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Nanyoung Kim
Jenkins Fine Art Center
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC 27858
kimn@ecu.ed

Editorial Office:
Joni Acuff, Senior Editor
Associate Professor and Department Chair, Department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy
1813 N High St, 2nd floor
Columbus, OH 43210
acuff.12@osu.edu

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Editorial: Pleasure Centers and Liberatory Practices

Joni Boyd Acuff, PhD
The Ohio State University

Sharbreon Plummer, PhD
Independent Scholar

In fall 2019, we (Joni & Sharbreon) put out a call for papers that aimed to "center pleasure in art activism and justice oriented art education" and "speak to the new (or newly found) spaces (physical, mental and emotional) that have been built (or imagined) for each other (especially marginalized groups) to thrive." The impetus for the call for papers was to center joy after engaging in the three 2019 jCRAE issues that centered Whiteness and the impact of racism in art education. We hoped to shift the heaviness that came with that conversation to the moments of **pleasure, joy, strength, healing, community-building, allyship, kinship and happiness** that manifest within our art and art education activism. There was an intentional goal to support justice-oriented art education scholars' "futuristic worldmaking." But, who knew that the year 2020 would bring a world so dystopian that "futuristic worldmaking" would feel impossible?

Twenty-twenty has presented us with a global health pandemic, better known as COVID19, that has claimed over one million lives in less than 1 year; the public deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, all Black human beings, at the hands of White police officers and vigilantes; ravaging wildfires that have left thousands of families homeless; recurring instances of domestic terrorism by White men, including but not limited to the twarted plot to kidnap and murder the White female governor of Michigan, Gretchen Witmer. Unfortunately, the list of unfathomable events that we have endured in 2020 can and does go on and on.

For this reason, we are certain that this volume of jCRAE, with the mini-theme "Pleasure Centers and Liberatory Practices," is a timely contribution to the world. When COVID shook the globe and most of the world was on lockdown, many sought out the arts for refuge. We saw DJ D-Nice take to *Instagram* to offer upwards of 250k viewers an 8 hour dj set, sharing classic music that spanned decades. We saw home videos of musicians playing instruments on their porches and balconies during quarantine, spectators stood by to listen. After Black Lives Matter advocates took to the streets to peacefully protest the ongoing killing spree of unarmed Black bodies, we witnessed

people from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds paint the words BLACK LIVES MATTER across city streets. Hopefully we've all seen contemporary Black female artist Amy Sherald's ethereal painting of Breonna Taylor that graced the cover of "Vanity Fair." In these times, we are witnessing, in real time, the ways the arts exist as a means for not only futuristic worldmaking, but present day worldmaking.

In her October 2020 feature in "Harper's Bazaar," Solange Knowles, Black female vocal and conceptual artist, writes,

Joy was the sleep I got after releasing secrets from my bones. Joy was telling the truth….Joy was discovery. Joy was having someone show me beautiful worlds of their own and trusting in the journey. Joy was letting go of control. Joy was just sitting. Joy was seeing how far I had come and waving at my shadows. Joy was accepting that the work is never done, but that every day is a choice.

Today we choose joy. Today we choose pleasure. Today we choose liberation work by honoring those who laid the foundation for us to step into this time of unapologetic self definition and resistance. This issue serves as a space for art educators to reflect and share how they have carried forth liberatory work, even when it was not (or could not) be acknowledged as such. We thank our community of peers, especially those of Black, Brown and Indigenous descent, for their vulnerability in sharing their work of undoing and releasing the bondage of White supremacy that seeks to extract, deplete and destroy—instead replacing that ideology and conditioning with ancestral memory and embodied knowledge. Art has always held a pathway to freedom, and we believe it is time to outwardly declare and theorize around that which is our right.

As you immerse yourself in this issue, we ask you to consider how art education can allow us to honor our instincts and creativity. Reflect on the balms within your artistic experiences that have offered reprieve not only for you, but those who have come before you. Most of all, take time to remember and call the names of those forebearers whose ability to cultivate joy and pleasure made it possible for us to be here today. For as brown states, "pleasure activism is the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy" (p. 9). Let our work within the field of art education not only be limited to our output and productivity. Instead, know that it is our collective responsibility to lean into the things that allow us to embrace our most holistically satisfied selves..

The Coalition for Racial Equity in the Arts and Education (crea+e) opens Volume 37, Issue I with an unfiltered, potent commentary that argues for the need to imagine new and alternative ways to engage in art education. crea+e shares a polyvocal and aesthetically eclectic writing that "mirrors the very nature of collective work in intellectual and social movements." The collective of artists, activists, educators, and scholars of color unapologetically present their interventionist work as a liberatory practice that seeks to heal racial trauma and come to see Black and Brown futures outside of traditional (read White) art educational discourses. Then, **Amber Coleman and Gloria Wilson** present a fiercely energetic paper that uses the cypher (originated in hip hop) as a methodology to center the necessity of love, care, and valuation of Black women. Building upon Black feminist thought to articulate Black women's hip-hop onto-epistemology, the authors present their lived experiences as knowledge, pronounce their roles as cultural and knowledge producers, and demand the ability to self define, which for them, incites joy. Next, **Tyson Lewis and Amelia Kraeh**e write about an intimate professional experience in which Lewis receives hundreds of verbal assaults and threats of violence and bodily harm for writing critically about racism and other forms of oppression in the arts. The authors categorized and coded the "assaultive speech" to demonstrate the ways it attempts to replace joy with affects of fear, paranoia, and hate, emergent strategy for scholars, teachers, and activists interested in justice, critical pedagogy, or transformative practices.

Dana Carlisle Kletchka, Adéwálé Adénlé, Shannon Thacker Cregg, Anna Freeman, Damarius Johnson, Megan Wanttie and Logan Ward invoke a *not-museum*, which the authors refer to as a site that is socially-responsive, justice oriented, and affirming to the communities in which they exist. The authors present a manifesto that lays out a blueprint for future museums to follow as they attempt to dig themselves out of the colonial, Western patriarchal systems that they continue to perpetuate. Then, **Tanisha Jackson** engages contemporary Black multimedia artist Jaleel Cambell in an interview in which he details how he navigates through his own experiences with anxiety and rage by cultivating joy and focusing on how to create collective experiences of pleasure. In Jackson's interview, Campbell describes his work, specifically his community-based social justice work, as a form of liberation. Next, **Katie Fuller** exames how art education can aid us in healing the many traumas and difficult knowledges that are embedded within our bodies and psyches. Using approaches such as arts-based inquiry through an affective lens, Fuller offers suggestions on how educators can mobilize students in becoming agents of change within their communities and for themselves.

In her research, **Youngaah Koh** details how she used art and art education to nurture Korean-American elementary students'

awareness and appreciation of their Korean cultural history. Koh connects the students' joy to their attainment of cultural competence, critical consciousness, and feeling of a sense of community within their home community. **James Sanders, Mindi Rhoades, Melanie Davenport, Courtnie Wolfgang, Kim Cosier** offer a detailed road map that takes readers through the standing interventionist session "Big Gay Church" (BGC), which occured during the National Art Education Association's annual conventions. The authors suggest that their use of farce, irony, and humor during BGC not only celebrates queerness for all, but also works to critique and tackle institutional inequities that specifically impact the LGBTQIC+ community within NAEA and art education at large. Then**, David Nyaberi** takes readers on a journey to Southwest Kenya as he reflects on pottery making traditions amongst the Luo people, specifically the Mama Nyungu group. He discusses how pottery-making, as a gender-specific site of knowledge production, encourages intergenerational dialogue amongst women and fosters support for girls to safely step into a more liberated existence. Following David with a visual/video essay, **Pamela Lawton** reflects on her time in Edinburgh, Scotland where she led community-based workshops for youth of color to process the injury and harm that resulted from racial trauma. Her experience demonstrates how collective creativity within marginalized communities can produce hope, healing and restoration for all involved. Next, **Shanita Bigelow** describes her work as "a portrait of a poet and educator." This brief essay documents Bigelow's journey into the art education field as a Black woman. She shares the ways that writing, specifically poetry, has given her the ability to see her future in the arts and take up space in the field.

Harrison Orr reflects on the intersection of his personal experiences as a gay man and art educator, and his path to finding a community of support and inclusivity. He specifically reflects on how museums, when operating thoughtfully, can serve as spaces for individuals to experience belonging and uninhibitedness by using art and connection as a tool for self-reflection. **Ann Wu** presents tarot as a form of technology for justice-oriented art educators. She defines tarot as a tool for alternative worldmaking and problem-solving, while encouraging readers to release hegemonic beliefs on how we define technology and validate ways of knowing that fall outside of traditional white-centric practices. Then, **Christian Hines** describes how the hobby of cosplaying as a Black woman presents a renewed sense of agency and self-expression. She defines her metaphorical shape shifting within cosplay as a form of *Blacktivism* that allows her to embrace radical imagination and fantasy in the face of a world that attempts to suppress Black women at every turn. Closing the issue, **Albert Stabler** shares how a teaching experience about sound evolved into an examination of White educators' use of hip hop as an "uncritical indulgence of empathy." Stabler challenges

White educators who assume hip hop as a pedagogy to reconsider if they have not done the necessary work to destabilize the structural exclusion of POC's knowledge widely.

Volume 37 of jCRAE forefronts a discussion about how pleasure, joy and liberation can be defined and/or identified in terms of its application and manifestation within justice-oriented art education. These authors highlight the components of critical theories that support and foster aspects of pleasure (e.g. self-actualization within Black feminist theory, narrative as self-expression within Critical Race Theory). The authors share research, personal reflections, paths of exploration, and even actionable items that may be able to assist the art education field in pushing beyond resistance and scarcity as the primary themes that frame marginalized voices and narratives in art education contexts. This includes, but is not limited to, critical discussions of politics of pleasure, Womanism/Black feminisms, and Queer theory as embodied and/or seen in art education practices, research and/or discourse.

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Art Education in Crisis: A Critical Race Studies Response to Endemic Complacency

Coalition for Racial Equity in the Arts and Education (crea+e)

ABSTRACT

This commentary advances thoughtful and imaginative alternatives to endemic complacency on matters of racial inequity in the field of art education. In a style that embraces cultural irony and a spirit of serious play, the Coalition for Racial Equity in the Arts and Education (crea+e) identifies three areas ripe for anti-racist intervention--discourses, embodiment, and form and proposes audacious new movements, like dropping beats, for racial justice in art education. The crea+e collective's form of writing is intentionally polyvocal and aesthetically eclectic in a way that mirrors the very nature of collective work in intellectual and social movements. Collectives need not erase or smooth out the different modulations of expression, thought, and experience to speak as a collective voice. Thus, through its content and form, the commentary aims to propel critical race discourse within the arts and arts education.

KEYWORDS:race, racism, crisis, COVID, equity, justice, collectives, arting, art education, embodiment

It has been three years since the Art Education Research Institute (AERI) invited the panel *Race and Racism in 21st Century Art Education* (November 2017). During this interactive assembly, critical race scholars, artists, and educators Joni Boyd Acuff, Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis, B. Stephen Carpenter, II, Amelia M. Kraehe, and Vanessa López, led a discussion about race and racism in art education research. The takeaways from the discussion were that because race is not widely understood as a central organizing structure within the field of art education, the field lags in addressing the problem of white supremacy; art educators of color are mentally and emotionally exhausted from doing race work and White art educators need to more critically and intentionally engage in anti-racist research, reflection, and teaching; and the white supremacist structures in art education are a problem created by and, therefore, best solved by people who perceive themselves to be White. In this commentary, the Coalition for Racial Equity in the Arts and Education for (*crea+e*)[1]

1 The anonymity of individual authors is a purposeful intervention. Individual naming is not consistent with collective ethics of crea+e that are rooted in radical care and

aims to spur collective thoughtful and imaginative alternatives to endemic complacency on matters of racial inequity in the field of art education[2]. We write from a standpoint that assumes racism does exist and is operative in art education. Thus, we do not devote space to rehearsing what racism is or making the case that art education is a field built upon and governed by whiteness.[3] Instead, in a liberatory style that embraces cultural irony and a spirit of serious play, this commentary identifies three areas ripe for anti-racist intervention--discourses, embodiment, and form. Using a cipher methodology rooted in orality, Black cultures, and community (Alim, Spady, & Meghelli, 2006; Keyes, 2002), we present an audacious new arrangement, akin to dropping beats, that models an anti-racist approach to "doing the work" of racial justice in art education. This knowledge construction is cogenerated.

pass the mic. Improvisation
feed off each other's work
transfer energy
speak for a specific group and out of specific group experience
no expectation that everyone will know everything a look
circular organization coherence
community of care
it's your people drop the mic.
sensations experiences beyond words
no translation no colonization into academic form

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coalition building more generally. Combahee River Collective and The Guerilla Girls offer examples of collectives that subvert the codes and conventions of White male dominated neoliberal institutions that value individuation, a strategy we find foments competition among individuals looking out for their own self-interests and undermines solidarity-based communities and relationships, and fails to recognize the social processes of knowledge construction and production.

2 The AERI panel launched numerous conversations that later gave birth to crea+e. Led by a steering committee, crea+e is an incubator comprised of artists, activists, educators, and scholars across the US who work to understand racism and its interaction with other forms of oppression and develop actionable frameworks, practices, and policy recommendations to advance racial justice in and through the arts and arts education broadly defined.

3 See Denmead, 2019; Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, & Carpenter, 2018; Link, 2019.

This approach generates writing that is intentionally polyvocal and aesthetically eclectic in a way that mirrors the very nature of collective work in intellectual and social movements. When present, this approach invites the critic to consider an aesthetic in stark relief to status quo, colormute-conscious arrangements implicated in societal structures of domination (Morrison, 1992). Collectives need not erase or smooth out the different modulations of expression, thought, and experience to put forth a collective voice. Thus, through its content and approach to knowledge production, the commentary builds upon the groundwork laid at AERI so as to move forward critical race studies in the arts and arts education.

Beat 1: In Times of Crisis, Arting Is Essential

In an essay titled "What Is Art Education For?" published in *The High School Journal,* Elliot Eisner (1958) asks his readers, "Is art education merely the whipped cream on the cake or is it a part of the meat of basic education? Can we justify to our students the fact that most of them are required to study art?" (p. 263). These opening questions are not focused on whether or not art is basic; that has been decided already. As he says, the majority of students are required to study art. It is compulsory and universal, and thus part of a basic education. Proponents of art education have continued to elaborate and reiterate the idea of art education as basic since the mid-20th century (e.g., Chapman, 1982). Common core subjects and standards are among the newer vocabulary to have evolved from the discourse. Although art educators may debate where art fits in the hierarchy of school subjects and they may disagree on what ought to be included in the art standards, the logic that art is a part of basic education is mainstream and relatively uncontroversial.

Discourses are inherently political. For Foucaudian scholars, they are the *conditions* that enable and constrain what objects may be designated at all and what thoughts may be accepted as true, effective, reasonable, and necessary (Ball, 2018). As Foucault (1972) says,

> All manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'; and that this 'already-said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never-said', an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath. (p. 25)

In a society that for hundreds of years has been structured on the basis of white supremacist heteropatriarchy, theft of Indigenous lands, and looting of Black bodies, as is the condition of the United States and many other settler colonial nations, there is no such thing as innocence through silence or race-neutral discourse. Silence is an

inaudible presence. It contributes to the conditions that enable or constrain thought and action. Art education discourses may appear benign, but they are nevertheless "an instrument and an effect of power" (Foucault, 1990, p. 101) constituting artist subjects and that which we designate as art. The discourse of art education as basic--a discourse that is the invisible backbone of art education--is implicated in conditions that marginalize, exploit, oppress, and exclude particular groups of people.

We believe it is vitally important that the field of art education interrogate its hidden discourses as potential hindrances to racial and social justice. For us that means reframing. Going back to Eisner's provocation, What is art education *for*?, we ask instead, What does art education *produce*? More specifically, what does art education sustain or achieve for *Black and Brown people*? Who have been the primary beneficiaries of the discourses that constitute and are reconstituted by art education?

The answer we come away with is that the basic discourse of art education advocated in previous eras has not resulted in a system of K-20 art education that serves all students equally well, least of all those for whom crises of educational neglect and social exclusion have foreclosed possibilities in the arts.[4] Rather than making educational inequity visible and knowable, basic art education discourse aligned with disciplinary specialization—art as a *special* subject in schools, artists as *special*ists with credentials and associations, and *special*ized professionals licensed to teach art (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Singerman, 1999). Both discourses avoid race talk. Indeed, they exemplify color-muteness, a pattern of silence that masks race-based exclusion, aggression, and inequality in art education (Alfredson & Desai, 2012; Pollock, 2004). Race-evasive discourses not only make it difficult to recognize white supremacy but also provide a shelter (Foucault, 1990) for racism to persist within the field. The effect is endemic complacency.

We are interested in responsive and generative critical race alternatives to prevailing discourse that, intentionally or not, eclipses concerns about racism in the arts. This is a site of intervention since discourse can be "a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault, 1990, p. 101). In communities that have endured American genocide, enslavement, Jim Crow, and other

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4 One need only look at studies like those by Basmat Parsad and Maura Spiegelman (2012), the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) surveys (Frenette & Dowd, 2020), and many others to see persistent large-scale patterns of racial disparity as a consequence of how art education opportunities and the educational complex for artists are organized in the US.

systematic forms of violence, exploitation, and marginalization—social crises that have not been eradicated and for which modern science and industry offers no pill, no vaccine--creative activity is life affirming salve that lubricates and liberates the spirit, eliciting joy and possibility even in the midst of debasement and atrocity (Warren, 2015). As Alain LeRoy Locke (1925) observed nearly a century ago, creative cultural practices are a primary modality through which (Black) people's struggle for freedom and fully human existence would be waged.

Creative activity is not basic, nor is it special. It is just what people do. It is what people have always done for *survivance* (Vizenor, 2008). The grammar of COVID-19 has brought this to the foreground: creative activity is an *essential* service, one that we do for ourselves and each other and without which we cannot be free. We lean toward the alternative language of *arting* to designate and encourage a range of creative activity, movements, and beats that resist and exceed the distortions of silent racism normalized in and through discourses that give art distinction as a special part of basic education.

Arting is essential for anti-racist thought and action. Just say it aloud. Arting. On the lips and in the ears, arting feels both familiar and yet clumsy, unrehearsed, even awkward. It is neither established, pinned down, disciplined, nor incorporated as (white) property (Gaztambide-Ferndández, Kraehe, & Carpenter, 2018). It is a radically nonhierarchical discourse that includes creative practices that arouse the senses, stimulate thought, and build perceptual capacities. "[A]rting refuses closed categories for what is and is not art and instead is open to that which is yet to be known or come into being" (Kraehe, 2020, p. 7). In many ways, this commentary is an instantiation of arting.

Beat 2: When This Body Is Weary, It Owes No Apologies

This body. This experience. Our superpower. We are the inhabitants of diaspora. A friend once said, love doesn't need to be so hard. But what if our love has always been hard? What if the only way we know (or have been allowed) to function in love and life and work is hard? We all know the work of racial equity is hard; emotionally and physically exhausting (Acuff, 2018; Smith, Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Being Black in the US weathers the body (Wilson, 2018). Indigenous, Colored, Queer, Poor, Trans, Immigrant bodies in the US are also weathered. How might we begin to live and work in relation to the requirements of this weather-ing? Living and working and loving within this "racial climate." Which is to say, the variable conditions that support the totality of this imperial racial project necessitates a reckoning *of* and *with* our present material conditions. Pivot. This weather-ing might then produce improvisation, changeability, and

new ecologies; a political act, which seeks to protect and heal this environment. Gardens in abandoned lots. Black Lives Matter street murals. Corner concerts. Online love letters. Idioms aesthetically texturizing, self-consciously.

What does healing and pleasure around racial equity look like in action? Our bodies cringe over and over again. But we keep coming back. Keep coming back to the conversations around this body and action in front of children who can see clearly. Children who refuse to hold the pain and trauma of their ancestors. How does one survive with a spent body and exhausted heart? You keep going. You stop talking to closed ears. You stop centering White desires and ambivalence. You stop writing so they understand. You find the people who already understand. The people who laugh at the audacity of the statements. The audacity of silence. You find the people who can see you when you can't see yourself. You find the people who tell the truth. Over and over again. You refuse together. You laugh together. You cry together. You dance together. You eat together. You write together. You heal together. You offer blessings. You perform rituals. You kiss and touch and hold one another. These are conceptual possibilities to perform and how up differently.

The healing comes in the here and now. The back then. And right now. And not again. In the children who have had enough and have taken to the streets to demand a reckoning. The multiple leaders. In multiple shells. All screaming the same thing. The polyvocal. In the children who refuse to be called out of their names. The children who pick new names and new pronouns and new ways of being. And demand we be braver. Bigger. More hue-myn. They make us think maybe we can be free in this body. Healing comes in making. Making out of nothing and everything. Design thinking started in the hood. Arting has been on the streets. Imagine a new world. Black. Brown. Yellow. Red. Magic.

Beat 3: If the Future Looks Dystopian, Revisit the Past

The arts give language to our dreams.

High pitched voices crackle in dark supper clubs, wailing in unison with a lone saxophone.

Vibrant color palettes and hair-raising textures fill canvases that design and illustrate Black and Brown existence. The images magnify visions of our love and humanity...because it is indeed magnanimous.

Intricate Nuanced Complex Thorough Ambitious ~~~> Deep

Black and Brown bodies move in conversation with beats from the

sun's vibrations. Unmediated by eyes from others, we create waves with our arms and earthquakes with our feet. These vibrations cannot be copied because they are sent directly from the soil to our soles.

Innate Natural Untethered Ancestral Peaceful ~~~> Light

Black and Brown souls art all the time. We exist-mediating, unmediating, remediating.

Make Create Generate Produce Imagine Build Direct
Plan Execute ~~~> Arting

Black and Brown hands, voices, bodies and minds have overcome the confrontational energy that overwhelms White bodies, particularly those with demonic hearts and green eyes.

Our work is never, but always Loud Bland Muted
Vague Frisky Meek Gentle Assertive
Rowdy Complex Quiet Ugly
Beautiful Simple Simply simple ~~~> All Encompassing

It can be nothing, but everything. If that is what we want, if that is what we imagine, if that is what we feel. All on our own. Even without the language of tongues.

Our arting can ~~~> Be
We can ~~~> Be

To lie on your back, star gaze, breathe deeply, imagine (anything) and smile...is a futuristic goal. Nostalgically remembering tomorrow, with color, rhythms and drama. The proposition is to not lie parallel with, but to be perpendicular to...maybe even oblique with. To move forward with uninhibited memories of the past, built with our collective imaginations, souls, and energy. We move in and out of consciousness. A mass of minds. Jumping through ropes like a double dutch marathon. That is now, but so it was then we followed their lead, while hoping to find new moments to enter and exit the rope, all without welting our ankles in the process.

Movement building has never been the act of one mind moving an agenda forward, but the minds of many moving forward together. Like ants building a colony. Everyone with an important job in the assembly line. Do not follow prescribed protocols and procedures. See AfriCOBRA, the collective made their own language, values, and principles to create, discuss, and appreciate art created with Black and Brown hands. The Black Arts Movement initiated their audacity. Whitestream "standards" be damned.

It is time. The opportunity is ripe for shift, for sustenance, for more

courage to re-vision.

It is time to Move Drag Pull Restore
Begin Fulfill~~~> crea+e

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THOT/Thought-Leading as Disruptive Pleasure

Amber C. Coleman
University of Arizona

Gloria J. Wilson, Ph.D.
University of Arizona

ABSTRACT

In this article, we, the authors, present our conceptualization of THOT/Thought-leading as disruptive pleasure enacted by Black women cultural producers, especially those engaged in hip-hop culture. Through our theory-cypher, we imitate the call-and-response nature of hip-hop cypher rounds through offering our hip-hop subjectivities as women of color; our historical and personal understandings of hip-hop culture; the ways we draw from various strains of thought from Black feminist discourse to articulate Black women's hip-hop onto-epistemology; and why we desire to articulate this concept of THOT/Thought-leading for the ways that Black women embrace self-definition and reject controlling narratives and respectability politics. By engaging in this conceptualization of THOT/Thought-leading, we center the necessity of love, care, and valuation of Black women, our experience and/as knowledge, and our abilities as cultural and knowledge producers.

KEYWORDS: Black feminism, Black studies, care, cypher, disruptive pleasure, hip hop, THOT, thought-leader

Introduction

"Girls like me seemed to be the object of the conversations and not full participants, because we were a problem to be solved, not people in our own right." (p. xviii)

Mikki Kendall, *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot* (2020)

Brown liquor, brown liquor
Brown skin, brown face
Brown leather, brown sugar
Brown leaves, brown keys
Brown freckles, brown face
Black skin, black braids
Black waves, black days
Black baes, black days

These are black-owned things
Black faith still can't be washed away
Solange, *Almeda (2019)*

We, the authors, identify as Black/women/artists/educators/researchers (Wilson & Lawton, 2019). We activate our work in the presence of our ancestors—Black women knowledge creators and curators (also see, Acuff, 2018) who have come before us, who sit at the table with us, step on stage with us, co-create with us, and for those who will be here long after we are gone. The lyrics of Solange Knowles' Almeda draw from specificities of the United States (U.S./North American continent) Black culture; the rhythms of these lyrics point toward traditions within hip-hop culture. We think with these lyrics and Kendall's (2020) words to ask: *What theoretical interventions might be made in order to articulate a politics of pleasure in spite of the heteropatriarchal space of U.S. hip-hop culture? What does it mean to refuse being "objects of conversation?" How might we account for Black women's participation in knowledge production in excess of respectability? How might radical care be enacted to recognize the full personhood of Black women?*

In this article, we propose THOT/Thought-Leading as disruptive pleasure found in Black women's onto-epistemological engagement in and through hip-hop culture and by rejecting heteropatriarchal norms and racist/sexist stereotypes in a manner of our and their choice. We further articulate this engagement as "disruptive pleasure," and theorize it as necessary for Black women as they continue to live in the wake and continued effects of transAtlantic chattel slavery and exist waywardly and fugitively (Bey, 2019; Hartman, 2019; Sharpe, 2016). Which is to say, living in a manner that is deemed not 'normative,' but exists as a practice of refusal to be governed within the context of United States heteropatriarchy. We think with the works of Saidiya Hartman (2019) and Christina Sharpe (2016) to extend the notion of disruptive pleasure. The writings of these thought leaders help us to imagine varied and various modalities of Black life. Additionally, we think about the notion of fugitive theorizing as the unruliness and impropriety of aesthetic movements and Black refusal of hegemonic norms (Bey, 2019) to what has been deemed knowledge construction and validation of such epistemologies (Evans-Winters, 2019). We view our theorizing as an act of radical care with and through Black women's knowledge and cultural production. In this article, we question: 1) whose knowledges are validated, 2) who has access to these knowledges, and 3) how a variety of sources can aid in alternative experiences of knowledge construction. We organize this article, together, as Black women knowledge holders and creators in an aesthetic call-and-response arrangement known in hip-hop culture as a cypher.

Welcome to the Cypher

In what follows, we guide the reader through our engagement with what we refer to as a *cypher*, a method of call-and-response in which those gathered share information creatively and publicly. Love (2016) and Evans-Winters (2019) have discussed how the cypher can embody spaces of multiple consciousnesses, co-constructed learning, and cultural memory. This method has often been used by hip-hop artists[1] and Black women as they create spaces for themselves to articulate their thoughts and experiences, offering opportunities for their voices to be heard (Coleman, personal communication, December 11, 2019[2]; Coleman, 2020; Pough, 2015). As Pough (2015) states:

> The cypher is in constant motion, created throughout U.S. history whenever Black women—whether expressing themselves through writing, public oratory, music, or club activities—come together to discuss issues of importance to themselves and the Black community. The cypher is both a space that Black women create for themselves and a space in which they question themselves about what it means to be both Black and woman in the larger U.S. public sphere. (p. 41-42)

In this spirit, our theorizing conjures the vernacular of hip-hop culture by inhabiting this call-and-response nature of the cypher. By engaging with theory and experience in and through hip hop, in a cypher-like manner, we bob and weave these multifaceted details of Black women's entanglement with cultural production through the concept of THOT/Thought-Leading. Each of the following sections reveal a series of rounds in our cypher, our understanding and conceptualization of how these elements interact as a form of aesthetic, non-linear call-and-response to inform THOT/Thought-Leading.

We begin by introducing the first section of the article as we introduce ourselves and present to the reader our connections to and subjectivities through hip-hop culture. What follows is our theorization of THOT/Thought-Leading, which is grounded in a

theoretical framework of Black feminist discourses, engaging with varied strains of Black feminist thought created and curated by Black women. We end our article by offering conclusions and implications from what we learned through our engagement with this *theory-cypher* (theorizing as a cypher and the cypher as theorizing), reflecting on the importance of each of these elements in this theorization and the cultural production by/for/about Black women. We envision the future of continued engagement with this theorization in hopes of advancing and centering disruptive pleasure. This article is a decolonial gesture (Dipti Desai, personal communication, October

9, 2020, Art Education Research Institute symposium) toward Black women and girls, who may read themselves within and into this text; its specificity addresses issues and experiences relevant to those who are not always considered in art education curriculum and pedagogical practice. This is our practice of care for and about Black women, in the wake of quotidian forms of exclusion (Collins, 1990/2009; Sharpe, 2016).

Cypher
Some think that we can't flow
Can't flow
Stereotypes, they got to go
Got to go
I'm a mess around and flip the scene into reverse
With what?
With a little touch of "Ladies First"
Queen Latifah & Monie Love, *Ladies First (1989)*

Round 1: Women of Color Hip-Hop Subjectivities

With the aim of honoring the sentiments of Queen Latifah and Monie Love, we begin this first round of the cypher with an introduction to our subjectivities as women of color through hip hop.

Gloria's Interlude[3]: My relationship with hip hop began in 1987 and continues today. It started in middle school. My regular morning routine was animated by the beats and lyrics blasting through my boombox, complete with a double cassette player and detachable speakers. The morning crew of WBLX radio set the tone by introducing the debut single, Push It, by emcees Salt 'N' Pepa (Cheryl James and Sandra Denton) and DJ Spinderella (Deidra Roper)—the powerhouse trifecta of Black women (two lyricists and a DJ) from Queens, NY. This song would set ablaze a fire in my body to answer their call to get out there and dance. There was something powerful about this mantra. Grossly misunderstood as a song about sex, the trio would protest this until they gained their well-deserved respect for this chart-topping hit.

My girlhood was situated within the burgeoning era of hip-hop culture of the late 1970's and early 1980's, was inspired by the first wave of Black women emcee's and DJ's such as Salt 'N' Pepa, Queen Latifah, Monie Love, MC Lyte, Roxanne Shante, Bahamadia, and the Real Roxanne. By the time I reached high school, I donned an asymmetrical haircut, bamboo earrings, and, on some days, an Afrocentric leather medallion. Like the early women-progenitors

3 The author has written extensively about her racialized identity (see also Wilson et al., 2016; Guyotte et al., 2016; Wilson, 2018).

of hip hop who demanded space to be seen and heard, I too was unafraid to take up space. With their 1989 hit single, *Ladies First*, Queen Latifah and Monie Love proclaimed a liberatory manifesta and call to arms, much like the Aretha Franklin song, R-e-s-p-e-c-t. This song delivered a specific message to White America that Black women were (and had been) undervalued—(see also #CiteBlackWomen and #CiteASista), giving Black women further permission to take up space/own the room.

The range of Black women in hip hop in decades to follow would move the needle (and me) in ways that would build a foundation of expressive form and knowledge of self (Tesfagiorgis, 1987) in relation to my understanding of interlocking matrices of heteropatriarchial oppression (Collins 1990/2009; Crenshaw, 1989). I began to notice a spectrum of Black women's representation unfold, as my love for hip-hop culture grew. The 1990's would usher in Lauryn Hill, a quadruple threat (lyricist, singer, rapper and producer), who would complicate the culture by spittin' lyrics, which would highlight and critique cultural and social conditions of blackness, Black womanhood, motherhood, and the music industry.

Amber's Interlude: I came to love hip hop through my parents, who grew up during hip hop's "coming of age" (1970s/1980s). They loved hip hop and we would listen to it in the house, in the car….it was all around me. I grew up listening to all kinds of music, but hip hop has stayed with me in a way that's different from other genres. I remember my mother playing music by MC Lyte, JJ Fad, and Salt-N-Pepa. My father played Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, and Jay-Z. There is just something about the vibrations of the beats....the rawness of the sounds….the realness of the lyrics that has always drawn me in. The first Black woman hip-hop artist that I remember inspiring me is Missy Elliot. Her ability to sing and rap, dance, and create her creative visual/sonic video productions amazed me. The first song I remember of hers was *I Can't Stand the Rain*. I grew up in the 90s listening to other artists like Lauryn Hill, Eve, TLC, Lil' Kim, Da Brat, and Mary J. Blige on the radio and on CDs.

With the evolution of technology and music distribution, I remember diving into my own explorations of different hip-hop artists in my teen years, spending hours on the computer looking up *YouTube* videos and downloading different songs. I would try to stay up-to-date on new song releases and hip-hop culture. I must also admit that being from Georgia, my musical disposition is tied to Southern hip-hop/rap and trap music, although I do enjoy the music of rappers from other regions. There's a beauty to the music and voices that connect to a feeling of home, centered in the Black experience in the Southern United States. As I see the sounds and movements of hip hop evolve, I continue to be excited to see what will come next. I have

enjoyed the recent evolution of Black women rappers and hip-hop artists such as Nicki Minaj, Jhené Aiko, Cardi B, Megan Thee Stallion, Lizzo, City Girls, Noname, Beyoncé, Tierra Whack, and more. Seeing and feeling their various representations of Black womanhood help me to reflect on my own understanding of what it means to be a Black woman in this particular space and time, and the kind of Black woman I want to be. Music was and continues to be a major part of my life. Hip-hop music has been a backdrop in my life, keeping me afloat sonically, visually, and culturally. I often think with music, often randomly singing lyrics, and believing there's a song for every moment.

Collective Interlude: Together, our embeddedness in (and indebtedness to) Black women in hip-hop culture captivates our ongoing dialogue with one another. It also reflects the critical dialogic exchanges we have with others (see also duo-/trio-ethnography methodologies, Acuff, López & Wilson, 2019; Sions & Coleman, 2019; Wilson & Shields, 2019). The necessity of such dialogues provoke questions such as: *What is "so-and-so" saying or doing in her latest music video? Did you see so-and-so's outfit? How is this different or similar to other artists? How might this add to the previous discourses for Black woman-/girl-hood liberation and joy? How does this new song add to our visual and sonic cultural understanding? Did you catch that sample?* As a part of the post-Civil Rights generation, we align ourselves with Black feminists like Cooper, Morris, & Boylorn (2017). These scholars inform our conversations about Black women producers of hip-hop culture, as they move the needle forward with Black feminist discourse by introducing the notion of "disrespectability" and "anti-respectiability" politics (Cooper, Morris, & Boylorn, 2017) as a way to understand the varied registers of Black women's knowledge. We (the authors) are invested in expanding and advancing a nuanced understanding of Black (and women-of-color[4]) feminisms and insist that the role of respectability politics and controlling narratives within hip-hop culture be directly addressed.

Being in conversation within and outside of this article, we, the authors, find connection as Black girls/women, creatives, pedagogues, scholars, and hip-hop enthusiasts. We see this space as a reflection of our communal means of offering care to one another (Collins, 1990/2009; Sharpe, 2016), imagining/reimagining what it means to be in community despite the many roles we have and partaking in care and healing practices for not just our survival, but

4 "Women of color" (WoC) aligns with Loretta Ross's 2011 articulation of WoC, in which she explains that although melanated women are not necessarily connected through biological designation, they are connected through the alignment of social, economic and political struggles experienced through a minoritized status (Western States Center 2011).

our thrival (Love, 2019). Conceptualizing THOT/Thought-Leading within the context of and exceeding the limits of art education, we extend the spaces, places, and moments where we can gather and share our most authentic selves as disruptive pleasure and activism on our own behalf.

(Love of my life)
You are my friend
(Love of my life)
I can depend
(Love of my life)
Without you, baby,
It feels like a sampled true love
Erykah Badu (feat. Common), *Love of My Life (An Ode to Hip Hop)* (2002)

Round 2: Allow Us to Introduce the Culture

In the previous section, we contextualized our deep connection to hip hop. We continue, in this second round of the cypher, with an introduction to the aesthetico-cultural phenomenon of hip hop and how, like the love of/for a close friend, has contributed to our practices of joy, personally and professionally. Hip hop, as a culture, is an aesthetic/movement, which has its origins in New York and was primarily created by Black, Latina/-o, and Caribbean Americans in the South Bronx and New York City. As with any culture, vocabularies were created (Spillers, 1987), which help to further define what hip-hop culture has come to be. For example, Afrika Bambaataa of the hip-hop collective Zulu Nation coined terms and concepts such as rapping, DJing, b-boying/b-girling, and breakdancing, also known as the four elements of hip hop. Other elements of hip-hop aesthetic movements include nuances of historical knowledge (intellectual/philosophical), beatboxing (a percussive vocal style), and hip-hop fashion and style. Although its origins have centered on the voices of Black men, these cultural productions have also served as a means for Black women to locate themselves within a capitalist society that has consistently refused to acknowledge our/their worth and value.
In our case, hip-hop culture is in our veins. It has impacted how we think about ourselves as Black people. Moreover, as Black women, we find connection with other Black women who are also engaged in the hip-hop world. Across music genres, the creative products from Black female culture in the form of audio/visual productions, have served as tributes, anthems, and roll calls, invoking the nature of call-and-response. It is because of and through the creative production of women emcees/rappers we were inspired to center the joy that hip hop has given us as Black women who have grown up surrounded by its power. For us, it is the space where we allow(ed) ourselves to feel

and experience our bodies (our blackness and our girl-/womanhood) fully, expressing most freely in our homes and other sacred spaces (with friends, in the shower, in the car); we dance, twerk, clap, snap, bop, sing full-throated, spit lyrics, yell at top of our lungs. Unapologetically. Much like the early calls-to-arms by Black women foremothers in the music industry (i.e., Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Ma Rainey, Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Bessie Smith, Ella Fitzgerald, Mahalia Jackson, Diana Ross, Lena Horne, Marian Anderson, Tina Turner, and more), we have been thinking deeply about what these women offer us: artistically, epistemologically, ontologically, and pedagogically (Wilson, 2020). Their creative expression has laid the groundwork for generations of artists and thought-leaders who would follow. As contemporary Black women artists and thought-leaders, our creation of this theorization is an extension of the joy and liberation that we have found in engaging with Black women's hip-hop productions. Understanding that Black feminist thought emphasizes knowledge validation of those who are and are not considered intellectuals (Acuff, 2018; Coleman, 2020; Collins, 1990/2009), our aim is to signal toward a recognition, affirmation, and democratization of intellectualism within and outside of the academy.

Sometimes I go off (I go off), I go hard (I go hard)
Get what's mine (Take what's mine), I'm a star (I'm a star)
'Cause I slay (Slay), I slay (Hey), I slay (Okay), I slay (Okay)
All day (Okay), I slay (Okay), I slay (Okay), I slay (Okay)
Beyoncé, *Formation* (2016)

Round 3: Get (IN)Formation: A Black Women's Hip-Hop Onto-Epistemology

Black women are producers of social, political, and cultural thought that speaks to their experiences, while also refusing their oppression (Durham, Cooper, & Morris, 2013; Nash, 2014). We agree with hooks (1989) that, "Black women need to construct a model of feminist theorizing and scholarship that is inclusive, that widens our options, that enhances our understanding of black experience and gender" (p. 182). She explains the importance of educating people about the experiences of sexism and racism that Black women face while also engaging in self-empowerment. As Black women also empower themselves, they come to embrace the specific cultural contexts they were impacted by. In this case, the context of hip-hop culture.

