pretty my house will look at Christmas. I buy 600 feet of equally expensive extension cords, brown, to match the ground. . . .Rain comes. Almost all the lime is washed away, but campus collaborators email me to say enough can still be seen to restore it! I do. And then do it again. . . I still don’t see the
metaphor. I am still eating at the computer, emailing while I am talking on the phone and collating program components.

Only when writing text for my exhibit that accompanied my “landscape sculpture” (aka Labyrinth of Light) did I begin to see our labyrinthian planning path. A labyrinth differs from a maze in that it is a single path. There is no possibility for a wrong turn. One simply makes a decision to walk it. In surrendering to the journey of a labyrinth, being drawn almost to the center, then out to the periphery, and then finally to the center, one can let go of mind and purpose and relax into the meditative spontaneity of individual Fate. The point of departure is the point of return. There is nowhere to go but inside. Nothing to do but walk the same path out again. . .if you’re an adult. . .

Children aren’t saddled with the Greek and Roman understanding of the Minotaur trapped in the prison of the labyrinth; and adults rarely learn that it was also believed to be a place of rebirth and protection. For several hundred years after 1000 C.E., labyrinths were the site for winter solstice celebrations in Christian churches and they became synonymous with the inescapable path of Fate that Jesus would walk towards his crucifixion. German and Italian churches incorporated the images of both a fruiting “tree-cross” (shown here from the 12th century Book of Illustration) which symbolized Christ’s victory over death, and a leafed tree of knowledge bearing a crucified Christ.

I saw our process. A rose in full bloom.

I had been so consumed with the elegance of the geometric seed that I didn’t realize until I actually installed the rope lights that I would need two separate strands to make the pattern. Two separate institutions to create the liminal tensions of the Margins, Boundaries and Thresholds of the Symposium. The tree cross morphed for me into a healing staff, entwined by two snakes, of DNA, and then into a brain, a solar system, a galaxy—all leading to the black hole center of all-consuming creative Self. A book I will write materialized before my eyes as I finally understood the labyrinth as the connector for winter solstice symbols I had been working with since the early 1990s.

The Symposium was wonderful. We were blessed with gorgeous early October weather, and participants as well as people from all over Montpelier came with their families to wander the labyrinth long into the night. Children raced around yelling, and, oblivious to the lines, toddlers tried to drag their more wary parents to the center. I saw women dancing in the moonlight.

I don’t know what will come of our hopes for campus unity that brought the Symposium and labyrinth into existence. These are uncertain times in higher education, particularly for a Ph.D. program such as ours which has evolved, over forty years, into a pedagogical model now all but indistinguishable from the process of art-based research. How will we—as
individuals, and as an institution—continue along our path while simultaneously opening to a Federally mandated and regulated shift in focus toward outcomes-based assessment?

Whenever I try to approach this question directly, I realize that I am betraying the method I’m trying to protect. One solution to this problem has been to shift the dialogue to the archetypal realm. I’m thinking now of the wise and compassionate Yudhishthira, a central figure in the Hindu creation epic, The Mahabharata. When Yudhishthira is told that war is inevitable, he says, “We cannot change what is destined to be, but I shall do nothing in thought, deed and action to provoke it.” Ironically, though, he has a weakness for gambling. He is terrible at it, yet he lets himself be lured into a game in which he stakes not only his entire kingdom and wealth, but his brothers and his beloved wife. He cannot stop playing, even as he loses everything, sends himself and his family into exile, and ultimately brings about the Great War that breaks the log-jam that has held back Creation. Yudhishthira’s final realization is that every path is an illusion, that there is no winning or losing, only integrity to self. With this recognition he finds peace.

In her 1999 Union Ph.D. dissertation Art-Based Research in Dance/Movement Therapy, Lenore Hervey essentially defined art-based research as integrity to self: “Artistic inquiry uses artistic methods of gathering, analyzing, and/or presenting data; engages in and fully acknowledges a creative process; and is motivated and determined by the aesthetic values of the researcher(s).” If the doing of art-based research is our passion, our love, our desire—then we are as a community the process of world peace. As we claim and live this identity, a more powerful and visible global human ethic will emerge as the shape of our path.
References


A Phenomenological Analysis of Music in Childbirth
Suzanne B. Hanser

This article is about a day in my life. On this day, I learned about the impact of music as therapy without the benefit of a textbook or a tutor. On this day, a revelation of the power of music was the stimulus for a research career, on a mission to understand the influence of music on distress and pain. Now I am an artist. I am a scientist. I am a therapist, philosopher, educator, practitioner, dreamer. I am a soul searcher and finally, a researcher. But mainly, I am and have been a music therapist. Through decades of this work, I have witnessed the best in people while they engage their creative selves. I have also been privy to their deepest secrets, when music connects them with feelings they didn't know they had. Within music therapy process, I have shared personal revelation, profound comfort, and immense angst.

It is a privilege to be a music therapist, and I take my role seriously. So seriously that I am not content to simply observe the phenomena and phenomenal events I encounter in my sessions. For me, every success generates hard critical thinking. I ponder and question:

"Why did she react so strongly when she heard that music?"

"How did he improvise with such fervor and beauty?"

"What precipitated those tears when she started to sing?"

"Would others benefit from these music therapy techniques?"

"Who are they?"

This modus operandi is the researcher in me, the one who demands answers to questions, but only seems to create more questions. This is the journey of the researcher.

To begin, I will share my story. It takes place on the day that my daughter was born and died.

I was in labor. I arrived at the hospital, having packed a bag full of cassette recordings just in case I wanted to hear a little music. But suddenly, the friendly nurse who greeted me frowned and twitched. She called in the obstetrician on-call to listen to the fetal heartbeat. There was no fetal heartbeat. He couldn’t find it and she couldn’t find it, and neither could anyone else who dared try their chance at it. The physician stated that there was nothing they could do but proceed with labor.

In disbelief, shock or both, I didn’t know what to do or how to feel. I grabbed a cassette tape and played it as loudly as I could stand it. Little did I know then that music would be the only
element that could provide comfort, familiarity and stability to allow me to cope with this ordeal. Fourteen hours later, I would give birth to a stillborn daughter. The music, playing continuously during labor and delivery, distracted me, riveted my attention to something powerful, directed me to breathe in rhythm, and transported me into a world of beautiful images to replace reality.

Using a phenomenological research paradigm (Forinash, 1995), I began to analyze my experience of listening to the music. Forinash suggests that the participant/researcher examines the syntax of the music, the sound as such, the semantic meaning and ontology of the experience, and then forms a metacritical evaluation of the process as a whole.

I began by looking at the music I selected. At first, I listened to Mozart sonatas that I had played as a child and the Debussy string quartet that I loved. I concentrated on every single note and played these selections over and over. As labor progressed, the rhythm of the music guided my breathing and paced the next several hours. The stability of an ongoing beat in Vivaldi’s chamber music and Bach’s keyboard works kept me breathing in their strict tempi, getting me through contraction after contraction, measure by measure. During a long and difficult transition stage of labor, Prokofiev’s chaotic and dissonant piano concerto matched my torment and somehow, curiously, I felt empathy with the music.