By embracing these various contexts, Black women have also theorized their experiences in many ways, and have engaged in practices of refusal against subjugation of their experiences by claiming and reclaiming their ways of being and knowing. Beyoncé's lyrics are reflective of this practice. We refer to these political acts as an extension of Black feminist discourse, which attends to the

intimacies between related analytics in articulating what Black feminism can offer (Nash, 2019). For example, Hip-Hop Feminism is related to Black feminism as it still articulates the experiences of Black women, but does so from the context of those who are a part of hip-hop culture. Joan Morgan (1999) first coined the term "Hip-Hop Feminist" and used it to describe being a feminist "brave enough to fuck with the grays" (p. 59). In this statement, Morgan references a politics rooted in the work of a multigenerational and multi-diasporic consciousness—one that is laced with tensions. The grays evoke those middle spaces that Black women live within, the complex intersectional matrices of identities, cultures, and experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). This does not mean taking up polarizing sides, but recognizing the importance of the intersections of identities, thoughts, and actions that exemplify who we are and what we think. In taking on hip-hop culture, Black women/feminists look for their truth among the intersection of voices to create something new. In this space, Black women reject respectability politics, which refers to the embracing of more "normative behaviors," or the policing of "non-normative" behaviors with Black people, in favor of "disrespectability politics" (Cooper, Morris, & Boylorn, 2017, p. 326).

Collins (1990/2009) states, "When Black women define ourselves, we clearly reject the assumption that those in positions granting them the authority to interpret our reality are entitled to do so" (p. 125). For us (the authors), this includes a disruption of colonizing orientations (Bhattacharya, personal communication, February 25, 2020), which questions the need to justify Black women's epistemologies (Collins, 1990/2009). In order to articulate THOT/Thought- Leading, we utilize the lens of Black feminist discourse. This discourse is a combination of the many theorizations of Black women, including Black feminist thought (Collins 1990/2009), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), Hip-Hop Feminism (Morgan, 1999), and Crunk Feminism (Boylorn, Morris & Cooper, 2017a). The use of multiple theorizations of/about/by Black women adds to our understanding of the many ways that Black women exist, share their experiences, and respond by creating cultural productions/texts (Davis, 1998). These Black feminist theorizations in conjunction with THOT/Thought- Leading inspires us to think with Black women as cultural and knowledge producers, creating from their disruptive pleasure, radical and liberating thoughts. Additionally, these theorizations expose generational shifts in thinking with Black feminist discourse and an expansion beyond neatly packaged narratives of survival toward thrival (Love, 2019).

Fuck bein' good, I'm a bad bitch (Ah)
I'm sick of motherfuckers tryna tell me how to live (Fuck y'all)
Megan Thee Stallion, *Girls in the Hood* (2020)
I'd rather be your B-I-T-C-H (I'd rather keep it real with ya)
'Cause that's what you gon' call me when I'm trippin' anyway

You know you can't control me, baby, you need a real one in your life
Megan Thee Stallion, *B.I.T.C.H.* (2020)

Round 4: Why THOT/Thought-Leading?

As in Megan Thee Stallion's lyrics above, Black women in hip hop have often rejected controlling narratives through their lyrical and visual pronouncements. As Collins (1990/2009) has noted, Black women have been subject to controlling narratives and imagery that attempt to dictate perceptions of who they are and what they do. These long-held perceptions have often led to the negative beliefs and stereotypes of Black women, which remove any forms of agency that Black women have in defining themselves and asserting their lived experiences. Collins (1990/2009) reminds us that Black women have been delineated as Mammies, Matriarchs, Welfare Mothers/Queens, Black Ladies, Jezebels, and Hoochies; in spite of these controlling narratives, Black women have a unique standpoint where we define ourselves.

In defining ourselves, Black women have often had to come to terms with or reclaim cultural products that have placed them in supportive or subservient roles. Within hip-hop culture, Black women have ultimately been viewed through the lens of patriarchy and capitalism, being objects of the male gaze and objects to be consumed. For instance, the term, THOT, an acronym for That Ho Over There, has been weaponized in hip-hop culture as a form of linguistic control over women's bodies, deeming their movements as sexual beings as wayward or in service to others' desires (Hartman, 2019; hooks, 1992; Nash, 2019; Wilson, 2020). THOT is a slang word and sexual stereotype that began appearing in hip-hop culture in 2014. It is a misogynistic term, which has been examined and understood to have gained relative power via social media platforms such as Twitter and via song lyrics and music videos, created by Black and Brown men in the hip-hop industry (Collins, 2000; Tyree & Kirby 2017).

For us, the term THOT acts as a neologism (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), a word or phrase that has entered into common use or mainstream language (and may perhaps be falling out of popular discourse), yet operates as a signifier of controlling language used specifically in reference to women (Tyree & Kirby, 2017). Meanwhile, Black women creatives in hip hop such as Cardi B have reclaimed this term like in the *Thotiana Remix*, as Black women have previously done with other controlling terms, to assert their agency, reject respectability politics, embrace their sexuality/erotic power, and define themselves as they see fit (Collins, 1990/2009; Lorde, 1984/2007; Morgan, 1999; Williams, 2017).
By participating in disrespectability/anti-respectability politics, Black women, through a variety of media, show that they have the ability

and agency to act on their behalf and in their own interests. Through historical and contemporary forms of Black visual and media culture, we (the authors) were exposed to and participated in forms of cultural production for and by Black women who invited us into liberatory forms of agency. For example, we grew up watching music video programs and channels such as *Soul Train*, *Video Soul and 106 and Park on BET, VH1 Soul, Yo! MTV Raps, The BET Awards,* and *Black Girls Rock!.* This agency is important when considering representations for Black girls as consumers of Black popular culture (Love, 2012). Hip-Hop feminism can be a tool for Black women and girls to "examine rap music and culture through a Black feminist lens that questions the misogyny and sexism within the art form but recognizes the sexual agency of women who utilize the culture to express themselves and their sexual desires" (Love, 2012, p. 23). As Black girls and women read hip-hop cultural texts through the lens of Black feminist discourse, we/they can come to more nuanced understandings of ourselves/themselves, the art form, and cultural entity that they are engaging with.

Yeah, I know my worth, these colonizers got to pay me
Yeah, I had to go first 'cause the rest would never last
I had to show the positives for those that couldn't add
Rapsody *(feat. J. Cole), Sojourner* (2019)

Outro: Thoughts on THOTs

In this final section, as Rapsody notes, we recognize our worth and the worth of Black women hip-hop cultural producers. We return to our original questions—the provocations which inspired our theorizations and suggest that THOT/Thought-Leading as a call-to-arms, an extension of Black feminist discourses, and a way to affirm Black women as cultural/knowledge producers, whose voices have been marginalized within the larger whitestream canon of art(s) education (Wilson, 2020). Our theorizations extend a contemporary Black feminist orientation and sharpen an understanding of the ways Black women participate in cultural and knowledge-production, which necessarily complicates an understanding of Black women's onto-epistemologies.

What theoretical interventions might be made in order to articulate a politics of pleasure in spite of the heteropatriarchal space of hip-hop culture?

Theorizing with and through popular and media culture, with which many people engage, can offer opportunities for articulating a politics of pleasure. This theorizing by Black women becomes particularly important when recognizing and understanding their status as thought leaders. When Black women engage with visual and media

culture on their own terms and in the name of activism on their own behalf, we/they engage in "black female interiority" and move beyond mere representation politics (Morgan, 2019). Here, Morgan refers to "the quiet composite of mental, spiritual and psychological expression," (p. 83) and necessitates that Black female interiority is in excess of this; this includes exceeding the limits of a politics of silencing of a broad range of feelings and desires.

We (the authors) offer our intergenerational and interior articulations as a way of performing radical care. Our theorization offers ways to think about and with Black women's hip-hop onto-epistemologies and what they may offer aesthetically and pedagogically. In doing so, we refuse a marginalized status by framing this work as disruptive pleasure, joy, activism, fugitivity, healing justice, and radical care (Hartman, 2019; Sharpe, 2016). For those engaging this article, we extend an invitation to become part of understanding, affirming and validating the knowledge created and curated by Black women. To place Black women as "objects of conversation" (Kendall, 2020, p. xviii) rather than centralize their agency to speak for themselves risks mere superficial treatment (as in a citation in an article or mention on social media), perpetuates an historic silencing, and invalidates our conceptualization of radical care and love (Sharpe, 2016; Nash, 2019).

What does it mean to refuse being "objects of conversation?"

In crafting this article, we spent many hours, weeks, and months listening to self-curated playlists, carefully attending to lyrics, while theorizing alongside an intergenerational wealth of Black women cultural producers, hip-hop creatives, and scholars (such as Missy Elliott, Bettina Love, Joan Morgan, and more). Exceeding our writing, we also allowed the music to guide our natural inclinations to get up and dance. This excess illuminates our range of Black women onto-epistemologies, and in doing so, we refuse being restricted, contained or "held in," (Sharpe, 2016, p. 68), as in the lives of ancestors contained as objects/cargo in the hold of ships during transatlantic disasters and as in the misogynistic portrayal of Black women in hip hop. As Carruthers (2018) notes, "We deserve more than partial freedoms cloaked as pathways to liberation. Freedom is not real if everyone can't exercise it" (p. 102). In engaging with this work, we centered and liberated our girl-/womanhoods, our pleasures and our joy. We agree with Garner, Hill, Robinson, & Callier (2019) who define pleasure as something that is produced when "we dismantle systems of power that seek to infringe on our ability to be our whole selves" (p. 191). In sum, we wanted to write an article that we, as Black women, would find joy in *producing* and *reading* (Evans-Winters, 2019).

Using the cypher as a means to hold dialogic space with one another

and also as a means to *be held* (in the wake of on-going aftereffects of transatlantic enslavement), we extend a radical care and love for Black women as knowledge-holders/producers. Black feminists across time have promoted the importance of being in conversation, valuing dialogue over monologue (Lorde (1984/2007). Continuing to think with Lorde (1984/2007), we honor this dialogic space as allowing for our thoughts and words as Black women to have deeper meaning, finding affirmation and validation in each other and our intergenerational knowledges.

How might we account for Black girls' and women's participation in knowledge production in excess of respectability? How might radical care be enacted to recognize the full personhood of Black women?

By curating a space to lay bare our connections to hip hop culture, we reveal an interiority of Black girl-/womanhood in excess of respectability. As what some might call "bad feminists" (Gay, 2014), there is no denying the complexity of loving hip-hop culture and its associated misogyny. Here, we think with Joan Morgan (1999) and her challenge for us to sit with the messiness and "gray" areas, and also Garner et. al (2019) to enact a politics of anti-respectability. The lyrics of the Black women highlighted in this article serve as punctuated aesthetic pronouncements of the lived realities of Blackness and womanness within and through the diasporas.

To these ends, these realizations cannot be ignored in the contexts of teaching and learning, as hip-hop culture has become ubiquitous in U.S. culture. What this means is that there is danger in deficit perspectives about hip-hop culture and Black girls (Garner et. al, 2019), which result in state- and school-sanctioned restrictions of "presentation" (e.g. restricting braided hairstyles and afros worn by Black students and clothing choices), and in removal through suspension (reinforcing trends toward the school-to-prison pipeline; see also, Morris, 2016). In order to counter these deficit perspectives, those who are involved in the culture of teaching and learning must divest from patriarchal and myopic narratives of blackness and womanhood. This is no task for the faint of heart.

In closing, we want to give thanks and express our gratitude to the Black women cultural- and knowledge-producers whose work we identify as disruptive pleasure.We have been inspired by the sonic and visual productions of these women through our love and appreciation of hip-hop culture, imagining and theorizing futures that center joy for Black women and girls. In doing this, we think with the words of Alice Walker:

> "For these grandmothers and mothers of ours were not Saints, but Artists; driven to a numb and bleeding madness by the

> springs of creativity in them for which there was no release. They were Creators, who lived lives of spiritual waste, because they were so rich in spirituality—which is the basis of Art—that the strain of enduring their unused and unwanted talent drove them insane....What did it mean for a black woman to be an artist in our grandmothers' time? In our great-grandmothers' day? It is a question with an answer cruel enough to stop the blood" (Walker, 1983, p. 233)

We say the names of the Black women who inspired and influenced this theorization: Aisha Durham, Alice Walker, Angela Davis, Angie Martinez, Audre Lorde, Bahamadia, bell hooks, Bettina Love, Beyoncé, Brittney Cooper, Cardi B, Carrie Mae Weems, Charlene Carruthers, Christina Sharpe, City Girls, Da Brat, Dominique Hill, Erykah Badu, Eve, Foxy Brown, Freida Tesfagiorgis, Gwendolyn Pough, Grace Jones, Hortense Spillers, Iona Rozeal Brown, Jamea Richmond Edwards, Janelle Monáe, Janet Jackson, Jennifer Nash, Jessica Robinson, Jhené Aiko, JJFad, Joan Morgan, Joni Boyd Acuff, Juliana Huxtable, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Left Eye, Lauryn Hill, Lil' Kim, Lizzo, Mary J. Blige, MC Lyte, Megan Thee Stallion, Mickalene Thomas, Mikki Kendall, Missy Elliot, Monie Love, Monique Morris, Morgan Kirby, Nicki Minaj, Noname, Pamela Lawton, Patricia Hill Collins, Porshé Garner, Queen Latifah, Rapsody, Rihanna, Robin Boylorn, Roxane Gay, Roxanne Shanté, Saidiya Hartman, Salt-n-Pepa, Sherri Williams, Sister Souljah, Solange, Susana Morris, Tierra Whack, TLC, Trina, Wangechi Mutu, Venus Evans-Winters.

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Rise: Emergent Strategies for Reclaiming Joy and Agency Against Neofascist and White Supremacist Assaultive Speech

Tyson E. Lewis, Ph.D.
University of North Texas

Amelia M. Kraehe, Ph.D.
University of Arizona

ABSTRACT

Since the 2016 election of President Donald Trump, there has been an uptick in the number of faculty reporting that they have been the subjects of harassment and intimidation by organizations and individuals espousing views consistent with ideologies of the alt-right, neofascism, and global White supremacy. In this new virulent environment, verbal assaults and threats of violence against progressive scholars are increasingly common, particularly in the case of women academics, minoritized professors, and those whose writing deals critically with racism and other forms of supremacy. This essay, informed by critical race theory, presents a phenomenological narrative and critical analysis of actual events in which an art education scholar was the target of assaultive speech and threatened physical harm following the publication of a book chapter critical of Whiteness. Understanding assaultive speech as an attempt to replace joy with affects of fear, paranoia, and hate, the authors examine the events that occurred in the course of performing one's duties as teachers, researchers, or concerned citizen-scholars, in detail to reveal (a) the overarching structure and life cycle of these all-too-common attacks and (b) how they affect the targeted person's mind-body. This combination of structural and embodied forms of knowledge can inspire new liberatory projects as a part of an emergent strategy for scholars, teachers, and activists interested in justice, critical pedagogy, or transformative practices to rise and reclaim joy and agency in troubled times.

KEYWORDS: art education, joy, strategy, fascism, racism, White supremacy, alt-right, critical race theory, assaultive speech, harassment, university faculty, phenomenology, democracy

I knew it was coming. After all, I had been contacted the day before by Campus Reform, an online news tabloid that targets professors who are seen as part of the "multikultis" left. But when I checked my email that rather banal weekday afternoon, I had not imagined the swell

of messages that would suddenly fill my inbox. One after another of mis-informed, derogatory, and hate-filled messages calling me any number of racist and homophobic names and slandering my work flooded my university account. Suddenly, my body felt hot, my mouth dry, and my heart was pounding so loudly that I thought it would leap out of my chest cavity. The whole thing felt like an invasion, leaving me in a precarious and vulnerable position. Immediately, I wanted to reach out to tell someone what was happening, but I was unsure whom I should contact. This feeling was coupled with an equally powerful sense of being frozen, clicking through each email, unable not to read the slander and the vulgarities. It was as if the cascade of emails hypnotized me. Then, my cell phone rang. It was the chair of my department, offering a warning that I might need to prepare myself for an attack by right wing watch dog groups. As I listened to her, I looked out my window, wondering whether or not my private address was posted on the university website….

……..

Shock, confusion, anger, vulnerability, fatigue, paranoia. These words seem inadequate to describe the emotional toll of being targeted by right-wing groups. Since the 2016 election of President Donald J. Trump, there has been an uptick in the number of faculty reporting that they have been the subjects of harassment and intimidation by organizations and individuals espousing views consistent with ideologies of the alt-right, neofascism, and global White supremacy (Levy, 2018). Much of the documented harassment takes place in public spaces, often in online tabloid news sites and in social media. But as the excerpt above illustrates, attacks can also be personalized and strike closer to home.

The incident Tyson described in the opening of this article happened in July 2018. It followed the publication of *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education* (Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, & Carpenter, 2018), in which his essay, "Art Education and Whiteness as Style," was featured as one of 33 chapters. We believe this publication was the impetus for the harassment and violent speech he would face for months to come. We write about this incident not because Tyson is unusual in being the subject of *assaultive speech* (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). To the contrary, assaults like this are becoming rather typical, particularly for women academics, minoritized professors, and those whose writing deals critically with racism and other forms of social injustice (Matias, 2020; Veletsianos & Hodson, 2018). As graduate students, neither of us—Tyson, a White cisgender male nor Amelia, a biracial/Black cisgender female—were mentored in ways that alerted or prepared us for the kind of intimidation Tyson would encounter and Amelia would help him work through as a friend, collaborator, and member of a scholarly

community that still values academic freedom. It is likely that few have been prepared for the rise in the number of attacks against academics deemed to be threats to conservative values, though some practical tips can be found in blog posts here and there (Cloud, 2017; Grollman, 2015). We believe there is an urgent need to understand the overarching structure and life cycle of these all-too-common attacks, how they affect the targeted person's mind-body, and how the combination of structural and embodied forms of knowledge can inspire new liberatory projects that are courageous but also restorative, adaptive, and sustainable.

This paper recognizes the new virulent environment that US scholars, educators, and students engaged in progressive struggles may encounter. As the American Association of University Professors points out, for many who have reported harassment and intimidation, "the triggering event occurred in the course of their normal academic duties as teachers, researchers, or concerned citizen-scholars addressing the public" (Levy, 2018, p. 48). Our goal is to contribute to a conversation about what these events and the wounds they inflict feel like on a human scale, the larger patterns that one can expect to see, and some practical and emergent strategies we have learned from our experience that others might put into practice to protect themselves and to support colleagues and students before, during, or after an attack.

Our approach to working through these three interconnected dimensions is to use an incident that happened to Tyson as a case study. We pay special attention to his phenomenological account of what it feels like to be subjected to assaultive speech through email campaigns, aggressive blog posts, rants on conservative talk radio, and internet articles posted on tabloid news sites. Phenomenology offers rich, first-person descriptions of lived experience. When coupled with a critical race analysis of larger social, political, and economic forces, phenomenology has the unique ability to reveal what it feels like to live through a politically contentious climate as a critical scholar and educator. In other words, the case study provides insight into the pedagogy of the flesh (Kraehe & Lewis, 2018), showing what the lived, embodied flesh can teach us about campaigns of hate and anti-fascism on the level of bodily affects.

Joy as Affective Capacity for Action and Passion

From the perspective of the flesh, what becomes clear is how these attacks are attacks against joy itself. The personalization of the attacks coupled with their intensity and ferocity intentionally isolate individuals, producing the sensations of a precarious and vulnerable flesh. The burden of carrying the weight of these attacks (especially when they are sustained for months, if not years) increases the risk of

eventual burnout (Chen & Gorski, 2015). The fight against burnout is therefore a fight for safeguarding the joy of being a critical scholar on the level of the flesh. As political theorists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2011) define it, "The path of joy is constantly to open new possibilities, to expand our field of imagination, our abilities to feel and be affected, our capacities for action and passion" (p. 379). In other words, joy is the sensation of an increase in the power to act and to think that comes from an encounter with others. As the narrative below will illustrate, assaultive speech is precisely an attempt to replace joy with affects of fear, paranoia, and hate--all of which support neofascist articulations of xenophobia, nationalism, racism, militarism, and armored masculinity (Lewis, 2020) over and above more democratically pluralistic forms-of-life.

To be sure, there are more physically dangerous places in the world than the US in which to be an academic or progressive thought leader. The reality of brutal violence, imprisonment, and exile perpetrated against people with views and affiliations perceived as a threat by dominant groups and institutions is exactly why it is alarming in the US, a nation that prides itself on upholding core liberties such as freedom of expression and the right of association, to see a growing number of professors targeted for monitoring and harassment by privately funded right-wing groups. The fact is that to make sense of any traumatic event and reestablish a feeling of safety and a way forward involves substantial labor. Ridding oneself of toxic affect requires being in solidarity with others. Even the seemingly simple act of sharing one's story allows others to help join in lifting the weight of trauma that is difficult for any one body to carry alone. In other words, self-care and restoration of joy can be reframed as collaborative acts. Our writing together about this is but one example of that.

After reflecting on Tyson's specific case, we offer some tentative suggestions or "projects" as parts of what writer and activist adrienne maree brown (2017) might call an emergent strategy for scholars, teachers, and activists interested in justice, critical pedagogy, or transformative practices to rise and reclaim joy and agency in troubled times. "Emergent strategy is how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for" (brown, 2017, p. 3). The strategies we focus on are intentionally diverse though not divergent. They work on different scales and on different levels of intensity. Some demand militant rigor against overt neofascist and alt-right groups, while others offer more studious forms of engagement. The point is that in the fight for joy, there is no "one size fits all" strategy. Rather there are multiple, intersecting, and networked strategies, some big and some small, some short-term and some long-term, that can, when viewed together, help restore a sense of wholeness and wellbeing.

"Your a Dumbass": An Unlikely Encounter With the Alt-Right

The harassment started in the summer of 2018. This was a tumultuous moment of mounting scandals in the Trump presidency; the disturbing separation of undocumented families at the US-Mexico border; a record number of women, Muslims, gays, lesbians, and transgender representatives of the Democratic Party running for high-profile government offices in opposition to reactionary Republican policies and judicial appointments; and a rather pathetic yet highly visible "Unite the Right 2" rally in Washington, DC organized by neo-Nazi activists. In the midst of all this, the book chapter titled, "Art Education and Whiteness as Style," that I, Tyson, had recently written on the topic of White privilege and education suddenly and for a brief and intense moment became a lightning rod of controversy.

It started with a request for an interview from the online "journal" Campus Reform (CR). CR is a far-right news site that actively polices higher education, openly shaming and mocking individual professors they judge to be liberal or leftist (and thereby a threat to "American" values). The website was founded by the Leadership Institute (LI), which has an explicit agenda to increase the number of conservatives in government and the media. LI's website states that the organization "increases the number and effectiveness of conservative activists and leaders in the public policy process. The Institute doesn't analyze policy; it teaches conservative Americans how to influence policy through direct participation, activism, and leadership." CR is part of this campaign of influence, all the while masquerading as journalism. According to Media Bias/Fact Check, CR rates as "strongly biased" toward conservative views, and is prone to using loaded words to characterize liberal or leftist professors and publishes misleading reports.

In my own case, a staff writer referring to herself as a "higher education reporter" from CR contacted me via email on July 22 at 8:27pm, less than one day before a story concerning my book chapter would go live on the CR website. Her intentions were uncertain. Perhaps she wanted to discuss the chapter with me, or to obtain a comment, or at the very least, to be able to say (at the end of the 11th hour window she had given me to reply) that the author could not be reached for comment. I declined to participate (by not responding). Giving CR and their "reporter" any response seemed to me to merely legitimize the source as a serious news outlet, and while they went through the motions of reaching out to me, this was an exchange in which I did not want any part. Without my response, CR published a critique of my chapter that was absolutely ridiculous. They clearly did not understand its discipline-specific content, and rather than researching further, they doubled-down on their misreading. The interpretation CR settled upon was so far from the actual argument of

the text that I thought it was a spoof. Yet within hours, the CR story had gone viral, appearing in alt-right Twitter feeds, blogs, and a host of other fake news sites across the internet that cater to extremist, fringe elements associated to various degrees with White nationalism and/or right-wing reactionaries. I started receiving dozens and dozens of hate emails, each clearly using CR's initial misreading as a jumping off point for their own wildly imaginative interpretations.

Still in its first day on CR's website, activity surrounding the essay did not abate, and kept amplifying to the point that by that evening, my chapter (or, at least, what my chapter had been interpreted as symbolizing for the alt-right in this moment) was featured on Rush Limbaugh's radio program. Like CR, Limbaugh had no idea what my essay was actually about, and his staff never reached out to do any fact-checking. I suspect Limbaugh himself was simply scrolling through a feed of whichever alt-right posts were getting lots of action in that moment, and there was the mention of my book chapter, trending near the top, stirring up lots of angry responses that he then magnified by bashing the paper, my education, my looks, and so on, all the while using the air time as an opportunity to repeat my name and current university position as many times as possible. This caused another round of hate mail, which flooded into my university email account and escalated to alt-right "watchdog" groups that called the dean of my college demanding that I be fired. My Academia.edu page received over 500 hits within a matter of hours, and became another outlet for people to post derogatory messages. Although I had always thought of Academia.edu as a way to share my work, it suddenly dawned on me that it was also an effective tool of surveillance by alt-right groups that had no real interest in engaging with the ideas. Seeing the skyrocketing hits on the website coupled with the obscene messages left in my Academia.edu inbox, in a moment of panic and impulsive frustration, I deleted my account. It felt safer somehow to pull the plug until the scandal subsided.

While I had read the first few hate messages with a sense of confusion, I was increasingly appalled and distressed by the threats, intimidation, and bigotry. As the escalation continued, university leadership published a statement in support of independent scholarship and, in the end, campus police were brought in to investigate those messages that threatened bodily harm.

Thinking the episode was over, I tried to go on vacation, but to my surprise, I received an email from Tucker Carlson's Fox News producer. Apparently, Carlson wanted to do a live, one-on-one interview with me for his TV show on the topic of race, education, and White privilege. What was amazing to me was how I had risen to the very acme of the right-wing news pyramid without lifting a finger. The machinery had revealed itself to me very clearly. The Fox

Television Network was receiving its agenda from poorly researched, conspiratorially oriented, fake news sources. These questionable stories trickled up through various fringe organizations until they hit a certain maximal saturation point, at which point they appeared on Fox's radar. Along the way, scandal, outrageous charges against my integrity, and blatant misrepresentations of my work spread like wildfire to the point where my initial essay seemed beside the point.

A Typology of Hate Mail

The tone and focus of these hate emails varied, but they could be grouped in several camps. To give the reader a sense of the kinds of assaultive speech contained in these emails, I have reprinted several below as I received them. There is a danger in reprinting this kind of hateful speech, as it can further its circulation. Yet, it is also important to give the reader a sense of the kinds of assaultive speech I received. As such, we have carefully curated the emails into representative types. Here we will shift out of a narrative and phenomenological analysis toward critical discourse analysis to help elucidate the various tactics (conscious or unconscious) used by right-wing groups to assault joy and provoke the kinds of fear and paranoia outlined above.

The Simply Confused Type

First, there were a string of emails that were simply confused over the argument I was presenting in the chapter. In one example of this type of email, an individual, who subsequently followed up with a string of emails to see if I was still "intimidated" by her trolling, wrote the following:

> I am trying to figure out how to approach you in this email, I am not sure if your [sic] a dumbass or if your [sic] just a manipulative liberal. How did you become a professor, what college did you go to? Did they have standards? You know math is based in numbers. . . . Numbers do not have any human or social context, it seems so simple and obvious. It is so hard to communicate with an idiot.

The confusion here is rather simple. The author of this email has confused the geometry of Whiteness with the Whiteness of geometry. I take no position on the latter thesis. Instead, I am concerned with how Whiteness itself is composed of certain lines, angles, and points. While one might think this is an obscure point of concern only for phenomenologists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Sara Ahmed, I actually took my initial inspiration for this geometrical interpretation of the body from common, everyday phrases such as "walking the line," or "angle of vision," or "having a point of

view." The vocabulary of geometry permeates our everyday ways of speaking about bodies in motion. One can often find great insight into structures of worldhood, the body, and perception right on the surface of language.

The irony is that if the author of the original CR article had understood my argument and represented it accurately, the readership might well have agreed to its basic premise. Many on the alt-right would most likely accept the observation that White bodies have their own unique geometry. The disagreement would lie with how this geometry is ultimately interpreted, with one side demanding that it be protected as a natural or innate right and the other that it be critiqued as a socially and legally constructed privilege based on a history of oppression.

Now, it might appear that this troller was attempting to reach out to me to clarify my thesis, but I do not sincerely believe this is the case. The aggressive, derogatory, and dismissive tone indicates a cynical approach to asking questions that presupposes the answer. This tone is indicative of the alt-right's overall strategy for attacking anyone that falls outside their politically narrow world view. It speaks to a fundamental intolerance and impatience with diversity, especially when such diversity discusses matters of race generally and White privilege specifically. In short, asking for clarification from a "dumbass" is not really asking for clarification at all. Questioning becomes a form of accusing, and accusing becomes a form of intimidation.

The Illiberal Type

Another group of emails targeted me less for the particular argument I was presenting in the chapter and more as a representative of the liberal bias of the university writ large. One particularly enraged troller wrote the following:

> The geometry of whiteness? Is there a reason that you just don't teach instead of trying to indoctrinate mentally vapid students? To actually believe your drivel means that the students at your institution of liberal learning don't actually think for themselves. I bet you're for safe spaces and will picket any speaker that may be conservative. Good job Mr. Lewis. Your administration is as clueless as you if they continue to promote and facilitate your intellectual laziness and bias.

The assumption here is that university education ought to be a neutral enterprise. I should "just teach" rather than indoctrinate students. Somehow teaching about Whiteness is neither fair nor balanced. I would disagree strongly with this. Introducing students to the research on Whiteness, having them reflect on how Whiteness

permeates their lives, and having them discuss the potential effects of Whiteness on their teaching is not a bias in itself but rather a way to get students to reflect on *potential* biases they might be unconsciously carrying with them. As such, it would be no different than unsettling biases concerning learning or teaching. Using the troller's own logic, could we not make the argument that *discussing* Whiteness in pre-service teacher education is precisely a way to promote "fair and balanced" teaching—teaching that is not biased by the privileges of Whiteness? At stake here is clarifying that discussing Whiteness is not the same as indoctrinating students into a certain ideology. Indeed, in my classes it is the exact opposite, as students often leave feeling overwhelmingly anxious that they no longer know what to think or how to act.

The Anti-intellectual Type

Another variant of this kind of attack is best illustrated by Rush Limbaugh himself, who seemed less concerned with the argument, which he openly admitted he did not understand, than with my mode of address. He appeared most agitated by the technical language, which he associated with liberal elitism. Hearing his comments made me wonder if he would have the same reaction to reading a technical paper published in the *American Journal of Physics* or *The Journal of Mathematical Analysis and Application*, which are also full of their own, highly specialized jargon.

It seems as though there is a general misunderstanding that everything an academic in education or the social sciences writes ought to be for the broadest audience, and that any deployment of specialized language is automatically an attack aimed to make people like Limbaugh feel inadequate. The handbook chapter that was the focus of CR's criticism is meant for scholars and researchers familiar with critical race theory and phenomenology. Because of this, it makes an easy target for paranoid, alt-right pundits looking for evidence of elitism in the academy. Yet with minimal research, Limbaugh could have found articles written by me that focus on similar issues but address a different, much broader audience of pre-service teachers.

The Unabashedly Racist Type

Other emails were overtly racist. Here is one example out of dozens, titled "Commie Faggot":

> Why don't you move down here to New Orleans and enjoy the diversity of black savage behavior. A little cock sucker like you would really enjoy these thick lipped savages on a daily basis and they like commie philosophy, you know-taking from the productive and giving it to them. But I know you snowflake

> fags stay inside your college walls with the rest of you clowns.

Additional racist emails attempted to appeal to me on intellectual grounds, recommending readings that could help my classes become more "fair and balanced." Take for instance one email that suggested I read the works of Comte Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, a 19th century French aristocrat who is infamous for attempts to legitimize racism through scientific means. The concerned citizen conveniently photocopied and scanned several pages of texts by de Gobineau and even underlined passages including the following except concerning the so-called Aryan race:

> Everything great, noble, or fruitful in the works of man on this planet, in science, art, and civilization, derives from a single starting point, is the development of a single germ; . . . it belongs to one family alone, the different branches of which have reigned in all the civilized countries of the universe. . . . History shows that all civilization derives from the white race. . . .

Such emails speak to a deep desire to seek out "intellectual" and "scientific" proof of White superiority as a historical fact, even if this means rejecting all evidence to the contrary (Harding, 1993). The mere fact that this troller is citing a 19th century essay as "evidence" of White racial superiority indicates a lack of scientific literacy and a desperation to support an unsupportable thesis.

The Cloaked Type

It was also interesting to note the various strategies that some trollers employed to get me to read their emails. While some of the most offensive indicated as such in the subject headlines, others were much more innocuous. For instance, many of the emails used deceptive titles such as "financial aid question." They, thus, masked their hate speech under the guise of a student question concerning academic programs at the university where I teach. The frequency of this strategy was surprising and seemed to indicate to me that there was a formula that was shared among the alt-right as a way to infiltrate the "liberal academy." The strategy was, sadly, rather effective insofar as I became increasingly paranoid about opening emails from individuals I did not know personally. When viewing my inbox, I would often pause before clicking on a seemingly innocent sounding email. This was particularly frustrating as I was, at the time of the incident, a graduate program coordinator whose main task was to field questions from possible applicants.

It was also surprising to me how many of the emails referred to me as a "liberal snowflake." Considering the vicious attacks I received

over one book chapter, a chapter it seemed none of the attackers had actually read and was merely advocating that White pre-service teachers think about the implications of Whiteness on their teaching, I do not think I am the snowflake here! Until this incident, I had no idea how sensitive the alt-right is to the mere mention of White privilege. In short, the tsunami of outrage was disproportionate to the claims made in the handbook chapter and indicates that if anyone needs a trigger warning it is the alt-right.

Forming an Emergent Strategy

Left to ponder implications of this event and how to best proceed, we, Tyson and Amelia, who is one of the editors of *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education*, began what became a series of discussions that at times included co-editors Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández and B. Stephen Carpenter, II, about follow-up action plans. Those of us who wanted to issue statements directly to CR or Fox News saw this as an opportunity to speak back and set the record straight. Others of us felt that any engagement with alt-right or tabloid news sources would only grant them a legitimacy they did not deserve. As long as they had "final edit," it seemed unlikely that much clarifying would come out of any engagement with them. Instead, it would add fuel to their fire.

We also had concerns over the safety of the other contributors to the book project, several of whom were our former students now in their first years of teaching as visiting professors and/or tenure-track assistant professors. Exposing them to increased levels of scandal seemed risky. But this discussion left us in a double bind. No one wanted to give in and simply remain silent. This felt like letting neofascist and alt-right groups "win" by silencing dissenting voices. At the same time, the stakes were high, and no one wanted to make a false move.

On a human level, I, Amelia, was surprised, disgusted, and angered by the assault on Tyson. As a friend and colleague, I wanted to support him anyway I could as he worked to process his immediate shock and overcome feelings of isolation. But I was also outside his direct experience and initially felt a degree of helplessness. Many questions pressed into the foreground of my thoughts: *Why were Tyson and his chapter targeted? Why not any of the other authors or chapters in the handbook? Was it significant that he was targeted given that he was one of only a few White authors in the handbook?* My initial surprise soon gave way once I started to see this traumatizing event within the context of US racial history.

As a critical race scholar, I found Tyson's encounter with hate speech to be both unique, in that he was the target of individualized threats

that caused him real harm, and also not unique, in the sense that it fit into well-established historical patterns. His private experience needed to be understood in relation to the privation experiences of Black and Brown people living in the shadow of White racism.

The fact is that Black Americans experienced more than 200 years of bondage followed by another 100 years of homegrown fascism and apartheid, otherwise known as Jim Crow. Throughout the nation's history, when people have tried to reckon with the legacy of slavery and challenge systems that uphold a sense of normative Whiteness and privilege, they have frequently become the targets of censure and violent backlash. Equally important is the realization that a person does not need to be engaged in justice work to experience what Patricia Williams (1991) calls *spirit-murder*, damage to a person's wellbeing that arises from structural racism and other forms of human disregard.[1] In their day-to-day existence, Black and Brown people, children included, are routinely regarded with prejudice and suspicion such that even joyful expression—laughter, play, music—may be met with physical, verbal, and psychological maltreatment. To protect from the injuries of spirit-murder requires historical awareness so that one can recognize individual instances of abuse as belonging to a larger pattern and structure of power, as well as a broad array of flexible methods for resistance.

We turn now to where we sit in the current moment at the time of this writing and disclose a fluid and emergent strategy for recouping joy in the face of an affective attack on democratic flesh. Here, our personal narratives give way to an effort to think collectively. We, thus, conclude with suggestions or "projects" for professors, universities, and organizations that have come out of our ongoing discussions with each other, the Handbook's co-editors, as well as other colleagues and friends.

Our suggestions are by no means definitive or complete. Rather, we view them as potential starting points for a much broader set of discussions that we hope this incident sparks. As such, we want to extend our thinking outward from a singular narrative toward actions that can be taken both individually and collectively in the face of trolling and intimidation. As brown (2017) argues, an emergent strategy is adaptive, tenacious, interconnected, fecund, and iterative. It privileges nonlinear and interdependent forms of resiliency that creates possibilities for a joyful form-of-life. The projects below are vectors of this fractal and insurgent strategy, promoting collaborative

1 In addition to racism, Williams (1991) discusses other forms of spirit-murder, stating "cultural obliteration, prostitution, abandonment of the elderly and the homeless, and genocide are some of its other guises" (p. 73).

and multidimensional approaches to scholarship, teaching, and activism.

I. Cultural Projects

We encourage our students to take seriously the reading of primary visual, literary, and philosophical texts. Yet, how often do we engage seriously with the primary sources of the far right and other extremist groups? We think it is time to dedicate efforts to reading and interrogating the visual and literary texts that are currently forming the background of alt-right and White supremacist movements in the US and abroad. If Franz Neumann (2009) once complained fascist philosophy is devoid of any redemptive qualities, then the same might be said of its literature. And yet it is important to read the texts that galvanize the right-wing collective imagination. Themes of manifest destiny, scientific racism, and the fetishization of pure bloodlines run throughout this literature and inform its visual culture, but what we want to emphasize here is the way these texts rest between utopian dream and dystopian paranoia—a mixture that is complex and demands careful analysis, especially in the ways that it attempts to appropriate and exploit joy for anti-democratic ends.

II. Pedagogical Projects

Although we have actively taught social justice, critical pedagogy, and transformative educational courses in the past to both undergraduate and graduate populations, we have never considered teaching about how to respond to these kinds of attacks. It now seems imperative that we tell such stories and arm students with emergent strategies that will empower them when they, too, are trolled. It is high time we focus not only on how to teach about race, class, gender, and sexuality with philosophical rigor, curiosity, a sense of deep responsibility, and dialogical openness, but also that we take responsibility to impart to future educators, scholars, and activists the strategies necessary to protect their wellbeing while doing so.

III. Institutional and Organizational Projects

In addition to teaching how to respond to attacks from the alt-right, it is also important to lobby organizations and universities to take a stand against such intimidation and advocate safety for members and faculty (Lawless, Rudick, & Golsan, 2019). The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign has a simple website and attending brochure dedicated to addressing trolling attacks against faculty. It clearly recognizes the problem (trolling attacks are becoming increasingly prevalent) and proposes simple actions that faculty can take to protect themselves and their students including a warning against responding to attacks, a call to preserve as evidence all

messages received, and so forth. But beyond practical advice, the very gesture of posting such a brochure in the first place indicates that the university is being proactive in supporting faculty, and thus promoting a sense of intellectual safety for faculty. It is important that all universities who support critical work publicize similar information.

Likewise, it is important for organizations to take a public stand against acts of intimidation and violence while also actively supporting members struggling against discrimination, oppression, and hate-filled, reactionary politics of any kind. Exemplary in this respect is the public statement made by the Art Education Research Institute against assaultive speech and other forms of intimidation targeting critical scholars. Such statements can be used as a shield to deflect criticism away from individuals and, thus, interrupt a primary strategy of the alt-right and neofascist groups bent on isolating victims.

IV. Ethical Project

We cannot speak for everyone; yet we think that sharing Tyson's phenomenological and narratological description is important and revealing for determining a starting point for thinking through the ways we might respond when we hear that colleagues or students are going through similar experiences. Initially, Tyson was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of emails. It was not that any one particular email was, in itself, more intimidating than any other. It was rather the wave of emails that felt oppressive. Sitting at his desk, spending hours forwarding emails to his university's public relations officer made Tyson feel exceptionally exposed. At first it was even difficult to describe the event to others. He did not have an articulate way to bring together unfolding events and the sensation of utter shock and confoundment.

When he did begin to open up, he was relieved by the number of supportive emails and phone calls he subsequently received, while at the same time rather unnerved by certain colleagues who seemed to have a perverse fascination with his case. For instance, several White colleagues who perceive themselves to be "radical intellectuals" expressed a strange kind of jealousy, as if being attacked in this way gave Tyson authenticity or the kind of *bona fides* perhaps they felt they lacked. We might refer to this as "White radical imposter syndrome." But more generally it was difficult to tell the story over and over again, thus putting the self and all its faults on display.

As such, we think it is important for all of us to embody an ethic of patience, support, and solidarity, letting individuals know they are being heard and are not alone while at the same time not pressing them to take specific actions or make public statements before they are ready. Within emergent strategies, there is plenty of room for decentralized and iterative processes that are overt and covert, political and scholarly, educational and ethical.

V. Political Project

We believe strongly that defending the freedom of thought is an urgent political project that grows out of the activities of learning, studying, and teaching. This does not mean that politics trumps education or that education is somehow an instrument of politics. Instead, it means that certain political commitments can and do emerge out of educational commitments as necessary for safeguarding education as a space for free, critically informed thinking. Some of these commitments might mean that we focus our attention on protecting institutional norms against White supremacist, alt-right attacks while others might mean we take to the streets to march for Black lives or join anti-fa movements. Some might become advocates for students undergoing similar attacks, while others might form study groups to read and engage with anti-fascist literature. Still others might engage in what Claudia Ruitenberg (2018) has called a "public pedagogy of insurrectionary speech" (p. 498), which risks ongoing trolling by making public statements about online violence in order to defiantly demonstrate "it is possible to survive" (p. 499) these attacks. As stated above, there is room here for multiple, intersecting, and emergent strategies that swells out of one's educational and philosophical projects.

If Donald Trump has targeted credible news media as the number one enemy of the people, then universities are most assuredly not far behind on his list. Already he has lambasted critical race theory, *The New York Times's* 1619 Project and its curriculum, and the teaching of diversity awareness to federal employees. These actions seek to undermine critical thought at all levels. Indeed, thinking itself is under attack, and if our prognostication comes true, then it will potentially affect academics writ large. Distinctions between fact and fiction, objectivity and subjectivity are now front and center of a larger political struggle in ways that far surpass recent historical examples in the US (Coppins, 2020). It is of course common knowledge that politicians put a "spin" on reality to suit their ideological needs, but Trump's willful rewriting of history as well as its erasure escalates mere spin to a new, highly problematic level that, in turn, "teaches" a generation of cynical followers that anything and everything can be fake news. In this sense, it might not be long before those concerned with "pure" epistemological questions (i.e., none of this race, class,

gender, and sexuality stuff) could also be subject to trolling. In short, there is no escaping the present climate of attack. Our stance is not pessimistic but realistic about the need to be proactive in the face of increasingly emboldened forms of hate speech and orchestrated campaigns of disinformation that will, either directly or indirectly, involve us all.

And When We Rise

To conclude, these emergent strategies should not be taken on all at once or by a single individual alone. Some induce pain and suffering, potentially prolonging various affective injuries. Because of this, we suggest collaborations and forms of solidarity that help us find joy even in that which hurts. We also suggest strategic reflection on who is best suited for which strategies at which times. Here, individual mentoring is important as well as broader forms of solidarity. In the end, what is paramount is a recognition that the struggle for joy is a collective, multitudinous, democratic project. While neofascism desires a body that is cold, hard, and manipulative, the democratic body politic is hot, pliable, and creatively inventive and insurgent. In other words, it is joyful, but only in so far as we innervate the flesh and its affectivity through our emergent strategies.

> To rise is to fight for empowerment to think and act together.
> To rise is to declare yes to democratic life and no to neofascism.
> To rise is to express joy in emergence.

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Imagining the *Not-Museum*
Power, Pleasure, and Radical Museological Community

Dana Carlisle Kletchka, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University

Adéwálé Adénlé
Shannon Thacker Cregg
Anna Freeman
Damarius Johnson
Megan Wanttie
Logan Ward
The Ohio State University

ABSTRACT

This manuscript describes a semester-long engagement by members of a graduate course cohort to reckon with individual and collective understandings of contemporary art museum practices, the roots of which are deeply entrenched in colonial, Western, patriarchal discourses. In response to course readings, guest speakers, and embodied experiences, members of the group engaged in a project of resistance—shaped by open, ongoing dialogue and critical reflection about the field of museology and centered in both radical critique and boundless possibility. Inspired by Black Feminist scholars, curators, and justice-seekers (brown, 2019; Cooper, 2018; Autry, personal communication, November 15, 2019) who find pleasure in collective visions of world-building, they entered into a communal space of theoretical imaginings together to invoke a *not-museum*, a site with the potential to enable a socially-responsive, just, affirming ontology for their communities. The authors conclude with a manifesto that serves as a promise, a vision, and a tool with which to build such museums.

KEYWORDS: Art museums, Post-critical museology, Decolonialism, Critical pedagogy, Embodied experience

Every other fall, as a university professor who directs a museum education and administration specialization, I teach a graduate-level course about the history, theory, and practice(s) of the American Art museum. This course is one of four courses required to earn a graduate-level museum education and administration specialization in my department. The description and objectives for the course clearly outline a historical commitment to conceptualizing a complicated story that nonetheless recognizes the deep colonial, Western, patriarchal roots of art museums and much art museum practice. According to written comments on my faculty evaluations, students' experiences with the material in this course tend toward

two poles: Some are distressed at what they see as an overly negative depiction of institutions that they love. Others seem to revel in the museological complexity inherent in these cultural behemoths, of which they were heretofore fully unaware. Most of them leave the course fully intending to work in a museum after they graduate.They find promise in the prospect of working in art museums and hope that their critical foundations will enable them to work passionately toward a more socially responsive—and community centered—museological ontology (Dewdney, DiBosa, & Walsh, 2013; Kletchka, 2018).

This article highlights the experiences of several members of the Autumn 2019 class cohort, who thoughtfully engaged the class readings, projects, and speakers but also felt strongly that there needed to be a more robust conceptualization about the ways in which the class could be enacted as praxis in their future careers as museum professionals. They wanted to think deeply and write about how their theoretical interests and commitments might inform or offer alternative visions of what art museums are or might someday become. In this paper, we, the graduate students and I, position ourselves in relationship to academia and one another, elucidate the theoretical foundations that propel our project forward, and offer a manifesto that serves as a basis for our work in a radically different conception of museums than what we have come to know. Our project is grounded in author, activist, and doula adrienne marie brown's (2019) conception of pleasure activism, a radical political stance grounded in Black Feminist Theory that positions the work of transforming the world in an ethos of love and happiness. We situate this effort as a form of decolonizing our understandings that extend to practice; of activism that is rooted in pleasure, recognizing that "sourcing [our] power in our longing and pleasure is abundant justice. . . we can instead generate power from the overlapping space of desire and aliveness, tapping into an abundance that has enough attention, liberation, and justice for all of us to have plenty" (brown, 2019, p. 12). Notably, this project emanated from the perspective of a collective—even as the professor and each student valued a particular theoretical perspective and their personal lived experiences, they moved through the course as parts of a whole that pondered, discussed, and learned together, united by a sense of longing for just, equitable, and affirming art museum practices situated within a new conceptualization of possibility.

Who We Are

The seven of us, graduate students and an assistant professor at a large Midwestern university, represent a profound spectrum of lived experiences in terms of race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, immigration status, and gender. We

represent the present and future of art museums and through this writing "seek to understand and learn from the politics and power dynamics" (brown, 2019, p. 13) inherent in their structure. We find great pleasure, personally and academically, in imagining art and other museums that are not just visitor-centered, but that are holistically committed to being socially responsive and steeped in the groundwork of anti-oppression.

We are aware of the problematic nature of both contemporary museology and academia. We recognize the frustrations and struggles of contemporary museum educators who are engaged in the evolving work of diversity and inclusion in their respective institutions, despite the fact that "the often slow pace of change in museums can be frustrating and demoralizing at times" (Ng & Ware, 2014, p. 44). We recognize implicit hierarchies between professor and student, Masters and Doctoral students, art museum curators and educators, as well as the systemic racism, sexism, homo- and transphobia, and xenophobia that pervades systems of power and seek to disrupt them by working together. In the space of this manuscript, we resist those hierarchies to the best of our abilities. We gather to write and create the not-museum as a conceptual space of imagination, hope, and possibility. That is our pleasure in this work.

As we continue, each of us has taken a different perspective on the current standing of art museum practices. Flowing through these analyses are questions and acknowledgements of historical marginalization, colonization, and identity. Each voice brings knowledge, learning, and experience that another may not be able to provide. We take pleasure in learning from one another through our writing. As brown suggested in her manifesto on love as political resistance, we situate ourselves in a space of radical honesty—as we enter into this space, we accept one another and value one another with a deep appreciation for our differences. We resist traditional hierarchies by declaring that our stories, thoughts, and experiences are valid. We recognize that love requires shaping inevitable change and building "communities of care" (brown, 2019, p. 63). This museological moment provides a unique opportunity for critique, analysis, and envisioning new ways of being and knowing in decolonized art museums. It is our pleasure to embark on this project together.

Our Foundations

Our coming together as a community is informed by our previous personal and professional experiences in museums, including paid positions in education/learning and visitor services, as volunteers and interns, and as enthusiastic visitors. We navigated the course with readings that situate museums —historically and in the present— as

contested sites, informed by social, political, economic, and racial discourses. In addition to contextualizing museums as part of historical research presentations in class, we engaged in the process of critically examining the Wexner Center for the Arts using art historian Margaret Lindauer's (2006) "The Critical Museum Visitor" framework, professor Claire Bishop's musings on the relationship between museums and visitors in Radical Museology (2013), and the MASS Action (Museum as Site for Social Action) Toolkit (2017). Broadly speaking, these sources became tools for us to constructively question how authority is manifested through structural power and privilege in art museum galleries and to understand the ways in which others have grappled with that dynamic. Our physical engagement with the campus art center provoked localized questions about embodied experiences, including surveillance of our bodies through cameras and guards (whom one student interpreted as "museum police"), the rather pronounced physical inaccessibility of the gallery spaces and small print on didactic labels, and the privileging of the English language and curatorial knowledge on didactic labels in an institution that serves an incredibly diverse, global constituency.

Additionally, La Tanya Autry (@artstuffmatters) visited The Ohio State campus to lecture to the Department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy and dialogue with the members of our graduate class. She offered ways to decolonize—or act in purposeful ways to center Black and Indigenous experiences—and challenge the white, patriarchal narratives that serve as a foundation for much museological practice. These are drawn from her personal and curatorial projects, her experience as a co-founder of the #museumsarenotneutral movement (Autry & Murawski, 2019), and as an initiator of the Social Justice Resource list.[1]. Her generosity in sharing her experiences as a Black woman, a doctoral student, and a curator in art museums, in addition to her sharing of academic resources, books, and online projects, inspired our group to think deeply about the future of art museums and actions that we might take. Our conversation with her engendered a long and fruitful discussion about racist, colonialist foundations of contemporary museological practice and how we might use theory to envision anti-oppressive ways of being for museums.

We set about, at Ms. Autry's urging, in imagining characteristics of what we eventually came to understand as a not-museum, which began as a list of oppositional statements to what we considered current problematic philosophies and practices. We initially

1 https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PyqPVslEPiq0Twnn4YYVXopk3q-426J95nISRxvkQI_Q/edit?fbclid=IwAR0HNtgM7gWAzJZ8sZDFwQ7_jqOnUtyk7ANk-jH-qBMIGZUIOBYJkivb7RMI

referred to this process as envisioning an "anti-museum" but felt uncomfortable situating our work in polarities rather than in visions of decolonial possibility. As we engaged with texts and each other, we expressed distinct, individual, and particular conceptions of the not-museum that established the classroom as a space for teaching, learning, and collaboration. This process enabled us to collectively produce a manifesto, which simultaneously serves as a vision, a statement, and a promise, that we as scholars, thinkers, educators, and cultural workers intend to ground our work in radical service to communities.

Shaping Future Practice
Theoretical Imaginings Toward the Not-Museum

Throughout the semester, as we developed our collective vision of a manifesto, we began to recognize our individual perspectives on museum work. Each author's view of the not-museum, expressed below, is rooted in distinct theoretical concerns: insights from African American history museums, decolonialism, critical curriculum practices and pedagogy, disability studies, the politics of identity and representation, and embodied experience/authentic engagement with African art. The diversity of concerns and interests among us indicates the variety of productive, compelling, and meaningful work to be done in art museums.

Damarius Johnson: Learning from African American history museums. Contemporary art museums are one of many cultural institutions devoted to art museum education. By decentering art museums as privileged sites for art education, alternative traditions of museum practice become visible. Although institutional histories and biographies of founding museum directors remain insightful historical sources, I offer a history of ideas and practices within African American history museums that highlights community outreach, institution-building, and art exhibition practices. Like many museums that curate the history and culture of ethnic or sexual minorities, African American history museums utilize art exhibitions to reinforce group identity, provide social commentary, and forecast desirable futures.

African American history museums originate in practices of self-help and community education. Throughout the 19th century, African Americans engaged literary societies, newspapers, social movements, and faith communities as platforms to disseminate African American history (Wright, 1996). Historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson formalized these efforts when he created "Negro History Week" (known today as Black History Month) in 1923 as an annual holiday to promote African American cultural pride and celebrate the year-round study of

African American history (Woodson, 1950). Although the first African American history museum was Hampton University's College Museum (1868), by the 1960s, African American "neighborhood museums" emerged as institutional homes for public history outreach (Burns, 2008, p. 40–41). In the wake of the Black Power Movement and widespread observance of Kwanzaa in the 1970s, neighborhood museums featured African American artists who linked aesthetic representations of Black life to emancipatory visions of Black social movements (Fenderson, 2019; Zorach, 2019).
The professional organization for African American museum professionals, African American Museum Association (now called AAAM), formed in 1976 (African American Museums Association, 1982). A 1982 AAAM report indicates that Dr. Margaret Burroughs and Dr. Charles Wright convened early national conferences that built professional networks for AAAM. Burroughs was an art educator, visual and literary artist who co-founded the Ebony Museum of Negro History and Art (known today as DuSable Museum of African American History) in 1961 (Burns, p. 39–41). Burroughs was among a generation of Black artists who contributed their talents, labors, and works to sustain African American history museums (Zorach, 2019). During the first two years of AAAM, the Museum of the National Center for Afro-American Artists (NCAAA) housed the organization. Edmund Barry Gaither, the Director of the Museum of the NCAAA, was also inaugural president of AAAM (African American Museums Association, 1982, p. 4–6). AAAM represents a legacy of administrative, intellectual, and institutional collaborations among African American artists, educators, and museum professionals.

I anticipate the not-museum as a conceptual space and brick and mortar institution that incorporates lessons from African American history museums by confronting the uncomfortable pasts and unsettling legacies of race. The not-museum is a gathering space to strategize and mobilize communities to bear witness to Black suffering and name agents of white supremacist violence. Yet, in recognizing white supremacy as a historic, contemporary, and oppressive structural arrangement (Bell, 1992; Coates, 2015; Copeland & Wilderson, 2017; Mills, 1997), the non-museum resists acquiescence to nihilism, despair, and defeatism. Exhibitions of social commentary and critique are situated alongside exhibitions that feature the transformative and imaginative visions of social justice movements. By featuring social commentary alongside visions of justice, museums communicate that social change is desirable, conceivable, and achievable (Burns, 2008; Kelley, 2002).

Anna Freeman: Decolonialism. The not-museum is a metaphysical space where Western museum conventions begin to shift and morph. This is a space of possibility and is one where decoloniality persists. Semiotician Walter Mignolo defines decoloniality as "the exercise of

power within the colonial matrix to undermine the mechanism that keeps it in place requiring obeisance" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 114). Simply put, decoloniality can be defined as the "state"/quality of being decolonial. However, in practice this presents a challenge. Through this semester I have become more aware of positionality and the importance of praxis. Latin American Cultural Studies professor Catherine Walsh contends that praxis involves the ability "to think from and with subjects, actors, thinkers, collectives, and movements that are signifying, sowing, and growing decoloniality in/as praxis" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 20). I take pleasure in learning about my indigenous Andean roots and find strength through moving as a collective body that takes a stance on unjust and oppressive institutional models.

La Tanya Autry's visit encouraged me to reflect deeply on my positionality and the future of art museums. In Autry's presentation she spoke about moments of resistance, places of possibilities, and claims of neutrality. She asked the audience to consider what decolonial means to them. She urged us to seek out different knowledge systems and build networks with people of different backgrounds. In class, Autry prompted us to spend time thinking about temporary spaces of joy and freedom (Simpson, 2014). Her candor provided me with a great sense of possibility for the field and left me feeling that I could not only break boundaries, but further expose them. Prior to Autry's visit I became involved with Ohio State's K'acha Willaykuna Curator Working Group that cares for an Andean and Amazonian collection on campus. At weekly meetings, we problematized means of accessibility and explored nuanced ways of display paired with a tactile or immersive virtual reality component. I joined this working group to learn more about my Andean heritage, collaborate with others, and extend my own expertise. In practice, I choose to align my act of resistance with the words of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, an indigenous writer and academic, who writes,

> We cannot just think, write or imagine our way to decolonized future. Answers on how to rebuild and how to resurge are therefore derived from a web of consensual relationships that is infused with movement (kinetic) through lived experience and embodiment. Intellectual knowledge is not enough on its own. (Simpson, 2014, p.16)

Our long-term goals include developing an accessible space to house the collection and to activate the work through Andean concepts that adhere to playful practices. These curatorial forays enable me to imagine the not-museum is a place where museum administrators and staff seek out the rightful owners of indigenous cultural property and make it known that possession of these objects are a result of

indigenous genocide and forced assimilation.

Megan Wanttie: Critical curriculum practices and pedagogy. Decolonial practices in the museum and critical museum pedagogy call for the rewriting and re-envisioning of the histories that are told within the museum to better represent the multiplicities in our society, in our histories, and in our futures. These practices seek to criticize and transform curricular experiences—intended to moralize, acculturate, and assimilate the population by replacing the singular, privileged discourse that exists within museums—with multivocal, community-based critical curriculum that is grounded in a socially-responsive, anti-oppressive foundations. In order to disrupt hegemonic curricula, one must acknowledge that, "all knowledge is situated and partial" (Sabzalian, 2018, p. 362). Curricula in museums shape the cultural and art historical narratives about our shared histories and have historically functioned as systems that perpetuate hierarchies of class, gender, and race (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). Elite, Eurocentric, and heteronormative interests are served through exhibition of so-called high art accompanied by moralizing and "culturizing" content primarily in the form of didactic wall text, supplementary and supporting materials, talks, and tours (Mayo, 2013). Additionally, the art historical canon establishes a singular, privileged discourse that privileges Eurocentric perspectives and narratives.

The use of curriculum scholar William Pinar's (2004) hidden curriculum can be applied to analyze museum curricula by searching for the known and unknown forces that act together to assume a proper, and conversely improper, type of knowledge and behavior that reinforces and recreates the status quo. In museums, we can look to the types of objects exhibited, the conversations and programs around certain art objects, and the collecting practices of the donors and museum. We may stake a claim that museum education is not completed in formal educational settings. Instead, docents, curators, and museum educators share the task of creating a curriculum for the public based on the display of art objects. Object labels, audio tours, programs, gallery talks, and tours are some of the formalized mechanisms utilized within the museum space to provide educational and interpretive material to visitors (Vallance, 2004).

More than a question of educational content, the not-museum acknowledges the reality that museums often perpetuate racist, classist, misogynistic, ableist, and heteronormative content. Art museum educators and museum staff must recognize the manifestations of white supremacy in the museum through exhibitions, discussions around art objects, and the overall crafted narrative existent within the museum (Dewhurst & Hendrick, 2018). The responsibility of this role requires the recognition that the history

of museums is deeply problematic and often violent. Museums should renounce the idolatry of the masterpiece, denounce systems of classification and boundaries that create hierarchies, and immerse themselves in spaces of unknowing (Hein, 2007). Only with these new impetuses can the museum engage in critical and productive dialogues with communities that serve to overturn historic hegemonic narratives. The potential for socially oriented, civically-responsible, and politicized museum spaces requires that we be mindful of theories that call upon us to recognize that museums are not apolitical and neutral spaces of equitable knowledge. Knowledge production and distribution will always be political; functioning under the guise of a so-called morality, inherent good, or natural makes the power of the museum even more insidious.

In order to counter the oppressive forces of the hegemonic, White supremacist institutionalized museum, we propose that the not-museum engage in practices that re-write the singular history presented in the museum space—both literally and figuratively. The not-museum should pay particular attention to what is on display, how it is displayed, and what is written and spoken about the objects on and off-view. The not-museum should seek to represent the things that have been hidden and erased from our communal histories; it should draw attention to the ways that the museum is not neutral (Autry & Murawski, 2019). The not-museum ought to be critical of the practices that it engages in and should infinitely question the motives and consequences of what a museological practice does. In practice, at the very least this means re-writing label copy; pulling out objects that have been buried in storage; reconsidering how we arrange, display, classify, and define art objects and artists; acquiring new objects from artists previously excluded from the art historical canon and the museum; seeking out opportunities to engage in inquiry-based and dialogue-based learning in the galleries with the communities that we serve; offering new opportunities for engagement in the museum space through programming, events, and more that are created to disrupt the status quo; and engaging in a constant, iterative process of redefining what it means to be a museum. The not-museum should be a space of creativity, criticality, risk, excitement, community engagement, and constant evolution. Ultimately, what we propose with the not-museum is the reconfiguration the museum without fear—and with a hope for what it could be in the future.

Shannon Thacker Cregg: Disability studies. In imagining the not-museum, possibilities for emancipatory approaches toward disability emerge from the field of disability studies. Historically, museums positioned visitors with disabilities as recipients of charity rather than as equals, as exemplified by programming and accommodations that treated visitors with disabilities as recipients of welfare (Sandell, 2019). Despite a push toward increased diversity and inclusion,

museums still struggle to include visitors with disabilities equitably, and attendance remains low for visitors with disabilities (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015).

A disability studies framework re-orients the ways that museums conceptualize visitors with disabilities. In response to issues with inclusion of disability in museums, scholars have responded by recommending that the social model of disability be incorporated into exhibitions on disability, educational programming, and museum decision making processes (Hollins, 2010; Johnson, 2018; Ginley, Goodwin, & Smith, 2012; McGinnis, 1999; McGinnis, 2007; Sandell, 2019). The social model of disability, which was crucial to the Disability Rights Movement and is linked to the field of disability studies, argued that disability is not the result of a physical or mental impairment, but is due to oppression and barriers that people with disabilities face. Instead of conceptualizing a disability as a deficit, the social model recognizes the systems of inequality due to ableism-the preference for a non-disabled population (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017). Therefore, the social model of disability can transform the way that museums understand visitors with disabilities.

Instead of positioning visitors with disabilities as a special interest group in need of accommodations and specialized programming, disability studies utilizes the social model to highlight the voices, knowledges, and experiences of individuals with disabilities. Disability studies re-frames disability as an agentive identity in which valuable sources of knowledge and experience are produced (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017). Therefore, when a disability studies framework is applied to museums, disability is no longer understood as a deficit or as a category in need of charity. Instead, people with disabilities are positioned as central to the functioning of the museum.

In addition to re-framing the way that disability is understood, a disability studies framework can transform museums through challenging normative educational practices. When a disability studies approach is incorporated into education, inclusivity is key. No longer is disability regarded as a reason to create separate and specialized programming that separates visitors with and without disabilities. Instead, disability studies critically questions the efficacy of educational systems—such as special education—that separate students with and without disabilities. Additionally, disability studies recognizes how normative educational standards segregate students based on difference due to ableism (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017). Instead, disability studies re-positions disability as an "ordinary human variation" rather than a pathology (Baglieri & Knopf, 2004). Therefore, when disability studies is incorporated into museum education, alternate ways of understanding the world are equally valued and considered as part of human variation. Furthermore, when disability

studies is incorporated into education, the focus shifts to removing barriers to access instead of remediating the disability. Additionally, disability studies recognizes how disability identity is entwined with other forms of identity such as sexuality, religion, gender, and race (Goodley, 2017). Therefore, disability studies offers possibilities beyond just a critique of ableism. One way that this is present is that inclusive educational practices for disability often incorporate theories, such as critical pedagogy, that seek to include students based on multiple forms of identity (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017; Goodley, 2017). Therefore, a museum education practice informed by disability studies considers the power dynamics between facilitator and participants, museum and visitors, as well as the intersecting nature of oppression.

Disability studies has the potential to guide museums in resisting normative and ableist educational practices. It creates a site of possibility for museums to transform into not-museums through questioning not only what disability means, but also investigating the intersecting nature of oppression and the implications for our communities.

Logan Seay Ward: The politics of identity and representation. The Western conception of Asian art follows a strict hierarchy with China and Japan at the top and everyone else at the bottom (Kim, 2014, p. 8). This is strongly reflected in the display of Asian art in United States museums, where China and Japan are represented with larger permanent exhibition spaces than their Asian counterparts. This is not unusual, considering that museums have historically organized space to reflect world domination and power (Duncan and Wallach, 2004). One example of this phenomenon may be found in the Cleveland Museum of Art's joint Korea-Japan gallery. Separated only by cases, three-quarters of the room is dedicated to Japan, and one quarter to Korea, despite the fact that the total amount of Korean objects in the museum's permanent collection numbers 200 more than its Japanese counterparts (Cleveland Museum of Art, 2016; Cleveland Museum of Art, 2020) In this case, size does not equal representation; clearly other organizing principles are at play.

The history of Korean art in United States art museums reproduces hegemonies that position Korea within the colonial shadow of Japan. According to the catalogue for the exhibition Korean Art from the United States (Lee & Park, 2012) at the National Museum of Korea, the collections in United States art museums have something in common—most of the objects were accessioned during the Japanese Colonial Period (1910–1945). At that time, Japan produced a great deal of art historical research on Korea. However, the major initiative of these projects was to demonstrate that "Korea had no creative or independent culture of its own," and that it was merely a "conduit"

between China and Japan (Kim, 2016, p. 9). Japan, as the colonial superior, situated Korea as its colonial inferior. As a consequence, many Korean artifacts that were excavated and collected or taken ended up classified as Chinese or Japanese objects in United States art museums.

Today, the story of Korea that United States art museums tell still lacks critical discussion. As Choi (2016) discusses, museums that function through Eurocentric concepts of art "dilute the cultural history from which the object originated," resulting in a "sensibility" of [Korean] art that is not true (p. 76). Museums reproduce hegemonies by ciphering what is and is not said about an object. Hooper-Greenhill's (2000) post-museum paradigm is one way for museums to engage in critical discussion on power. Museums can recognize and denounce their position as an "authoritative source," and museum workers may become "border-crossers" by initiating critical dialogue with visitors and promoting diverse narratives (p. 140). This follows a constructivist principle of meaning by positioning meaning as social (p. 139). Museums resist their tendency to reproduce hegemonic structures through narrative when they reposition themselves as learners along with visitors.

Like art education scholar Eunjung Choi (2016), I believe that "decentering the traditional and singular ways of viewing Korean objects," can change how museums consider objects overall (p. 80). Korean art in the United States is only one of many cases that show how power incorporates the narratives that museums (re)produce. As Trouillot (1995) argues, "power is constitutive of the story," (p. 28). If museums wish to change for the better, power as it is manifested through cultural representation must be central to that discussion.

Adéwálé Adénlé: Embodied experience/authentic engagement. "Kneel down, close your eyes, and let us pray." This was the command that was given to my mother upon her conversion to Christianity in the early 1970s. She hearkened to the voice of the colonialists, spoken through the 20th Century African converts. By the time she opened her eyes, the black charcoal pot (ìṣásùn) that used to cook my favorite jute leaf soup (ewédú) and the clay pot (ààmù) that provided natural cold water, were all gone. Her newly found religion has succeeded in convoking the release of these items, as they were considered part of the tools that made up the "dark past," or as the missionaries would say, Africa's Christ-less generation. Accordingly, the ìṣásùn and the ààmù now being the instruments of the "devil" were to be destroyed alongside other statues and traditional icons. Replacing my beloved ìṣásùn and ààmù were China's porcelain, glittering forks, and the Holy Bible.

On visiting the British Museum in 2000, I was startled to see a semblance of my mother's ìṣásùn, now an object of endearment, entombed in a glass casing. This object, which hitherto functioned on a high density and degree of open fire, has been consigned to the coldness of an air-conditioned environment. Perhaps more than the environmental reality and paid admission fee to view my traditional ìṣásùn, I was perturbed by the didactic panels and labels in which the spiritual and functional contexts of this object were supplanted by narratives that embodied western aesthetics, referred to Eurocentric artistic processes, and a canonized construct of what they should be and not what they are. Prior to this visit, I had subscribed to African art scholar Roy Sieber's (1999) analytical posit that colonialists and missionaries effected cataclysmic ends to these objects (p. 14). Obviously, the destruction that Sieber mentioned did not apply to some of the African traditional and spiritual objects that were later found in the West. While some were ethically or deceptively acquired, going by my mother's ìṣásùn, many were forcefully gotten. Obtaining these objects in an unethical manner divorces the substance and context of their creation from their representation, as they become susceptible to "the problem of cross-cultural translation" (Cole, Poynor, & Visona, 2008, p. 10) and ethnocentrism. This is reflected in the accuracy of their interpretations and by extension affects visitors' experiences and engagements in Western art museums.

Presently in United States art museums, there are evolving discourses and advocacies for "socially-responsive practices" through dialogical approaches between communities and museums (Kletchka, 2018, p. 300). These interactions, when applied to curators and educators of African traditional and religious objects, should include communities and cultures where these objects originated. Traditional African objects within "traditional museum practice" (Anderson, 2012, p. 2) of exclusive representation and Eurocentric interpretations have endured performative disconnections from their original religious and mythological practices. Their educational manifestation in this domain remain intrinsically tied to their original purposes, materiality, and "anonymous" artists. Advancing a not-museum should therefore include returning to objects' African roots, where religious and cultural precepts can be learned within a broader framework of art historical studies. These studies are critical to dismantling the conventional canonized and hegemonic descriptions that permeate non-western objects.

The process of creating African traditional and religious art may include a ritual connecting the "physical to the metaphysical and the human to the divine" (Lawal, 2007, p. 15). The rituality in this creative process varies from one culture to the other. In some cultures, connection to the divine are observed through the use of organic materials believed to have metaphysical powers. In many

African cultures, artistic creation is a construct of and from continued consultations with varied deities relevant to the functional intention of the work. In a process of curatorial and interpretive exchange, intersecting the progenies of artists with the formative relevance of these deities may reinvent museum paradigms, shifting "the focus from internal to global (and) singular voice to multiple perspectives" (Anderson, 2012, p. 6). Additionally, in a not-museum, the didactic labels and signage applied to traditional and spiritual African objects would be liberated from the confines of Western hegemonic and "hierarchical languages" (deSouza, 2018, p. 40). Etymological and spiritual words or voices defining some objects and ceremonies would be left untranslated whenever they defy precise interpretive languages. Finally, authentic representations in a not-museum would not be limited to, or substantiated only by, the originality of these objects. The use of replicas, re-creations, and ceremonial re-enactments are of essence where original objects are absent. What should be of importance is the factuality of descriptive theories, given that "the authenticity of the experience, rather than the authenticity of the object" (MacDonald, 1988, p. 32) is far more consequential.

Conclusion

We conclude our ruminations with a manifesto inspired by the writings of another Black feminist author and professor, Brittany Cooper. In her recent work *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*, Cooper recognizes that critical stances, even toward those things that we cherish, have a tendency to remove the joy and pleasure that they otherwise might evoke. She writes:

> I actually think it is irresponsible to wreck shop in people's world without giving them the tools to rebuild . . . . the harder work is helping people find better tools to work with. We have to smash the patriarchy, for sure. And we have to dismantle white supremacy, and homophobia, and a whole bunch of other terrible shit that makes life difficult for people. Cooper, 2018, p. 274)

Our manifesto provides us with tools toward building art and other kinds of museums. It shapes our practices now and as we go out into the world, grateful for the time we spent together and hopeful for the future of what we now know as museums.

MANIFESTO

We root our work and activism in love and an ethic of care.

We critically consider our positionality as individuals, as educators, and as professionals and how those identities overlap.

We recognize and endeavor to destabilize hierarchical narratives that have long served to divide or subvert our communities and our work.

We learn from the myriad voices of Indigenous, Pan Asian, African and African diasporic communities, queer folx, and trans/women/femmes who share their wisdom about ways of knowing and experiencing the world.

We privilege not just the visual, but sensory, emotive, aural, spiritual, religious, experiential, historical and political understandings and recognize the power that those relational ways of knowing hold for visitors and communities.

We value and embrace traditions of artistic production and representation that exist in cultural institutions beyond the mainstream art museum.

We recognize that museum architecture, exhibitions, collections, forms of pedagogy and interpretation, and cafe/museum shops form a curriculum of/for the body that positions visitors in specific ways and upholds particular cultural norms.

We position ourselves within a collective project that builds towards the not-museum as a range of accessible, inclusive, and equitable cultural institutions for our communities, the public, museum staff, directors and boards.

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In Conversation with Jaleel Campbell: Cultivating Pleasure Through Community-based Art in the City of Syracuse

Tanisha M. Jackson, Ph.D.
Community Folk Art Center – Syracuse University

> *My roots run deep here in Syracuse, and so it is so important for me to not only showcase the beauty and the essence of my Syracuse, you know, but to also showcase the people who have placed such an influential role on me and everything that I do (personal, communication, Campbell, 2020)*

A recent Master of Fine Arts graduate of Purchase College, multimedia artist, Jaleel Campbell is known for creating multimedia art consisting of dolls, digital illustrations, and wearable fashion with signature designs and music videos that involve community participation in his hometown, Syracuse, New York. Jaleel, a Black American artist, also engages local community members through social justice-oriented art workshops and public programming at the only African Diasporic Arts Center in the city of Syracuse, the Community Folk Art Center (CFAC).[1] As CFAC's Executive Director and a professor in the Department of African American Studies I have collaborated with Campbell to bring public programming and exhibitions at the Community Folk Art Center (CFAC), including a virtual art exhibition that showcases a retrospective of Campbell's multimedia artwork. This collaboration has allowed us to bridge multiple communities that are oftentimes disparate.

On June 27, 2019, Campbell hosted an annual summer exhibition called "Collective Display" that featured emerging artists from the Syracuse community. During his exhibition tenure, he also taught doll making workshops in which he shared his artistic process on how he made a series of mixed-media material dolls known as "Jalethals." His reach and intentional advocacy for the black community was supported by the Gifford Foundation's "What If" mini-grant and as an *OnPoint* alum, Jaleel was commissioned by Burrell

1 CFAC is the only African Diasporic Arts Center in the city. Established in 1972, CFAC is both a 501c3 organization and a unit of the Department of African American Studies at Syracuse University. The organization's mission is to promote and develop artist of the African Diaspora and to exalt cultural and artistic pluralism by collecting, exhibiting, teaching and interpreting the visual and expressive arts. http://communityfolkartcenter.org/index.html

Communications, the country's leading black-owned design agency, to design Walmart's swag bags for the 2018 Essence Festival.

Yet, perhaps what is most evident about his artistry is how he uses creativity to build community and nurture the overall growth of community members in Syracuse. In 2018, Campbell, with the help of fellow creative Christian Kaigler, co-produced the music video, *Feel That Funk: A Short Film*[2] that featured community members in Syracuse dancing, and posing for a complimentary photoshoot as an homage to the 1970s. Subsequently, in 2019, Campbell co-produced another community-based video shoot with Kaigler, *Feel That Funk: The Crush On You Experience*[3], that is inspired by rapper Lil Kim's 1997 *Crush On You video ft Lil Cease* and a dance scene from the *Whiz* (1978). Both videos, filmed at the Community Folk Art Center, demonstrates the power behind Jaleel Campbell's artwork, which is to bring people together with an emphasis on Black Joy. Black joy described by Cooper (2018) arises from an internal clarity about our purpose. Campbell demonstrates this through his artwork and when he shares personal stories with community members of how his own trauma has catapulted his journey as an artist.

As a form of community engagement, community art is also connected to what John Dewey (1916/1986) contends is progressive education and is a pathway to civil responsibility and maintaining democratic values. In communities like Syracuse, New York where the poverty rate remains among the nation's highest and 30.5% of the city's population lives below the poverty line (Weiner, 2019), community art serves as a form of liberatory practice that is both participatory and collaborative. Campbell understands this as a role of creative activity, as evidenced in his words at the opening of this paper. Campbell's commitment to working with grassroots arts organizations demonstrates the impact professional artists have when they work directly with local organizations to create art in the public's interest (Krensky & Steffen, 2009). His work also supports Lawton's (2019) stance that community-based art is most affective when it is

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2 Feel That Funk: A Short Film explores the importance of celebrating what it is to be black in times of uncertainty. Very Wakanda meets The Wiz and Soul Train. This Film aims to empower and show black folks in a way that breaks all boundaries; Pride, regality, fun, laughter... In other words, a good black ass time! https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=pS0BODPs8Pg&feature=emb_title

3 Inspired by the video work of Hype Williams in the 1990s, Feel That Funk: The Crush On You Experience serves as a catalyst for filling in the gap that separates the past and the future. This film also aims to serve as an acknowledgement to the work of hip-hop pioneers such as Missy Elliot, Busta Rhymes, P. Diddy / Bad Boy Entertainment and a tribute to the great Lil Kim. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erRe5qWXqKE&feature=emb_title

connected to public welfare and civic responsibility (Lawton, 2019). Yet, what is most compelling about Campbell's artwork and community-based arts initiative is how he navigates through his own experiences with anxiety and rage by cultivating joy and focusing on how to create collective experiences of pleasure. Campbell provides space for affirmation and wellness for all participants including himself. It is the artist's development of pleasure through artmaking that the following dialogue reveals pathways to individual and collective wellness. Furthermore, my conversation with Campbell highlights the clarity that comes from experiences of rage, something that Cooper (2018) explains is needed in order for people to determine what kind of world they want to see and not just what kind of things they want to get rid of.

In a one-on-one interview I sat down to discuss how Campbell's personal and community work, which often centers social justice initiatives, is a form of liberation. Currently, Campbell has an exhibition on CFAC's newly launched online gallery[4] and it features music videos, *Feel That Funk* photographs, digital illustrations, and a featured film about Jaleel Campbell *The Jaleel Campbell Experience (2020)*.[5] Some of these images are discussed below as poignant examples of How Campbell finds pleasure in making art.

Artist Jaleel Campbell Defines Pleasure

T: How do you know when you are enjoying what you do as an artist? Or that you are going to finding pleasure in the process of making art?

J: When I'm up at five o'clock in the morning, still working on something that is how I know I'm in my zone, that is my sense of pleasure, um, it's just not being able to put it down. I find myself in a constant state of work but it doesn't feel like work and it doesn't matter how long it takes to create. When I'm in the middle of creating a new product or something that I really like I give it my all. So, I just started making these berets. And like, that just came to me on a whim. And so just testing out new ideas and everything that is when I'm just like, it's, it's so much fun. Like it's really fun because I feel like a mad scientist just playing around with stuff and you don't know what the end result will be. Uhm, so sometimes it doesn't hit but most of the time it does and, it's just so much fun to be able to literally make things [laughs], out of a variety of materials. Like you can see something in your head and bring it to life. Not a lot of people can do that. I'm just really, uh, I'm really, really happy that I've gotten to this

4 https://www.cfacgallery.org/jaleel-campbell-exhibit/

5 Philavanh, Kai, (2020). The Jaleel Campbell Experience. https://www.cfacgallery.org/jaleel-campbell-exhibit/

point where I can have so many different products and services and stuff to offer.

T: So that leads me to why I wanted to talk to you because what I am trying to ascertain is how you define pleasure in the work that you do? Also, I'd like to know if you identify your work as social activism?

J: You know people---they tell me that my artwork is a form of activism. However, I don't go into different projects thinking about that. I'm just trying to uplift and showcase the beauty of black people and all the different avenues that-that takes. I'm with it, you know?