The phenomenological research approach allowed me to interpret the meaning of the experience and the effects of the music. Introspection helped me identify my internal states. I used journal narratives to define and detail the experience of loss, the emotional and physical pain, and the process of paying attention to the music to help me cope. Then I translated the lengthy narrative into descriptions of competing behaviors – how I blocked my anguish and physical pain with the thoughts and feelings associated with the music. I analyzed that moment when the music was able to engulf me and carry me away from my trauma. I described this deeply felt, spiritual moment and analyzed how the rhythm and meter of certain music kept my breathing regular and slower than my natural inclination. I examined how familiarity and previous associations with other music generated calming imagery. I reviewed how relaxation responses which were previously conditioned to the music enabled me to rest, even while enveloped in chaos.

I wanted to know whether music could similarly influence other women in labor and delivery. My personal case study provided the critical elements to articulate criteria for selecting the most appropriate music to accompany each stage of labor in other women. If music could be so powerful in helping me cope with the hundreds of contractions, perhaps it could help other women through their labors, and ultimately help others in distress or pain. I developed a clinical music therapy protocol which could be replicated by other researchers and clinicians.

To test the protocol, I designed a behavioral research project. I defined some of those things
that I believed would change as a function of music. I selected certain behaviors that I thought were indicative of perceived pain and tension. These became the dependent variables of this research. I hypothesized that listening to music which was conditioned to evoke a strong relaxation response would result in fewer pain responses than not listening to any music at all.

I knew I needed to pilot case studies which applied the model to other women in labor. I personally coached and interviewed several women to refine the model and develop the protocol. I engaged two graduate students to do independent observations and assist in the research process. To my delight, the women we worked with, as well as their coaches and medical teams, embraced the model enthusiastically and cheered us on to continue. Their fortunately uncomplicated birth experiences demonstrated the replicability of the model and added a celebratory component to the birth of the baby. Meanwhile, I was observing a supremely positive outcome to birthing to conclude my own traumatic experience.

During this time, a friend with cancer was enduring the hideous side effects of chemotherapy. I gathered up a collection of cassettes to accompany her next treatment. She revealed that the music had, indeed, provided some distraction and positive mood changes during the next two sessions. But, then at home, she began to experience nausea whenever she played these musical selections. Horrified, I recognized that this process was unwittingly conditioning a distressing response to this music. I needed to study the behavioral conditioning literature, and consult with fellow clinicians and researchers. My review of the development of classical and respondent conditioning paradigms enlightened me on these unexpected outcomes. Subsequently, I took care to pair music with relaxing effects in order to condition positive effects prior to experiencing any pain or trauma.

Back on course, I embarked on a research design to test the effects of music listening on women in labor. Using each patient as her own control, my collaborators and I observed pain responses during ten contractions while music was playing and compared them with their responses during five contractions without music. The observation continued throughout labor with extremely positive results. Every woman we observed had fewer pain responses during the music listening condition (Hanser, Larson & O’Connell, 1983).

Music carried me through personal trauma, brought meaning to my experience, and gave others a chance to benefit from music therapy. The research process itself served as a therapeutic outlet for my own recovery while identifying the factors that were influential in helping others cope with the pain and anxiety of childbirth. My loss was a gain for the many women who were inspired to use music to facilitate an easier labor and to celebrate the birth of their children. The phenomenological and behavioral approaches served to guide music therapy practitioners in the methods and outcomes of this remarkable service known as music therapy.
Insight begets insight as the journey of an artist, scientist, therapist, philosopher, educator, practitioner, dreamer, soul searcher and researcher continues.

Music carried me through personal trauma, brought meaning to my experience, and gave others a chance to benefit from music therapy. The research process itself served as a therapeutic outlet for my own recovery while identifying the factors that were influential in helping others cope with the pain and anxiety of childbirth.
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Art Therapy’s Bastard Child
Martin Perdoux

Intercourse of Image and Prose

The language of most educational researchers uses the tone of the academy and the implicit intent of science. It is distanced, authoritative, oriented toward wider meanings and generalizations, and often implies that there are right or wrong ways of teaching. It does not speak the voice of uncertainty, does not acknowledge the changeable, instinctive, and intuitive character of teaching. (Gallas, 1994, p.2)

This paper examines the long-term process of art-based research I pursued across art forms, from sculpture to prose, resulting in the writing of a memoir about the story of my conception. The writing of Junkie Bastard emerged from ceramic sculptures I created as a graduate art therapy student in 1994, and earlier, and continued for ten intensely therapeutic years. Only this amount of time could yield sufficient artistic and psychological distance. Junkie Bastard is about growing up in France 23 years ago as a 17-year-old punk rocker with a bad heroin habit, and discovering I was the love child of a Hungarian opera composer.

When I found out in 1982 that I was not the son of my mother’s pharmacist husband, I was forbidden to tell him. I was already a troubled seventeen-year-old, but I now had a troubling story to boot. Even though it was still a family secret, I had to tell my story to everyone else, because it was about who I was, and because I couldn’t get out of trouble until I could tell people who I was. In other words, I couldn’t save myself until I owned the story. Not an easy task since I was the product of the story I had to tell. It predated me, and for seventeen years, my participation in the story was passive, unaware. My first problem was that the story was bigger than I was.

The solution that manifested itself was twofold. First, I went into the story. In practical terms, it meant exploring every detail available in the amazing archives my mother had created by religiously keeping photo albums, original manuscripts, musical scores, every scrap of paper relating to her love story, and a large suitcase filled with love letters. This creative archive was a lifeline, especially during the four years until my first visit with my biological father in Hungary. Long after I left France at the age of nineteen, these archives focused my search. They simplified the arduous work of recalling memories complicated by the presence of a secret. They mapped events I had lived but not truly experienced.

Getting all the facts was only part of what I needed to do before I could tell mon histoire. The second part of the solution manifested itself once I moved to the United States. I realized that I had a difficult time articulating the story because it had been told to me in French, and
because French was the language used to hide the secret from me for seventeen years. French was not only the language my mother taught for a living. For me, it was the artful tongue of lies, understatements, and cover-ups. My mother used French to romanticize the plain truth, not the language I needed to debunk the myth of the affair. French was too loaded with emotion to allow me the distance I needed. It also held the stigma of academic failure during the last years of French high school I spent in a narcotic stupor, while the success I experienced in American universities introduced English as a hopeful language. I was the embodiment of the Unspeakable in the French language, but English welcomed me as its Love Child. It is no wonder I chose an English speaking audience to tell my story, since English gave me the first term that described me in a way that felt comfortable.

I think 23 years is rather slow to catch up on seventeen years of incomplete self-knowledge, but maybe it is just my impatience, my obsession with finding out everything that I may have missed during these first seventeen years of ignorance. At any rate, this obsession probably had a lot to do with my going into the profession of art therapy. Altruism was not my only motive. Understanding, and maybe even controlling the process of self-discovery also attracted me to the field, because I had been thrust into the process since I had left France. The act of running away from the drugs and the drama in France charged everything around me with the energy and the symbolism of what I had escaped. I began deliberate art-based research about my story only after my graduate art therapy studies, but the sculptural attempts I made as an undergraduate student were already an exploration of my birthright.