T: Could you elaborate on how you approach uplift and showcase the beauty of black people?

J: I just like to provide spaces for us to have a good time and to heal. And, that's really my thought process behind my work. How do I get pleasure from it? Well it is in that creating process and I love being able to make people feel joy. I just love bringing people together.

T: Yes, I've observed this in many of the projects you've brought to the Community Folk Art Center.

J: Yes! I've really, really loved bringing people together, getting them to have a good time and not have to worry about all the different things that they have going on in their own lives. They can put that to the side for a minute to create art and come and dance or come listen to some music.

T: One example that demonstrates what you are describing is the open mic night events that are held in CFAC's black box theatre. Do you agree?

J: Yes, listening to people perform through singing, spoken word poetry or even participating in some of my workshops literally helps everyone involved to distress from their regular day to day. Uh, I think that there's power and community building in what we bring to these events, and I want to keep cultivating those experiences in spaces like CFAC.

Collective Display Exhibition

T: So, let's talk more specifically about some of your projects. We've talked about them in a very general way. But let's talk about some of your projects that you've done that builds community, and that adds to the pleasure you get from being an artist and art activist. What are some specific things that you've done to build

community?

J: Okay, so, I am approaching a 6-year anniversary for one of my projects, a group exhibition called Collective Display. I developed this project right after my freshman year at Cazenovia College. During that time, I was extremely defeated. I was going through a terrible breakup and I just felt like the lowest of the low. And so, I had to figure out a way to get back to me, you know? While I was in this space, I was working on a lot of new artwork and I felt like I needed to showcase it to the public. I wanted to have a different conversation through my art than what I was having with myself. So, um, I talked to my barber at the time, and she actually let me use her space to host my first art show. Yeah, so over on the north side of Syracuse, we held this group artists exhibition called *Collective Display*.

T: Who was part of the exhibition?
J: Well, I reached out to four or five of my friends to be a part of the show as well. It's now a collective and, 6-years later, we've had it at, the south division center over on the south side. We've also had an exhibition at the Everson Museum. And now we have found our home here at CFAC. I think exhibiting at the only Black arts center in the city of Syracuse is extremely important for what we're trying to cultivate through Collective Display, which is to bring visibility to young black artists in the city if Syracuse,

T: Yes! Needless to say, that I am happy about that. Collective Display definitely connects with the mission of the Community Folk Art Center.

J: So, it is beautiful to see how much positivity can come from that pain. From that pain and hardships and other things that I was feeling, I learned that I can thrive from the pain. As much as I hate it. It is a terrible curse. Everything that I do, I feel like it really does stem from a place of pain and, um, right now I'm doing like a whole bunch of internal work to sort all of this stuff out.

T: I personally think that doing the necessary internal work provides great outcomes for artists because you're actually digging deep in the issues that push or pull you in life.

J: Absolutely! Going back to your question about pleasure, my way of coping with my pain is turning it into pleasure or happiness for others as well as for myself, and this is meaningful work for me, you know.

T: Absolutely. So, you have an annual Collective Display exhibition and subsequently you're bringing people together creating an opportunity for these emerging artists to showcase their work.

What have been the major outcomes for artists who participate in *Collective Display*?

J: I think this exhibition contributes to building equity and opportunities for underrepresented artists in the field of art. These artists might not have necessarily ever exhibited artwork on this scale or in a legitimate gallery. For instance, to have Amiah Crisler this 12-year-old genius be a part of the show last year and to have her, uh, refer to me as Mr. Campbell, and to just tell me like this is her first time exhibiting in a show with such enthusiasm, Uhm, I was about to start crying, you know. I look at the response from the community who attend the *Collective Display* opening exhibitions and I can see that we're starting to shift the culture here in Syracuse. You know we're really starting to shift the viewpoint that some people have about art and who can be considered a legitimate artist. Also, I recognize that the community takes this exhibition seriously based on the large attendance and their tremendous show of support.

T: Well the quality of the art, the curation and even the venue of the exhibition being in a university art gallery that is accessible to the public are all contributing factors. *Collective Display* is really a great example of the Community Folk Art Center's mission which is to provide a platform for African Diasporic Artists and as well as artists from other underrepresented groups and that is especially the case for emerging artists. So, tell me what is your main goal when curating the exhibition?

J: I'm just trying to build up other artists. That's really what my goal is.

T: That's beautiful. I see this endeavor to develop a platform for other artists who are oftentimes marginalized in mainstream art spaces as part of the activism in your work.

Creating a Space for Wellness and Pleasure Through Doll Making

T: In addition to curating community-based exhibitions, you also are known for creating a body of work called the Jalethal Dolls. Please explain more about the dolls, how you came about creating them and also how these dolls are centered around your notion of pleasure.

J: Okay, so for me growing up, I have always loved dolls. I loved Bratz dolls in particular. Bratz dolls have a certain personality. They reminded me of Black women, you know.

Figure 1. *Jalethal Doll (Orange) Mixed Media* (2019)

T: How so?

J: The Bratz dolls are just so fly. When they first came out on the market, I had never seen anything like them before. Barbie didn't have anything on the Bratz dolls. I remember how I would take my sisters' dolls and at that time I actually had all of the action figures or what society says are boy dolls anyways. So, playing with dolls was not foreign to me. However, I would take my sisters' dolls. I would design clothes and do their hair with different stuff from found objects around my house. For example, I would take the latex from a balloon and turn it into a dress or something for the dolls you know like I was really crafty, with paper mache too. I would replicate the mummification process with paper mache and create a body cast with the dolls. Yeah, there are just so many different instances where I, look back like yo, I was really onto something, you know [laugh].
And, um, it was just fun and liberating to me to have these little people that I could, uh, dress up and create you know and come up with scenarios in my head about who these dolls were. So, um, I loved playing with them. However, my father hated it, though. While growing up I had to be extremely discreet with the dolls and my mother was my lookout. She would let me know if my father was on his way home in time for me to put the dolls away. In my mind I'd tell myself I've gotta put these dolls up so he doesn't come in and beat me

or cuss me out for playing with them.

T: How does your early experiences with playing with dolls and your relationship with your father inform your work as an artist?

J: Well those experiences have always been really hard to work through. Once I got older, I tried to forget all of those memories of the dolls and, um, all of that pain that was attached to them. Uhm, my relationship with my father has become like way better now because we've been able to discuss the past and he has apologized about the way that he has treated me but you know, of course, the anxiety that I experienced doesn't go away overnight. So, um, I will say that I'm just so glad that I was able to find, an outlet or a way to go back to that younger Jaleel that found pleasure in designing fashion for dolls. From there, I wanted to make a doll that I would have appreciated when I was at a young age, and I did.

T: You've really come full circle by creating something that gave you joy at a very young age but that also is connected to a lot of pain you've experienced. This seems to be a pattern in your life. In regard to the Jalethal dolls can you describe what exactly they represent?

J: Well the Jalethal Dolls are non-gendered, however it's interesting to hear how people refer to them or see them. Some people refer to them as he. Some people refer to them as she. Regardless, I leave it up to the person to decide what the gender of the dolls are.

T: How does this connect back to your earlier experience with playing with dolls?

J: Uhm, because I know what it feels like as a little boy to want to play with these dolls but to feel restricted, and I don't want to put restrictions on people who interact with the dolls I make. I want people to feel free interacting with the Jalethal dolls and not worry how it's gonna look if they do- like the world is moving into such a new place in regard to gender.

T: I agree. One thing I've notice about the Jalethal Dolls are patterns that reflect a West African aesthetic.

J: Absolutely, I want these dolls to reflect the African Diaspora and black culture. So, I borrow West African aesthetics and textile patterns to design my dolls. I also create my own unique design patterns because these dolls are connected to my own identity. That's why the dolls are called Jalethals, which is a variation of my name Jaleel and in some ways represents my alter ego.

T: In regard to the community interacting with the Jalethal dolls, what have you observed?

J: One thing that I am really fascinated by is how young black boys interact with the dolls. I participated in a show at the Sankofa Festival over the summer. And all these little kids came up to me and asked, "Uhm is these voodoo dolls?" [laughs]. And I'm just like, "No." And I'm like, " Do ya'll wanna hold them?", and they held one. Next, I'm playing with these kids from the community and they took pictures with the dolls and everything. Here were these little black boys just having such a good time. And I was like, "Oh my God, this is so cute, this so cute. "I was so happy because it's what I hope for, I knew that these dolls would have such a strong impact, you know?

T: This goes back to your goal of creating experiences of joy for members in your community, right?

J: I agree, I've also been able to channel all of the different emotions, uh, pain and turmoil that I've held onto throughout the years. My personal journey is something that I'm turning into something positive through art, and this is something that I have prioritized. Uhm, so I would say that another approach to creating positivity and pleasure is through my community-based doll making workshops.

T: Well, I love that you've brought these workshops to the Community Folk Art Center. The doll making workshops definitely establishes a strong sense of community through art.

J: That's great to hear, I want to again, bring people into this space and it's not only about learning how to create dolls. It's more so about the dialogue surrounding the creating of the dolls you know what I'm saying? Uhm, I have for like the past two or so years, really been trying to work on getting people to trust me enough to open up and show me who they really are. I feel that people in my community, we have so many different walls up because you never know who you can trust, you know what I'm saying? It's really hard to let our guard down. And so, whether it's with the *Feel That Funk* videos that I create, the Jalethal Dolls or even the *Collective Display* art exhibition, I want to also create a safe space for people in our community to let their guard down.

T: I'm glad you mentioned the videos. We'll get to the *Feel That Funk* videos a little later but I'm curious to know what's the nature of the dialogue you are facilitating during the doll-making workshop? What are the things that the community is talking about?

J: Right. So, with the doll making workshops, I give people a chance to come into the space with whatever problems or situations that they have going on in their lives. And we all just sit down, in groups that are multi-generational to create and talk, in these workshops. I hear so many different outlooks on whatever issue somebody might be facing. For example, there was this one day, when one of the women that was, uh, in my last workshop, she came in the space frustrated. She was having such a bad day because of her job and she talked about how she was feeling unappreciated by her boss. Also, she just didn't feel like they valued her as much as she felt like they should. And so, we all talked about it, you know, we built up this relationship with her and we were just trying to give her positive affirmations to speak life into her and remind her of how important she is and that she is needed in the community. This conversation took place while we were creating these dolls, and it was nice to see everybody band together to support her in that moment.

I should also mention that while we were doing all of this doll making and talking, we were listening to house music in the background. So, I also got to introduce different music to younger participants, that they might not have heard before, you know some of my favorites. This is also an example of how my art making process brings pleasure for myself while creating a space for healing in our community.

T: Yes, creating a space for healing adds to the overall building of wellness and based on the nature of some of the group's conversations, would you say that you are also creating a space to discuss some of the social injustice that is experienced in your community?

J: I agree. We discuss a lot of issues that have negatively impacted the African American community in Syracuse because sometimes our collective experiences are also individual experiences that we carry with us. Overall, for me it's just really nice to get to, plan and teach a creative skill while at the same time give space for vulnerability, and to support as much as I can. Uhm, the people that participate in these workshops are really important to me and they allow me to be vulnerable and establish wellness for myself. One great example of this are the music videos I co-produced that involves the participation of community members.

Feel That Funk: Building Community Pleasure Through Digital Media

T: Okay, now let's talk about the *Feel That Funk* music videos. Where did you get the idea to create music videos that involved the participation of so many community members?

J: The *Feel that Funk* project began after the first solo show that I curated at CFAC last summer, um, or two summers ago, in 2018, and that came out of me just wanting to have a real-life version of my illustrations at the time.

Figure 2 *Tenekqua, Mazzy, Shay*, Digital Photo (2018)

I created a digital illustration series called Feel that Funk, which is based on 70s aesthetics. I wanted to bring these images to life. So, um, I got a grant and I ended up coming up with these two installation rooms where people got a chance to come in dressed in 70s attire, and just pose for the camera.

The pictures that we produced from this photoshoot were so beautiful and for 14-hours we had a photo session for community members here in Syracuse as well as a house party that turned into the production of a music video.

T: That's incredible; I didn't know this was a full day of production. Please walk me through the experience of producing a music video at the Community Folk Art Center.

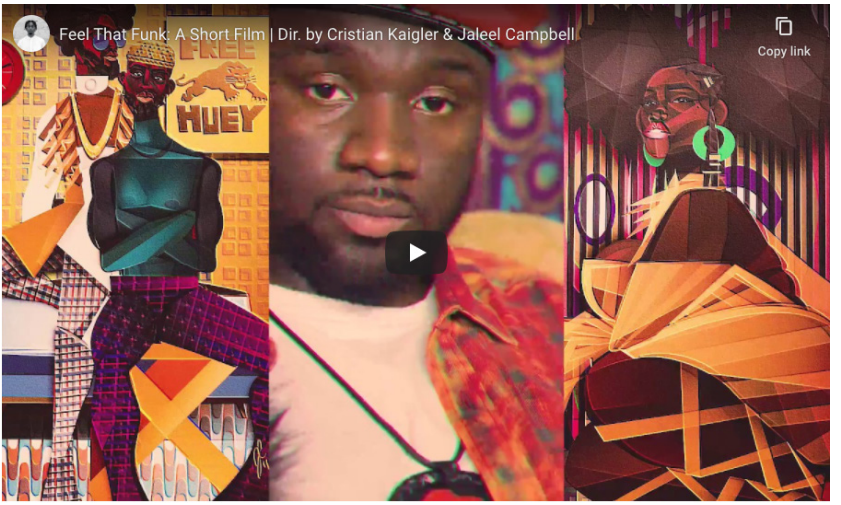

Figure 3. *Feel That Funk: A Short Film* (2018)

J: It was a long but amazing day. Uhm, I just wanted to treat people like they were royalty and just have them come in and have a good time. Me and the production team provided drinks and food and then participants got their pictures taken. From there, the event became a social gathering for people to network amongst each other while we got everybody's pictures taken.

So that was half of the day. Then we brought everybody into the black box theater where we had built this entire set and decorated the space. This is where the video portion of the *Feel that Funk* series came in. So, um, we had this list of 70s songs and we just had a 70s party. We were in there dancing and people were feeling really good. They were really feeling good especially after the liquid courage kicked in [laughter]. I'm so glad that I was able to get people loose. These people did not know each other at all. Their only relations with each other was me and their love for my artwork and creativity.

T: This definitely another strong example of how you build

community and experiences of pleasure through art.

J: Mm-hmm. So, to bring all of these people that I love and who support me into the same room and have them dancing together as if they were old friends; definitely brings me pleasure as a creative. You know, like, that was such a beautiful moment for me. I really felt supported as an artist because the community participated for a long time. They danced for almost 6 hours or so in order for us to get as much footage as possible for the video. What's most impressive is that no one complained [laughter]. This was my first time doing any project like that, so I didn't know what to expect at all. At one point the video set almost fell down and my afro wig was about to fall off during some of the dance scenes [laughter]. But when I saw the final product which was this video, I was shook, you know like the video came out so nice. And me and the production team exhibited my illustration work throughout the video. It was like a cross-promotion for not only this music video but also the *Feel that Fun*k series digital artwork as well.

Figure 4. *Rahm*, Digital Photo (2018)

T: One thing I have definitely observed is that you are excellent at promoting your artwork on social media. It's fascinating to see you do it and subsequently how you are able to expand your audience beyond the city of Syracuse.

J: Thank you. You know this video was posted online, and we used the song by the R&B group, *The Internet*. Uhm, we used their song *Roll* from their last album *Hivemind* and, um, they saw the video and they loved it! I was contacted by their tour manager because the group was gearing up for a tour at the time, and they showed the video to audiences while touring across the country.

T: So, is this a R&B group that also plays Funk music?

J: Yeah, yeah. They're associated with Tyler, The Creator. So, it's very, um, R&B funk. Their last album was really, really dope and that song, in particular, is just intoxicating.

T: And what's the name of the song?

J: Um, *Roll (Burbank Funk)*.

T: Why do you feel that it's important to specifically bring people in the Syracuse community together to have these experiences whether it's through doll making workshops or photography and video productions like the *Feel that Funk* project?

J: Well, when I'm on Facebook, I see so many different statuses of people complaining about Syracuse and how there's nothing to do. This is a city whose Black and Latino community face one of the highest poverty rates in the country and people need to be inspired and encouraged. Also, on Facebook, there's a group called Syracuse vs. Rochester where it's like, all these black people competing and debating about whose city or community is better and it doesn't make any sense at all to me but it means something to my community to have unique experiences like the ones I'm trying to create through art and really public programming. I'm trying to give people the alternative to those different negative tropes that are being said about Syracuse. There are positive things to do here and there are so many dope and creative people that live here. And, um, I wanted to see what can happen when we bring all of these dope people into the same room, you know.

T: What would you say are some of the most positive outcomes from your creative social experiments [laughter]?

J: [Laughter] well so many relationships have been built from these different projects that I have done. There are so many different people

people who have told me, "You know, thank you for introducing me to this person", or, "We met at this place, like at one of these different events and I'm just like--

T: You're a connector.

J: Yeah, I'm a bridge--[laughs] and this adds to my overall sense of enjoying life and pleasure because it just is really important that I contribute to building a strong sense of community.

My conversation with Jaleel Campbell reveals that pleasure comes from answering the call on one's life and for Campbell that call is to be an artist. His ability to manifest ideas into creative projects is a process that keeps him in what he calls "the zone". Yet, what is most revealing is that Campbell's sense of pleasure is deeply rooted in trauma and it is through creating art that this artist has created a space for healing and wellness. Campbell also makes a distinction between pleasure, a feeling he gets while making art, from joy, particularly black joy, an experience that is harnessed through his community-based arts projects.

Campbell provides space for people to heal and to have what he calls "a good black ass time." Doll-making workshops, music video productions, open mic nights and his annual art exhibition, *Collective Display*, are just a few examples of how Campbell seeks black joy within his community. Through community-based arts he centers black people, black culture, and the black aesthetic. Both Campbell's personal journey as an artist as well as his work with community members gives space for vulnerability, healing, and wellness. Most importantly, Campbell prioritizes these attributes for himself and others, a revolutionary act that is a form of social activism in and of itself.

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Healing Trauma with Art and the Affective Turn

Katie Fuller
Florida State University

ABSTRACT

Trauma lives in the body and is passed on unless it is confronted, creating an opportunity for the body to heal. Art in education spaces can provide opportunities for such healing because of the body's spontaneous response to art. If we can learn to sit in the pain, shame, fear, and deeply personal responses that trouble the body, the body becomes a tool for listening, learning, healing, and growing. By applying affect theory to art, we are able to access difficult content and open up discourse around self-love, community building, and restitution. This pivot point, the affective turn, is the moment when healing emerges.

KEYWORDS:Affective turn, systemic racism, difficult knowledge, healing

Healing Trauma with Art and the Affective Turn

Educators deal with trauma every day. Students bring trauma from home, from communities, and from everyday pervasive systemic inequities into the classroom. Active-shooter drills in schools are the norm, and mass shootings in schools are no longer thought in terms of if but when. Students and teachers must handle these occurrences subjectively, tasking teachers with the responsibility of pushing through embodied traumas in order to educate. Education systems look to state standards and standardized tests to measure students' learning acuity as a means to quantify success, further suppressing and compounding students' lived experiences. I propose a means of addressing trauma, both in students' lives and in what and how they are learning, and disrupting trauma's inevitable cyclical patterns by implementing arts-based curriculum taught through the lens of affect theory. Building on the notion that trauma lives in the body and is passed on to others through the body, listening to how the body responds may provide key moments of learning and opportunities to absorb information, which can generate possibilities for new ways of understanding and learning. Pedagogy that confronts historical trauma by acknowledging and accepting it provides opportunities for healing, growth, and learning. Art provides a means to access challenging topics, such as systemic racial injustices (Lee, 2013). A person's reaction to art can be visceral and spontaneous, but the viewer does not always understand to what s/he is responding.

Teaching difficult knowledges through art helps students move into and beyond these uncomfortable moments. In Lee's work confronting racial biases through art education, she shows how engaging with art helps slow down discourse, absorb pain, and allow for process, making space for the trauma reactions to disperse from within the body into productive, external expression. This paper explores ways an arts-based pedagogy, centering embodied experiences can facilitate learning about, understanding, and healing from race-based traumas (Hickey-Moody, 2013; Zembylas, 2014).

Affect Theory and Difficult Knowledges

Affect is the reaction to material representation (Zembylas, 2014). The interior response can be a subtle flicker of memory, but it can also be a triggered response that brings the past into the present (Sharpe, 2016). Zembylas (2014) considers affect within the context of curriculum as a tool educators might use to open up space for different epistemologies. When teaching and learning painful histories, what Zembylas refers to as difficult knowledges, affective responses can feel overwhelming. He states, "difficult knowledge is difficult not only because of the traumatic content of knowledge, but also because the learner's encounter with the content is deeply unsettling" (p. 393). If we understand and accept how the body receives and processes these knowledges, approaching historical traumas through the affective lens can be a pedagogical tool. Arts-based pedagogy is the vehicle through which difficult knowledges can be taught because, whether making art or discussing it, art elicits affective responses (Hickey-Moody, 2013).

Difficult Knowledges of Systemic Racism

On August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri, police officer Darren Wilson shot a Black teenager named Michael Brown six times. After the killing, Brown's body was left in the middle of the road in the summer sun for four and a half hours (Lowery, 2016). Lowery called attention to this fact as further traumatizing the majority Black population of Ferguson, harkening back to the days of lynchings, when dead bodies would be left to rot as a reminder to Black citizens that they were not free. Eyewitness accounts claimed that Brown put his hands in the air, showing that he was unarmed and did not pose a threat. The rallying cry against police violence became "*Hands up, don't shoot!*" (p. 28). The shooting and disregard for Michael Brown's body unearthed long-simmering tensions of Ferguson citizens, who felt the police continually harassed and abused them. Though perspectives differ on what, why, and how events unfolded, for four days protesters and police clashed in the streets of Ferguson, the police using military force to quell the rage fueled by centuries of violence and injustice against Black bodies.

The body is the vessel that contains these patterns, the vehicle through which trauma cycles pass. Michael Brown was killed and his body left on display. Prior to being shot, he put his hands up to submit his body. "The disaster of Black subjection was and is planned; terror is disaster and 'terror has a history'" (Youngquist as cited in Sharpe, p. 5). When Brown's body was left in the streets, Lowery (2016) referenced lynchings in his writings, the form of racial terrorism that attempted to control Black bodies for close to a century after the period of Reconstruction ended. This deeply symbolic, historical act by Ferguson police fanned the flames of unrest in the city streets, and for four days militarized police tried to regain control over the pain wrought by the senseless death of a teenaged boy. Watching this unrest unfold marked a turning point for me. It was the first time I realized the protesters' rage was a manifestation of ongoing systemic racial trauma, a pain that had been embodied for four-hundred years was thrashing at the center of this unrest.

As a white woman, I had leaned on my privilege, never truly considering the sustained emotional impact of racism and racial exclusion. Spillane (2015) refers to white positioning as the point of power around which all other racial categories are constructed. This positioning must be exposed in order for all of us to heal and grow. Michael Brown's death moved my thinking away from passive knowledge towards critical examination and a new understanding: the past is constantly influencing the present, the present constantly bound to the past. Sharpe (2016) refers to this phenomenon as the wake, which she describes as the continued consequences of "chattel slavery" (p. 2). The wake is the water churned behind a ship at sea. Sharpe is referencing the ships moving across the Middle Passage, a name given to the route of ships transporting enslaved Africans from West African Coast to North America (Cohn & Jensen, 1982). The wake is the lingering evidence of a ship's passing. Once the ship is gone, the wake continues to expand outwards. Even though the past is gone, it still informs the present. Sharpe observes that the democratic land on which we walk is covered with legally sanctioned deaths of Black and Brown bodies. How does one exist in space with that difficult knowledge? Instead of denying, ignoring, or tiptoeing around them, how can we step into these histories that belong to all of us?

It is impossible to see trauma patterns if there is no context through which to ground them. For six years I worked as an educator and teaching artist at the New-York Historical Society, where I was exposed to topics and programs like Slavery in New York and the Chinese Exclusion Act. Prior to working there, I had not known of slavery in New York or Chinese exclusion. Being able to introduce these painful periods to school groups through artwork made it

easier to teach and learn these histories. The material I was absorbing during my time at the museum began to synthesize and become a new epistemology. Zembylas (2014) suggests the artifact itself, in this context an art piece, cannot perfectly represent the difficult knowledge. Pedagogy can be enacted when the body responds to the artifact. We may find ourselves wishing to turn away or towards the artwork, to step in or step back. Do we feel compassion for our response or for how others respond? As a museum educator, I was starting to understand that when we use art to center a pedagogical discourse, the art becomes the focus, absorbing some of these unsettling feelings. While working at the museum, I had opportunities to sit with multi-media artworks and to continually examine them through the eyes of visiting students. Together we were in conversation around difficult knowledges, learning stories that were rarely told in classrooms with the hope that students would begin to embody an understanding of this country's painful legacies.

Reclaiming the Body through Art as an Act of Love

In her chapter on Eros in *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks (1994) writes about the revelation of internalized self-love that can occur when addressing difficult knowledges of race and racism in academic settings. For hooks eros is removed from its sexualized connotations, becoming an energy of excitement that can ignite passions for knowing and actualizing new epistemologies. When one of her students, who is so deeply moved by the course work around Black women writers, goes through a sea change, coming to love her Blackness and confessing this new-found self-love to her classmates, hooks is initially uncomfortable. She is brings herself to critically examine her discomfort, and, in time, understands the affect of the student's transformation. The student had moved into a "critical consciousness that empowers" (p. 196), but hooks was stuck in the "disembodied [spirit]" world of academia. She states, "I witnessed the way education for critical consciousness can fundamentally alter our perceptions of reality and our actions" (p. 195). She sees the power in this student's actions, the defiant act of embodied love. Hooks was able to reckon with her discomfort and learn from it. Discourse around art that creates discomfort through how it challenges dominant narratives can bring us into the process of becoming (Hickey-Moody, 2013).

When developing critical consciousness as an awakening, I immediately think of Nona Faustine's ongoing "White Shoes" photography series as an example of affective growth. The artist uses her nude body as an historical marker on sites in New York City that were impacted by slavery. In the photograph *From Her Body Sprang the Greatest Wealth* (Figure 1), Faustine connects her enslaved ancestry with her present home city, wearing the genetic and topographical

pain of these histories in her body.

Figure 1. *From Her Body Sprang the Greatest Wealth* 2013, by Nona Faustine

By choosing to pose nude at the site of one of New York City's former slave markets, she is inverting the original intention of slavers, who forced the people they were selling to stand naked and display their physical prowess. The pain of the past is felt in Faustine's expression, but her stance is a declaration of her existence. The choices she makes feel like profound acts of self-love and push critical discourse onto the stories held by the land on which we stand. The vulnerability in her countenance and stance as she lays bare her body to communicate the truths of New York City's past is an unparalleled act of bravery. "To call attention to the body is to betray the legacy of repression and denial that has been handed down to us by our professorial elders, who have usually been white and male" (hooks, p. 191). The provocative choice to pose nude serves a pedagogical purpose, generating new ways of being in the self and claiming spaces, metaphorically and historically. Faustine's artistic choices confront difficult knowledges around racism and force the actualization of traumas buried in the land. The objectification and subjugation of Black women's bodies continues to be a part of this country's traumatic landscape. Faustine's body, poised on an auction block with hands bound by shackles, speaks of White rape, commerce, industry,

and fertility, all of the ways Black women's bodies have been used for white profit. New York City's slave market was located at this site, but only a small plaque recognizes this fact. The viewer's affective response to Faustine's body posed in front of tall buildings and a moving yellow cab resituates history by bringing the past into the present. Sharpe (2016) makes a claim similar to hooks's "disembodied [spirit]" (p. 196). To teach Black history in academia is to contort pain into a dispassionate rendering. To directly confront history, "We must become undisciplined. The work we do requires new modes and methods of research and teaching" (p. 13). Faustine creates impassioned opportunities to learn and embody the truth. We are able to heal from the shame and pain when we step into these truths.

Acknowledging Past Traumas to Heal Communities

Part of the resistance to confronting trauma is not knowing what is on the other side of the pain. According to Berg (2018), the past is not in the past; historical trauma exists in the present and will become a part of the future. She states, "Part of the challenge is . . . collectively taking responsibility for the way things are and of imagining how they might become" (p. 7). The uncertainty of the future creates a longing for the past, rooting traumas deeper into the landscape. After World War I, lynchings and white mob violence spurred the Great Migration of Black Americans from the South to the North. They had to physically move their bodies to protect themselves from racial terrorism. Bryan Stevenson and the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) have forced conversation about this chapter of United States history through EJI's Community Remembrance Project (2019).

EJI leads a national campaign to honor victims of racial lynchings. With the support of EJI, community outreach projects are leading soil collection ceremonies and placing historical markers at lynching sites, including family and descendants of the victims in the ceremonies. The EJI offices in Montgomery, Alabama, have a wall dedicated to these jars of soil, over 300 jars of trauma. In December 2016, when I visited the office, a staff member led me to the room where the commemorative soil was on display (Figure 2). I anticipated being moved and upset, but I did not expect the sense of awe that swept over me when I saw the containers of soil, a beautiful display of reds, greens, greys, browns, and deep black marking almost a century of racial terrorism. The room creates the time and space to feel, but it is the opportunity that is presented beyond that room that allows for healing from the weight of truth when connecting the jars of soil to the lives they represent.

Figure 2. *Soil Collected for the EJI Community Remembrance Project*
Photograph taken by the author

If one is interested in participating in soil collection, EJI has a form on their website. One question asks if you would like to be contacted by other community members in your region who are also interested in honoring lynching victims. I filled out the form for Leon County, Florida, and within a few days, was put in touch with a woman who is part of the Tallahassee Community Remembrance Project. Through my correspondence with her, I learned of several other participants who have been trying to get historical markers placed at the site of the former Leon County Jail, from where two of the victims had been taken by a mob and lynched. Together we can work on establishing memorial sites for the descendants of the men and acknowledge the trauma, making room for healing and growth. The affective state, in this case, is the feeling-thinking state of knowing that the past is with you in the present and will, inevitably, impact the future. Through citing Barad, Berg (2018) considers affect in relationship to time as "'it is not that the future and past are not 'there' and never sit still, but that the present is not simply here-now. . . Past, present, and future' are not linearly laid out 'but threaded through one another'" (as cited in Berg, 2018, p. 8). Soil from topographies laced with terror bring the past into the present, forcing conversations about the future.

If We Embrace Affective Dissonance

A direct confrontation of historical trauma will result in affective dissonance, a reaction Zembylas (2014) defines as "negative emotions" (p. 394). In this sense, affective dissonance is the feeling-state of letting go of what seemed true and reckoning with the pain

of new knowledge that cannot be ignored. Arts-based inquiry and art making can help the body process these difficult knowledges. As these truths pass through the body, the affect is acknowledgement, and with acknowledgement comes responsibility. A performance by Shaun Leonardo is based on the dying words of a Black man named Eric Garner, killed by police officer Daniel Pantaleo who used an illegal chokehold. The piece engages in an affective dissonance time-continuum or "wake work" (Sharpe, 2016).

Eric Garner uttered "I can't breathe" eleven times as he was being choked to death. He was killed in 2014, just a couple of weeks before Michael Brown would be shot, and his dying words "I can't breathe" defined a people being suffocated by oppression. Artist Shaun Leonardo took that phrase and turned it into a performance piece (Figure 3).

Figure 3. *I Can't Breathe* by Shaun Leonardo (center) at Smack Mellon Gallery

I Can't Breathe (2015) looks like a self-defense workshop with the objective of protecting the body. Leonardo leads some partnered participants through a series of defensive techniques designed to keep the defending body safe while doing little damage to the offending body. The techniques culminate in a defense against the three-point chokehold, the same technique Pantaleo used on Eric Garner. Berg (2018), who wrote about *I Can't Breathe*, describes the workshop as an "embodied reflection on protection and survival" (p. 10). It is rehearsed collaboratively, allowing the participants to let go of an anticipated outcome. Leonardo forces participants and viewers into moments of profound vulnerability, where one person's safety is in the hands of another. Zembylas (2014) says, "pedagogical encounters

with trauma can offer hope and reparation rather than being stuck in despair and the work of memorializing loss" (p. 394). With this in mind Leonardo's performance piece is essential as a reclaiming of power, choice, and identity.

Participants, as if in a dance, are shown how to protect their bodies and their lives. They have the space to hold the injustice of Garner's death through the subversive act of self-defense and to allow those feelings of powerlessness and fear transition into something new, something strong. Leonardo (2015) led the performance to demonstrate new ways of processing the embodied dissonance that comes with the pain of watching police murder an unarmed Black man. Participants experience the affective discomfort of moving through the past—when Garner's death played on repeat in the news, serving as a reminder of those who came before him—to reconnect with the present again and to feel their vitality and value.

Leonardo teaches the participants movements that allow the trauma to pass through the body, to acknowledge the wake that continues to unfold and to introduce productive ways to acknowledge, name, and use fear. When addressing these traumas, Leonardo uses the shock of affective dissonance to shift thinking towards a productive, optimistic pedagogical turn.

Engaging the Affective Turn through Art

Witcomb (2013) visited an art exhibition that explores the genocide of Australia's Indigenous peoples and finds herself standing in representations of difficult knowledges. Like Zembylas, she engages in this work to see if affective experiences of the body can influence critical thought. The exhibition, titled *Identity: Yours, mine, ours*, is rooted in the past that has influenced the present and creates wonder of an unknown future. By placing the visitor into a specific place and time within the exhibition, a tension arises around the history being told. Witcomb describes a room in the gallery with a map that must be stepped on in order to be viewed. By doing this she understood herself as a part of the narrative. The map creates a connection to place and past because locations of the region have two names: one indigenous and the other a result of British colonialism. These shocks helped her connect the interactive experience with the violence of the history being referenced, the affective dissonance transforming into critical thought. "The use of my own body . . . forced me to ask questions about my own position in relation to the dominant narrative . . . Suddenly the whiteness of the room only emphasized my own position as a member of the 'settler' and 'migrant' groups" (p. 260). I had a similar reaction as a participant for a performance art piece held in connection to an exhibition I co-curated around the topic of school segregation.

My past experience of teaching in a segregated school will stay with me as one of my biggest failures. At the same time, my inability to be effective led me to the path I am on now, so I will always be grateful to those students for exposing my complicity in a system I had never really been forced to question. Ten years later, when I had an opportunity to curate an exhibition at a well-known gallery in Brooklyn, I chose the topic of de-facto school segregation post Brown V. Board of Education. Eighteen artists participated in *Still Separate – Still Unequal*, which toured the Northeast from June 2017 – July 2019. Most of the artists were teachers, creating an authenticity we, as curators, could not have anticipated. One artist, Dominique Duroseau, presented a performance titled *A Rap on Race with Rice* (2017), an ode to a famous recorded conversation from 1971 between James Baldwin and Margaret Mead. For Duroseau's iteration, participants discussed racism and school segregation while separating grains of white rice from grains of black rice that had been piled on the table in front of each person's seat. Duroseau's interpretive piece, which has since been re-created with different topics and participants, provides space for participants and viewers to experience the affective turn while engaged in the dual activities of talking and separating. For her piece, the artist gathered participants around two tables and led us in a conversation about school segregation. Participants were hand selected and wore identifier hats that, for the most part, read "Negro Quota". My hat had the word "Default" printed across it. An audience looked on and witnessed the unpredictable conversation that would unfold.

The artist guided us through questions that defined societal and school segregation and how we interpreted these words as experiences, all while we separated grains of white rice from grains of black rice. I could feel discomfort rising in my core throughout this early process. I was physically segregating rice while in discourse about a system deeply enmeshed with segregated practices against children. The affect I was experiencing infuriated me. But as the conversation continued and the participants offered their perspectives, the sensation of powerlessness passed. I found myself speaking up about my embodied experience at the segregated school where I had taught. Zembylas (2014) writes, "learning is inextricably linked to the uncertainty and complexity that organize our affective responses to difficult knowledge" (p. 396). In this moment of having the space to be in my body and to hear from others around this issue, something in me opened up.

When I was in the classroom, I recall feeling a deep sense of shame in front of my students at the segregated Brooklyn school because they resented what my skin and privilege communicated to them, yet I had no idea how to help them move through that resentment.

Years later, in this gallery, surrounded by artworks that recognized and articulated the problem of school segregation, wearing a hat that read "Default" and segregating strands of rice, I felt grounded. I understood that my body, standing in that school in front of Brown and Black teenagers, had been reinforcing the dominant narrative. During Duroseau's performance, I asked the participants why I had never created an opportunity for students to tell me everything they despised about my white race. I could have distributed strips of paper and pencils and had a student collect them, so that the comments remained totally anonymous. I could have read their responses and turned what they wrote into constructive curriculum. The students could have written about their everyday experiences, the depths of the racism they were confronted with every day, and what it feels like to walk through metal detectors to go to school. Participatory art and affect (Hickey-Moody, 2013) were helping me face past failures which were threading their way through this process of segregating rice. Being able to focus on the act of separating/segregating the rice absorbed the pain of the act, allowing for space to think and learn critically. Zembylas (2014) refers to "affective communities" to describe this moment of collective emotion that can move us towards shaping change. Being engaged with the art grounds the participants, keeping the focus on the rice on the table in front of us and not on each other's embodied responses. The act of separating became a means of catharsis, as indicated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. From *A Rap on Race with Rice*, 2017, a performance by Dominique Duroseau Photographs taken by the author

Figure 5. From *A Rap on Race with Rice*, 2017, a performance by Dominique Duroseau Photographs taken by the author

To support this idea, Zembylas says, "we are enabled to theorize affects and emotions – and thus difficult knowledge – as intersections of language, desire, power, bodies, social structures, subjectivity, materiality, and trauma" (p. 399). *A Rap on Race with Rice* generates affect through a simple process of gathering strangers together to share experiences, interpretations, and ideas on school segregation. Being a part of this performance further shaped what I was learning about the power of art to move us through difficult knowledges. But affect theory can do more than move us through difficult knowledges by allowing for uncertain futures and inspiring action.

Berg (2018) asks if affective inspiration can happen in classrooms, such that students become agents of change. Whether they are participating in a performance piece or talking through an art piece that reframes historical traumas as an opportunity to embody self-love, collaborating and becoming a part of their desired futures would empower them. "To stay in the tension between 'what is' and 'what is not' is . . . a matter of being responsible for the present" (Berg, p. 14). From a pedagogical perspective, the meaning is being comfortable staying in the uncertainty of that tension, creating opportunities for change. Students use art to reflect on then the past from their present

perspectives so they may understand how to move through and past the embodied challenges of both. Within these affective communities, a true sense of agency could emerge.

Conclusion

Arts-based pedagogy applied through an affective lens can help students move through difficult knowledges. The uncomfortable embodied feelings that may occur with affect become a profound tool for teaching about historical traumas. Seigworth and Gregg (2010) note how affect may help students synthesize what they do know as their bodies begin to accept what they are coming to know. Moving through the discomfort creates possibilities for previously unimagined futures. As I grow more comfortable with discomfort, I find my curiosity about what comes next is activated. More often than not the moment of affect reveals a positive lesson, and then I am inspired to act. Zembylas (2014) articulates this as, "explorations of difficult knowledge in curriculum and pedagogy [becoming] strategic sites of ethical and political transformation that pay attention to both nonverbally articulated and embodied elements and cultural norms that are perceived corporeally" (p. 399). Art and artists provide an essential lens on individual, lived experiences through which we can learn. Art attracts its audience through looking, interpreting, seeing, participating, becoming, and each of these actions has the possibility for growth beyond affect. The place from which I apply this is through the logos that art has a job, and that job is to make us feel. Affect can guide us through that feeling response into action.

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Achieving joy through community-based culturally relevant art education: A case study of Korean-American elementary students in the Midwest

Youngaah Koh, Ph.D.
Miami University

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impacts of ethnic community-based culturally relevant art education for a group of Korean-American elementary students in the Midwest, particularly with regards to how they relate to the students' experience of joy. The study defines joy within the context of culturally relevant education as students being culturally competent, critically conscious, and having a feeling of a sense of community within their home community (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; McMillan & Chavis, 1985). The study finds positive correlations between community-based culturally relevant art education and students' increased cultural competence and reinforced sense of community, which partially fulfill this definition of joy.

KEYWORDS: culturally relevant art education; community-based art education; Korean-Americans; ethnic communities; sense of community; joy

Justice-oriented work, while can be exhausting and frustrating (Acuff, 2018; Acuff, Lopez & Wilson, 2019), is known lead to a feeling of "pleasure, as well as joy, strength, healing, community-building, allyship, and kinship… when futuristic worldmaking is part of disrupting inequities" (Acuff, n.d, p. 1; brown, 2019; Cooper, 2018).

Within the field of art education, scholars (Acuff, Hirak & Nangah, 2012; Ballengee-Morris, 2005; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001; Buffington, 2014; Lai, 2012; Lee, 2012) have shown that justice-oriented art education can empower historically marginalized students including racial/ethnic minorities who had often been largely disregarded in the "Eurocentric, culture-bound, elitist, or even racist" (Chalmers, 1992, p. 134) conventional art education.

Culturally relevant education is one of justice-oriented educational approaches which aims to empower, transform minority students by valuing, capitalizing on their home cultures (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2006; Gay, 2010). Culturally relevant art education has been increasingly implemented not only in formal K-12 education but also in communities through initiatives of organizations and individuals.

This study investigates the impacts of ethnic community-based culturally relevant art education for a group of Korean-American elementary students in the Midwest, particularly with regards to how they relate to the students' experience of joy.

Literature Review

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)

CRP emphasizes validation, empowerment, and transformation of minority students, with a particular focus on those of color, as articulated by scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a, 2006, 2009) and Geneva Gay (2010). CRP rebuts the prevalent colorblind approach that education should be identical to all student populations which often makes students of color be considered "culturally-deficient" compared to their White counterparts. This deficit-oriented paradigm has also impacted students of other minority social identities, including gender, sexual orientation, and religion. On the contrary, the asset-based paradigm of CRP calls for educators to respect and incorporate the cultures of individual students in their teaching. This approach, which capitalizes on each students' culture in their learning, is ultimately intended to empower them.

The three propositions of CRP are academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2009). Ladson-Billings (2006) refers to cultural competence as students being confident and integral in their own cultures while learning about those outside their own. She (1995a) defined critical consciousness as that which "allows them [students] to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162).

In this study, I focused on analyzing the impact of community-based culturally relevant art education with regards to cultural competence and critical consciousness, but not academic achievement. This was because the former two were more relevant to this study which is based in a community rather than a formal school.
Moreover, although not discussed as one of CRP's three propositions, sense of community was added as a focus of analysis in this study. This was because the role of community was something that Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 1995b) emphasized in articulating the framework which I found to be highly relevant to this study. CRP emphasizes the role of a home community in creating a learning environment that induces a sense of membership and collective empowerment (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a). Sense of community refers to "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be

together" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

Against this backdrop, this study defines joy within the context of culturally relevant education as students being culturally competent, critically conscious, and having a sense of community within their home community (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a, McMillan & Chavis, 1985). This definition is also based on an understanding of the definition of pleasure and joy associated with justice-oriented activism as a feeling of liberation, empowerment through practices that tackle oppression and inequity (brown, 2019; Cooper, 2018; Nieto, 2013).

I chose to use the term, "joy," rather than "pleasure," throughout this paper based on my understanding that the two terms are interconnected, yet carry slightly different connotations. Whereas pleasure is primarily sensory, temporary, and something that can be easily sought and achieved, joy is attitudinal, intense, and thus long-lasting (Sloan, 2011). While I acknowledged that pleasure may ultimately lead to joy, I believed that joy was the term that aligned better with the aforementioned expected outcomes of culturally relevant education.

Asian-Americans and Culturally Relevant Art Education

Despite abundant research (Acuff et al., 2012; Lai, 2012; Lee, 2012) regarding the positive impacts of culturally relevant art education for racial and other minority students in helping empower them, there is still a lack of such research concerning Asian-Americans. This is mainly due to Asian-Americans' small population size compared to other racial minority groups in the United States, their intergroup diversity, and the model minority stereotypes.

Although Asians are the fastest-growing racial group in the U.S., they only account for five percent, or 20 million, of the total U.S. population (Chang, 2017). More importantly, the diversity within the pan-ethnic group makes it challenging for Asian-Americans to be discussed in a generalizable manner. Asian-American is an umbrella term that includes people who have ethnic backgrounds in South Asia (e.g. Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (e.g. Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam), and East Asia (e.g. China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan) (Chang, 2017), whose respective countries have rich, distinct history and cultures.

Another factor is Asian-Americans' relatively higher academic achievement and economic success within society which gives them the common stereotypical label of "model minorities" (Chow, 2011, p. 1). Asian-Americans are often seen as having a somewhat privileged position over other racial minority groups, frequently portrayed as

patient and hard workers, traits that other minorities are encouraged to emulate.

However, not only is this stereotype a myth (Chow, 2011; Wong, 2018), research (Chang, 2017; Iwamoto & Liu, 2010) shows that many Asian-Americans actually undergo considerable stress that results from racial, ethnic stereotypes both as "model minority" and "oppressed minority" (Chang, 2017, p. 1). Common identities of Asian-Americans as oppressed minority are "perpetual foreigners" and "Orientals," which alienate, mystify, exotify, and patronize them (Lien, Conway & Wong, 2004; Said, 1979). Moreover, similar to other immigrant populations in the country, many Asian-Americans experience confusion that comes from their blended cultural identity (Lantrip et al., 2015; Berry et al., 2006; Chae & Foley 2010). Thus, this study thus brings into attention the need for more culturally relevant art education for Asian-Americans.

Community-Based Art Education

Community-based art education, or informal art education, is broadly defined as art education "that takes place outside of K-12 schools" (Ulbricht, 2005, p. 7). Community-based art education can take place in a more systematized manner, for instance, at organizations such as museums, and local Parks and Recreation departments or can be organized for and by members of a community (Ulbricht, 2005). Community-organized art education has been implemented increasingly through programs that are intended to empower marginalized populations, including racial minorities, youth who are disengaged with school due to financial and other reasons, homeless individuals, and individuals with disabilities (Ulbricht, 2005).

Community-based art education is generally understood as implementing a more democratic, pluralistic approach to art education than that of formal art education. This is because community-based art educators usually seek to support a reform of the Eurocentric formal art education paradigm and to tackle real-life social issues through artistic endeavors (Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Ulbricht, 2005).

This study can be generally described as concerning a community-organized art education program although its atypical setting poses unique challenges related to achieving a more pluralistic, justice-oriented approach to art education. The context of this study will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative, single case study in which I designed, facilitated a 10-week culturally relevant art curriculum for six second-

and third-graders (see Figure 1). My class took place within an art program which was offered by a Korean Christian church in the Midwest.

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2011) describe qualitative research as a "situated activity that locates the observer in the world…(which) consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). Creswell & Poth (2016) define case study as:

> A qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) … over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information … and reports a case description and case themes (p. 96-97).

Figure 1. *Students in my art class at a Korean church in the Midwest*

Data was collected through qualitative methods including ethnographic field notes (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 1997) based on my experience of class facilitation and observation. Additionally, student art works, and semi-structured interviews with students and their parents were collected. Interviews with students were conducted pre- and post-study to discern the potential changes my art classes would have made for the students' cultural competence, critical consciousness, and sense of community, and consequently their level of joy. In addition, my experience of working with the students prior to this study since 2017 also informed the research albeit not as direct data.

Collected data was transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted. Coding and categorization were used as strategies for data analysis and interpretation. Codes are identified as efforts of a researcher making meaning of the various bits of information collected in the field or generated during interviews, while categories can be produced through a comparative analysis of patterns between or among the individual codes (Chenail, 2008). I primarily focused on identifying codes and categories which respectively pertained to specific indicators and outcomes of CRP. I also focused on identifying students' joy which was connected to their cultural competence, critical consciousness, and sense of community within the context of CRP.

Korean Church in the Midwest

The case of my art class in this study is situated in a Korean church in the Midwest which predominantly serves Koreans and Korean-Americans in its area. Over 70 percent of Korean immigrants in the U.S. participate in Protestant Christian churches, and they are known to practice a fervent, church-oriented style of worship (Conner, 2014; Suh, 1985).

As their American counterparts, ethnic churches in the U.S. are known to assume social, cultural, educational roles on top of a theological one, for the populations they serve (Hirschman, 2004). Korean ethnic churches, including the one in this study, are no exception. The most prominent role of Korean ethnic churches is their social function as a "pseudo-extended family" (Kim, 1981, p. 199) through which their members form and extend their social networks and bonds. This social role is presumably prominent due to the Korean culture's strong emphasis on homogeneity, in terms of language, ethnicity, and solidarity (Min, 2006).

Korean ethnic churches also play a cultural role, helping members' cultural identification by offering a place where they can use their native language and celebrate their traditional culture, including holidays and food (Choy, 1979, as cited in Hurh & Kim, 1990). For this reason, Korean ethnic churches tend to play a positive role in helping second-generationers navigate their blended identity, with regards to their ethnicity, nationality, and religion (Cha, 2001).

Ethnic churches, including the Korean church in the study, also serve an educational role. The church's Art Class program, which serves around 30 students in total, is one of multiple educational programs that the church offers, alongside Sunday School and Korean Language School, which is a heritage school program. Heritage schools have operated in the U.S. as independent educational institutions

outside the formal education system since the 1880s, beginning with earliest ones that served German, Chinese, and Japanese immigrant populations (Wang, 2017). The purpose of their establishment by ethnic members was to help immigrants and their descendants develop linguistic abilities and cultural knowledge related to their heritage (Compton, 2001). Heritage schools in a form of weekend programs continue to be popular among Asian-Americans, including Korean-Americans (Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Zhou & Portes, 1993, as cited in Keller & Tillman, 2008).

The Korean church in this study is not a setting where justice-oriented community-based art education typically takes place. In fact, the church's adherence to conservative Christian doctrine, combined with Korean culture's emphasis on homogeneity as mentioned previously, make it a rather challenging site to implement justice-oriented art education. My choice of this site in the study, however, came as the church happened to be the largest community of Koreans, including children, in its area. I expected that the church, despite it being an atypical venue for justice-oriented art education, would be able to provide valuable insights into the idea of joy for Korean-American students who participated in culturally relevant art education. Besides, I identified church members paying growing attention to diversity and pluralism based on my conversations with them pre-study, which affirmed my decision to implement this study there. Church members were particularly vocal about the issue of racial equity and were increasingly interested in ways to cultivate relationships with non-Korean communities surrounding the church as a member of a wider community.

Positionality

Throughout the process of this study, I maintained a positionality as both an insider and an outsider of the church. I was an insider as I identified to a degree with members of the church due to shared heritage and faith. I have been a member there since 2016. However, I was simultaneously a self-perceived outsider, as I was critical of many church members who devoutly observed conservative, exclusive Christian doctrine. They were particularly discriminative towards certain minority groups including non-Christians and the LGBTQ community.

I attribute my insider/outsider identity within the church to my self-identity as a Korean, Christian with a progressive orientation (Taussig, 2006) and a critical multicultural scholar. Critical multiculturalism acknowledges unequal power relations and privileges that are deeply embedded in social structures, and systemic oppression they impose against subjugated groups (May & Sleeter, 2010). For this reason,

I have affiliated myself with Korean church communities in the different places I have lived in the U.S. and elsewhere but never felt like a fully integrated member.

My position regarding the conflicting values between conservative Christianity and critical multiculturalism is that more flexibility and pluralistic thinking are needed among Korean Christians in the U.S. If they are to seek racial equity in the American society, it makes sense that they also recognize the rights of other minority groups in terms of sexuality and religion. With the issue of social justice being particularly eminent in the current society, my concern is that conservative Christianity which lacks tolerance towards diversity would only isolate itself further from the rest of society.

Culturally Relevant Art Curriculum

The curriculum for the study took place for 10 weeks, with one lesson per week, during Fall 2018. The tenets of CRP informed the curriculum with regards to teacher posture of valuing, respecting, and capitalizing on students' respective cultures and backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 2009), as well as teaching strategies (Gay, 2010). Teaching strategies included creating a learning environment where students had a voice in responding to the curriculum; implementing a comprehensive curriculum which was focused on teaching the whole child rather than just art; and emphasizing care, validation, and mutual trust-building between the teacher and students (Gay, 2010).

The design of the curriculum, meanwhile, was influenced by tenets of contemporary scholars (Gude, 2008; Lampert, 2006; Stewart & Walker, 2005; Stewart, 2014; Walker, 2006) in the field of art education who have emphasized art education as a means to enhance understanding, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among students through the use of big ideas.

Big ideas, or enduring ideas, are known as themes, topics or issues that reflect big questions about the human experience which have been investigated over time (Stewart & Walker, 2005). They are "broad, umbrella-like ideas that guide students in understanding what it means to be human, to live alongside others and in the natural world," such as "identity," "power," "conflict," and "spirituality" (Stewart & Walker, 2005, p. 25). Walker (2001) stated that big ideas are characterized by "complexity, ambiguity, contradiction, and multiplicity" and that they "do not completely explicate an idea but represent a host of concepts that form the idea" (p. 1).

I chose "Understanding of self and others in a multicultural society" as the big idea for my curriculum, as it was broad enough but also confined enough to tackle tenets of culturally relevant art

education with my students. The rationale (see Table 1) addresses the relevance of the big idea to my students. I developed three essential questions (see Table 1) to help students explore, discuss, and address the aforementioned big idea in class. They were intended to tackle the three key concepts in the curriculum, which were cultural competence, critical consciousness, and sense of community. The key concepts were drawn from the tenets of CRP, including its emphasis on collective empowerment and the role of community. Indicators for each key concept (see Table 2) were similarly derived from their definitions within the context of CRP in order to measure the impact of the curriculum in addressing the key concepts among students.

Table 1
Big idea, rationale, essential questions, and key concepts for the curriculum

Big idea	Understanding of self and others in a multicultural society
Rationale	Being able to understand one's self-identity and to position oneself in relation to others is important for children living in this era to navigate the multicultural, globalized world. As Korean-American Christians, my students inherently have a multidimensional culture which they are in an active process of exploring. Learning about different aspects of their culture by engaging in relevant creative activities and discussions may not only help their identity exploration, but also help them build cultural competence and critical consciousness. Furthermore, investigating the idea of "community" through art may help students consider others in society, by thinking about what constitutes a community, and thus concepts such as inclusion, exclusion, tolerance, and pluralism.
Essential questions	• What kinds of aspects describe a multicultural society? • What kinds of things define our identity? • What is a community to you?
Key concepts	Cultural competence, critical consciousness, sense of community

Table 2
Indicators for key concepts within the curriculum

Key Concepts	Indicators
Cultural competence	Cultural self-awareness (cultural confidence); ability to learn and build on varying cultural norms; valuing diversity; having a view on difference
Critical consciousness	Recognition of sociopolitical issues of race, class, and gender; ability to question the norm
Sense of community	Sense of membership, trust, interdependence, openness, respect, cooperation, connectedness, fluid relationships

I designed the curriculum (See Appendix 1 for a complete summary of the curriculum with topics, objectives, and activities for each week) for the class based on the aforementioned enduring idea, essential questions, and key concepts. The curriculum comprised three major projects and all classes consisted of artmaking and class discussions.

The first project was a storybook called My Community in which

students respectively created chapters on their self-portraits and their community. Then, students developed an autobiography map, My Lifesland, through which they visualized their life with symbols of people, places, objects that were significant, meaningful to them. These two were individual projects. Finally, we created a world map mural, Us and the World, which was a group project. Students were asked to not only paint but also position themselves on the world map with their initials made of yarn, while sharing their knowledge about cultures of different parts of the world.

Findings & Discussion

This section discusses major findings of this study, specifically regarding how my art curriculum impacted students with regards to their cultural competence, critical consciousness, and sense of community, and how this related to students' experience of joy.

Cultural Competence

Ladson-Billings (2006) refers to cultural competence as students being confident and integral in their own cultures while learning about those outside their own. Some indicators to determine students' cultural competence include cultural self-awareness, ability to learn and build on varying cultural norms, valuing diversity, and having a personal view on difference.

The art curriculum offered students an opportunity to consider, explore their self-identity through art which went beyond biculturalism and consisted of a blend of Korean, American, and Christian cultures. This contributed to students' increased cultural self-awareness, according to their reflections from post-study interviews. Students' increased cultural self-awareness fulfills the definition of joy with regards to cultural competence within the context of CRP.

Students' increased cultural self-awareness was also shown in their art works. For their self-portraits (see Figure 2), students carefully observed their physical features and recreated themselves in drawings that actually resembled them. These drawings were different from Barbie doll-like figures that they typically drew whenever they were asked to draw themselves prior to this study. Students' autobiography maps (see Figure 3), meanwhile, featured objects signifying their family, friends, toys, Jesus, and the Bible, which offered insights about their interests, values, and cultures that they identified with. Their autobiography maps addressed their identification with Korean, American, and Christian cultures.

Figure 2. *A student's self portrait*

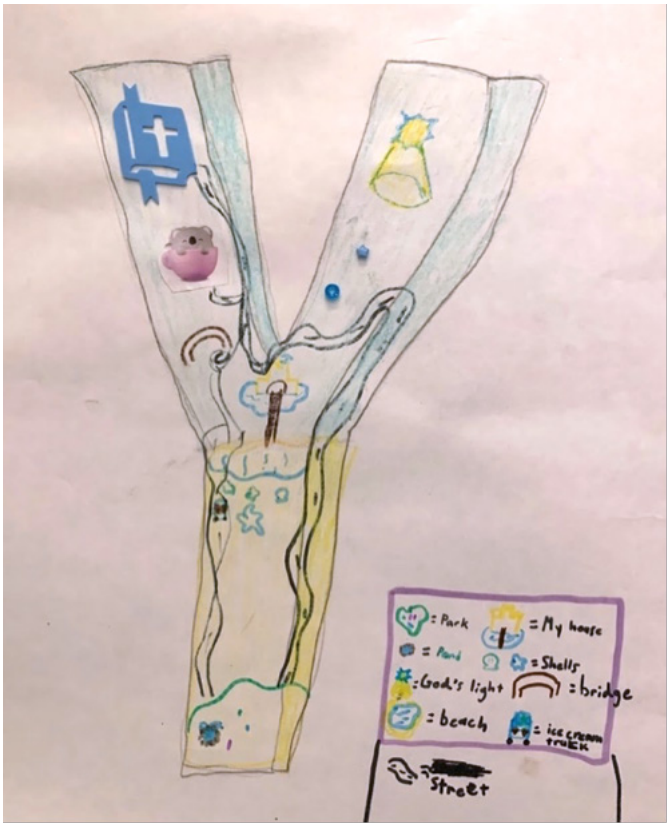

Figure 3. *A student's autobiography map*

The curriculum highlighted students' ability to learn and build on different cultural norms as well as cultural agility. They were literate in Korean, American, and Christian cultures and were thus agile to adapt to the different cultures and norms in a given context, whether it be school, home, or church. They were more "American," or assimilated to the mainstream culture at school; more conventionally "Korean" in terms of lifestyle, food, and language, at home; and both more "Korean" and "Christian" at church where a blend of the two cultures were practiced.

School was a place where students' American identity manifested most notably. Students told me in interviews that they spoke the English language at school, learned about the American history and cultures from mostly White teachers, and ate "American" food. Their friends were mostly non-Koreans as there were only a few Asians at their school. Students also said in interviews that they rarely had opportunities to share their Korean culture at school other than occasional events such as Heritage Nights where they introduced traditional Korean attire or food in front of their peers and their parents.

Students' orientation towards Korean culture at home, meanwhile, was indicated through their preference to speak the Korean language to communicate with their family, eat Korean food, and practice Korean culture such as holiday celebration, as per their parents' comments. Home thus served as a primary space where students stayed connected to their ethnic heritage. Students told me in interviews that they had family members including their parents and grandparents who were less fluent in the English language and that they wanted to learn the Korean language to primarily connect and communicate better with them.

The study identified students' dominant Christian identity through their expression of the centrality of faith and church in their lives in interviews and in class. Their Christian identity was apparent in their art works, including their autobiography maps (see Figure 3) which featured symbols such as the Cross, the Bible, and "God's light" as significant in their lives. In another instance, one student addressed her friends and peers at school in an interview, saying that she "felt connected" to everybody because "technically everybody is family" as God created everyone.

Students were exposed to diversity and perceived it as normal. The Korean and Korean-American students showed a generally open-minded attitude towards and valued diversity. Students often said "difference is good" in interviews because they learned so from school and saw diverse people at school and in their neighborhood.

Students talked about their peers and friends from school who were of various races/ethnicities, wore headscarves, and had special needs and thus needed their help. They described their life at school as "happy" and "good" which indicated that they were not opposed to the differences and diversity they experienced there.

Critical Consciousness

Ladson-Billings (1995a) defines critical consciousness as that which "allows them (students) to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162). Indicators for identifying critical consciousness are recognition and questioning of sociopolitical issues of social identities including race, class, and gender.

Students recognized social norms regarding race and ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability, and socioeconomic status. They acknowledged that the White race, heterosexuality, and the middle class were considered the norm in society. With regards to race, they discussed how their White peers and teachers were dominant in number at their school and thus their culture was considered normal. Students also recognized that their conservative Christian religion was not the norm, discussing during class how they were not allowed by their parents to participate in costume-wearing at school or Trick-or-treating in their neighborhood on Halloween.

Students had a clear understanding of the middle-class norm which was often shown in conversations regarding their living situations during class. They talked about how some of them lived in a large single home with a big yard where they could have sleepovers, some in a condominium with no yard, and others in a rental apartment. They all expressed a preference for large suburban single homes which they perceived as representing the American middle class.

Meanwhile, students also recognized the norm around social identities such as sexuality, and disability. Through interviews with students and parents, I was able to learn that students understood that a family with two parents who were of opposite sexes and one being physically/mentally able were considered normal in society.

Students' response to diversity and norms around different cultures in society, however, was largely limited to awareness of, if not conformity to, rather than questioning or taking actions to disrupt them. They often expressed confusion with navigating the diverse society they lived in in terms of what attitude to have or actions to take in varied situations. This was evident in how students particularly refrained from addressing their critical awareness regarding race and ethnicity.

Their parents, however, provided some helpful insights in this regard. Through conversations with parents, I was able to discern that not only did students recognize the norm, but they also showed considerable insecurities regarding their race/ethnicity, being inclined towards deficit-oriented thinking.

Parents discussed their children's frustration regarding their physical, cultural differences to their White peers. Parents told me in interviews that students sought to assimilate to, or physically "look more like," their White peers at school by wearing clothing and backpacks that were from specific brands which were popular among their peers. An important factor that contributed to students' deficit-oriented thinking, according to their parents, was their occasional encounters with unjust situations, for instance, being called out by their peers as having "ugly Chinese eyes." A parent said this particular instance had a negative, lasting impact on her daughter's self-confidence regarding her Korean ethnicity.

Parents also shared through interviews that their children, while frustrated, did not know exactly how they should tackle the previously discussed unjust situations regarding their race/ethnicity so they often chose to avoid addressing them. Moreover, parents said that they did not know how to help their children because they were not able to fully relate to their children's experience due to them having different migration experiences. Most parents were first-generational immigrants whereas most students were second-generationers.

The study finds that 10 weeks were a rather short period to identify substantial changes in or development of students' critical consciousness which tends to develop progressively over time. A cycle of critical consciousness development proposed by Paulo Freire (1970) (as cited in El-Amin et al., 2017) involves 1) gaining knowledge about the systems and structures that create and sustain inequity (critical analysis), 2) developing a sense of power or capability (sense of agency), and 3) ultimately committing to take action against oppressive conditions.

While my students recognized norms and injustice regarding diversity, they were yet to critically question them or take actions to disrupt them. True critical consciousness includes questioning and action factors which relate to the definition of joy within the context of CRP (Freire, 1970; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). To this end, students would need to develop a sense of agency and empowerment based on an understanding of social forces and structures that justify inequity (El-Amin et al., 2017). This provides an insight into why students experienced more insecurities and frustration rather than joy with regards to their critical awareness.

It is also important to note that the meaning of critical consciousness for the students in this study might be different from its conventional understanding. Identifying as Korean, American, and Christian, students navigated innate conflicting identities which made them consider themselves both oppressed and privileged minorities. Their Korean ethnicity made them self-identify as oppressed minorities who needed to assimilate to the mainstream White culture. Moreover, while they identified themselves as religious minorities being conservative Christians, they also conformed to exclusive Christian doctrine which condoned discrimination against certain minority groups including the LGBTQ community and non-Christians. This was indicated from their parents' intolerance of LGBTQ culture and religions such as Islam, and their efforts to raise their children with similar values as shown in interviews. Children's morality and values tend to be heavily influenced by their parents' (Suttie, 2015). Students did not express their strong opinion with regards to the LGBTQ culture and other religions such as Islam.

Students' such a conflicting self-identity can be explained by the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1981; McCall, 2005; Valentine, 2015) which emphasizes multiplicity and fluidity of ones' culture and identities. In fact, Gill Valentine (2015) makes a notable remark about the fluid nature of one's identity, stating that "given the multiple and fluid nature of our intersectional identities, most people over their life course can never be simply categorized by binary labels such as 'majority' or 'minority'" (p. 146). Essentially, intersectionality scholars argue that "everyone's unique social advantages and disadvantages should be subject to scrutiny" (Gopaldas, 2013, p. 91).

Sense of Community

As discussed previously, CRP emphasizes the important role community plays for minority students in enhancing their learning experience and inducing collective empowerment. Specifically, CRP calls for the involvement of adults in the community in students' education, serving as positive role models. Moreover, CRP prioritizes collaborative learning among students, and close connectedness and fluid relations among students, teachers, and the rest of community members (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Based on my observation and experience, a strong sense of community was already established within the church community, as well as the art program. Most students, parents, and teachers discussed their strong sense of belonging in and commitment to the church community, saying that the church felt like "home," a place where they fulfilled their social, emotional, and religious needs, and had established trust-based relationships with other members.

The art program was taught by teachers who were dedicated church members and volunteers who had existing connections and fluid relationships with most of their students. Due to the wide range of careers the teachers had, from housewife, teacher, graduate student, and artist, they served as role models for children in the church. For instance, a student in my class said she considered pursuing a career as an artist due to her mother's influence. Her mother, a freelance teaching artist, served in the art program as a teacher.

My art class prioritized a fluid relationship between students and myself. I paid attention to make the relationship between the students and myself as "equitable and reciprocal" as possible (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 95). I made efforts to be a collaborative, responsive teacher who co-created the curriculum and class with them as a facilitator, rather than one who delivered a unilateral curriculum without considering student responses. During the study, I was open to tweak activities within the curriculum according to student requests and helped students with their individual or collaborative work without guiding them in a certain intended way.

Although students already showed a strong sense of community amongst themselves and within the church community at large, my curriculum helped further reinforce their sense of community. In particular, the world map mural, Us and the World (see Figure 4), which was a group project, encouraged students to enhance cooperation, codependence, and trust, while enhancing the connectedness and fluid relationships amongst themselves.

Prior to the mural project, students were well-bonded but preferred to engage in their artwork on their own based on my experience of working with them since 2017. However, with the mural project, I observed constant instances where students deliberated, discussed together to decide which color to paint a certain part of the map and their self-positioning on the map, and shared what they knew about different countries and cultures around the world. There seemed to be an understanding among students that in order to tackle this large-scale project they needed to rely on one another's participation, commitment.

Students said in their post-study interviews that they appreciated the world map mural project the most within the curriculum, particularly its collaborative aspects. They told me that they valued the fact that they were able to complete a large-scale, complex project by working together which they otherwise would have not been able to do so. They also discussed how they felt even closer to and identified more with their classmates after finishing this project. For this reason, they told me that they wanted to have more group projects in class in the future.

Figure 4. *A world map mural, Us and the World*

It is evident from such responses that students experienced much pleasure and joy from the world map project. Moreover, the reinforcement of a sense of community amongst the students through the project fulfills the definition of joy within the context of CRP.

Joy and Culturally Relevant Art Education

This study presented positive correlations between community-based culturally relevant art education and students' increased cultural competence and reinforcement of their strong sense of community. This partially addressed joy as defined within the context of CRP, which was students being culturally competent, critically conscious, and having a feeling of a sense of community within their home community (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a; McMillan & Chavis, 1985). Despite some confusion and frustration that students expressed regarding their critical consciousness, I was able to identify manifestations of their pleasure and joy during this study.

Art was a primary factor through which students in this study found joy. Students valued art's intrinsic benefit, saying that they felt "happy" and "good" when they were creating art. They said that they genuinely enjoyed working with different materials, themes, and being able to express their thoughts and emotions through art.

Yet through the lens of CRP, joy for my students came from their cultural competence, specifically their increased cultural self-awareness as Korean, American, and Christian. Students said in post-study interviews that my art classes helped them better understand their cultural identity which they had previously found to be difficult, confusing to navigate. They also said that they had rarely had an opportunity to consider their identity at school, home, or the church prior to this experience.

What amplified students' joy related to cultural competence was affirmation and validation regarding their self-identity which they experienced amongst their peers in class. Students explored and gained a better understanding of their self-identity together and often found out that they shared similar feelings or thoughts about their self-identity or diversity during this process. I observed that students became more comfortable addressing their identity in class and in post-study interviews over time as they realized that their self-perceived identity resonated much with one another's.

Students' joy with regards to sense of community resulted from its reinforcement through their participation in a group project in class. Students shared in post-study interviews that they appreciated the world map mural project for its collaborative aspects which helped them further cooperation, interdependence, and mutual trust

amongst one another. Outside my art class, students found much joy from a strong sense of community they experienced within the church community. Church was indeed a place of pleasure and joy for students. It was not only their primary social, cultural, and religious network, but also a safe space and refuge where they referred to as "home." Major factors that contributed to this were their families' committed participation in the church based on the interdependence and trust they shared with others in the church; and similar ethnic, cultural, religious identities its members shared.

In sum, the art class and the church community created an environment where students' unique intersecting identities consisting of their Korean, American, and Christian cultures were explored, affirmed, and validated. The art class helped students increase their cultural self-awareness and enhance their sense of community without them feeling judged or stereotyped.

Students' critical consciousness tends to be developed by their experiences and education at school, home, church, and elsewhere in their community. Therefore, it would be helpful to implement a similar research in the future in an alternative research site outside of the church and separate from their religious identity. This could be a Korean community center that is not affiliated with a religion or an afterschool multicultural education program.

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Joyously Playing with/in Church

James H. Sanders, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University

Mindi Rhoades, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University

Melanie Davenport, Ph.D.
Georgia State University

Courtnie Wolfgang, Ph.D.
Virginia Commonwealth University

Kim Cosier, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

ABSTRACT

Here you are called to contemplate the antics of Big Gay Church (BGC), considering how the NAEA Queer ritual revels in joyous excess, deploys humor and absurd actions that move participants toward healing damaged psyches and souls. The BGC performing troupe tackles critical social injustices and does so through unexpectedly delightful and irreverent services that confront pain, cruelty, erasure, and abuse. Four or more colleagues have led this scholarly, political and performative inquiry for more than a decade, attempting to replace damaging actions with healing gestures of love, caring comradery, and contemplative reimagining of what church could be. Perhaps most significantly, this arts-based performative inquiry theoretically celebrates all that is queer, and encourages pre-service art educators and those who guide them to embrace diversity and inclusion while in pursuit of equity and engagement. The manuscript opens by outlining how queer inquiries reclaim unattended lives, expands perspectives, and celebrates queerness for all. The paper then shares an overview of Big Gay Church as an annual academic ritual at the National Art Education Association (NAEA annual meeting, Methods and modes of presentation vary by co-presenter – most building on childhood lived experiences of Church. This second section's illustrated counterpoint to descriptions of s typical presenter's contributions to the BGC service. The third section, describes presenters' varying methods and narratives, and assert this play-group employs farce, irony, and humor while leveling institutional critiques (particularly tackling NAEA's evolving relations with the LGBTQIC+ special interest group. The Conclusion traces BGC service, the pedagogical and historical challenges the group calls congregants to help undertake, and ALWAYS doing so with joy.

KEYWORDS:Human Rights, Social Justice, LGBTQ+, Performative Inquiry, Church, Community, Love, Joy

Setting a Seemingly Sacrilegious Scene

During the annual National Art Education Association (NAEA) convention, a decade long, standing conference session titled Big Gay Church (BGC) has aimed to share love and revelry with congregants committed to critical social justice, ethical and equitable treatment of all art inquiring scholars, students and tangles of educating actors. Participating parishioners engaged in studies of art history, craft, play, and social struggle inclusive of gender, sexuality, race, class, and self-identification define a subaltern body who clearly can, and does speak.[1] This is a congregation set on refusing marginality and mistreatment of LGBTQIA+[2] communities.

The performative inquiry the BGC troupe[3] shares disturbs silences the field of art education has perpetuated for far too long. The resistance enacted in the BGC session is enraged, but it's undertaken with a wink, a smile, and valuably, a comforting embrace. Confronting injustice with giddy joy, BGC works toward ending cycles of violence, self-hatred and oppression of LGBTQIA+ peoples; ever cognizant of the risks queer pedagogy undertakes. At this service mistreatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning (LGBTQIA+) and others historically oppressed are not tolerated. Joyously, Big Gay Church leaders leverage this annual assembly to broach concerns that individually and collectively, presenters find most troubling.

The BGC performing troupe disarms hate with humor, camp, irony and play. For over ten years, the performance series has presented serious scholarship, silliness, and protestations of injustice grounded in love, compassion, and refusing our own and Others' reputed powerlessness. The gestures church

1 Here we nod in humble recognition of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's pivotal 1988 essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" as it importantly addresses power, voice, and who is heard.

2 We acknowledge the fluidity of this acronym as it changes to be better-representative of our communities. We are using the LGBTQIA+ version to represent as broad-reaching inclusion as one acronym might have.

3 Primary Big Gay Church Troupe members include Kim Cosier, Mindi Rhoades, Jim Sanders, Courtnie Wolfgang and Melanie Davenport. All five are co-authors of this paper.

leaders share reclaim disquieting childhood memories inflicted by organized religious institutions, with BGC reimagining them as they could be otherwise.

Figure 1. *BGC V San Diego (2014):* Congregation in DIY Paper Parade Hats

Refuting dominant fundamentalist messages framing queers as damned, irredeemable, unlovable and certainly unwelcomed by organized religious institutions, BGC creates a space where all might feel vital in their difference. At Big Gay Church, first and foremost, all are assured they're loved and belong in the congregation. Critical of exclusionary practices leaders experienced in the past, outrageous gestures, prayerful play, and healing acts performed at BGC encourage those once broken to let go of the pains endured through religious oppression.

Congregants are annually reminded that the actions they witness at BGC are not performed to disrespect any religion, but as an institutional critique. The audience is asked to deeply ponder historic injustices enacted in the name of religion, whether justifying colonization, ostracization, or annihilation. Through song services, sermons, Sunday school lessons, and traditional art history lectures, the BGC troupe undresses and exposes inhumane behaviors enacted within and by the church. Big Gay Church encourages participants to *Make a Joyful Noise* and given the current political climate, we certainly CANNOT afford to be silent now. While Big Gay Church services are pan-denominational and have varied each year, most members of the troupe reference their experiences within traditional White

Protestant church services in the United States. Each church leader takes responsibility for one or more service components, but no preordained perspective is prescribed.

Figure 2. *BGC V San Diego (2014): Make a Joyful Noise* Kazoo

Description of BGC Services

Typically, Big Gay Church (BGC) services include the following: recorded background music played as the congregation enter, a component curated by Courtnie Wofgang, aka Brother Love; opening scripture reading and prayer delivered by Mindi Rhoades, aka Reverend Rhoades; congregational recitation of the Oath of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, led by Jim Sanders acting as Sister Sanders in nun's habit followed by their queering art/education multimedia lecture/lesson aka the Sister Sanders Slide Show; art and craft fellowship/activity + music/hymns presented by Courtnie as Brother Love and Melanie Davenport as Deacon D; Kim Cosier performs Sunday school with Miss Jeanette (lessons vary in form from year-to-year); guest testimony (when applicable); sermon earnestly enacted by Mindi Rhoades as Reverend Rhoades; testimonials/prayer request /holding to the light Melanie Davenport as

Deacon D can do; reverse offerings (which may involve any/all BGC Troupe Members); and a closing/benediction offered by Rev. Rhoades, Brother Love, and all Others). All facets of each year's service are sub-performances within the larger collective arts-based research structure (see Appendix E, Bibliography). Art educating actors shift slightly over the decade as colleagues move on, confront life-altering events and professional affiliations. Playlists of background music opening services have included Madonna, Boy George, Lady Gaga, David Bowie, k.d. lang, Prince and Van Cliburn--musicians frequently linked to the city in which that year's NAEA convention was being held.

Congregants and church leaders are welcomed into the space, transformed from an ordinary conference room into a welcoming, festive space adorned with banners, streamers, and other decorations. As the session begins, all are welcomed to another year of Big Gay Church. We encourage guests to fellowship with others who are seated next to and/or near them. After a few moments, Reverend Rhoades then shares a passage of scripture (most often) from the Christian Bible. An illustrative example being the "love passage" from 1st Corinthians 13:4-8; 13:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. And these threeremain: faith,hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Reverend Rhoades then segues into an opening prayer. Some years these have been original, they might reference other works, or feature solely the work of another author, such as Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter to Coretta 18 July 1952" aka "The Higher Principle of Love." In this piece, Dr. King envisions a better nation and world, based on sharing instead of greed, peace instead of violence, justice instead of inhumanity. Such selections attend to intersectional relationships and celebrate the solidarity between the LGBTQIA+ community and other groups struggling for human rights and social justice. Sister Sanders then assumes primary

leadership duties, inviting the congregation to join in the annual recitation of the oath of the "Pledge of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence"[4]

Pledge of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence

I, Sister [state your name], *as a member of the Order of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, dedicate myself to public service, social activism, and spiritual enlightenment.*

Wearing an at times humorously malfunctioning, slippery nun's garb, Sister Sanders delivers their annual Queer Art Lesson/Slide Show, an academic-style lecture sharing a critical (re)readings of art (historic) subjects that allow Sister Sanders to call out historic visual affect depicting reprehensible acts of xenophobia and intersectional oppressions. In-short, the lesson links historical injustices to contemporary challenges unaddressed, and persistent ones the service seeks to *unthink*.

3.15. Theodore de Bry, Balboa Feeding Indian "Sodomites" to the Dogs, 1590 (engraved book illustration, America).

Figure 3. *BGC I Baltimore (2010): Balboa Feeding Indian Sodomites to the Dogs*

4 The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence initially emerged in San Francisco as the HIV/AIDS pandemic began to take its toll on the LGBTQ+ community in the early 1980s and bearded men in clown white-face, drag make-up and nun's habits worked community events in raising social consciousness and support for those needing material and spiritual support. Early acolytes emerged from the Cockettes and populations most impacted by the HIV pandemic.

In subsequent years the talks reclaim LGBTQ+ artists historically erased from art education history, or celebrate the queer antics of cultural icons *straightened out* by popular (read homophobic) media.

Figure 4. *BGC IV Fort Worth, TX (2013):* Herman Harry Serving Congregants Pancakes

Sister Sanders subsequently cedes center stage (as it were), to either Sunday School Teacher, Miss Jeanette, or Music Minister, Brother Love. Love leads a combination of creative (craft) fellowship activities (supported by Deacon D and the entire BGC troupe), and/or leads a song service. In past years, congregants made joyful noises in multiple ways (see figure 2), including voice and kazoo. This portion of our program has evolved to incorporate a collective participatory artmaking activity (see figure 1), providing a productive way to joyously channel creative activist energies while building a stronger sense of community. Past projects have included paper hats and costumes for an NAEA Pride Parade led by Deacon Davenport (BGC 5, 2014 San Diego) and individual sculptural contributions to a large community sculptural installation (BGC 6, 2015 New Orleans). Brother Love often concludes this portion of the service with a short chorus sing-along to bring the congregation back to attention, in preparation for the next presentation.

Miss Jeanette's Sunday School lessons are structured to

forefront important sociopolitical causes, acts of resistance in which she's been engaged, or intersectional queer concerns, artmaking initiatives, and artists. Each year Miss Jeanette honors an individual advancing LGBTQ+ issues and rights, and in recognition of their work fashions prayer cards that have been shared with congregants (see Appendix D) in a reverse offering. Cards celebrate LGBTQIA+ *Saints and Angels:* people prominent in current events, lauded for their historical achievements, and/or associated with the city in which the NAEA convention was held.