With titles like Let’s get to the Bottom of Things, these early studies were displayed along with abstract statements like “Have you ever wondered what someone really meant in all honesty? Do you look for the hidden meaning, the deep significance of words and behaviors?” Although I could not see it then, the juxtaposition of the sexual imagery and the statements created a dissonance that betrayed the need for more work.

Fortunately, I did not stop exploring the story of my birthright, especially since I did not fully comprehend what was driving me. I kept my addictions at bay as long as I ceaselessly explored the story of my identity. If I had stopped, it would have caught up with me and I probably would have self-destructed.

Art therapy cultivated the curiosity I already possessed—or maybe it was the curiosity that possessed me—but it also helped to define my audience as a writer. Once I settled on English, memoir writing still entailed finding the right choice and combination of words in a second language. This process often consisted of eliminating the language of therapy. This became painfully obvious as I told my story to art therapy colleagues, who responded with remarks like, “It’s a lot of loss,” or “There is an absence of father.” Clearly I didn’t need to feel sorry for myself or to reconnect with the shame I had inherited for being the Unmentionable, but it also seemed unwise for artistic reasons. As
much as I knew the value of good psychotherapy, memoir writing privileged artistic merit over psychotherapeutic insight. As Lopate admonishes would-be memoir writers, “unproblematically self-assured, self-contained, self-satisfied types will not make good essayists” (1994, p. xxvi). It was much more interesting for the reader to watch me bumble through the story and make repeated mistakes, than it would be for me to claim to have great revelations and infinite wisdom. When I shared these writing tips with my graduate thesis students as an art therapy educator, I was confronted with the limits our programs placed on students in the name of academia.

During graduate art therapy thesis, students wrote about the world they encountered during their art therapy fieldwork, a maelstrom of psychiatry wards, group homes, jails, and reform schools, that often seemed as ill as the people there. The daunting task of writing about messy and overwhelming experiences in the neatly structured style of the American Psychological Association took on an absurd quality. Encouraged by the program overview my department handed out to students, in which it advertised the possibility of producing non-traditional thesis formats, I offered my students the help needed to write a thesis in the creative writing style of the personal essay. I had found the personal essays I had written about my own art therapy practice to be much more representative of the experience, and I had published one in a widely read local weekly (Perdoux, 2001). Creative nonfiction was native to the artistry it described. I was confident the department would support me in my effort to innovate, since the rest of the school had validated the connection between my creative writing and my thesis course by awarding me a faculty enrichment grant and a residency to finish my memoir. A chapter of Junkie Bastard won an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship Award in prose. See: http://www.state.il.us/agency/iac/IAC Fellowship Web Pages/Prose Recipients/Perdoux/Home.htm.

Increasingly, students and I talked about the therapeutic quality inherent to the process of writing a creative thesis. I was not surprised, since I had already experienced this in my own creative writing about art therapy. I had likened it to a form of self-supervision, a way to gain true objectivity on fundamentally subjective situations. I often remarked to students that “just because something is not billed as art therapy does not mean it’s not therapeutic.” The inclusion of creative writing in thesis constituted a much-needed form of self-care for students, but it also seemed to embolden them to speak out on previously self-censored issues.

My effort was cut short when my application for a promotion was voted down by my department, and my contract was not renewed. I was told that my application would be great if I were applying for promotion in the Writing Department, but not for Art Therapy. Since I had gotten good course evaluations and excellent recognition outside the school—the two criteria for promotion—the thumbs down surprised me, particularly since I taught a writing
course. The vote frustrated me at first, but my disappointment was quickly replaced by my concern for the welfare of students and the provincial thinking it suggested.

One of my essential premises was that in art therapy, we don’t choose our medium, our medium chooses us. My medium was prose, not because I had chosen it, but because I had to write the story of my conception as a condition of my existence. Consequently, my view of therapeutic art forms was inclusive, and certainly not limited to visual art forms. I also understood that just because something was billed as art therapy didn’t mean that it was therapeutic. Some therapeutic creative processes fared better in the context of their native discipline rather than in their pseudo recreation within art therapy. Art therapists would do better, I thought, to take the idea of art therapy and run with it. I had tried it, returned with a memoir (a chapter of it is appearing in an anthology http://www.middlefingerpress.com) and a second nonfiction book (Jason & Perdoux, 2004), but I was rebuffed.

I knew from McNiff (1998, p. 65), that the field was “now ready to explore voices that emanate from artistic expression”, but while Allen’s warning (1992) about the “clinification syndrome” led many art therapists to practice her advice, it remained only a didactic exercise in much of art therapy education.

While some colleagues perceived my successful transition from sculpture to prose as evidence of my departure from the field of art therapy, I felt it had brought me closer to its heart. In my experience teaching and practicing art therapy, I found overwhelming evidence of what I already knew from writing Junkie Bastard. Privileging artistic considerations and aesthetic concerns rather than psychoanalytic insight produce better art, and in the end, this process is more therapeutic. If I reached the heart of art therapy by crossing its academic boundary, it suggests that art therapy education is off center and that art-based research is a way back. I continued to share these findings in the field by leading creative writing workshops for art therapists on a state and national level.

Meanwhile, my writer and artist friends reacted with a salutary envy. “You’re so lucky to have a story like this!” They said. “What a great story!” Naturally, I started spending more time with writers and distanced myself from people whose company did not enrich my work. Memoir writing was neither a solitary search for language, nor a sudden success, but a slow process within a community of fellow artists. One person in this group stood out by the quality of guidance I received from her: My wife Eileen Favorite, who is herself a writer.

Shortly after she wed me in 1994, she retraced my awkward attempts at telling her family my story. With her help, I recalled how miserably I stumbled to explain I had been married once before, why I had two fathers, and why I had not been raised with my six siblings. This was the beginning of my ability to talk about my story to a broader audience. Until then, I could only tell my story to people I knew very intimately, or people I wanted to know very intimately. Fellow writers and the vast horizons of literature taught me how to tell it well to strangers.
Although the material was exactly the same, spinning a good yarn to write a true story turned out to be a lot more laborious than the art of seduction. Beyond that, both rewarded me with intense pleasure and pain, but the foreplay of writing lasted years longer.

I needed these years to take artistic distance, before I could rewrite the most painful material, the stuff that I had to revisit, to re-experience from the safety of twenty-three years away. I needed the compassion I discovered as an art therapist who worked with troubled teens for nine years before I brought to life my own teenage junkie ghost, and kept him at bay with enough self-deprecating humor to crystallize him in a twenty-three-year-old present tense.

Before I knew it as art-based research, I already knew that the synergy of image and prose setting in motion this inquiry about my life was the source of the deepest and most beneficial influences coming to me. My research started intuitively with a series of sculptures and drifted into prose without having to choose one or the other, because I sensed that it would have been an artificial choice. I did not choose my medium; it chose me, and I went where it led me with a deliberate abandon. I exercised control instead on artistic considerations, not psychotherapeutic ones. Looking back on this decade with the eyes of an art therapist, I see that only an unfettered artistic journey across art forms could guarantee an experience as rich as the human existence I yearned to recapture. My experience has shown that is the duty of art therapy educators to learn to recognize the diversity inherent to art-based research, to welcome it in their programs, and to share it with their students in a teaching mode that is native to its nature.
References


Remembering the Holocaust
Vivien Marcow Speiser
Phillip Speiser

An Arts-Based Inquiry

This article describes our process of doing arts-based research as a search for meaning making around the losses our families suffered in the holocaust. As expressive arts therapists and educators we used the arts as a method for exploring painful emotions, documenting our journey into Poland and as a means for sharing our experience/findings with others. The final form of our research has taken the shape of a multimedia dance performance piece. As performers and educators we have shown this piece for the past 14 years, in courses for therapists and educators, at Holocaust remembrance events, across the United States, in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

We will describe our methodology as well as present some of our findings through words and images. In 1990 we made a trip to Poland to explore the towns that Phillip's family had lived in before and during World War II. We also planned to do some teaching at the University of Warsaw so that we could learn more about the culture and to keep the trip from being entirely personal. We knew that we intended to visit some of the concentration camps in Poland, particularly Auschwitz-Birkenau where we had both lost family members. As co-investigators we decided that we would process our feelings and experiences along the way as they came up in the moment. We both kept journals where we wrote about our experiences and created documentation through photographs and recorded interviews with people we met along the way. At that time we had no clear thoughts or ideas about what, if anything, we would do with the information we were gathering.

In many ways we had both been investigating the holocaust all of our lives. As children we were both aware of the Holocaust and its impact upon our families. Throughout our lives we have both read extensively about the holocaust, and have visited holocaust museums and memorials throughout the world. In our somewhat extensive traveling we have always investigated the Jewish life of every country we are in and have examined the life of that culture both prior to and after the Second World War. Both of us have worked as expressive arts therapists with Holocaust survivors and have investigated the effects of the Holocaust upon the next generation of family members.

When we traveled to Poland we knew that we would be grappling with issues around Jewish identity and family history in an attempt to make sense out of non-sense. This trip was our way of honoring our Hirschowitz, Schabaschewitz, Speiser, and Stybel family members who perished in the Holocaust. We knew it would be painful to enter into the territory of what we thought of as “the enemy” and it was. Phillip’s parents were afraid for us and clammed up in
terms of giving us helpful clues to guide us in our search. We found ourselves in an emotional terrain where from moment to moment we would suddenly plunge into dark feeling states as we encountered remnants of Jewish experience in Poland. We had also heard many stories about anti-semitism in Poland so we were always on our guard. The questions we traveled with included: uncertainty about whether we would find the homes Phillip's families had lived in; whether it was safe for us to travel about as Jews; and questions about what sorts of tangible signs we would discover about Jewish life in Poland in the past and in the present. We traveled by ferry across the Baltic Sea from Sweden and brought Phillip's Saab across to drive around the country in. We were pretty much playing it by ear, each day unfolding as we followed our quest. We did not speak Polish and we rarely had translation available to us.

Traveling through Poland was an emotional roller coaster ride. Our attempt to retain some sort of professional distance by teaching students at the University of Warsaw is a case in point. We were shown to a guest apartment inside the Department of Psychology building where we were to be living and teaching. At that moment we both experienced an unexplainable painful visceral reaction. Both of us felt suffocated and we could not stay there. Later we learned that the building we were in was the former Gestapo headquarters for the Warsaw Ghetto and across the road from the building stood the station where the Jews had been deported to the concentration camps--so much for “professional” distance.

We succeeded in finding the towns that Phillip's families had lived in and managed to find the actual house that Phillip's father had grown up in and helped to build--all this happening with a small scrap of paper that had written on it in Polish: “Do you know the family Speiser from the 1930's?” Despite the lack of translation we managed to create a non-verbal relationship with the three generations of family who currently lived in the house and were touched by their hospitality and obvious warmth. Later we learned that this family was indeed very good friends with Phillip's family before the war. We did not experience the anti-semitism we had expected to find.

We learned quickly how to find our bearings in every town we traveled through by asking where the Jewish cemetery was to be found. These cemeteries usually had lost most of their tombstones which the Nazi's had desecrated, often to build roads with. Sometimes these tombstones had been hidden and resurrected following the war. Sometimes we would see candles or stones at the sides of the graves, which indicated that they had recently been visited. It was profoundly moving to walk through these graveyards and to see so many centuries of Jewish life lived in Poland, stretching back for centuries. We were often in tears, and would frequently bump into people making similar pilgrimages in search of their own roots. It was a chilling, humbling and profound honor to be undertaking this task of remembrance.

The most profound moment of our experience was visiting the death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. We had dramatically different responses to the camp. Vivien sank into the ashes, as
Phillip felt compelled to keep moving and explore and photograph. In the performance piece that we later crafted out of this experience we recapitulate our process in the camp and transform it into an artistic multimedia piece.

When we set out on our trip into Poland we knew that we needed to document our journey. We did this in the form of journal writing, audio recordings of individuals we found who knew Phillip’s family and photography. We did not think of ourselves as arts-based researchers. After returning home we realized that we needed to find a way to keep this journey alive and fresh. It is here that we turned to artistic inquiry to help us find a form for remembering the holocaust and its impact upon our lives. Our attempt to find meaning, in this case to become the keeper of the stories and share these with others, slowly emerged. This is what crystallized from our research. We began an intensive period of reading, attending classes and events related to holocaust studies and became involved in a project that was recording interviews with holocaust survivors. We also recorded the histories of the survivors in our own families.

It is during this period that we continued to shape our raw data from our journey into various artistic forms. We created a photo essay, part of which will be presented at the conclusion of this article. We also created a slide presentation where we share our stories through the form of storytelling. Lastly, in a 7-minute performance piece entitled “I am alive in this place of death”, Phillip accompanies Vivien on the flute as she moves to seven slides that were taken inside the death camp Birkenau. This multimedia dance performance projects the slide images off of the back of Vivien and onto a screen. The effect is hauntingly eerie as the image of Vivien moving collides with images of Vivien in the concentration camp and near the ovens of death.

We use our exploration and findings as an arts-based teaching methodology which demonstrates a research process in action. Our goal is to serve as role models who demonstrate how others can make art out of their own life experiences. We have evoked a powerful response to our work. Audiences are often left in tears, stunned, speechless. In the question and discussion period following the performance people find their own connections and often talk about their own heritage, their own losses and their desire to preserve connection to that. The work remains vivid and alive for us as we continue to interact with others around it.