Miss Jeanette has offered pithy civics lessons in *artivism*, and arts-based activism (Sandoval & Latorre, 2008), noting how these use/d the arts to confront not only LGBTQIA+ inequities and those perpetuating them, but other forms of injustice as well. From protesting immigration policies to posters, banners and actions supporting teachers striking over unfair labor practices, Miss Jeanette's falsetto accounts illustrate how art educators are putting their lives on the line. Miss Jeanette often includes self-created and/or student-assisted short videos in her Sunday School lessons, and shares resources she anticipates will be of value to congregants and art educating others. S*weatin' for the Revolution*, Miss Jeanette's most jubilant Sunday School lesson to date, took place in Boston in 2019.

The presentation (re)introduced audience members to sculptor and "badass butch" Edmonia 'Wildfire' Lewis (the subject of a prayer card offered to the congregation at this service), the Kung Fu Nuns (Gupta, 2019) and the Flying Cholitas of Boliva, (Butet-Roch, 2018). Miss Jeanette then screened a video in which she had inserted herself into a vintage Richard Simmons workout tape via green screen, a project she undertook with middle and high school student helpers. Not content to have the congregation (or herself) sit and watch this gem, Miss Jeanette invited the congregation to join her as she danced her heart out wearing the same shoulder-padded, satiny green, vintage 1988 track suit that she wore in the video. The driving disco beat made a joyful noise to be sure!

Figure 5. *BGC X New York City: , Edmonia "Wildfire" Lewis* (2019)

Figure 6: *Big Gay Church #2 New York: Miss Jeanette and Sister Sanders* (2011)

Following Miss Jeanette's Sunday School lesson, Big Gay Church shifts to a proper sermon. While guest presenters have shared Jewish and Hindu spiritual traditions, primarily this portion falls to Reverend Rhoades. Their presentations combine religious texts, art and visual culture, current events and critical theory within a consistent context of community-building and care. An excerpt from two of the most recent sermons offers a sense of the presentations delivered in the twenty-teen decade.

> As a group long accustomed to living in the margins, we–the LGBTQ+ community and our advocates/accomplices– should be highly sympathetic to the struggles of others. We should stand in solidarity with those who find themselves othered, outed by society, ousted. We cannot be complacent with justice for the few. It is not enough. We need more. We are more. (BGC 9, 2018)

> [W]e didn't just find Big Gay Church. And you didn't just find it either. Not ten years ago, and not today. We built Big Gay Church together. We continue to build it together. We are it. We are a song. We are singing and dancing it while we are writing it, this love song. And it's this love, this refrain that happens year after year, this melody that repeats with words that vary but that always nourish my soul and make me want to sing along. You. You sing the song of my soul. (BGCX, 2019)

Reverend Rhoades sermons stress acceptance, forgiveness, community, and—mostly—love.

After the sermon concludes, Deacon Davenport. (or another clergy member) opens the service for testimonials, prayer requests, and, as Miss Jeanette is fond of saying, *holding people to the light*. Congregants take and use this space. They've shared deeply personal concerns and experiences, they've told their stories, and they've asked for support. This intimacy has been one of the most unanticipatedly moving and impactful portions of this project. To have formed an actual congregation, a

community of love and support in the middle of a professional organization and event is humbling. As the service concludes Reverend Rhoades offers a benediction and congregants often linger and reflect, parting only after hugs. This is the heart of our church, and to share an account of it brings us great joy.

Beyond Hopeful Pronouncements, Methods and Narratives

Big Gay Church is undoubtedly campy, provocative, and entertaining, utilizing smiles and laughter to broach critical topics. Through these playful performances, the troupe invites congregants to examine religious productions of LGBTQIA+ lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and questioning, populations' (LGBTQ) alterity. BGC offers alternative notions of moral and ethical behavior, calling into question queer misrepresentations deployed by many organized religions that have (mis)shaped public perceptions of queer artists and art educators. For a decade, core BGC clergy and guest speakers have engaged congregants in reconsidering the roles the visual arts have played in shaping sociocultural and spiritual (mis) understandings and in pondering how art educators can redress these wrongs.

These joyful services not only present scholarly inquiry but feed it as well. Over the years, BGC leaders have built upon this collaborative work to produce numerous articles that further explore key themes and examine the rite itself. Our publications are the part of our advocacy that fits dominant genres and venues for academic research even as it challenges them. The articles and chapters we have released are the revelation and investigations of the theory, research, experiences, and pedagogy informing our seemingly frivolous diversion. Our academic publications and accumulated research invite colleagues to examine how we have spent a decade reflecting on arts education policies, practices, and the institutional and cultural constraints impacting our lives.

Recently the troupe utilized James Scheurich's archaeological methodology to generate and reflect on an accumulated archive of artifacts and documents from BGC, which can be seen at <New URL to follow>. This has challenged Church elders to consider the impact the research has had on each of us individually, our colleagues, our congregations, and the field. Among the treasures one can find in the BGC archive

are Sister Sanders's slideshows, Miss Jeanette's prayer cards, and Reverend Rhoades' sermons, along with photographic documentation of the congregation. Photographs span the dozen years, picturing events such as a parade, a wedding, and a pancake supper. Reflecting upon this record elicits joy and further conversations about future iterations. The academic publications may provide the most lasting, concrete, and tangible outcomes of our research, education, and outreach efforts. However, nothing compares to experiencing the BGC, as part of a community of believers, dreamers, wishers, lovers, and fighters.

Figure 7. *BGC IV San Diego*: *Big Gay Church Elders* (2014)

Conclusion

As a troupe we've interrogated sociocultural prohibitions, the (mis)educating of students, and of those teaching them. We've deconstructed our actions and continue to dive deeper into these topics to demonstrate our dedication to sharing knowledge, confronting challenging issues, and agitating for action. Much of this work has involved us playing sacred fools, self-confidently criticizing, satirizing, cajoling our field—all

while advocating for change from the inside. We argue that maintaining a healthy sense of humor, an openness to critical critique and warm embraces, and a willingness to celebrate in the face of oppression are essential in the lethally serious work of unthinking and undoing heteronormativity, and combating homophobia, in education and society at large. We have facilitated a growing congregation dedicated to playing, laughing, praying, crying, and creating change with us across the past decade, and hope readers too will get engaged in these efforts. It's pleasure and a joy!

As co-authors we recognize the necessity of being prepared for sustained collaborative struggles as we labor for social justice and human rights. We know that journey may at times feel far from bearable, but if it's undertaken with loving friends who share a sense of humor, are open to working-through outrage when facing injustice, and to embrace each pleasure that comes our way, there's a stronger chance that work will continue to be accomplished with joy. Writing-up our efforts in this and other manuscripts has offered our group of long-term LGBTQ+ clergy multiple opportunities to reconsider BGC as a performance that's been enacted in social spaces where tomorrow's art educators can join in fellowship with queer elders eager to share their outrageous histories, their archaeological skills, and both hope and enthusiasm for progress. We close reconsidering what remains after individual, cumulative, and collective cognitive, emotional, and spiritual explorations have been exhausted.

Portions of Reverend Rhoades' sermons both open and close this article, offering readers a sense of the warmth, generosity of spirit and sacred responsibility all BGC troupe members consider somberly, even while undertaking the surface-silly performance in which we engage. These may at times be read as poetic musings, as paeans to a love we share, as testimonies to the political solidarity that bonds and emboldens us, and the mutual admiration and support that has repeatedly buoyed us in the face of near-death experiences, health crises, career concerns, and even the mundane challenges of our day-to-day (queer) lives.

Pushback and resistance to queer concerns persist, and myriad legal and social advances still remain unfulfilled. Our serious work awaits, numerous states have no employment

protections for LGBTQ populations, hate crimes are on the rise, and trans women of color continue to disproportionately be victims of violence and abuse. Our BGC troupe's work will continue to embrace intersectional concerns and offer NAEA members resources for developing more diverse and equitable art education approaches, policies, pedagogical practices and curricula. An ever-broadening army of queer allies, accomplices, activists, and artivists (Sandoval & Latorre, 2008) share in co-creating BGC as a pedagogical performance, as arm-in-arm we sustain our commitment to inclusive arts education practices, queer fellowship, and disruptive queer inquiries that move our field toward more equitable, inclusive, and socially-just practices. Our outrageous gestures, costumed performances and thought-provoking antics joyfully inspire.

Reverend Rhoades' Sermonic Reprise

As LGBTQ+ people, we have learned to celebrate and enjoy our successes along the path to equality and justice. As a people relegated to the margins, we have learned, as the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. declared, to accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. And that infinite hope fuels our celebration and joy, even in the face of oppression. (BGC 3, 2012)

Big Gay Church welcomes me in, over and over. Big Gay Church is us making a place for us, making a place for love together. Across this decade, I've never ceased to be astonished by what we conjure: a time, space, and acolyte the permission to love – to love as a personal and professional praxis. To love radically. To hope radically. To teach radically. To live radically. We are a miracle. We are worthy. We are loved. (BGC X, 2019)

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Table of Appendices

Appendix A: Chronology/Summary of Big Gay Church Services (2010-2019)

Appendix B: Reverend Rhoades Sermons
Co-construction of a self-affirming, loving and inclusive LGBTQ+ community is the annual ends of the joyous services examined in this article, and as summarily named in this appendix.

Appendix C: Sister Sanders/Hermana Harry's Lectures/Lessons
A primary way Big Gay Church addresses constructs of injustice, queer demonization, and hate acts as well as affirming reflections on LGBTQIA+ artists in history and their work, is through Sanders annual PowerPoint lectures. Additionally other church elders at times take up this mantle and work at unthinking the historic erasures of queer perspectives at NAEA.

Appendix D: Miss Jeanette's (reverse) offerings, Prayer Cards and commemoratives
An often coveted Big Gay Church relic is Miss Jeanette's original (almost) annual Prayer Cards; these are regularly linked to the Sunday School lesson annually shared.

Appendix E: Annotated Bibliography
A bibliographic record of Big Gay Church publications addressing social construction, function, and outcome of art policies and practices, including studies celebrating joys shared, tackling social injustice, marginalization, and efforts to redress traumas experienced in church.

Appendix A: Chronology/Summary of Big Gay Church Services 2010-2019

Key:

Red-Letter entries denotes service portion for which artifacts/details are still being sought… like many religious texts, this narrative is the product of collective memories, actions and teachings. Readers with BGC Artifacts they'd like to share, can contact Jim Sanders at jhsandersiii@gmail.com.

2010 ***Big Gay Church: Re-examining religiosity and the religious*—Baltimore, MD**
LGBTQ readings of religion and visual culture.
Sister Sanders reviewed art illustrating xenophobia, and acts of violence toward LGBTQ populations and indigenous peoples by members of the clergy. In contrast, contemporary queer artists are identified, and discussions of their works are considered. The art history lesson Sister S shares, both unearths hideous historic records, and captures contemporary artists' works that play with erotic themes and re-imagine parables as seen through the eyes of contemporary queer artists.

Figure 8. *Big Gay Church #1 Baltimore* (2010). Gilbert and George (1997), Sodom

Deb Smith-Shank led the congregation in song, and prayer requests were considered. Deacon D shared story of a friend driven from her church due to her sexuality.
Kim Cosier [in a handsome suit] delivered a reading from her recently published piece on girlhood, and shared a lesson on Guardian Angel, Rachel Maddow.
Reverend Rhoades' Sermon: Homosexuality Misinterpretation and the Bible.
Fellowship (wine, cheese and lettuce leaves shared with congregants)

2011 ***Big Gay Church II: Creativity, Imagination, and Innovation Meet The Art Education Congregation*—Seattle, WA**

Sister Sanders discussed controversies surrounding the National Portrait Gallery's removing of David Wojnarowicz' *A Fire in My Belly* from the exhibition, *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, Jonathan Katz and David Ward co-curators (2010). Works published in the exhibit catalog were reviewed, including photos Annie Liebowitz shot of Ellen DeGeneres and Susan Sontag, and images of Ray

Cohn, Marcel Duchamp, Lady Gaga, Langston Hughes, Keith Haring, Robert Mapplethorpe, Robert Morris, Bessie Smith, Gertrude Stein & Alice B. Toklas, David Wajnarowicz, Andy Warhol, Walt Whitman, and others.
Miss Jeanette's Sunday School Lesson:
Offering: "Forgiven" and "Loved" cards distributed to congregants .
Reverend Rhoades' Sermon: *Forgiveness*

2012 ***Big Gay Church III: Hooking up Queer Theory and LGBT Research in the Classroom—New York, NY***

Sister Sanders's Sermonette on Samuel Steward is based on curator Justin Spring's Museum of Sex installation; *Obscene Diary: The Secret Archive of Samuel Steward, Professor, Tattoo Artist and Pornographer.*
Welcome to Sunday School [Lego animation] *with Miss Jeanette*
Kim Cosier's Sunday School lesson: Guardian Angel Melissa Bollow-Temple. (digital animation)
Rev. Rhoades's sermon: *Judgment + Condemnation vs. Love, Commitment, Equality + Justice.*
Closing silence in memory of Leona Emma Spoltman Smith (d. March 1, 2012), [Debbie Smith-Shank's mother, was interred as BGC II unfolded]

2013 ***Big Gay Church IV: Homo, Homo on the Range: A Pancake Supper,*** **Ft. Worth, TX**

Hermana Harry [aka Sister Sanders] spoke on the value of sustaining supportive communities while flipping pancakes which were served with assorted homemade jams (Brother Love assisted while mourning her beloved father's recent passing).
Miraculously, Miss Jeanette appears as a digital apparition and greets the congregation while discussing gendered action figures and delivering a lesson on…
Rev. Rhoades's sermon: *Rejecting Rejection: A Tipping Point*
Deacon D provided welcoming banners and with helped serve up pancakes.

2014 ***Big Gay Church V: Sparkle and Shine*** **San Diego, CA**

A dematerialized digital Sister Sanders rants about media appropriations of queer subjects by heterosexuals actors exploiting Others' pain while Jim Sanders in a black skirt and panda hat dances to a Macklemore's Thrift Store video and offers a visual culture analysis of Academy Award accolades bestowed on heterosexual actors Jarred Leto and Mathew

McConaughey for performances in Buyers Club; and Emmy awarded Michael Douglas' for his HBO portrayal of Liberace in HBO's *Behind the Candelabra* (see figure 7 mid-article, above-with Sister Sanders projected on the screen).
Rev. Rhoades's Sermon:
Introduced Lawyer Bob who discusses legal precedents discriminating against LGBTQ populations
Brother Love's craft project: Hat and Parade Costume Making (see fig. 1: Congregants' 2014 Craft Fellowship: Deacon D led hat and costume making for Pride Parade and provided puppets to lead the processional to the wedding of Kim Cosier and Josie Osbourne.

2015 ***Big Gay Church VI: Queer by Design*** **New Orleans, LA**
Sister Sanders talk on Nick E. Cave: A Fiercely Divine Troubling Angel .
Miss Jeanette's Sunday School lesson; *Beyond Bullying: New Approaches to Queering Art + Design Education.* Resources recommended by contributors to Kim Cosier's, et. al. (eds.) anthology, *Rethinking Sexism, Gender and Sexuality,* included authors Lisa Bloom (2012), *10 Urgent Rules for Raising Boys in an Era of Failing Schools, Mass Joblessness, and Thug Culture*; Jeff Chang (2006), T*otal Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-Hop;* Elizabeth Meyer (2009), *Gender, Bullying and Harassment: Strategies to end Sexism and Homophobia in Schools;* Jamie Campbell Naidoo (2012) *Rainbow Family Collections: Selecting and Using Children's Books with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Content;* Melissa Regan (2013) *No Dumb Questions;* Southern Poverty Law Center (2010), *Bullied*; Susan Strauss (2012), *Sexual Harassment and Bullying: A Guide to Keeping Kids Safe and Holding Schools Accountable*; Nicholas M. Teich, (2012), T*ransgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue; and Groundspark Films, It's Elementary* (1999), and *It's Still Elementary* (2008).
Rev. Rhoades' Sermon: *Queer by Divine Design + Called to Disrupt: Making Angelic Trouble*
Brother Love's Artmaking Activity: Group Sculpture installed in the Mezzanine

2016 ***Big Gay Church VII: Lead Us (not) Into Temptation*: *Deadly Sins + Easy Steps*** **Chicago, IL**
Sister Sanders Deconstructs David Bowie, marking his life, and art experimentations.
Guest Cantor, Karin Pritikin shares prayers in Hebrew, her Shaindale Script, and stories of the Borsht Belt Burlesque comedian, Pearl Williams.
Sister Jeanette's Sunday School Lesson:
Brother Love's Art Making Enterprise:

Rev. Rhoades' Sermon: *From Ally to Advocate to Activist 7 Deadly Sins + 7 Easy Steps*

2017 **B*ig Gay Church VIII: Turn + Face the Strange: The Challenge of Ch-ch-changes around LGBTQ Issues and Art Education*** **New York, NY**
Sister Sanders
Guest scholar, Dr. Manisha Sharma explores Sanatan Dharma and Indian Spirituality
Miss Jeannette's Prayer Card & Sunday School lesson: Badass BUTCH Pauli Murray
Rev. Rhoades' Sermon: *Ch-ch-changes: Returning to Radical Love*
Brother Love's Art Making Event:

2018 ***Big Gay Church IX: ST3AM Queens*** **Seattle, WA**
Sister Sanders' Steamy propositions on mortality, craft and constructing communities
Miss Jeanette's lesson:
Rev. Rhoades' Sermon: Putting on the Whole Queer Ensemble of Love & Protection
Brother Love's Art Making Experience:

2019 ***Big Gay Church X: The Musical (Make a Joyful Noise)*** **Boston, MA**
Sister Sanders re-examines the Big Gay Church journey, its growth, calls for sustained vigilance and laboring for social justice, equity, diversity and joy.
Miss Jeanette's lesson
Rev. Rhoades's Sermon: B*ig Gay Love Songs to You: A Decade of Greatest Hits*
Brother Love's Art Making Extravaganza: Keychains from the Heart

In Appendix A Above
Brother Love is academically known as (aka) Dr. Courtie Wolfgang
Miss Jeanette is also known as (aka) Dr. Kim Cosier
Sister Sanders/Hermana Harry is aka Dr. James H. Sanders III
Reverend Rhoades is aka Dr. Mindi Rhoades
Deacon D. is aka Dr. Melanie Davenport

Appendix B: Reverend Rhoades' Sermons

2010 Sermon: *Homosexuality Misinterpretation and the Bible*
2011 Sermon: *Forgiveness*
2012 Sermon: *Judgment + Condemnation vs. Love, Commitment, Equality + Justice*
2013 Sermon: *Rejecting Rejection: A Tipping Point*
2014 Sermon: legal precedents discriminating against LGBTQ populations??
Sparkle + Shine (Parade + Wedding)
2015 Sermon: *Queer by Divine Design + Called to Disrupt: Making Angelic Trouble*
2016 Sermon: *From Ally to Advocate to Activist 7 Deadly Sins + 7 Easy Steps*
2017 Sermon: *Ch-ch-changes: Returning to Radical Love*
2018 Sermon: *Putting on the Whole Queer Ensemble of Love & Protection*
2019 Sermon: *Big Gay Love Songs to You: A Decade of Greatest Hits*

Appendix C: Sister Sanders Art and Culture Lectures/Lessons

2010 Lecture/Lesson on History of Western Art/Religion and LGBTQ issues
2011 Lecture/Lesson on removal David Wojnarowicz work at National Portrait Gallery
2012 Lecture/Lesson on Samuel Steward based on Spring's Museum of Sex installation
2013 Lecture/Lesson on Sustaining Supportive Queer Communities
2014 Lecture/Lesson on heterosexual appropriation of queer art and culture (digital)
2015 Lecture/Lesson on Nick E. Cave: A Fiercely Divine Troubling Angel
2016 Lecture/Lesson on Deconstructing David Bowie (in memoriam)
2017 Lecture/Lesson on ??
2018 Lecture/Lesson on mortality, craft, and constructing communities
2019 Lecture/Lesson reflecting on past, present, and future of Big Gay Church

Appendix D Sharing Talents: Miss Jeanette's Prayer Cards and Brother Love's Arts and Craft Activity/song service

2010	Baltimore, MD	John Waters
2011	Seattle, WA	Rachel Maddow

2012	New York, NY	Melissa B Temple and Saint Vito Russo
2013	Ft. Worth, TX	Saint Van Cliburn
2014	San Diego, CA	Ally Elizabeth Taylor "Bitch, do something" Crafting Hat and Costumes for Pride Parade
2015	New Orleans, LA	Bayard Rustin Group sculptural construction
2016	Chicago, IL	Jane Addams and David Bowie
2017	New York, NY	Stormé DeLarverie and Pauli Murray
2018	Seattle, WA	Stormé DeLarverie stickers & Pauli Murray stickers
2019	Boston, MA	Angel Richard Simmons and Saint Edmonia Lewis

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Dancing in Clay: Pottery-making as a Safe Space Activity for Girls in Southwestern Kenya

David Nyaberi, Ph.D.
Lincoln University of Missouri

ABSTRACT

This paper explores elements of traditional art education embedded in pottery-making activities of a specific community among the Luo people of southwest Kenya. In a society where sociocultural norms tend to favor the education of boys over girls, conversations with Mama Nyungu—a pottery-making group in Homabay County in southwest Kenya reveal some sophisticated and organized tradition-related strategies for preparing young girls for adult life. In building upon Dietler and Herbich's assertion that pottery making is "a social labor that involves women in an important network of shared activity, knowledge, and personal relationships" (1989 p. 149), this paper demonstrates that this network provides a haven for girls in a community with a tradition and history of underage marriages. Through engagement in and learning about the customs and norms expected of girls, pottery making activities provide a sanctuary, which enables young girls to complete their formal education.

KEYWORDS: Pottery making, traditional art, education, girl child education, gender equality

In southwest Kenya, emanating from the mountains of Kisii county and undulating gently westwards toward the shores of Lake Victoria, is a landscape of hills and dales—a remarkable artwork of nature that forms part of Homabay County. Homabay is one of the four counties in Kenya that the Luo people occupy. The Luo people of Kenya linguistically belong to the Nilotic group, whose early migration into Kenya dates to around 500 BCE (Ehret, 1971). According to Ehret, the movement of the Nilotes was mostly southward from Sudan and eventually settled in geographic regions of Kenya suitable to their subsistence practices. Thus, the Luo settled down around Lake Victoria, where they practiced and continue to practice fishing and farming (Ogot, 1989).

The neighboring Kisii County is the homeland of my ethnic community, the Kisii (or Gusii) people, who Bower (1971) describes as "the Gusii tribe - a Bantu-speaking group in a sea of non-Bantu peoples" (p. 2) because of their Nilotic neighbors–the Luo, the Kipsigis, and the Maasai. The migration of Bantu people into present-day Kenya probably began around 1000 CE (Were & Wilson, 1968). With several centuries of coexistence and notwithstanding their

ethnic and linguistic differences, the Luo and Kisii people share some traditional practices such as pottery-making (Herbich & Dietler, 1991), which I set out to investigate beginning in the summer of 2016. At one of my research sites near Oyugis town in Homabay County, I met a women's group called *Mama Nyungu* (literally meaning "pot lady"). These women lived in various traditional homesteads arranged and built according to the Luo customary arrangements for family houses. A homestead or *dala*, several of which make up a village or *gweng*, consists of monogamous or polygamous domestic groups in which each married woman has her own separate house, granary, and a field to cultivate (Herbich & Dietler 1991; Hebinck & Mango, 2001). The Luo build their traditional houses from straw, wood, and mud or clay. When mixed with water, clay creates a mud puddle where children enjoy dancing as adults put up the house. However, to the women of Mama Nyungu, clay is for a different kind of dance, which plays a significant role in a girl's upbringing.

Mama Nyungu operated pottery-making sites in various homesteads of the nearby villages. As described by Herbich and Dietler (1991) about potter communities, members of this group lived in "homesteads clustered in close proximity to one another in the neighborhood of a clay source" (p. 108). My primary research goal at this site—a topic for separate research in progress was to study the stylistic differences between the Luo and Kisii pottery. However, during the study, a new perspective emerged, one that motivated the women to produce much pottery even when they acknowledged that there was no market readily available for their wares. A further inquiry uncovered a historical background, one informed by the drive to wrestle with existing cultural patterns to empower women through educational opportunities in post-colonial Kenya.

European influence in Kenya dates to 1846 when the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established the first Christian mission school at Rabai Kenya in East Africa with a curriculum covering the general rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic (Otiende, 1992). According to Bogonko (1990), spreading Christianity, the main goal of missionary education at the time, conflicted with the local traditional lifestyle for two main reasons. First, going to school meant that children would not be available at home to perform their daily chores. Second, missionaries asked Kenyans to discard all their traditional ways, such as making animal sacrifices to ancestral gods, which were inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible about the new way of Christian living. Nevertheless, missionary work continued and eventually paved the way to the colonial period, which effectively began towards the end of the nineteenth century after the Berlin Africa Conference. The conference, which put forth proposals to partition Africa into different colonies of European nations, was held in 1884, and its recommendations ratified in 1885, making

Kenya a British colony (Were & Wilson, 1968). The type of education provided to Africans during the colonial period largely depended on the racial attitudes of the Europeans toward Africans, as was evident in the writings of Sir Charles Eliot. He wrote, "it facilitates a better and more civilized life if natives [Kenyans] can engage in some form of trade or occupation which causes them more or less to break their old associations" (1905, p. 241). In the early days of colonization, there was no distinction made between evangelization, education, and modernization (Omwami, 2011). Instead, the British legacy looked to Christian missionary work to further the colonial agenda (Sheffield, 1973). Consequently, as the Church of England set up mission stations along the coast, more Christian missionaries spread to inland Kenya.

During colonial rule in Kenya, most ethnic groups were initially reluctant to embrace formal education in favor of the traditional system. Like most of these ethnicities, the Luo people tried to maintain the purity of their culture, which at times was at odds with the teachings of Christianity and the formal education promoted by the Christian church and the British colonial government (Evans-Pritchard, 1950; Ominde, 1952). In traditional Luo societies, according to Ominde, girls were born into a cultural pattern of life or traditional lifestyle. This lifestyle, acquired through an informal process, was moral, progressive, gradual, and practical (Otiende, 1992), and despite variations from one community to another, the goals of traditional education were similar across the cultures (Bogonko, 1990; Sifuna, 1994). For girls, Ominde wrote, activities associated with traditional education continued to be practical and aimed at preparing girls as future wives.

Ominde noted that "young girls [became] increasingly occupied with domestic work, such as fetching water and firewood, tending babies and watching the fire" (1952, p. 26). According to Otiende (1992), these activities took place locally to integrate individuals into their social group, community, and society as a means of achieving the goals of traditional education. However, formal education required children, mostly boys, to spend time at school and away from their parents. The separation of children from their parents diminished the traditional roles of education, such as socialization and cultural transmission. Instead, the colonizers delegated these roles to schools, which, according to Bogonko, served the interests of colonial education policies structured to prepare Kenyan Africans for skilled and semi-skilled labor to fill the colony's employment needs.

In the years leading to Kenya's independence, Africans embraced formal education because it promised careers in the sprawling urban centers. These centers were the places of modern living, which reflected the ideals of the Western lifestyle. The attraction to a modern lifestyle, among other factors, led Kenyans to demand

that the colonial government expand teacher training programs for African teachers in response to the growing number of African students (Bogonko, 1990). In response, the Beecher Report published in 1950 recommended that the colonial government continue with the existing system of recognizing the churches as official government agents for secular education (Sheffield, 1973). Despite this recommendation, according to Omwami (2011), the patrilineal tendencies common in most Kenyan ethnicities continued to influence women's access to education, as was evident in the colonial structure of education. For the women who accessed educational opportunities, their training was designed to complement their gender-defined roles as caregivers for their households and role model housewives (Ominde, 1952; Omwami, 2011).

The curriculum created uncertainty as to whether the education was for a homemaker or a career mother. In the context of this conflict, the Luo girl child in a rural village is burdened with household chores, which, among other factors, diminish her opportunity for schooling. Given this reduced prospect for the girl child's access to education and from the standpoint of social justice and gender equality, this paper discusses steps that a specific Luo community, the Mama Nyungu group, has taken to address the challenges of fostering and safeguarding the girl child education. Specifically, this paper demonstrates how, in a male-controlled society, a group of determined women juxtaposes formal education values with traditional teachings. These teachings are embedded in pottery-making activities to encourage young girls in a rural community to remain in school against the challenges of prevailing sociocultural norms.

Access to Education: The Role of Sociocultural Expectations

Gender disparity in access to formal education is a chief concern among educational stakeholders in Kenya, and scholars acknowledge that girls are exceedingly disadvantaged in part by the persistent and prevailing sociocultural factors, which tend to favor the education of boys (Gitonga, 2009; Kipkulei et al., 2012). As previously mentioned, during the mid-twentieth century among the Luo people, parents provided utilitarian traditional education that prepared girls as future wives and mothers. According to Ominde (1952), the goals of this education were accomplished by the girls accompanying their mothers or other older women to fetch water, till the garden, grind millet or sorghum, nurse siblings, prepare food, and other chores expected of girls. Yet, any boy who showed interest in these chores was discouraged by the mother. Ominde further noted the limitations to girls' freedoms despite daughters having higher economic value than sons. Parents were unwilling to spend much money educating a girl who would not remain in the family to help parents in their old age.

While there is nothing inherently feminine about domestic chores like cooking or laundry (Kipkulei, 2008), among the Luo and most other cultural groups of Kenya, gender roles continue to be socially defined. The notion of associating domestic chores with feminism fits into the patriarchal nature of most ethnicities and contributes to widening the gap between boys' and girls' access to education. In 2003, the Government of Kenya implemented an education for all (EFA) policy to provide free primary education (FPE) to all eligible children and illiterate adults (Chege & Sifuna, 2006; UNESCO,[1] 2015). This policy was an effort to reduce the gender gap and increase access to education in the twenty-first century.

By 2012, Kenya had made significant progress towards achieving gender parity in primary education enrollment and near parity in secondary education enrollment. Yet, according to a UNESCO (2012) factsheet, this parity did not mean achievement in universal access to primary education. Based on the data available at the time, UNESCO expressed concerns that over half of secondary school-age girls were not enrolled in secondary school because girls were more disadvantaged than boys. The gender gap in access to education is widest in rural Kenya, where extreme poverty accounts for the low enrollment of girls in secondary and tertiary education (Kipkulei, 2008; Komora, 2014). Two other factors contributing to this low enrollment are, first, traditional tendencies of a culture in which families with limited resources prefer to educate boys over girls. This preference stemmed from a cultural practice, which entitled only male children to inherit family or ancestral land because female children would be married off to live with their husbands (Hebinck & Mango, 2001).

For this reason and as previously discussed, Ominde (1952) noted that some families found no need to waste educational resources on girls, an experience through which my mother lived. My mother, who dropped out of school in the third grade, and most of my aunts of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s generations were married off because their parents could not afford to educate girls. This preference continues to be commonplace in rural areas where traditional norms are still prevalent. Mama Nyungu women were aware of and acknowledged that some aspects of traditional and modern lifestyles were at odds. Rather than being tied down to traditions, these women desired their daughters to complete school, find jobs, become career mothers, and raise families.Second, modest government involvement in rural development places an economic burden on people who are already overburdened. In the rural areas where infrastructure is poor, schools are so far apart that some students often walk for up to a mile or more to get to school. In addition to the already inadequate infrastructure, equipment in some rural schools is so minimal that classrooms lack

1 United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

necessities such as enough desks and chairs (Wambua et al., 2018). According to Alexander et al. (2014), the maintenance of existing facilities is a challenge, and the Kenya government does not provide enough resources for constructing water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities. With the limited government assistance and rather than giving up to the societal forces to choose between educating their sons over their daughters, Mama Nyungu women used their knowledge and experience to boost the morale of their daughters. The women selected and combined appropriate lessons from traditional and modern lifestyles to increase the girls' chances of staying in school and end up in careers that promised economic independence.

Research Activities

Studies on pottery-making traditions in Kenya tend to focus on historical contexts through ethnoarchaeology, which uses available information on present-day societies to recreate patterns of ancient lifestyles (Sutton, 1964; Collett, & Robertshaw, 1983; Grillo, 2014). Such studies do not necessarily account for the learning process involved in the production of the material culture. Instead, since archeological interpretations depend critically on a theoretical understanding of the nature of learning and its role in the production of material culture, Herbich and Dietler (2008) argue that this learning process cannot be studied directly in archeological contexts. In their exquisite and extensive ethnography on Luo pottery systems, Herbich and Dietler contend that "theoretical understanding must be developed in ethnographic contexts where such complex practices and processes actually can be observed by cultural anthropologists and ethnoarchaeologists" (p. 224). Thus, to understand their motivations for pottery-making, I spent eight weeks in the summer of 2016 and six weeks in summer 2017 with the Mama Nyungu group observing, participating, and talking about their activities.

In my research activities, I utilized ethnographic approaches articulated by Spradley (1979). Spradley contends that "one of the great challenges in doing ethnography is to initiate, develop, and maintain productive informant relationships" (p. 45). To create and maintain rapport with informants, I asked my research assistant to introduce me to the Mama Nyungu group as an art teacher interested in learning about traditional pottery. I was familiar with some of the Luo traditions because, in the early 1990s, I taught art at a high school in one of the Luo counties. The introduction was specific to this site because of the additional inquiry on motivations for pottery-making. Spradley identifies the essential qualities of a good informant as one with thorough enculturation and current involvement. Spradley suggests that one way to know thoroughly enculturated informants is to determine the length of time they have been on the scene. In this regard, most of Mama Nyungu women

had a pottery-making experience of at least five years, which by far exceeded Spradley's suggestion of a one-year minimum. According to Spradley, informants currently involved in a cultural setting use their knowledge to guide their actions. Such informants, Spradley writes, "review what they know; they make interpretations of new events; they apply their knowledge to solving everyday problems" (1979, p. 48-49). I interviewed Mama Nyungu women for their expert knowledge, firsthand information, and ongoing involvement in the art of pottery-making.

As previously mentioned, for fourteen weeks spread across the summers of 2016 and 2017, I spent time with the Mama Nyungu women group investigating the motivations for their pottery-making activities. Even though the group was composed of women, some men helped in supporting roles such as mining and transporting the clay to the various work sites. During such instances, I participated as one of the male assistants who helped the group with the heavy lifting. The women carried out their pottery-making activities every day from Monday to Friday. However, I spent two days a week with the group for two aspects of data collection that depended on the site I visited. The first site was at the clay source, and the second was at any of the homesteads scheduled for pottery-making activities. At the clay source, the women spent time in the mornings preparing the clay for transportation to various houses. On days I visited this site, I left home by 6 am because the ride took between one hour and one hour thirty minutes.

At the clay source, I arrived by 7:30 am to find the men, who had come by 6 am, excavating the clay using hand-held hoes. After excavation, the men shoved and placed the clay on a dry earth surface. After children left for school, the women arrived by 8 am to knead the clay body after removing stones and foreign objects. In lumps of about 20 - 25 pounds, the women wrapped the clay with banana leaves and tied it with dried banana barks. During the preparation and packaging session, my conversations with the women involved questions about their life stories such as education, marriage, family, social life, rural life, relatives in urban areas, and about the girls. Since the girls were away at school, I had the chance to learn what the women knew and thought about the girls. For example, they would say that so, and so was a little naughty and therefore needed more guidance on life matters. Alternatively, the women would say, so and so is destined to be a teacher, doctor, or other profession deemed appropriate.

At the homestead, conversations continued as I participated in the pottery-making activities with the group. For visits to this site, I left home by 2 pm to be in time for the girls' arrival time of 4 pm. I observed the manner of interaction and communication with the girls

as I listened to content in teachings and talks between the women and the girls. I took note of responses from the girls. I paid attention to how the girls (learners) performed rudimentary actions of the pottery-making process, such as identifying and deciding the type of vessel to make, cutting the clay, identifying sherds to use, preparing the working surface. I observed the girls' demeanor and reactions to instructions and the girls' attention to details of tasks. I participated in all pottery-making stages throughout the study, from mining the clay to the firing process.

Luo Pottery: Conversations with Potters

At the time of this study, the Mama Nyungu group consisted of 18 women and 29 girls from 10 homesteads of the surrounding villages. The Luo cultural distinction between "girl" and "woman" as described by Ominde (1952) is that a girl or *nyako* refers to an unmarried child (from infant through school-going age) and a woman or *dhako* is a married adult. This characterization is generally accurate across most other ethnicities in Kenya. Members of Mama Nyungu group were predominantly from nearby Luo communities, and through marriage, a few of the women were from different ethnicities. All members were fluent in Dholuo, the language of the Luo people. To achieve a comprehensive insight into the group's activities, I sought interpreters' help because some of the older women did not speak English or Kiswahili–the two national languages in Kenya. Interpreters helped me understand the content of the discussion, particularly between the older women and the young girls. I was also fortunate to find from Kisii, my ethnic group, a few women who offered clear and detailed explanations of some of the discussion topics.

The Mama Nyungu group, like other traditional Luo potters, carried out pottery activities in their homesteads throughout the year, even though there was a slow down during peak seasons for agricultural activities (Herbich & Dietler, 1991). As outlined by Ominde (1952), the women of this group acknowledged that boys, who usually slept in dormitories separated from their mothers' houses, had a lot of free time since they did not perform domestic chores. In this part of the world where days and nights each consist of 12 hours, a girl's day during the school week begins at about 5:30 am (the time of a rooster's anticipatory predawn crowing). On a typical day, the girls, most of whom sleep in the same house[2] as the mother, get up to begin household chores, including fetching water from a nearby river and preparing family breakfast.

2 In a polygamous family, girls sleep in their mother's house, but in a monogamous family, girls sleep in their parent's house.

Between 6:30 am and 7:30 am, girls prepare for school, which usually begins around 8 am. After school at about 4 pm, the girls go home to continue with domestic chores, which they typically completed at around 9 pm. One may not easily understand and appreciate these girls' predicament unless one sees and experiences the gravity of chores and responsibilities expected of them. Despite those responsibilities and the understanding that it was expected of them[3], these girls were committed to participating in the pottery-making activities performed between 4 pm and 6 pm daily during weekdays. During this two-hour window, each participating girl was supposed to spend at least one hour working with a mentor. As I observed and learned about the content of conversations between the girls and their mentors, I sensed that the activities were part of a lifelong learning pottery-making process and a means of shielding the young girls from the risks of dropping out of school.

This mentor-learner interaction provided an ideal working and learning environment for all members, where each participant made an equal contribution to the teaching and learning process to achieve an end goal or product. The content of the conversations was repetitive of similar topics touching on relationships with boys and the value of education. Besides, each learner was encouraged to develop her unique style called a hand or *ma en luet* to distinguish their work from other potters (Dietler & Herbich, 1989). Achieving excellence was through cooperation and collaboration, but more important than reaching perfection was the expectation that the girls would learn the importance of education and keep away from temptations into early marriages.

Teach Her: Your Daughter is Also my Daughter

Given the enormous amounts of time spent on pottery-making activities and advice to the girls, it was evident that the older women were primarily concerned about the future of the young girls who participated in the group's activities. It was clear to me that pottery-making was not an activity for meeting an economic need or other profitable enterprises, but rather an opportunity for school-age girls to keep busy and distracted from events that could derail their educational and career opportunities. Even though Luo potters "are not full-time specialists able to live wholly or even in large part off the earnings from their trade" (p. 107), the little earnings belong to the potter for personal use. Any little money the Mama Nyungu group made from the pottery sales helped meet some of the expenses

3 The girls' cultural setting is complex because there is not room to debate about what is expected or not expected. If adults told these girls to perform chores, the girls understood - whether they liked it - that those chores were to be completed.

associated with the young girls' education, such as books and supplies. Every mother gives valuable teaching to her daughter; after all, that is what mothers do. However, what I found unique about this group's approach was the women's emphasis on education, which they considered a path to a woman's economic empowerment.