We did not know that this research would be woven into our teaching and that 14 years later we would still be the keepers of this story. We have learned that this story impacts powerfully on others, that it has stood the test of time, and that we are still learning from it. This story is linked to our sense of mission, agency and efficacy in this world and it is our way of making sure that we do not forget. We are not yet done with this inquiry and probably never will.
In the same way that we take the audience inside of our felt experience through stories, images, music and movement, when we teach and perform this work, we use words and images to capture and express what continues to live within us in relationship to this work. We consider this to be an integral part of who we are and have taken upon ourselves this task of sacred remembrance.

For the remainder of this article, we will present a portion of the “data” of our research findings through the photo-essay that we created. We hope that these words and images “speak” to you, our readers.

Our Personal Backgrounds

Vivien:
I grew up in South Africa in the fifties. My grandparents had immigrated to South Africa to escape pogroms in Lithuania and my parents were born there. As fervent Zionists, my parents immigrated to fight in Israel's war of independence in 1948 and I was most likely conceived on an illegal immigrant ship. My personal myth was fashioned out of this experience where in utero I was present in Israel during this war but because I needed to be born by Caesarian section, my parents returned to South Africa shortly before I was born.

As a child, I experienced anti-semitism early in grade school. At the same time I was one of those children who were fascinated by the holocaust and I read voraciously anything holocaust related I could lay hands on. In the Jewish community, Israel's day of independence was celebrated and before this celebration I remember watching vivid and graphic movies about the holocaust, which haunt me to this day. In the way that children tend to merge events, I tended to merge the holocaust with the founding of the state of Israel, and since I had almost been born there, with my birth. Thus I become intrinsically connected to the holocaust (at least in my own mind). I did not know as a child that my grandfather's entire family had been left behind in Lithuania and that apart from one cousin who survived, the rest of the family perished, primarily in Auschwitz. As is common in survivor families this knowledge had been buried and did not surface until I was an adult, living in Israel, at the time.

Phillip:
I grew up in New York City in the Bronx and in Brooklyn and was surrounded by Jews and the experience of being Jewish. I knew that my parents had immigrated to the United States from Poland and that my mother's family had escaped the Holocaust by moving across the border into Russia at the outbreak of the war. I knew that my father had left Poland on his own as a young man where he met up with my mother's family and eventually married my mother. I also knew that my paternal grandparents and the rest of the extended family had died in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

All my life I had heard stories about the war, and the heroic acts my father performed to stay
alive, such as being sent to a work camp in Siberia and later escaping. I did not notice that every year on Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, remembrance candles burned to honor my father’s family who had died. This I only discovered as an adult.

My mother’s family and my parents survived the holocaust by escaping into Russia where they endured the war. After the war they passed through Poland again, on their way to Germany where they were interned in an American refugee camp for several years. From here they immigrated to the USA, where I was born. One of my older brothers was born in the displaced person’s camp in Germany.

My parents did not return again to Poland and were fearful about the trip I eventually made. As an adult I immigrated to Sweden for a twelve-year period. Since Poland was only a ferry ride away on the Baltic Sea, I had always thought that I would make the trip across when the time was right.

Selected Field Notes from our Trip to Poland

TEACHING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

As we approached the University, where we were to stay in a guest apartment, we became very apprehensive. We had already been in the country for several days and had been finding our feet. We tended to verge in and out of a consciousness that we were Jews, visiting a country where Jews had been persecuted. As our perfectly charming hosts led us into the guest apartment, Vivien experienced a deep visceral terror and we both felt that we could not breathe and needed to leave the space. When we returned to teach in that same building the next day we discovered that the department of psychology was housed in what had been the former Gestapo headquarters for the Warsaw Ghetto. We declined an invitation to visit the basement where the prisoners had been tortured and could not practice emotional detachment in regard to these experiences.

Notes from Phillip’s Journal:

“Familiar faces, familiar spaces, familiar places? You, students, were to be a buffer between the past and the present- a safety valve and reality check so that I would not sink totally into my parent’s past. So naïve I am. So naïve are you. You listen to me, a Jew, with open curiosity. You move with freedom and grace. The work is full of wonder. And yet we all remain trapped in this hell- the former Gestapo Headquarters for the Warsaw ghetto.”

Visiting Aunt Reiber’s House

Since we were new to investigating in this manner we tended to invent strategies as we went along. We had already discovered that outside of the university, not too many people spoke
English and when we explored the rural towns Phillip's mother had lived in we were much at a disadvantage. Learning from experience, when we visited the town of Rzeszow we took the porter of the hotel along with us on our search. He was an older gentleman who knew that we wanted to visit the Jewish areas of the town. He did not understand or speak English but knew what we were looking for (i.e. the location of what had once been the Jewish Ghetto). We had the address of Phillip's father's aunt's house, and because this house had stood at the outskirts of the Jewish Ghetto, we found that actual house which was undergoing renovation.

Notes from Phillip’s Journal:

“I am walking on the streets that you, Dad, walked as a child. They are repairing the very same house that you lived in as a child in order to go to the better elementary school. I am excited. I want to rejoice over having found the building. And yet, at the same time, I am torn and filled with tears. Aunt Reiber is gone and so are all of your other aunts, uncles, and grandparents. So are your parents, Moses and Perla, as well as your sister Miriam. Gone. Gone to Ash.”

Finding Phillip's Father's House

By now we were becoming more proficient field researchers and we set out to find the village of Phillip's father armed to the tooth with a piece of paper which asked, in Polish,”Do you know the family Speiser from the 1930's?”

The first man we came up to in the village, who looked older and would thus remember, nodded his head, but his bus came so he had to leave. The next man we approached knew the family and led us there directly, pointing out the houses that Jewish families had lived in on the way. Like before, the exultation in reaching our destination was bittersweet, suffused with pain, suffering and loss.

Notes from Phillip’s Journal:

“This tearing feeling inside of me will not leave. I want to rejoice. I want to celebrate. And yet, I don't even know who these people are, living in your home. Are they part of the family that tried to kill you when you returned from the war? Is this the water that you Dad fell into as a child? It's 50 feet from your house, just where you said it would be. Is it the same water that your neighbor threw all of your parent's belongings into? You told me about how your father had to fight to get his valuables returned, just before they were sent off to the ghetto.”

Visiting Auschwitz-Birkenau

Towards the end of the trip we visited Auschwitz –Birkenau that in many ways was the culminating crucible of the personal quest to research and understand the ways in which the holocaust had impacted upon our lives. We had visited other camps whilst in Poland but this
was the camp where we had both personally lost family members. We will present some of the data we discovered in images and words and call upon our readers to enter into their own dialogic responses to our discoveries.

Notes from Phillip’s Journal:

“This is the last stop! There are no other stops. There are no other stations. My body is no longer torn--no longer trying to allow a moment of joy to exist. There are only memories of pain and death screaming at me to be heard and seen--memories that I hear and see although I have never been here before. I have come to rest in Birkenau, Jewish Death Camp number 2 at Auschwitz.

The tracks never seem to end. I walk on through eternity and experience the endlessness of time. It is as if history is repeating itself, life repeating itself, generations repeating themselves.

I have you Vivien to walk with. I am frightened. Let us not be separated.”

Notes from Vivien's Journal:

“I stand in that field in Birkenau
It is a warm spring day
I can hear the birds
And the sounds of the tractor
In the adjacent fields.
I can see the ovens of the crematoria
Stretching as far as
My eyes and my mind can see

I cannot approach the crematoria or ovens of death
I can enter the barracks where the inmates lived.
I am living in the shadow of the inmates

You are still exploring
You climb up another guard's tower
By now they have me
I am totally in their power
We are still in the avenue
Between the camp of life
And the camp of death.
I can smell death in the air still
The air over Poland is still death
I can see the ashes all around me
In this avenue of death.

I still hear the birds
And the sounds of the tractor.
I start moving out.
You are in front of me
The grass is tall all around us and I can hear the sounds
We make as we walk through.
By now I am terrified.
I want to run back,

I go back to the guard's tower
And in a rush of fury I break off a piece of wood.
You tell me "If everybody did that there wouldn't
Be a way to remember."
I take your picture inside the guard's tower.
I cannot go inside
I cannot stand where the guards had stood.

I am feeling numb
My defenses kick in and block out all feeling.
We walk into the compound
You continue exploring the insides of barracks.
I lie in the field with the ancestors
On the ashes of my people, my people,
The great-grandparents, the great-aunts and great-uncles and second cousins
I will never know.
I see a steady stream of Jewish faces just like mine
Who were killed just because they were Jewish

I remember when I was a child
I would wonder how people survived the camps
I begin to understand the way I might have survived
If I had survived at all
And I realize that what might have happened to me comes not
From that place of courage in me that I had imagined
But from an absolute indifference to
Whether I lived or not

Yet
I am alive in this place of death
Still alive in the warm afternoon sun
Still alive so that I can tell this story

Conclusion

It is now 14 years since we made our journey into Poland and began an intensive, ongoing artistic inquiry to preserve and share this experience. We went into this journey with some vague and undefined feelings of both anxiety and excitement, without expectation of where we would be heading in terms of the outcome of our research. We did not know then that we would be working on a performance piece. We did not know then that we would integrate this journey into our teaching. What we have found and continue to find is that this work is central to the work we do in this world. It lives inside of us and each time we present the work it is as if we are instruments for the work performing itself. It is clear that the piece has stood the test of time and it feels as relevant now as it did then. In many ways our mission has become clearer.

We are the keepers of this story and telling the story has become central to our mission in this life. Our project affirms how the arts are uniquely suited for integrating these complex and unplanned experiences, deepening our understanding of their significance, and providing us with the vehicles for communicating the outcomes that continue to emerge from our inquiry. Given our family histories, we have undertaken this task of sacred remembrance and we give thanks that we are alive in this time and able to make this offering. Each time we share this offering with others we are reminded that our testimony is itself an affirmation both of the continued existence of our people as well as the transformative power of the arts. We celebrate life itself as we share this work with others and integrate the feedback we receive into the next telling.
A Choking Rooster Sings:
Poems About Teacher Transformation
Mary Clare Powell

Introduction

It all began when I set up a little research study because I wanted to know the impact of our Creative Arts in Learning program on some of our teachers. Five were from a cohort in Gardner, MA (rural/small town) and five were from Boston Public Schools (urban). In addition, 11 teachers who had completed the program in Derby Line, VT were interviewed once about its impact.

Using a case study method, I interviewed each teacher and observed her teach about 3 times in two years of going through the program. They filled out questionnaires after each course. The names of the principal participants follow the article.

When I decided to extract poems from these transcripts, the changes in the inner lives of teachers came clearly into focus. Their poems, selected and edited by me, became the heart of my written piece. My prose, which surrounded their poems, was explanatory.

But I wasn’t happy with this. I personally hate reading prose interrupted by poetry, even though I’m a poet. So I decided to make “poems” out of my own prose. Through this form, this dialogue between me and them in poems, taught me as I worked and re-worked them.

Poetry is slanted, it is metaphorical, and it must be read more slowly than prose and with an open heart. I’d love to hear from any readers about how this form strikes you.

I want to know:
What changed inside you
as you went through
this integrated arts
program?

How did you shift and morph
inside? And how do you
describe your pretty self
now?
The Choking Rooster Sings
By Chris Conner

During chorus class in 7th grade, the teacher was trying to establish sopranos, altos, baritones. She set up a divider, asked three children to stand behind it to sing the scale. After my group, the teacher said, and I quote, Which one of you sounds like a choking rooster? The other two pointed at me.

From that day on I mouthed the words when we performed.

I think it hurt so much because I loved singing. At home I would sing all the time.

I carried that hurtful negative comment with me all my life until this Master's program when a special person, Louise, changed my view and gave back what was destroyed 19 years ago.

She said Everyone can sing! We were never forced, and I eased myself into all the songs. After the two weekends I was actually singing, not mouthing the words.

Since then I have taught many of the songs to my kids. I even sing in front of parents.
and colleagues.

Eleven courses
in Creative Arts in Learning
over 4 years--
poetry, music, curriculum theory,
visual arts, arts and society, integrating the arts
creative movement, arts and technology,
drama, storytelling, integrated project

To Fill the Space
By Kathy Barrett

I. Coming to Lesley was a rude awakening.
Sitting in class, I was actually being challenged
to think for myself,
to come up with my own thoughts.
It was very scary when I realized
I did not know how to do this.

For a long time I sat in silence
observing
what was going on around me.
When asked to contribute verbally
or through written work,
I found it very difficult to depend
only on myself,
no one telling me exactly what to do.

There was so much room for me,
but I was very unsure about how
to fill the space.

II. Unlike what I was used to,
the instructors were not looking
for one correct response.
All my life I’ve spent looking for
the right answer,
so afraid I would come up with
the wrong one.

I was called upon
to become involved,
to actively participate,
to think critically
and to be creative.

I soon discovered that people actually
wanted
to hear what I had to say.
My voice was being listened to.

The arts have stimulated not only my mind,
but my emotions as well,
involving
my whole person
in the construction
of knowledge.

Real learning has gone on,
and it has come from within me.
Predictably,
their lives were changed,
as well as their teaching.

What is of equal interest
are questions raised
by the process:

Can a poet be a researcher?
Whose poems are these?
Is it really poetry? Good poetry?
Why poetry?
Poet as a Teacher
I don't really trust research.
There, that's said.
A house of cards,
with one person's data,
valid or not,
used as a brick
in building another person’s
new house.
And so on.

I love being a poet. 
She doesn't sit for hours
Poring over words. 
She wanders, she waits, 
hunts for an experience, 
opens herself to whatever comes along. 
The poet sits and sits, 
she sifts and sifts.

**In the First Person**
by Robin Williams

I didn’t have a teacher 
telling me about poetry, 
I had a poet 
telling me about poetry.

I had a dancer telling me 
about dance.

That makes a difference—
a person’s telling you 
in the first person.

The teachers are real artists. 
It makes art real.