The women were aware that girls had less time available for schoolwork than boys because of the enormous domestic responsibilities in the rural setting. To push the girls across the academic line of success, the women taught and encouraged the girls as future pillars of homes, never to give up because more domestic responsibilities awaited the girls. Instead, if the girls worked hard and succeeded in school as encouraged, they would find a job and afford house help. In supporting the girls, the women were fully aware that not every girl would make it to the university and acknowledged that even getting into vocational careers indicated a victory for the girls. The women's actions were part of a collective effort in which everyone was happy to see every girl succeed—a sign of communal effort toward a common good and a sense of shared responsibility that gave the girls a worthwhile cause for which to fight. In their endeavors, the women developed an elaborate and sophisticated approach to educating and mentoring young girls. The education was twofold; first, learning about and expectations of the Luo people's traditions and customs, and second, understanding the importance of formal schooling in liberating one from poverty, which was prevalent in the village.

Knowledge was passed from older women to young girls through two main ways. First, through the actual participation and making the girls understand that the tradition and culture required the girls to know how to use the pottery utensils. The older women taught the young girls about the functions of the various pottery. The teachings included understanding the real and ideal functions of traditional pottery, as described by Herbich and Dietler (1991), where a pot stereotypically meant for water may be used for some other ideal purpose, such as beer-drinking. Even though household products made from modern industrial processes had largely replaced traditional pottery, the women expected the young girls to apply traditional pottery knowledge to the functions of modern vessels.

Second, through conversations of real-life situations and how to handle those situations. Most of these conversations' recurring themes included the value of education and staying away from men, who might lure them into early marriage and subsequently dropping out of school. From the numerous teachings, there was a real-life example provided by one elderly lady about a local girl named Anyango[4], who worked hard through elementary school and earned

4 Not the real name of the subject

good grades, which qualified her to join a prestigious boarding high school in Kenya. Unfortunately, Anyango did not go to her preferred high school because her family could not afford the tuition required for boarding school. Notwithstanding the disappointment of not attending boarding school, Anyango settled for a local day school to pursue her secondary education. Even with her daily commute to the school of about half a mile, Anyango found time to participate in the activities of Mama Nyungu. Anyango was quite attentive and took seriously all the advice she got from the group's older women. While a rural village girl's life can be challenging as previously described, Anyango worked hard in school and scored excellent grades, which earned her a place at a government university.

At the university, Anyango studied law, was admitted to the bar, and eventually became a magistrate. The elderly lady paused, turned to a young girl in front of her, and then continued to speak. The elderly lady then said that had Anyango decided to get married before completing school, she would still be struggling in the village. Instead, said the elderly lady, Anyango made the excellent choice to listen to advice and work hard in school, ending with a promising career. The women told such stories repeatedly to remind the girls about the importance of formal education with an expectation that such repetition would help the girls remember the most important lessons—staying in school and staying away from men while in school.

Even with the Mama Nyungu teachings, it is essential to note that Luo customary practices strictly prohibited engagement in premarital sex among the youth even when boys invited girls to visit or sleep in the *simba*, or bachelor's dormitory (Evans-Pritchard, 1950). Nevertheless, the women of Mama Nyungu group understood that "the anatomical evidence a woman is required to show on her day of marriage to prove her chastity" (Ominde, 1952, p. 37) was no longer a cultural practice. Modern Luo society seemed to have ignored this commitment, and unlike in the olden days, the youth of nowadays no longer adhered to such strict norms or expectations. Nevertheless, girls in rural Luo communities continue to learn to be wary of men's tricks of luring them into marriage through real-time warnings from the women. In cautioning the girls, the women used coded language instead of a direct mention of a specific alert.

The use of such coded language was one of the few instances that I, as a participant-observer familiar with cross-cultural patterns, related to an aspect of communication, which carried implied inferences beyond the spoken word. For example, whenever the women sent the girls, say, to fetch water from a nearby river, such errands would include a warning like, "go straight to the river and come back with water and ignore any whistling sounds." Girls understood such a statement

to mean that on their way to and from the river, there would be no paying attention to distractions from any boy out there producing sounds from puckered lips. It was also apparent the women knew much about the girls, more so about those likely to play mischief. One statement I heard that reminded me of youth days was when one woman said, "I am spitting at the ground, please make sure you get back before the saliva disappears[5]." As a reminder to hurry up, such a statement would accompany a child known to be slow going or otherwise easily distracted from an assigned errand. In their situations, the girls understood that they should keep away from boys and men. In all their endeavors, the women made efforts to shield the young girls from risks of dropping out of school to see them succeed in becoming economically independent through careers such as law, medicine, teaching, or vocational trade.

Whereas I did not get much data on their success, a valuable lesson learned was that every child belonged to the society, and most of the women advocating for the girls' sociocultural liberation were those who never had formal education. Sifuna and Chege (2006) observed that Kenya was not serious about gender issues, and the absence of evidence-based interventions in rural communities continued to reproduce uneducated women, who, in turn, brought forth generations of uneducated girls, who also replicated the roles of their mothers. However, contrary to this vicious cycle, most of the Mama Nyungu women were denied access to schooling because of the very discriminatory social practices that existed in their time but now felt the obligation to call out on the tradition to put girls on equal footing with boys.

In West Africa, Callaway (1984) found that one of the primary impacts of education for girls among the Hausa people of Nigeria was the increased contact outside the confines of their households and the opportunity to find social reinforcement for the positive creation of a self with enhanced aspirations. In uplifting their daughters' ambitions and familiarizing them with the importance of female economic empowerment, Mama Nyungu women seemed to understand, as in the words of Callaway, that "through education, women themselves may change in their perception of their own rights and role" (1984. p. 442). Mama Nyungu women believed that it did not have to take the genius of an educated person to figure out the girls' schooling needs in the village. Instead, the women believed that it was their duty to help the girls because the alternative of leaving the role entirely to the school was bound to failure.

5 Metaphor for asking someone to hurry up, do it quickly, or otherwise waste no time. The metaphor makes sense in a home environment where spit saliva rapidly dissolves into the ground dust within a short time because the yard is of earth without grass.

Final Thoughts and Considerations

Since there was no apparent or significant economic benefit from the vessels' large scale production, my conversations with Mama Nyungu led to the conclusion that this endeavor was primarily for the teaching, mentoring, and protecting the girls in the local villages. In the example of Anyango, the village girl who became a magistrate, the women understood, as Nampushi and Welsh (2012) put it, that the failure of these young girls to obtain an education would be a failure to break out of poverty, which often prevented them from getting an education. The spirit of dedication evident among the Mama Nyungu members and the intentions and knowledge imparted into the young girls is a useful component of learning that could part of the mainstream school curriculum as a shared cultural value. In an earlier publication, I suggested the concept of cultural hybridity as an approach to combat the challenges of bringing together traditional cultures to coexist in national unity (Nyaberi, 2009). Similar issues also emerge from the writings of other post-colonial theorists, who support the concept of cultural hybridity as a path to cultural democracy (Giroux, 1992; Lunga, 2004; Maeda, 2009).

From the standpoint of colonization, Lunga (2004) describes hybridity as a survival strategy for cultures "caught between the languages of their colonization and their indigenous languages [in which these cultures] use colonial languages without privileging colonial languages" (p. 291). Lunga characterizes cultural hybridity as an outcome of contact between and integration of cultures in post-colonial nations. However, in a global context, one must also consider how factors such as power, market, and space bring about hybridity (Ackermann, 2012). As a dynamic basis for the politics of identity, community, and pedagogy, Giroux argues that "culture is not viewed as monolithic or unchanging, but as a shifting sphere of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experiences, and voices intermingle amid diverse relations of power and privilege" (1992, p. 24).

In this regard, I view hybridity as a global synthesis where all facets of human activity converge. To participate in this synthesis, and in the context of education in Kenya, Maeda (2009) wrote that schools should adopt the virtues of a hybrid culture to help the country achieve a realization of a democratic society in the post-colonial era. While I recognize the potential challenges of educational policy enactment, it is entirely plausible to implement a meaningful arts-based curriculum that brings cultures together. A good starting point would be with this Luo community, in which dancing in clay and making pottery provides refuge to girls who otherwise would suffer the cultural conditions that deny them educational and career opportunities equal to those of boys.

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The Pleasure of Your Company: Artstories UK, A Joyful Community-Based Art Experience

Pamela Harris Lawton, Ed.D.
Maryland Institute College of Art

ABSTRACT

This visual/video essay tells the story of the author's art-based research with immigrant youth of color in Edinburgh, Scotland. Despite experiencing racially motivated aggressions causing injury, harm, and trauma to them as individuals, and the institutions and communities they inhabit, youth created artworks expressing hope and healing as a peaceful and joyful form of resistance and resilience.

KEYWORDS:social justice art; community-based art education; creative youth development; education for hope and healing; Black joy

Life is a series of painful or joyful moments, which follow each other in an endless cycle. Whenever pain comes near us our only salvation is to seek places of beauty, joy, and peace.

- Buddha

My research and teaching for the past 18 years has focused on acts of social just165ice and transformation through art making, primarily with marginalized communities of learners across the lifespan in the U.S. and abroad. I see community-based art making as a space where people from differing backgrounds and beliefs can come together through art to learn from one another and build community (Lawton, et.al., 2019). This is my life's work. Why? Because as a Black woman I have lived in such communities and have personally experienced marginalization, despite being highly educated, middle-class, and well paid. I grew up in an intergenerational family where arts activities were commonplace, a means of socialization, teaching moral values, learning and celebrating cultural history, and developing a positive self-concept. As a facilitator of community-based art experiences I learn as much from the communities I engage with as they learn from me. The exchange is reciprocal and often transformational. Sometimes the work comes with feelings of despair, particularly when participants live in extreme poverty, suffer from poor health, lack of access to educational opportunities, quality goods, and services due to systemic oppression; making for a hard life.

Figure 1. *Author demonstrating decorative paper techniques*

Figure 2. *Paste Paper Design*

My most recent community-based art education (CBAE) research took me to Edinburgh, Scotland, a country with a very long history of persecution, violence, and hardship, but also fierce cultural pride. I was interested in parallels between the sociopolitical climate in the UK on the eve of Brexit and the Trump administration's policies in the U.S. The political climate in Edinburgh for the most part did not align with the ideals of Brexit. There were daily demonstrations outside the Scottish Parliament calling for independence from Great Britain. However, on two occasions I had conversations with folks who admired changes wrought by the Trump administration.

I was fortunate to work with SCOREscotland (Strengthening Communities for Race Equality Scotland) a youth group composed of resilient Black and Brown immigrants. SCOREscotland is housed within WHALEArts (Wester Hailes Art Center) a community arts center in the Wester Hailes community of Edinburgh, where many immigrant families have settled due to the lower cost of housing. Wester Hailes was a predominantly White community and the influx of immigrants from African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian countries has led to some tensions there. The existence of SCOREscotland is itself an act of resistance; providing positive outlets and opportunities for immigrant youth of color to engage in joyful communal acts that celebrate their cultures and build self-esteem.

Figure 3. *Creating decorative paper backgrounds for the stories*

Figure 4. *Cutting tissue paper shapes for decorative book pages*

WHALEArts provides opportunities for Wester Hailes residents to engage in art, crafts, theatre, gardening, cooking, book clubs, and more. However, most of these activities are racially and culturally segregated. Only the cooking class, set up for members of the community to make and share their food traditions, had participants from many cultures and ages, and even then, there were tensions. Initially I wanted Artstories UK to be intergenerational, multicultural and multiracial, but after speaking with the director of SCOREscotland, I realized that the immigrant youth, aged 13-18, needed their own space; a joyful and positive place free from the constant racial, ethnic, and religious aggressions they experienced at school with peers and teachers and in their neighborhood.

During my first visit to WHALEArts to meet the SCOREscotland youth and talk with them about the Artstories UK handmade book project, they were in the midst of a frank discussion with community council members about their experiences with racism at school. In the UK the role of a council member, is similar to that of an alderman or city council member in the U.S. political system. I was shocked by their stories of racially motivated aggressions with peers and teachers, wondering how they could concentrate on their studies when their teachers, who should have supported them, treated them so inhumanely. I anticipated that their handmade books would focus on negative stories of lived experience. I could not have been more wrong. Instead of focusing on negativity youth participants created handmade books expressing the joy of living, creating written and

Figure 5. *Sharing design ideas.*

visual principles to live by. For me and them creative expression became an exercise in radical hope and healing. There is a sense of hopelessness among youth of color, particularly in places like the U.S. and Europe where the sociopolitical structure views them as a threat, and seeks to silence their voices and presence in a community. "Hope, in and of itself, is an important form of resistance, both political and personal, and reaffirms what is possible, and worth fighting for" (Ginwright, 2016, p.2). Social justice activism through creative youth development is focused both inward, helping to heal wounds inflicted by systemic oppression, and outward focusing on social change (Ginwright, 2016). Not only was my time with the SCOREscotland youth pleasurable, but I learned how youth are intrinsically motivated, hopeful about the future, resilient, and self-confident in the face of often demeaning encounters and adverse environments. These youth embodied the power of positivity and demonstrated the ways in which communal art making can establish common ground from which to build healthy relationships and purposeful lives. For example, the text some participants included in their books reflect joy through resistance: "Being yourself is the best medicine you can ever taste;" "Wear your differences like a badge;" "Overcoming is something to show off. BIPOC scholars and cultural producers describe how joy and pain are two sides of the same coin

for Black people: as exemplified by gospel singer Shirley Cesar, " the world didn't give it [joy] to me, and the world can't take it away" (Lu & Steele, 2019, p. 823) and scholar Cornell West, who " asserts that, for Black folks, joy and pain live together" (Lu & Steele, 2019, p. 823). "Joy is resistance. Oppression doesn't have room for your happiness. You resist it when you find joy anyhow" (Brittany Packnett, 2017, as cited in Lu & Steele, 2019, p. 823). Community-based art education is both a labor of love, and a form of social justice activism, making it hard but joyful work. This visual/video essay recounts my artistic journey with SCOREscotland youth and the beautiful and lasting memories we made together.

Figure 6. *Constructing book forms*

Figure 7. *Finalizing the books*

Figure 8. *Completed books*

Figure 9. *Exhibition Celebration at WHALEarts*

Figure 10. *Exhibition at the Edinburgh College of Art Library*

Link to video: https://vimeo.com/363346007

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Portrait of a Poet Educator: Personal and Professional Evolution through the Arts

Shanita Bigelow
DePaul University

ABSTRACT

This narrative is a portrait of a poet and educator. It chronicles—in parts—the author's journey in and through arts education toward a life of teaching and writing. It includes a poem, "Storied," placed in parts throughout the narrative. Beneath the surface of life history, teaching experiences and experiences as a student, the author writes, as a foundation, the poem and vignettes to demonstrate the negotiations and practices inherent in shaping her work as an educator. These pieces converge to provide a brief and nuanced look at how education through the arts can lead to personal/professional evolution and a sense of empowerment.

KEYWORDS: art education, poetry, narrative, autoethnography, self-reflection, praxis

And I began to recognize a source of power within myself that comes from the knowledge that while it is most desirable not to be afraid, learning to put fear into perspective gave me great strength.

(Lorde, 2007, p. 41)

I don't remember the first book I read or the first poem I wrote. I don't even know the first words I said. I don't know what came first, what first of many set me on my current path, but I do know what has stayed, what stuck and how to see past present fear, reservation or elation toward possibility—toward something more. Call it hope, call it imagination or foresight. Call it what you will. For me, a Black woman, a poet, an educator, the future has often been a scary place, thus neglected. I learned that to see is more than gauging the present, more than earning the now; it is a remarkable feat of will.

This essay is about my journey. While it's not a complete portrait, the pieces—narrative in nature, autoethnographic in method—I hope, demonstrate that will and showcase the possibilities, the impact poetry and, by extension, the arts have had on my life—academic

and otherwise. Interspersed throughout is a poem, in parts, called "Storied." And, there are other refracted reflections of my art educational experiences.

I'll take breaks throughout the essay for the poem, for vignettes of experiences that have come into focus. These moments or breaks serve as pieces of a larger tapestry, one that reminds me to work and not stop, one that compels me to listen and recognize the positive potential of new modes of learning, teaching, living, being. This narrative, as both story and inquiry, as witnessed and lived, can, as Dalia Rodriquez (2006) wrote, "serve as a powerful means of creating a site of resistance" (p. 1069). Further, she wrote, "storytelling can teach people about how one can construct both story and reality" (p. 1070). That is arts education for me—a site of inquiry and creation. Inquiry in terms of reflexivity and creation in the sense that that inquiry forms a path, a direction for one's own reality.

I come from a place, a neighborhood, a city many deemed dangerous. There is truth to that. There was much to fear and there were many times when I was afraid. I grew up in a single-parent home. But home was also where I flourished, where I learned to see beyond the danger of the everyday and find, anchor myself in the possibilities of next, of tomorrow.

I'm from a mid-sized urban center in the Southeast. I come from a predominantly Black neighborhood. There was violence and crime. And there were a couple parks nearby and friends and we'd ride our bikes and have cookouts and sleepovers. It is still such a place. It is a place like any other, one that houses the good and bad, one that brings joy and grief, that challenges me to recognize all of that within myself.

So what? Right? Well, exceptionalism aside, some don't make it. While I'm sure others may say I showed promise, the truth is I struggled early in school in the sense that I didn't quite fit. Was it not for my mom who cared so intensely she'd do anything to ensure her children's success, who knows? Whatever promise existed in my brain didn't come out of my mouth, not much did. I was what most would consider a shy kid, and I avoided class participation for as long as I could. So, there must have been something wrong with me, right? Not so according to my mom, who knew it was just a matter of method and community. She placed her kids in the best possible environments (swim lessons at the YMCA for example), encouraged us to find our own way and surrounded us with care.
Seems simple. I knew early how fortunate I was.

With that, I found my way. I read and read and read and I began to write, to journal. I eventually made it into our elementary school's

afterschool arts program. I continued all of that for as long as I could. While I loved to draw and paint (once I learned), I reveled in words, in books and the blank page.

I began writing to understand the world: the beautiful, the brash—as much of it as I could. I began writing to see me, to hear me more clearly. I continued because it was my method of expression and response. And I remain a writer for many of the reasons Rodriguez outlines: "I write to face my fears…I write to face that which I may have unknowingly repressed for days, maybe years. I write to erase invisibility…and I write to free myself from my inner hidden masks" (p. 1080). Expression is always about and always more than the expressed. So, I write. Some may say, "Well, you had an aptitude for it." Maybe. But then I say, we all have an aptitude for something. Maybe it's an aptitude for mechanics or engineering, maybe it's compassion, maybe it's simply the ability to listen or synthesize and analyze (and not just in an academic sense), maybe it's the ability to complicate, to problem solve, to challenge. Whatever it may be, there's space for its positive development.

I remember sitting in on a graduate level critique as an undergraduate studio art major. The artist rendered three or four portraits or children by using a blowtorch, a medium that required subtle and thoughtful manipulation. The portraits were clear, but light. There was enough contrast to distinguish their faces, to see them. A professor asked the artist why there wasn't more contrast, why they weren't as sharp as they could be. The artist responded—and I don't remember what she said. But I remember wanting to say something like: "Maybe they shouldn't be so sharp, so defined. They're kids. They're still becoming." At any rate, the lack of definition made sense to me. The delicacy of definition makes sense to me. We owe ourselves and each other time to settle into ourselves. I'm still settling, still trying to find the words to support it.

I began writing to better understand my feelings, family dynamics, school assignments, what I'd read, etc. Writing was the only way to make sense of anything: it helps me to be still and distill experience. Writing is a process for me to better process texts, conversations, life. I found in writing a vessel and a vehicle through which to make sense and explain sense, to make matter and to matter, to make meaning and make meaningful.

Poetry is a tool for making sense. I turned to writing poetry, to reading more of it, to listening to it, to seeking it out. I find joy in it. It is both a deep dive and a wide expanse. I find the concision and precision with which poetry makes its mark—that and the imagery and sound, a coming to/return to the senses—to be a means of recognizing the importance and purpose of intentional reflection.

That a moment in my life or a moment in history, that a painting or a crumpled newspaper or a cup of coffee or loss of any kind or the sound of laughter, can be and remain resonant through the space of time is immensely powerful and heartening. Writing poetry is deep-seated, and at times, painful, difficult, but in the end, there is a sense of elation or more subtly, a genuine sense of calm or contentment.

Storied - Part 1:
My name, the name I'm called slides through teeth, salve of the misinformed me. I can't remember who said it first. I'm all beginnings, so many I've lost track of which follows which, what's to come.

I don't know who I am in the way a person knows
exactly where they stand. I question ground, every sod-covered hill:
crabgrass mocks how I've come to call myself myself,
what captured me in the first place.

Creative assignments come and go in school: dioramas and papier mache masks, comic strips and, in my case, a little poetry collection fashioned in the style of the work of Shel Silverstein. The comic strip I remember featured a black girl named Lucy with an oval face and two ponytails. I don't know why I named her Lucy, but there are times when I look in the mirror and see her joyful face. She was me then, a futurity at the time, but I didn't want to see it that way. I denied her. She was just a character. She was bright-eyed, precocious. She fit in and didn't care. She fit in because she didn't care if she fit in. Her world a mirror to my own, an upside-down response to my middle school reality. And I quietly let her be.

The poetry in me came and went and stayed. And, at some point I acknowledged, accepted and attempted to grow it. Before that, it was just me and my feelings, me unwrapping the world, attempting to fix it together again. Lucy understood it. She stood tall and proud—a me imagined confident, purposeful. I imagine a time, a self capable enough to shoulder all the memory of her, all the weight of her future in my own, my given name, in me—all the joy pronouncing it brings me now.

Recollection assumes both stasis and change. The memory of Lucy, of that assignment, of the unconfident and often ashamed middle-school-me, quiet yet sturdy me, is both horrifying and helpful. I remember as me today, not as me then and so the shift in time necessarily shifts the meaning of that time. It's as if I'm reimagining Lucy, even now, and reimagining middle-school-me.

There was much to learn, much and many to avoid, and I found solace in words and images, in the makings of my own hands, my mind. For my well-being, I imagined myself into a different reality,

constructed one, where danger wasn't as dangerous, and if it was, I knew how to get past it—where my thoughts could subvert its power. My sight shifted. I learned to see differently and as a result, be differently. Adrienne Rich (2009) wrote of the imagination:

> Yet the imagination—the capacity to feel, see what we aren't supposed to feel and see, find expressive forms where we're supposed to shut up—has meant survival and resistance…We may view the imagination as a kind of gated, landscaped neighborhood—or as a river, sometimes clogged and polluted, carrying many kinds of traffic, including pollen and contraband, but in movement: the always-regenerating impulse toward an always-beginning future (p. 92-93).

I choose river—the unencumbered and unruly coursing of all things. Nothing is as neat as we think it should be. Art, poetry taught me that—hardship and setback taught me that, and that that's okay. There's a plurality of being identified in the arts, in living and learning through and with them.

I haven't always believed in my future—"always-regenerating": yes; an "always-beginning future": not exactly. Growing up, I took it day by day, moment by moment—still do. I'm only just beginning (and it pains me to write this) to become more exacting about my future—believing in its concreteness. I have a future. I am a future.

There's a part of me that's always known that, hence getting through school, working, trying to be a responsible adult. But all that pollen and contraband, that doubt—a kind of slippage into self-neglect—can take root. I've always written myself, rivered myself through it. Poetry became a vehicle, a tool that translated into/from closer readings of assigned and unassigned texts. Writing felt like everything, but I also had family and supportive teachers and friends. Writing became the place for all that and everything else.

What is it that we possess? I think of students I've worked with, what they consistently brought to the table, what they sought sort of intuitively and sometimes asked for. It pays to pay attention, I've learned. Poetry and art sharpened my sight and hearing, prepared me for change, for perspectival shifts (my own and those of others), for hurt, for the uneventful, and for life's inevitable emergencies.

There is pain in much of my poetry. In sharp contrast to the brightness of Lucy are the estranged shapes of the inner emotive space—the stuff beneath the surface and deeper. I learned through creative exercises, through writing that both the bright and the buried exist simultaneously, that there's a hardiness and elegance to both.

Storied - Part 2:
I can't whistle. To sound my space, I
swing my arms, one then the other, like oars.
They cut the air, any belief I've held.

My story read, re-read—symbol transposed, shared.
Who believes? Story: foresight and oversight, misappropriation
of piedmont and hillock. It's how I roll.

I've crowded the streets of my learning with all my perceived missteps, all the falls, the near misses, all the questions rendered unanswerable, all the silences I've gripped—still hold onto. Learning as myself is always me learning myself—who I am today, in this space with these people, and what do I have to say, what can I say? Why have I chosen to write into the moment and after? There is something more—a not letting in and/or a not letting go.

Tenth grade English class—American Literature: we read about Robert Johnson at the crossroads between damnation and salvation, between want and responsibility. Our teacher posed a question—straightforward as I remember it. There was no response. I remember being on the edge of my seat, not literally, with a response itching my tongue and yet, the silence remained. We didn't get far into that lesson, and I felt I could've changed that, but I chose not to. Why? I'm asking myself now. I had something to say. What is it that pauses me to the point of no return? What solace is to be found in that kind of pulsing silence? Perhaps it is the pulse itself, a sort of foreground for knowledge in process—taking shape, for the words to one day come, for the thoughts, the self-theorizing to come. Perhaps I imagined myself in Johnson's position between the safety of desire and the fear of responsibility or reality or some other thing that can't quite be named—that thing that pushes us toward decision when decision is uncomfortable.

As I reflect on these educational moments, on my feelings then and now as they come back to me, I'm reminded that reflection can be a guise. As Baszile (2008) wrote of her own experiences in becoming a reflective practitioner: "Reflection—in this sense—often becomes rationalization" (p. 372). She continued, "The question I seek to answer is quite simply, what does teacher reflection work to repress?" (p. 373). What is it, if we take that statement broadly—what is it that I'm avoiding in all of this? What is that I'm not saying? Why?

Storied - Part 3:
It's how I roll greens, pour rice—the way I say
'See ya' and 'hell.' It's the catch of my t's, real soft
dialectical glitch.

Self, myself, the self witnessed in everyone else—
a self most self, enough of her to justify the heat dressing
my tongue.

As an educator, I've worked with students of all ages. And what propelled the work, what propelled me was simple: I believe in the learning process, and I believe we're all capable of forwarding what we know and what we think we know, toward choice and belief.

Instructors had to find other ways to hear and see me. And they did. For me, the arts provided voice and direction. The arts were the road, the path out—one that is steep and cracked. It has not been an easy way to go. There is, as always, much uncertainty. But what holds one together, what holds me together is that belief, belief in all our knowledges and experiences. And, so as an educator, I had to find other ways too.

As an adjunct instructor at a small midwestern university, I was asked to teach a speech class. Though I felt ill-prepared for such a task, and it showed—my students, that first day of class could sense my nervousness and expressed their own about it. I attempted to reassure them, and by the end of the course, the nervousness—for all of us—had dissipated.

Challenge summons creativity and problem solving. What was I going to do? How does someone who is quiet, who avoids speaking, especially publicly, teach a speech class? Easy. I knew I wasn't the expert, so I went to them—I found them in texts and other media—and we practiced, all of us in different capacities. I learned to be more flexible and confident in my choices, to let go—just a bit.

Storied — Part 4:
Tell me the story of my story,
the one written in feet—all those miles,
memories and back—weight outlined in soil,
words displayed in ground, in forbearance,
a diptych—above and below.

Baldwin (1963/2010) wrote, "Art is here to prove, and to help one bear the fact that all safety is an illusion. In this sense, all artists are divorced from and even necessarily opposed to any system whatever" (p. 42). We're a wild bunch, and often sincere in our crafts, honest in our approaches to living and learning, perhaps too prideful in our becoming. I often think I'm not safe. That the illusion of safety is a dangerous trick of the mind. But there's also part of me that requires a brace at the crossroads, something to hold my weight should I waffle too long before choosing a path. I resist systems predicated on a damaging sense of failure, the kind that presumes the only way

forward is already in motion, that there is only one way out. It's the kind of system that perceives me as another of some other; the kind of system that never recovers from its loss of fidelity and innovation—a system without grace.

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The Joy of Finding Community in an Intergenerational LGBTQIA+ Arts Program

Harrison Orr, M.A.
Museum of Contemporary Art Tuscon

ABSTRACT

This article explores the potential for community building within an intergenerational, LGBTQIA+ arts workshop known as Stay Gold. I describe my personal experiences as an art educator in such an environment, as well as my journey to finding a community. I hope to become a stronger educator through self-reflection and to inspire other educators to seek out communities of their own.

KEYWORDS: LGBTQIA+, arts program, museum education, art education, self-reflection, narrative inquiry, autobiographical narrative, community

My art... is...
personal… my life...
is...
personal… how can I
share that with others.
I am gay...
queer… I am a gay man,
I make gay… queer
art.
The one thing I care most
about… my art. My
weird… gay... queer art.
This is me...
scattered...
jumbled...
disconnected...
queer.

Introduction

As art educators, we naturally center our practice around the needs of the students. They are, of course, the reason we are teaching in the first place. When I first started to teach and write about art education, I told myself to focus solely on the needs of learners, as if I didn't

have any as an educator. I thought it would be perceived as selfish
I thought it would be perceived as selfish to explore my own identity as a queer [1] art educator. Both my family and I worried that I could face discrimination in K-12 settings due to my sexual orientation. Two years in a social justice-oriented art education graduate program at The University of Arizona (UA) taught me that my identity does matter and that it's okay to be vulnerable. A course on community art education taught by Dr. Carissa DiCindio showed me that I can find a teaching environment in which I feel comfortable being myself. What will follow is the story of how I found community in Stay Gold, an intergenerational LGBTQIA+ arts program held at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson (MOCA) and the joy it continues to bring me

Program Background

Stay Gold started as a class project in a graduate course focused on public pedagogy at the University of Arizona in 2017. The program was designed as an extension of Mapping Q, an afterschool arts program for LGBTQ youth jointly organized by The University of Arizona Museum of Art (UAMA) and Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF). Stay Gold's three-session pilot program was held in a classroom on UA's campus. Bringing together LGBTQIA+ elders and youth, the initial Stay Gold program was focused on storytelling through zines and also included a visit to UAMA (Burke & DiCindio, 2019). Eli Burke, a current PhD candidate in AVCE at the University of Arizona and Education Director at MOCA, was one of the co-founders of the program and now fully oversees it. Under Burke's leadership, Stay Gold has now grown into a biannual 10-week program held at MOCA that offers participants the opportunity to work in a variety of mediums while interacting with the exhibits on display, as well as one another.

More recently, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a digital version of Stay Gold has emerged. Two rounds of 10-week digital programs were held through the late spring and summer of 2020 (Burke, 2020). Stay Gold is intended to make the museum more accessible to LGBTQIA+ individuals, one of many groups of underserved populations in museums. Traditional curatorial and educational practices prevent genuine inclusion and diversity in museums (Jennings & Jones-Rizzi, 2017). Social justice-oriented practices seek to disrupt this culture of exclusion.
While my experience with MOCA has been positive because of the

type of programming offered there, it is important to note that this is not necessarily the norm in museums across the country. Stay Gold is currently joined by only two other *reoccurring* museum programs for queer participants: Mapping Q at UAMA and InterseXtions at the

Brooklyn Museum (Aleman, Ehrlich, & Harris, 2018). I hope there are more out there that I have not found yet or that there are more to come. Without programs specifically intended for queer participants, these individuals will continue to feel left out of museums all together.

Autobiographical Narrative & Queer Theory

Narrative inquiry is a method by which researchers can better understand the world through the lived experiences of individuals. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) state that "…education and educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories" (p. 2). Autobiographical writing is one of a variety of potential data sources available in narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry can inform teaching practices, curriculum, educational policy, and teacher preparation programs, among many other aspects of education. Dewey (1910) encouraged the use of self-reflection by teachers, suggesting that experiences hold educational value only when reflected upon.

In this article I will describe personal experiences that explore the connection between my identity as a gay man with a history of depression and anxiety and my developing practice as an art educator. I will utilize narrative, prose, and images to tell my story. Educators before me have made use of autobiographical narrative as a method of research, allowing them to reflect on their place in the field of art education and their teaching practices (Broome, 2014; Check, 2012; Rolling, 2010). Some educators have written autobiographical narratives that don't necessarily require a stated methodology; these have come in the form of commentaries or creative formats, such as graphic novels (Branham, 2016; Burke, 2019). Still, others reflect not only on their own experiences, but aslo those of other educators or preservice teachers, who have shared their stories through interviews, writings, or artworks (Blair, 2014; Check & Ballard, 2014; Unrath & Kerridge, 2009; Unrath & Nordlund, 2009). I am particularly moved by the first-hand accounts of queer art educators (Burke, 2019; Check, 2012), but there are not enough of these stories in art education publications. This is, perhaps, due in part to a fear of losing their jobs or other perceived personal and professional repercussions of revealing their sexual or gender identity in connection to their profession (Check, 2010).

Queer theory exposes the power dynamics that make it difficult for us to express ourselves fully. I take my understanding of queer theory from the writings of other art educators (Bey & Washington, 2013; Gretman, 2017; Sanders & Gubes Vaz, 2014). Through my scholarship, I hope to increase the visibility of queerness in art

education and challenge power dynamics that are present in the academy, museums, and society as a whole. Queer autobiographical narratives challenge the binary system's definition of normal and promote visibility and self-awareness. Similar to Ed Check (2010), I have sought out queer stories to inform my teaching practice and in return hope to contribute my own narratives to the field, so that another educator may someday benefit from reading them. While I have also often hesitated to identify myself as a queer art educator, the danger of remaining invisible is much greater. Just as queer students benefit from learning about queer artists (Lampela, 1995), queer educators benefit from reading the narratives of those who came before them. Queer theory guides my exploration of identities, spaces, and events, unbinding my experiences from the heteronormative world. This allows me to define my identity and my place in society and education, rather than having them defined by me.

Finding Community

On the first day of Dr. DiCindio's community art education class, I stared at a green chalkboard with the word *community* written neatly across it. She asked the class to contribute to a definition of the term. As I stared at the word, an anxious feeling started to grow inside me. I get a little edgy and aloof when I'm anxious. I hyperfocus on whatever it is that's making me anxious, as if nothing else exists. Worriedly flipping through the syllabus, I saw a list of all the places we would be visiting throughout the semester, all the people I would have to talk to, people who I assumed wouldn't like the art I made or the ideas I had. I quickly translated the syllabus into my own internal, irrational language and every page seemed to say, "*You don't belong here.*" I looked back at the board. The word had become twisted, crooked, thorny, unwelcoming. I hadn't realized it before this incident, but I didn't like the word community. I felt some sort of indescribable animosity towards the word… towards the concept. When I heard it, I immediately thought of exclusion. I thought of straight people, normal people, people who don't have to deal with mental illness, people who naturally fit the binary mold. I thought of 1950's television families: The Nelsons and The Cleavers.[2] Each with a perfect, plastic lawn and a perfect house made of plywood, sitting on a studio backlot. *You don't belong here.* I knew I didn't belong when, as a kid, watching reruns on late night TV, I found myself attracted to the male characters: Wally Cleaver, Theo

2 The Nelsons and The Cleavers are fictional families in the television sitcoms, Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet (1952-1966) and Leave It to Beaver (1957-1963) respectively (IMDb.com). Both of these families were white, middle-class examples of the supposed ideal American family. The Nelsons were portrayed by an actual family, but their characters are fictionalized versions of themselves.

Huxtable, Peter Brady[3] . As my satirical illustration below suggests, my television set could have told me I was queer.

Figure 1. *You're Queer by the author, 2019, ink with digital coloring.*

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I grew up in a small suburban town in Connecticut that lacked a visible gay community. I only knew a few other gay kids in high school, none of whom I was particularly close with due to my social anxiety. I was lucky enough to have gone mostly unnoticed and unscathed during this time. I didn't have any meaningful interactions with other queer people until I started college in Arizona. Just as I had learned that I was different from television, I also learned how to be gay from television, or so I thought. It turns out that *Queer as Folk*[4] does not serve as a practical guide for interacting with other gay men. My undergraduate experience was tumultuous, to say the least. In my third semester of college, I discovered a group of gay friends, but

3 Wally Cleaver, Theo Huxtable, and Peter Brady are fictional characters from Leave It to Beaver (1957-1963), The Cosby Show (1984-1992), and The Brady Bunch (1969-1974) respectively (IMDb.com). I watched reruns of these sitcoms as a child in the late 90's and early 2000's.

4 Queer as Folk is a hyper-sexualized television drama about a group of gay, white friends that ran on Showtime from 2000 to 2005 (IMDb.com). I watched this series on DVD during my first year of college.

I never quite fit in. Social pressures weighed on me as I struggled to connect with other gay men. Halfway through college, I was diagnosed with generalized anxiety and clinical depression. While I had shown signs of both of these conditions growing up, they suddenly hit me with a force I had never felt before. I developed an anxiety-induced eating disorder, something that would control my life for the next six years. I became too wrapped up in the wrong things and I lost sight of my studies, as well as the community I yearned to be a part of. I was not in the right state of mind to contribute to a community at this time. My peers were ill equipped to be the support system I needed and those who did try to help were in over their head. My behavior was erratic. I couldn't think clearly because my mind and body were not whole. Every aspect of my life suffered because of my eating disorder. I was isolated in a dark place. Real life was proving to be much harder than it appeared to be on television. The image below references my feelings during this difficult period of my life, particularly the feeling that I was stuck with the disorder no matter what I did. When I finally sought professional help, the healing process was neither quick nor easy.

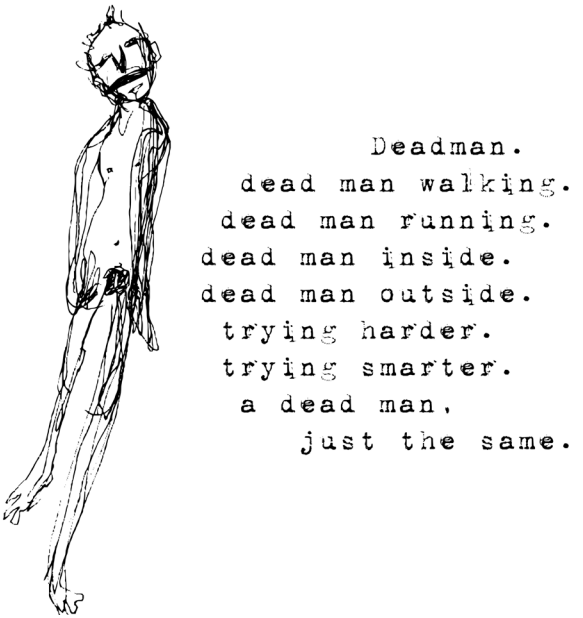

Figure 2. *Deadman by the author, 2019, ink with digital lettering.*

After a six years long battle, the eating disorder had finally been beat. Though it took longer, the depression and anxiety eventually became manageable. I regained eighty pounds after recovering from the eating disorder. I finally felt human again, no longer a walking skeleton. I had lived in New York City and Boulder, Colorado after graduating and in May of 2015, I made my way back to Tucson for a job unrelated to art education. I tried to reconnect with my old friends, but it didn't feel right. The past still lingered in the air. I had to look to the future, letting go of things that could not be changed. I buried myself in a job I felt little passion for. I kept my head above water by pouring my soul into artwork I didn't share with anyone. I didn't have anything even resembling a community and that bad feeling about the concept was probably brewing inside of me at this point. Yearning for something more for my career and life, I eventually convinced myself to go back to school. Soon after beginning a graduate program in Art & Visual Culture Education (AVCE) at the University of Arizona, I began to form bonds with peers and instructors.

Con...temp...or...ary
art. Am I a con...artist in a
hetero world? A squiggle in a
row of straight lines? I am
queer. Contemporary. I am
contemporary. My thoughts
are contemporary. My art is
contemporary. This is
relevant. I am relevant. My
art is relevant. This feels
right.

My sense of community greatly evolved when I became involved with Stay Gold. Dr. DiCindio took my class to MOCA to meet Eli Burke. We learned about museum education and began to plan an activity for Stay Gold, which we would then co-facilitate. I was immediately drawn to the space at MOCA. Just from our initial meeting with Eli, it seemed like a place where I could get involved and flourish. I mentioned to Eli that my research interests involved queer identities and he suggested that we work on a project together. Happy to make a connection with a like-minded person, I felt invigorated to work with the Stay Gold participants on the activity my classmates and I were planning. We were asked to center our activity around queer spirituality to relate to the exhibit that was on display at the time, titled Blessed Be: Mysticism, Spirituality, and The Occult in Contemporary Art. We collectively decided to make air-dried clay vessels that symbolized our souls, spirits, or bodies. Participants could, of course, interpret the activity in any way they saw fit to express their own concept of spirituality.