The poet wants to see 
how the arts hit them, 
how they were changed 
by the touch of the arts. 
to see faces, 
hear stories, 
eyes gleaming, 
voices rising with discovery, 
to look at their art pieces,
Two Selves
by Shireen Samuel

As a child, I felt I had two lives,
my American self
and my Trinidadian self.
I had to always remember the correct self for the correct place.
I did not want to be made fun of so I kept my voice under wraps.

When you feel safe,
I think that is when you create.

Unshackled
by George Milkowski

I enjoy dance, theater and so forth.
But
I never considered myself a creator.
They do that
and I do something else.

It wasn’t the piece of work we did,
it was what
I was going through,
that unshackled me,
not whether it was going to be beautiful
or artistically appealing
to everybody
or anybody.

The process I was going through
is what art is really about.

Whose Poems are these?

I am a poet who happened to be standing
in the way when a bunch of words
were thrown out the window like bathwater
and I recognized a baby.

Who is speaking?
Them.
I only chose and arranged,
brought to life.
A midwife?

"Metamorphic transformation, the interpenetration of identities, is for many still at the heart
of poetry" (Hirsch, 1999, p. 131)

Interpenetration sounds sexual---
their identities as teachers
penetrate my teacher,
my identity as poet
penetrates their poems,
Mary Clare, researcher,
put on the poet mask
as she searched the data.
They're not my poems,
but I dug them out of cliff walls.

**Transformations**
by Mary Gagnon

They said
in the beginning
it was going
to change your life,
and it really did.

I never had been exposed to the arts, never had the opportunity
to try them on for size.
Something happens
in the classes
that I'm still thinking
about
at twelve o'clock
that night.
I've become aware of
and learned to ignore
my inner voice that says
I look foolish,

and just to enjoy
the doing
of the arts.

I've really reached
into a part
of myself
that I hadn't
reached before.

I'm more relaxed

about where I am

and what I am doing

which has helped me

become

more articulate

in voicing
my educational philosophy.
I do feel that I'm more creative.
I actually apply the creative process,
I see that it's a real process focused in different media.

It's focusing inward

on what you can

pull up.
I see myself
as a POET now.
I get a lot of satisfaction
from putting my thoughts on paper
in a poetic way.
Each of my poems
feels like a little chunk
of my life
being set loose
into the world.
It is
very empowering.

I was able
to paint and draw
without being
self deprecating
about my work.
I just had a good time
without feeling bad
about my final product.
This was a
very new
experience.

I don't need anyone to affirm it.
I paint it, and I see a part of me.

that's all I need,
not somebody
to say
it's good or bad.

Singing, I'm much
more relaxed
than I was
--oh,
I say to myself, you'll sing even though you don't sound so great.

I considered myself awkward and ungraceful.

I always thought I needed years of training before I could dance.

Now I like the feeling of moving in space, of letting thoughts be expressed kinesthetically.

(I deliberately incorporate some movement into almost everything I teach now.)

I trust myself as the source. Outside approval or even inner approval doesn't seem as much of an issue now. I just enjoy the process.

I have always been audience, always watching. I enjoyed nice art, nice music, nice theater, but now
I feel like
I can actually
produce things,
though it’s not
museum quality.

It makes me feel good to do so.

Mainly,
this program

has made me feel

confident--

that what I’m doing
is OK,

not too weird,

not too bizarre,

that perhaps
I’m on the right track.
I trust myself.

**IV. IS IT POETRY?**

Uttered as prose,
words became poems
because a poet heard them,

extracted them like teeth
from a mouth,
laid them down on paper
in the shape of poems.

My process
a metaphor for how the arts
transform classrooms
because teachers
are transformed.

The poet tells the truth but tells it slant.
Speaks in “a voice”
other than her natural or social voice.
Strikes a pose,
plays a role,
reveals a truth while concealing. (Hirsch, 1999, p. 127)

Are they Good Poems?

I am not "in" these poems
and for this reason
doubt their worth,
don't recognize them as poems,
even though I have made them.

The poet wants
poems beautifully
and carefully done.
She knows how long
it takes to make
a good poem.

She is afraid
these poems
do not work
this way,
like teachers' doubts
when asked to create
songs or scenes or drawings.

**Winding Back and Forth**
by Peggy Bennett

The better you feel about yourself,
Dancing by yourself when you hear music is OK,
but suddenly you're good enough to dance in front of people.
The better teacher you are
If you look at a painting of mine,
you are seeing
a side of me I can show you now.
The better you feel in the classroom
I never thought I’d write a decent paper again,
but I did, and I said, Well, you did it.
the better your sense of self is reinforced.
I hated my voice when I heard it on tape.
But now I’m trying to learn stories by taping myself,

The better you feel about yourself,
I’m a ham, and I can ham it up. Go ahead, I say.
The better teacher you are
I can take a lesson I’ve created and publish it.
I look at teacher magazines and say, I can do that!
The better you feel in the classroom
I shared my poems with the 5th grade class
the better your sense of self is reinforced.
I could have been an artist in residence.

The better you feel about yourself,
the better teacher you are
The better you feel in the classroom
the better your sense of self is reinforced.

**Why Poetry? An Average Joe**
By Chris Conner

I felt my talents were nil
compared to my fellow teachers.
I thought I was an average Joe,
I just didn’t feel whatever I was doing was good enough
to put on display or show other faculty.
I thought it was because I was younger.

But now I feel
I have
a lot
to offer
other people,

Once I do an activity
I'll share it with someone else
and before you know it,
it's going around the school.

I don't worry
about who's doing what
across the hall.

I realize if I look deep enough
inside
me
I
do
have
creative
resources,
and the children will benefit from them
and from me.

From poems,
will
the Teacher
Education
Accreditation
Council
know
how teachers grew from our program?
Will educators think poems reliable? Valid?
Will poems be at home
in the culture of evidence?
Will regional recruiters taste this research eagerly,
wanting to see which pieces can sell the program?
How will my colleagues see these poems?
Won't summaries
of what I found
make them just as happy?
I don't know.

I do know
poetry illuminates metamorphosis
Metaphor

Poetry traffics in metaphor, the only thing big enough to suggest deep changes. Prose's laboring sentences can't as easily corral transformation.

Poetry suggests, then leaves it to be filled in by readers. Garlic Press by Linda Newcombe

 Basically the arts opened up my world made it a lot bigger and more fun.

It had the same effect on my teaching as well.

It's like a garlic press--you squeeze it and all this great stuff comes out.

Poetry is a device for seeing what's at the heart of teacher learning, or anything else. And teachers feeling their power cannot be schoolmarms.

Learning to Speak
By Pat McLynch

In the beginning,

I was terrified to speak in front of a group of adults.
Then in Storytelling, Sharon said at the end of the first weekend that anyone who was nervous could stay and talk to her.

I said

It won’t do any good for me to stay because no matter what you say the day of, I will be nervous because it builds up with me, if I know I have to do it, it works on me constantly.

Sharon asked how I was going to be in my class. I said, I’m fine with kids.

I learned two stories and when I was ready I went across the hall.

And then I worked my way into third grade, Mary and Peggy’s kids— their hands were flying up the minute I finished they wanted to tell me what they’d heard in the story.

And then I did the other fourth grades and then a fifth grade.

I felt like a celebrity by the time I told my story in five other classrooms. The children loved hearing my story.

I am often asked in the hallway if I will come back to tell another.

Reading and re-reading transcripts, forming and re-forming poems,
one day
the titles of their poems
on my floppy disk
showed me the metaphors
they chose to use,
and they were
metaphors of transformation.

From going through the program,
becoming a better teacher is a given,
but what,
has happened to her?
Not her the teacher, but her?
Herself,
her very self?

I asked, What changed for you?

They answered:
I am
Engaged
Unshackled
Stretched
Reaching inside
Stepping outside
Pulling out the whatever
Smarter in a different way

I am large
Comforted by the arts
Spilling over and stripping down
Filling up spaces and gaps
Standing up!

I say
I want this and I fear this
at the same moment.
I am a little amazed and a lot proud
I think…, I guess…. I am…creative
I Am Creative
by Itonya Dismond

I am creative,
yes,
I am creative
because I always
try to get myself
and the students
involved in music,
different music from Ghana.

The way I present myself is creative,

Teachers have to be creative,
not stick with one method of learning,
because the children are not one.

I Am an Artist
by Shireen Samuel

I’m learning to bring out
what I think
I already have
inside.

We keep ourselves from creating
when we say only
artists,
dancers,
or actors
do this

and the rest of us
are just meant to watch and appreciate.

That’s just not the case.
VIII. RESULTS

Here's the juice!
Here's why I'm teaching!
This thing they are reporting,
is what I'm after
for other people
and for myself as well.
This keeps me alive.
Reach Inside Yourself
By Robin Williams

The instructors
make you reach
inside yourself.

It's very gentle,
it's very subtle,
but that's what's
been going on.

I realize what I have
to do for these courses:
I have to let go of control.
I have to be a child,
and if I don’t,
I'm not going to get
anything out of it.

I have believed it
for many years:
first, the low-income women
in the projects of Chicopee,
our writing workshop.

Seeing them believe they were writers,
with something to say
and the power to say it.
Seeing them move out of public housing,
go to college, even get Master's degrees.
Seeing them reaching back for the women still in public housing, and the children.

**BE LARGE**  
by Marty Wakeman

When you take a drama course and Stan tells you,

be large,

That's a different way of looking at the world, to be large. Not talking louder but being bigger.

It's not just your voice that gets large,

you start to feel large too,

It's a perspective thing that keeps popping back.

Before that, studying ten women artists working in clay, dance, theater, music, writing, visual arts for my dissertation how they shared artmaking with homeless kids, troubled adolescents, small town citizens, elders.

I've been on this trail a long time, and now I see in teachers the same change happening: the enlargement of the self, the breaking of old definitions, the belief in oneself, the sharing of the new self.

**Not As Cautious**  
by Robin Williams

Doing this degree in Creative Arts
is one of the best things
I’ve ever done
for myself.
I’ve grown.
I’ve discovered another
Robin
who is OK
with trying out new stuff
and not being afraid
of what others think.

I’ve increased
the boundaries
of my comfort zone.

“In poetry, identities are in process, selves are constructed out of words, line by line, stanza by stanza” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 130).

And these newly created teachers are with many students in many classes, year after year, and they never go back to the way things were.

I Do Wish
by Mary Gagnon

I want for the children what I have described happening to me in the Lesley program.

I do wish somebody had taught me that way in elementary school, that someone had given me
that opportunity.

If teachers can change, 
kids can change, 
and if kids can change 
education can change, 
And if education can change, 
society itself can change, 
and if society can change, 
life can change.

Through Them
by Stephen Gould, Principal

In helping teachers learn 
to integrate the arts, 
one of the first things 
in all the classes 
is to help the teachers 
find 
where 
the arts intersect 
with them as persons.

They’re so trained to be teachers 
that they come to courses looking for lesson plans, 
but that route isn’t the way.

The route is through them, 
through bringing something alive 
in them 
and making some 
connection 
with an art form.

What follows from that flows naturally into the classroom, 
and with their colleagues 
because they have been 
touched.

If schools are going to be
interesting places for kids, teachers have to be people who are capable of being interested in things themselves.

Teachers baptized as artists--opened, stretched, spilled, filled, pulled and tugged into new locations within themselves.

They know what's possible, they have a little peek into what size humans can truly be, and down what pathways it is possible to go while we are alive.

**New Attitude**
by Linda Newcombe

The arts helped me form a new attitude:

I'm willing to try new things and appreciate things that are different.

Perhaps we need that attitude in a multicultural society.
References


Research Subjects—Teacher Transformation

**Gardner Participants**

Chris Conner, kindergarten
Linda Newcombe, kindergarten
Helen Deranian, Principal, Bennett School
Peggy Bennet, 3rd grade
Mary Gagnon, 3rd grade,
Stephen Gould, Principal, J.R. Briggs School
Pat McLynch, 4th grade

**Boston Participants**

Valerie Almeida, 4th grade, Dennis Haley School
Stephanie Cousins, 1st grade, R.D. Roosevelt School
Itonya Dismond, 4th grade, John Marshall School
George Milkowski, teacher, Lesley on-campus student
Shireen Samuel, 5th grade, Mendell School
Robin Williams, kindergarten, F.D. Roosevelt School
About the Contributors

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Professor in Lesley’s Expressive Therapies Program, McNiff has delivered hundreds of lectures and presentations on expressive therapies topics throughout the United States, Canada, Europe and Israel over the past forty years. A prolific author, Shaun McNiff’s written work includes *Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul* (2004), *Integrating the Arts in Therapy: History, Theory, and Practice* (2009), and the upcoming *Art as Research* (2013).

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Adjunct Instructor in Lesley’s Expressive Therapies program, specializing in psychodrama and drama therapy, Phillip Speiser is currently the Director of Parkside Arts and Health Associates in Boston, Massachusetts. Speiser has worked and developed programs with individuals and groups in conflict in unstable regions, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and the Middle East.

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Visual artist, ethnographer and former Fulbright scholar Gene Diaz has delivered keynote presentations at national and international conferences that explore intersections between the arts, aesthetics and teaching/learning. Diaz returned to Medellin, Colombia in 2007 to research DESEARTE PAZ, an arts and pedagogy network of organizations working towards establishing a culture of peace in the South American nation.

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Art therapist with nine years of experience in psychiatry and special education. He currently teaches woodworking to gang members in a private school. He taught for four years in the graduate art therapy program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In the Fall, he begins teaching about the relationship of writing and visual arts in the MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts program at Columbia College, Chicago's Center for Book and Paper Arts.

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A Professor of Expressive Therapies at Lesley and the Director of National, International, and Collaborative Programs, Vivien Marcow-Speiser has utilized the arts as a method of communicating across borders and cultures. Her expertise lies in building resolutions to trauma and cross-cultural conflict, and has worked with groups in the Middle East and South Africa.

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