The Stay Gold group, made up of various generations, was receptive to my classmates and myself. We introduced the project, sharing example vessels we had made in our classroom. Due to my lack of experience with clay, I stuck with a simple phallus-shaped object, perhaps to bring a little humor to a new experience, in an effort to calm my social anxiety. The participants worked and talked in harmony. We were available to assist as needed, but in general, participants were confident enough to try new things on their own.

One of our classmates, Gus Meuschke, who identifies as Chinese, Alaskan Native, and white, volunteered to lead a spiritual activity at the end of the workshop. Inspired by the Chinese tradition of burning Joss paper for ancestral offerings, Gus planned to have the group burn paper in a bowl outside the museum. Participants would be invited to write something of meaning to them on the paper before burning it. The act of molding a vessel and then burning the Joss paper was intended to provide participants with a spiritual experience in which they could reflect on their queer identities and those around them, pay tribute to those who came before them, or to relieve themselves of grief. Participants scribbled words on their papers and took turns tossing them in the fire. At times somber, and at other times joyous, the participants appeared to be engaged in the activity. While the activity connected to a research project Gus was working on about his Chinese grandfather's immigration trial, he later questioned his use of Joss paper in this particular setting, unsure of the participants' understandings of the tradition. He reflected on both the potentials for learning and possible pitfalls of cross-cultural exchange in a museum (G. Meuschke, personal communication, July 19, 2020).

I feel (mostly)
comfortable sharing myself
in a room full of queer
people. (Un)comfortable
because everything makes me
(un)comfortable, but
comfortable because I'm
safe. Safe because it's
queer… contemporary… a
lovely evening it has been…
the air… the people…
it's all so… queer.

Defining Community

I soon became a more permanent member of the Stay Gold community when Eli offered me an internship co-facilitating the Spring 2019 season. More than a year later, I have now facilitated three 10-week seasons of Stay Gold, each time with a different co-

facilitator. I have seen both familiar and new faces each season. I have seen my community change, grow, and strengthen as some stay for a while and others, for a long time. Throughout my time with Stay Gold, I have considered the meaning of community, to further understand why this group means so much to me and others involved with it. Community is not something that can be defined from a singular perspective. It means many different things to different people. In my quest to define the term, I initially turned to psychology books with clear, concise definitions. However, as someone who channels raw, queer emotions through my artwork and everything I do, these definitions did not feel authentic to me. A clinical description of community would not suffice. I therefore turned to queer scholars, feminists, art and museum educators, and visual artists for guidance. Rather than the clinical, sterile, concise definition of community, I am interested in its unruly, emotional, queer counterpart. Feminist theorist Starhawk (1982) beautifully defines community from a Neopaganist perspective:

> Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free. (p. 92).

Consider the beauty in these words. In stark contrast to my previously perceived notions of community as a body of exclusion, Starhawk paints a picture of friends, hands, voices… all welcoming and healing in perfect harmony. This is not a community defined by geography, nor is it a mainstream heteronormative community that creates barriers for outliers to participate. How does one find such a community, one that they belong to perfectly? I desire the circle of healing, of friends, but I often feel displaced, caught between changing spaces, none of which feel like my own. Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) addresses this feeling of displacement associated with queerness and intersectionality:

> As a mestiza I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) (p. 102).

The queer in us is in all races, genders, languages, places. There is not a shadow on earth that does not have queerness in it. Everyone's circle, everyone's community may look different. We transcend

what is expected of us and descend upon our new home, where we feel right. I have contemplated visions of community through image-making. I have defined my circle of healing as one that does not place emphasis on roles assigned by a larger society. My circle consists of oddballs and outcasts, of thinkers and lovers, of the creative, the accepting, and the nurturing. Above all else, my circle, my community, is queer. The image below is my visual representation of community: queer people joined together, hand-in-hand, not afraid be themselves. It is also intended as a statement of solidarity with my friends who are not cisgender, all of whom are important members of my community.

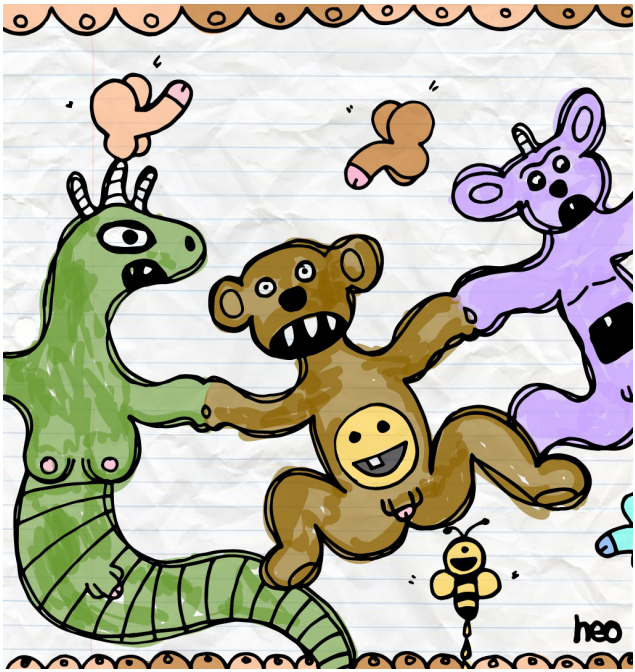

Figure 3. *Gender is a Construct by the author, 2019, ink with digital coloring.*

As a scholar and art educator, my sense of community intersects with multiple environments, including classrooms and art museums. Despite my experience, many marginalized individuals may not view museums as a place where they can find a community. I also, felt this way before I discovered Stay Gold. Art education can, perhaps, serve as a tool for addressing this issue of inclusion and help museums form welcoming communities. Though there is not a general consensus in the field of art education on the definition of community (Campana, 2011), the concept has been addressed by former museum director Nina Simon (2016) through the lens of museum programming:

> A community is a group of people who share something in common. You can define a community by the shared attributes of the people in it and/or by the strength of the connections among them. You need a bunch of people who are alike in some way, who feel some sense of belonging or interpersonal connection. (Part 3.1)

A sense of belonging, interpersonal connections, and shared attributes are key themes in Simon's definition of community. Without them, a community would fail to thrive. Museums and other spaces for learning can serve as places where these elements converge. When museums offer programming that brings people with shared experiences together, drawing people out from the fringes of the larger community, new bonds are formed and new connections are made between humans, the museum, and the artwork, forging a circle of belonging.

The larger LGBTQIA+ community can be difficult to navigate and is divided into segments based on varying identities, such as Lesbians, gay men, and transgender individuals. It is further divided by age, race, and other factors. Therefore, the museum has the ability to serve as an important meeting place for queer people interested in contemporary art who may have felt disconnected from the larger queer community, as I have. Researcher David Woolwine (2000) describes the gay community as an imaginary concept. An anonymous participant in his study on the gay community echoes a sense of fracture within the larger community:

> I'm not sure there is a community per se. I think there are multitudes of communities who have a loose alliance over the fact that they share some sexual… habits. Other than that I don't know if there is a community. I think you go to a Gay Pride Parade and you see all the variety of communities that come there. To say that they're all one community would be stretching it a little. (p. 12).

Since I didn't feel like I fit in with other groups, it was a relief to find a sense of community in Stay Gold. As the participant in Woolwine's study suggested, there are many communities of queer people, often based on race, gender identity, and socioeconomic status. A beautiful thing about Stay Gold is that these artificial barriers are torn down. People are free to be themselves and to commit to their own art and to enjoy the company of one another. The image below is a whimsical take on community, exploring the joy we experience together.

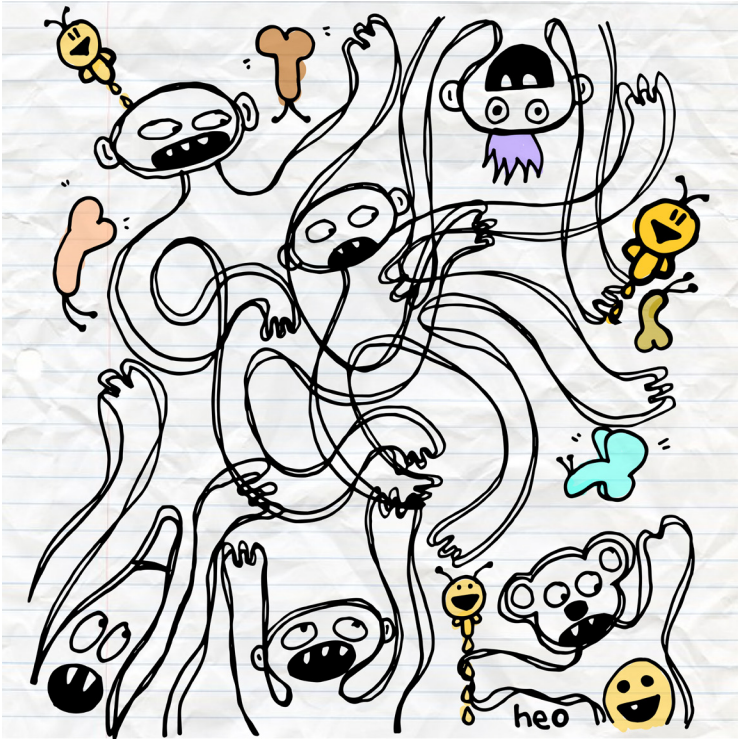

Figure 4. *Don't Let the Bees Pee on You by the author, 2019, ink with digital coloring*

Reflection

Stay Gold has helped me overcome some of my inhibitions and has taught me to embrace other people, welcoming them into my heart. I am now more capable of working through social anxieties and I am able to commit myself to meaningful friendships with others in the group. I have greatly enjoyed working with each and every individual who has come to Stay Gold. They all have their own reasons for coming to the program, but in the end, we are bonded by a common goal of creating a community through art. There is great momentum in museums for educational programming directed towards underserved populations. Of the museum experience, Nina Simon (2016) writes:

> Instead of asking: "How should we script the experience?" we could ask: "What do our visitors most desire? What's in their hearts? How could we start by getting to know them, and then build an experience based on that?" (Part 3.7)

Simon's quote resonates with me as an art educator. I want to know what's in my participants' hearts, what they desire, and what they need from me and the museum. I learn more about the unique individuals at Stay Gold each time I talk to them. A couple that recently moved to Tucson told me that they had come to Stay Gold for the intergenerational aspect. They are both retired and spend most of their time at home making art and reading, so they are eager to interact with others, especially those with youthful energy. A returning participant told me that she had recently experienced a violent altercation. Stay Gold was the only thing she was willing to leave the house for that week. My eyes filled with tears as she told me this and I hugged her and assured her she was in a safe place and that she belonged there.

When participants allow themselves to be vulnerable, I do the same in return. I value Stay Gold participants, and in return, they make me feel valued. That is one of the greatest joys of finding a community. These moments are what tell me that I have truly succeeded in my quest to belong. I encourage all art educators to search within themselves and consider the environment in which they work. If you haven't found a community there, one that you connect with on a much deeper level than your paycheck, then ask yourself why that is. Where do you belong, and where will you flourish? I believe that educators can serve a purpose beyond the instruction of art by activating the potential for spaces of learning to form communities.

Communities are made up of a multitude of bodies that transcend their own being to become a part of a whole. A good community environment embraces the differences of its members, never striping an individual of their unique identity. I have speculated about the relationship between our bodies, our community, and the place in which our community comes together. How do we exist differently when we are in that space? If I hadn't become a part of Stay Gold, what would it look like without me? It would still be functioning perfectly fine, but what does a body look like when it is missing a piece? Unlike the disjointed, hectic figures in my art, I believe the body of a community is more resilient and will, therefore, reshape itself when one piece goes missing. Stay Gold was a wonderful community before I came to it, and I imagine it will remain so with or without me.

I believe Stay Gold will have a greater effect on me, as an art educator and human, than I ever could on the program itself. The lessons I learn and the connections I make will remain with me in my journey. Our impact on a community is meaningful, whether it be fleeting or long-lived. Wherever an art educator ends up, there is always potential for creating something meaningful. Whether you

create something new or drop in for a bit, each of us has something new to offer, as well as something to gain. While it may seem like the odds are against us, defying long-held traditions of exclusion in museums, there is always hope. I encourage educators to either seek out pre-existing programs that promote inclusion or to create their own. This sometimes requires finding an institution with leadership that shares our desire for inclusive programming, other times we can make small, but meaningful changes in environments that aren't as supportive overall. Perseverance and determination are key in the journey for inclusion and equality. No matter where we go, always remember that our identities matter and that the formation of a supportive community is possible.

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Tarot as a Technology

Hong-An (Ann) Wu, Ph.D.
University of Texas at Dallas

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I situate Tarot at the worldmaking juncture where anti-oppression meets technological innovation among social justice activist communities in the United States. The adoption, appropriation, and adaptation of Tarot and other delegitimized technologies by and for marginalized communities to cultivate imaginations informed by ancestral wisdoms demonstrates the resilience and resourcefulness of social justice activism. In light of these innovations, I propose Tarot as a technology, extending the meaning of Tarot into a technology of care, for art educators to consider. My aim is to draw attention to common assumptions we make about technologies, what we choose to name as technologies, and assumptions technologies make about us, particularly in the field of art education. Art educators can use Tarot to begin an exploration of justice, where the card decks serve as tools and the reading strategies serve as techniques that constitute a practice of justice-oriented worldmaking.

KEYWORDS: Tarot, social justice, activism, technology

On June 5th, 2020, W.I.T.C.H. Boston[1] uploaded a redesigned Justice card from the iconic *Smith-Rider-Waite Tarot* deck[2] on their Instagram page. Merely days after the police killing of George Floyd, W.I.T.C.H. Boston explained the intentions behind creating and sharing this imagery in the caption:

> By the light of the June full moon, by the shadow of the eclipse, we harness that energy to support the power of Black Americans as they bring light to the shadows of oppression on which this nation was built. Black Lives Matter. We remain

1 As stated on their website, "W.I.T.C.H. began in October of 1968 and was a collection of several independent feminist groups in the United States. W.I.T.C.H., for them, stood for many things, including 'Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell,' 'Women Inspired to Tell their Collective History,' 'Women Interested in Toppling Consumer Holidays,' and more" (n.d.).

2 This Tarot deck illustrated by Pamela Colman Smith in collaboration with A. E. Waite, members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, was published by the Rider Company in 1910. While most often referred to as the Rider-Waite Tarot deck, I refer to it as the *Smith-Rider-Waite Tarot* deck to emphasize Smith's contribution.

prepared to fight white supremacy in all its forms. (W.I.T.C.H. Boston, 2020)

Figure 1. *No Justice, No Peace Card* (W.I.T.C.H. Boston, 2020).

Combining the celestial timing of its dissemination, naming of a witch identity, and iconographies of Tarot cards to convey its message of Black Lives Matter, this picture wove together contemporary heterogeneous practitioners of Tarot, astrology, and witchcraft, however temporarily, as social justice activists opposing and refusing oppressive frameworks, specifically white supremacy and anti-Blackness, in the pursuit of a more just world. "Tarot is trending," Breena Kerr proclaimed in the *New York Times* back in 2017. More specifically, in *The American Interest* magazine, Tara Isabella Burton characterized that "progressive occultism" has become "the metaphysical symbol set threaded through the worldly ethos of modern social justice activism" (2019, para. 10).

In the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*'s call for submissions under the theme of Pleasure Centers and Liberatory Practices, editors Joni Acuff and Sharbreon Plummer asked us: "How are artists and other practitioners beyond the academy exploring liberation within art education? What are the tools needed to begin an individual exploration of pleasure as an anti-oppressive framework within art education?" These questions prompted me to describe and share my practice of Tarot as a technology amongst communities of social justice activists. I first began engaging in this practice outside of my job in the neoliberal academic exchange and yet this community of practice sustains — no, fuels — my ability to return, again and again, to the struggle of engaging with the academy as a justice-oriented art educator. This community of justice-oriented Tarot practitioners I think with and speak of consists of overlapping groupings of people, including people identifying and/or positioned as persons with disabilities, immigrants, caregivers, abolitionists, intersectional feminists, LGBTQIA, trans, Black, Indigenous, Brown, persons of color, and more, with divergent, and at times conflicting, political stakes, commitments, and accountabilities.

Despite our differences, we converge on our practices of Tarot to care for ourselves and our interdependent relationships in this world at least in parallel with our social justice activism, if not as a way to imagine and manifest it directly. Through our time spent with Tarot as a technology shaping our lives, we share an oppositional position of *refusal* (McGranahan, 2016; Simpson, 2016) towards the hegemonic science-technology matrix rooted in oppression and manifested in what we commonly name as technologies and their worldviews. As opposed to *resistance* that emphasizes the unequal power relations within the hegemonic social order, Audra Simpson theorized that *refusal* is a presumptive claim of an equal relation by offering "its own structure of apprehension that maintains and produces sociality through time, manifest in a political posture of acute awareness of the conditions of this production" (2016, p. 329). By practicing and

developing Tarot as a technology, we are exploring what a world might be made with our refusal of what is commonly named as a technology and then justified to interact with. As technologies mediate our realities and what is named as a technology implies a judgement of worth, our time spent with Tarot is a refusal of the defaulted social progress, relations, and comprehension under the hegemonic science-technology matrix. In the following sections, I attempt to identify the significance of this practice, community, and work. In doing so, I introduce Tarot as a technology, and particularly a technology of care, with pedagogical potential, for educators and, perhaps, for students.

Technologies in and for Art Education

I sat down. I'm tired, anxious, and very scared. I drew a card. I saw a woman. I followed the name of the card to the guidebook that came along with the deck. I listened to these words[3].

Technologies are of paramount importance to art education and art educators. Technologies, from pencils to lines of computer code to lesson plans, are the external *others* we engage *with* in the act of artmaking. In thinking through what we use to make things, Amelia Kraehe (2019) proposed that "it is timely and crucial to rethink technology and the various roles it plays in our lives. What do we mean by technology? What do different technologies afford? How do we engage technologies of making in art education?" (p. 4).

In discussing art education vis-à-vis technology, Mary Ann Stankiewicz (2003) offered this definition of technologies: they are "methods by which a social group provides itself with the *material objects* [emphasis mine] of their civilization" (Society for the History of Technology as cited in Stankiewicz, 2003, p. 318). However, technologies are not only the observable material objects that we call technologies but also the social order they presume, purpose, and impose. Jennifer Slack and Macgregor Wise (2005) cautioned us against understanding "technology as a 'thing'" (p. 95) because "to focus on bounded artifacts --- on thingness -- is to deflect understanding from the ongoing energies, activities, relations, interpenetrations, and investments within which these things appear, take flight, and have effects" (pp. 96-97). In other words, we might come to name a certain object as a piece of technology, but the significance of that object lies not in its stand-alone material form but in the intentions and reflexivity it has come to manifest and materializes in practice. As Langdon Winner (1983) articulated, technologies are forms of life with values, intentions, and politics shaped by and shaping our social worlds. Read in this way,

3 The italicized vignettes that appear at the beginning of each following sections are narrations of my practice of Tarot as entangled with the writing this article.

technology can be defined as "a form of knowledge" (Wacjman, 1991, p. 14), including "what people do as well as what they know" (p. 14), that orient us towards particular epistemologies and guide our thinking, doing, and living.

Various scholars have thoroughly articulated the ways in which patriarchy, heteronormativity, capitalism, sexism, racism, militarism, colonialism, ableism, and classism as forms of knowledge are integral to the development, dissemination, and deployment of emerging digital technologies (Wacjman, 1991; Balsamo, 1996; Nakamura, 2008; Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter, 2009; Crogan, 2011; Byrd, 2016; Noble, 2018; Dooghan, 2019). For example, in contextualizing the emergence of computer games as the "defining technology of the contemporary digital information age" (Crogan, 2011, p. xiii), Patrick Crogan traced the trajectories of scientific research, including cybernetics and virtualization, funded by the United States military for the goal of war-making during the 20th Century; the "computer-based simulational technics" that undergird modern computer games emerged from these trajectories (p. xx). Through these histories, Crogan goes on to argue, "the latest phase of technological modernity is significantly different" from previous periods "because it moves beyond control toward the new watchword of *preemption* [emphasis original]" (p. xx).

In other words, these computational technologies based on simulation seek not only to control the present via the complete enclosure of the past but also to control the future by foreclosing other possibilities. Beyond the domain of games and war-making, Virginia Eubanks (2018) studied the digital simulations utilized for the state of Indiana's welfare system, Los Angeles' unhoused registry, and child welfare prediction in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Through these cases, Eubanks found that "poor and working-class people are targeted by new tools of digital poverty management and face life-threatening consequences as a result" (p. 11). Specifically, the poor are punished and entrapped by what Eubanks called a "digital poorhouse" (p. 12) produced by government technologies. Along the same lines of technologies' reproductive qualities but specifically through the lens of Black feminist thought, Simone Browne (2015), Safiya Noble (2018), and Ruha Benjamin (2019), investigating surveillance systems, search engines, and the "New Jim Code" (p. 47) technologies respectively, have generated foundational insights regarding how anti-Black racism is not only reproduced technologically but also fundamentally "a precondition for the fabrication of such technologies" (p. 44). In that sense, Benjamin argued for the centrality of race itself as a technology, whereby approaching "racism in relation to other forms of domination as not just an ideology or history, but as a set of technologies that generate patterns of social relations, and these become Black-boxed as natural, inevitable, *automatic* [emphasis

original]" (pp. 44-45).
Key to these discussions is the refusal to approach and analyze *technology* as distinct and separate from *culture*. Instead, these scholars foreground a *technocultural* approach (Balsamo, 2011) to understanding how technologies fulfill their predictive, automating, and reproductive duties as systems of control with which they are often endowed. This approach sheds light on what technologies we choose to adopt and orient toward as a key moment and site of worldmaking.

While art educators engage with a wide range of technologies in practice, discussions of technologies in art education scholarship and, in particular, the naming of something as a technology, are often focused on new media, digital technologies, such as various computer software and hardware (Freeman, 1997; Roland, 2010, Overby & Jones, 2015; Han, 2015; Mathes, 2017; Knochel et al., 2018; Wang, 2018). As Stankiewicz (2003) observed, "for many art teachers, technology seems to mean only electronic, computer-based, digital devices for creating, transmitting, and accessing images" (p. 318). This common approach of using the term *technology*, colloquially and in art education specifically, primarily to denote new and emerging media based on digital technologies coincides with the idea that "technology is progress, just as progress suggests more and new technology" (Slack & Wise, 2005, p. 9). Here, developments and deployments of new technologies are equated with social progress. At the same time, the labeling of something as a technology provides significant justification for the messy introduction of a relatively new piece of mediation into existing practice. This introduction is inevitably messy as "old practices are then painfully revised" (Marvin, 1988, p. 5), and art educators have historically contended with the justification for various conflicts introduced by new mediations in the name of technologies (Gregory, 1996). As *old* technologies in art education practice, such as pencils and paper, is taken as a given, their existence in practice no longer warrants legitimization via the term technology.

Yet, not explicitly naming old, often analog, materials as technologies means that they are not equated with social progress, which raises the question of whose progress we are thinking about exactly? Careless adoption and adaptation of new, and particularly digital, media in the name of technologies run the risk of replicating, reproducing, and reinscribing systems of *control* developed to fuel the expansion of oppressions. This shed light on what we choose to name as a technology as another key moment and site of worldmaking.

As technologies are not neutral, what we incorporate into our practice as art educators and advocate for in the field of art education in the name of technology carries considerable weight and consequences. In particular, for art educators oriented towards social justice,

adrienne marie brown (2017) reminded us, "we are in an imagination battle. Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown and Renisha McBride and so many others are dead because, in some white imagination, they were dangerous" (p. 18). Specifically, if the technologies we employ and orient toward frame what we can imagine, then we need to pay attention to what we name as technologies, which are associated with the idea of progress, as well as what technologies we choose to engage with, which mediates our realities for imaginations. In that vein, numerous art educators have modeled the ways in which technologies, including both digital and analog varieties, can be engaged mindfully to practice social justice work (Acuff, 2011; Knochel & Patton, 2015; Yoon 2016; Keifer-Boyd & Smith-Shank, 2017; Sweeny, 2017; Justice, 2017; Keifer-Boyd, Knochel, Patton, & Sweeny, 2018; Lewis & Thurman, 2019; Garber 2019; Wolfgang 2019; Leake, 2019).

Tarot as a Technology

"Justice is knowing the feeling of home. Knowing you are worth your breath, receiving validation, and having full authority over your body. Justice is fabulous and she wants you present for her revolution." (Road, 2017, p. 18)

It is in the context of enlarging our imaginations that I position Tarot as a technology for art educators to consider, where anti-oppression meets technological innovation at the juncture of worldmaking among social justice activist communities in the United States. Building on Jennifer Slack and Macgregor Wise's articulation of technology mentioned previously, I use Tarot as a technology to include, but not be limited to: the Tarot card decks as boundary objects with various associated interpretative strategies circulating in communities of Tarot practitioners; the ways in which Tarot acts as a technology of care for individuals refusing oppressive systems; and the oppositional politics undergirding current developments of various related magical, spiritual, astrological, divinatory, esoteric, and occult practices. By boundary object, I mean an object that is "both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 393). I propose Tarot as a technology, particularly of care, for art educators to begin an exploration of justice, where the decks serve as tools and the reading strategies serve as techniques that constitute a practice of justice-oriented worldmaking. By describing social justice activists' engagements with Tarot as technological innovation, my aim is to draw attention to common assumptions we make about technologies, what we choose to name as technologies, and assumptions technologies make about us, particularly in the field of art education.

What is Tarot? Most commonly, Tarot is seen as a fortune telling

practice using a deck of cards with no basis in science, particularly the capital S kind of Science rooted in Western Enlightenment ideals of "objectivity, rationality, empirical reliability, comprehensiveness" (Harding, 2011, p. 369). Specifically, as Harding characterized, "The West's sciences and technologies were supposed to be the jewels in the crown of modernity. To achieve social progress, value-neutral scientific rationality and technical expertise must replace traditional religious beliefs, myths, and superstitions about nature and social relations" (p. 2). In tracing the histories of Tarot, many scholars pointed towards 15th Century Italy as Tarot's beginning (Jorgensen, 1992/2020; Gregory, 2012; McConnachie, 2017). There, early forms of Tarot were said to have emerged as a deck of playing cards that drew symbolism from a diverse set of knowledge traditions, including cartomancy practices[4] , astrological zodiacs, alchemical philosophies[5] , and theological virtues (Jorgensen, 1992/2020). Tarot spread across Europe and various local versions of the deck flourished for tricks and gaming purposes. Its explicit connotation as a divinatory practice emerged during the 18th Century in Europe when scholars associated Tarot's origins with various religious practices, including Egyptian mythologies, Hebrew Kabbalah, Chinese I-Ching, and more (McConnachie, 2017). At the same time, it gained traction within various occult communities, such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was an organized occult secret society "founded in London around 1887 as a Masonic organization" (Jorgensen, 1992/2020, p. 44), and its embrace of Tarot led to the publication of the *Smith-Rider-Waite* deck in 1910. This *Smith-Rider-Waite* deck became one of the most commonly practiced decks and recognizable iconographies of Tarot today in the United States (The Cut, 2020). The ubiquity of this particular deck solidified various conceptions of Tarot into a familiar set of images in popular culture, loosely identified with fortune telling.

*A*n integral part of Tarot as a technology lies in the deck of cards as a recognizable and yet flexible boundary object with various associated interpretive strategies circulating across different communities of practice. As succinctly characterized in Christy Road's Kickstarter campaign for the *Next World Tarot* deck, "The Tarot is an ancient spiritual tool that has been re-written over and over to aid and abet varying value systems and communities" (n.d., para. 1). In its most common contemporary form, a Tarot card deck commonly consists of

4 Cartomancy practices refer to a divinatory meaning-making process facilitated with a deck of playing cards.

5 "Alchemy is the quest for an agent of material perfection, produced through a creative activity (opus), in which humans and nature collaborate" (Pereira, 1998, para. 1). Specifically, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.), it is "a medieval chemical science and speculative philosophy aiming to achieve the transmutation of the base metals into gold, the discovery of a universal cure for disease, and the discovery of a means of indefinitely prolonging life."

78 different cards, with 22 trump cards termed Major Arcana and 56 cards divided into 4 suits termed Minor Arcana. At the same time, a deck usually comes with a guidebook to aid in one's

interpretation of the pictorial images on each card. In practice, Tarot cards are combined with a range of interpretive strategies in which cards are randomly drawn and placed in specific positions called a spread, such as the Kabbalistic Tree of Life spread or the Chakras spread. Each position in the spread denotes a different meaning and each card contains different connotations to be deciphered. Tarot as a technology unfolding in practice involves the Tarot practitioner engaging in a set of procedures that combines the cards, their positions, and their relation to each other to generate meaning. At this point, the practitioner must mobilize their subjective lens and context of interpretation to draw connections across past and present as an act that projects into the future.

While available historical accounts of Tarot privilege its European lineage, my inclination and attention toward Tarot is derived from the contemporary, creative and innovative development of this technology by social justice activists. Tarot unfolds in practice for care in justice-oriented worldmaking across activist communities, such as on The Detroit Blk Gurls Do Tarot Facebook group (Adams, 2019) and at the Allied Media Conferences held in Detroit, Michigan. By taking seriously how the technologies we use orient us toward particular epistemologies, various activists who are also Tarot practitioners have developed Tarot as a technology to shape future possibilities by making and publishing decks with explicit anti-oppression politics. Various Tarot practitioners have reclaimed the pictorial images in decks and the language in guidebooks to prefigure a world where the lives, experiences, and knowledge of the poor, colonized, LGBTQIA, Black, Indigenous, Brown, people of color, and people with disabilities are not only centered and legitimized but also cherished and celebrated.

Figure 2. *Encountering the Kapwa Tarot deck* (Photo by author).

I want to highlight four of these reclaimed Tarot decks here. The first one is the *Shrine of the Black Medusa Tarot* (2014) created by Casey Rocheteau, where Rocheteau collaged various Black Americana iconographies explicitly celebrating "Black culture, queer magic and hoodoo divination" (para. 1) to remake Tarot cards as "a tool for the future crafted from images of the past" (para. 1). As a sponsored project of the Allied Media Projects, it is described as follows:

> The mission of the Shrine of the Black Medusa is to connect people and ideas across generations and geographies & create tools and objects that represent and uplift Black people. SBM is rooted in an understanding that many practices from the African continent were lost through the slavery, and that malicious uprooting of culture creates a need to uncover our past and create new tools for understanding our present conditions. (Allied Media Projects, n.d.)

Working alongside Rochetau to rework imaginations of futures by the reclamation of past and present through Tarot as a technology, Jana Lynne "JL" Umipig and collaborators created the *Kapwa Tarot* deck (2018), where they revised the cards based on their Pilipinx ancestral wisdom to speak to the Pilipinx diaspora. While recognizing that Tarot "has readily been commodified and glorified by capitalistic means of commercialism," Umipig writes, "I acknowledge this as I share with you this adaptation that was created for a greater purpose": to "create visibility and access to the teachings of my Pilipinx Ancestors that I have worked to remember through my growing, and are an act of creation that means to utilize a familiar divination tool in the diaspora for the service of that sharing" (p. 10). Through concern about the prevalence of unaddressed mental health crises among Asian Americans, Khúc and collaborators from the *Asian American Literary Review* created the *Asian American Tarot* deck (2017) "featuring original art and text that work to reveal the hidden contours of our Asian American emotional, psychic, and spiritual lives, as well as the systems of violence that bear down upon them" (para. 4). Some contributors to the *Asian American Tarot* deck engaging in various social justice activism were also featured in the *Next World Tarot* deck (2017) created by Cuban-American artist, writer, and musician Christy Road and collaborators, in which the Tarot cards were drawn to represent "co-conspirators, heroes, inspiration, and family; living both on earth and in the spirit world" (Road, 2020, p. 3). As Road characterized it, this deck is "an illustrated oracle articulating the end of the world as we know it" (p. 3).

Beyond the technological innovations named above, developments in Tarot coalesce with a wide range of other divinatory, spiritual, and magical practices to provide a family of related techniques and tools for social justice activism, such as the book *You Were Born for*

This: Astrology for Radical Self-Acceptance by Chani Nicholas (2020) and the *Oracle for Transfeminist Technologies* by Sasha Costanza-Chock and collaborators at the MIT Co-Design Studio. By harnessing the interpretive strategies of these practices for prefigurative politics (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018), this family of technologies that centers and contours the world that we long for but is not yet here provides affirmation for social justice activists in the grind of justice-oriented worldmaking work.

In thinking through how Tarot come to sit at the intersection where anti-oppression meets technological innovation, I consider the ways in which both social justice activism, particularly around queer folks, people of color, and other marginalized people in the "trauma diaspora" (Jones, 2019, p. 14), and Tarot practices refuse the current hegemonic epistemology under the dominant scientific order. In recounting the development of Tarot during the Enlightenment in Europe where notions of scientific rationality emerged, Danny Jorgensen (1992/2020) described how Tarot was "forged into a socially marginal and perceivedly illegitimate current of Western culture through the systematic exclusion of these ideas and their adherents from both religious and scientific claims to knowledge and supporting communities" (p. 38). Meanwhile, contemporary social justice activism is rooted in a direct counter to Eurocentric ideas of science and modernity, which is "visible in not merely the global spread of colonial exploits but also in the spread of the notion of European domination as the natural expression of superiority over biologically inferior and culturally primitive others" (Chan, 2013, p. 13). In many ways, Tarot and people of color share the valence of being illegitimate and queer under the hegemonic gaze. While epistemologies are merely "strategies for justifying beliefs" (Harding, 1987, p. 3) that outline theories of knowledge, knowledge produced, accumulated, and circulated among occult practitioners and people of color communities has been historically and systematically erased, marginalized, and appropriated (Aldred, 2000; Federici, 2004; Djurdjevic, 2014). As these communities do not adhere to the strategies of established scientific methods to justify their beliefs, their practices and knowledge are discarded via the label of superstitious, pseudoscientific, irrational, subjective, and emotional (Harding, 2011).

However, despite claims of illegitimacy, social justice activism among queer folks and people of color is committed to imagining a world "that transitions ideologies and norms, so that no one sees Black people as murders, or Brown people as terrorists and aliens, but all of us as potential cultural and economic innovators" (brown, 2017, p. 19). Here, Tarot provides social justice activists a way to "socially accomplish a knowledge of what is envisioned by them as an uncommon reality" (Jorgensen, 1992/2020, p. 196). By refusing Science and embracing Tarot as a technology with all

its alleged illegitimacy, social justice activists are turning toward different epistemologies to forge and inhabit a different world. The adoption, appropriation, and adaptation of Tarot and other delegitimized technologies by and for marginalized communities to cultivate imaginations informed by ancestral wisdoms demonstrate the resilience and resourcefulness of social justice activism: use the technologies we have available to us in innovative ways to make the world we need. As Chani Nicholas (2020) succinctly explained in an interview:

> Even if we can't take up that space externally, for safety reasons, I think it's really important if we allow ourselves to take up that space internally. Astrology supports that, because it only ever speaks to your essence in a nonjudgmental way. So as queer folks living in this place in history we need these systems of knowledge that support our understanding of ourselves to say, 'You are you. This is exactly what was meant for you. This is exactly who you're supposed to be.' (para. 10)

Tarot as a Technology in and for Art Education

She wants me present for her revolution. I listened. So, I'm here.

How might Tarot as a technology intersect with art education? How might we, justice-oriented art educators, incorporate this technology into our practice? While I don't have any definitive answers, I share my experiences of how my Tarot practice has intersected with my practice as an art educator. I employ a narrative methodology to reflect, research, and rewrite my messy intersecting practices as an art educator and Tarot practitioner. I follow James Haywood Rolling's (2010) articulation of narrative methodology as a form of social inquiry that "seeks to proliferate new tellings, not primarily to redeem a set of 'facts,' but to articulate 'the significance and meaning of one's experiences'" (p. 7).

When I began practicing Tarot again in 2016, I had never imagined that it would intersect with my practice as an art educator, which includes the act of writing about it in an academic journal. This compartmentalization of my various practices speaks to the ways in which I have internalized the claims of illegitimacy that limit my imagination. I hadn't approached this practice of mine through the lens of *research* and I hadn't systematically documented its unfolding in my life to accumulate the coherent material traces required for them to qualify as *evidence*. And yet, it found its way. Thus, my source of *evidence* here is my narration, and my hope is that through this narrative process I can "tell a story that informs others of who we are, where we come from, where we are going, and what our purpose may be" (Rolling, 2010, p. 6).

Figure 3. *Encountering the Next World Tarot deck* (Photo by author).

In May of 2018, I was visiting Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, staying at the home of my close friend and generous interlocutor Meadow Jones. Upon entering the guest room, I was greeted with a pile of small gifts. Among them was Christy Road's *Next World Tarot*. Meadow's choice of this deck of Tarot wasn't made lightly, as she's been an integral life partner throughout my years in the United States. She observed that I gravitate toward various mystical, magical, and divinatory practices to sooth myself through moments of pain, despite how they are ridiculed and named by others. Knowing I have familiarity with these technologies and having a shared affinity for the *woo*[6] , she shared this boundary object Tarot deck as a form of knowledge that's collectively generated by social justice activist communities in the United States to aid me in my current transition.

6 I use *woo* elastically here to mean both the *woo-woo*, which is a term used to describe the "dubiously or outlandishly mystical, supernatural, or unscientific" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.), and 巫 which is a Chinese character in proximity to *sorceresses* and pronounced as *woo* in English.

Upon graduating from an art education graduate program in 2017, I began teaching in an interdisciplinary program in higher education that integrates critical studies of media and technology with creative practice. My dissertation research was on engaging digital game modifications through critical pedagogy, so I mostly taught courses around critiquing and creating games as media arts. Many of my students, both graduate and undergraduate, were self-identified gamers and aspiring/practicing game designers. With digital games being the "paradigmatic media of empire" (Byrd, 2016) and considering the horrors of #GamerGate in 2014[7] , I emphasized the consumption, production, and circulation of games in political, cultural, material, and historical contexts in my teaching. At the beginning of my tenure, I was upfront and explicit about my positionality and the experiences that came with it, as I truly believe in the "pedagogy of vulnerability" as outlined by Joni Acuff (2018, p. 178). This required teachers to "open their social identities and experiences for critical reflection and scrutiny in an effort to engage a community of learners in 'critical thinking and reflection on diversity, including the topics of power, oppression, privilege, and social justice'" (p. 178).

And yet, semester after semester, over and over again, my vulnerability was taken as a weakness and weaponized against my sense of reality in class. In one instance, during a discussion on representation in games, a student proclaimed to me in front of the class that "male privilege and white privilege is not real, if one more person says that I will UGHHH" (personal communication, 2018) before he buried his face behind the computer screen for the rest of the class session. After that incident, that student and I had a private conversation where I saw myself as a pedagogue continually trying to 'see' and reach for him while I left my "self-doubt, anxiety, and shame as the 'Other' teacher" (Yoon, 2019, p. 87) unattended, brewing, and spilling over in my "relation of cruel optimism" (Berlant, 2011, p. 1) with the academy. I noticed myself growing in resentment, cynicism, and "disillusionment" (Hetrick, 2017 p. 33). I noticed myself going through the motions of instruction and unable to engage in the pedagogy of vulnerability because I was too afraid. I noticed myself projecting my previous encounters onto students and reducing "the students as equal to their cultural identity" (Emdin as cited in Acuff, 2018, p. 176). I noticed that I could not meet "each student on his or her own cultural and emotional turf" (Emdin as cited in Acuff, 2018, p. 176).

7 #GamerGate refers to the 2014 threats and harassment campaigns toward individuals, particularly feminists, working in the digital games industry. For a more detailed discussion, see "A Conspiracy of Fishes, or, How We Learned to Stop Worrying About #GamerGate and Embrace Hegemonic Masculinity" (2015) by Shira Chess and Adrienne Shaw, cited below.

I needed a way out, and I needed a way to care for both my students and myself. My friend Meadow was right. I was, indeed, leaning more and more into the side of me that didn't have the language to defend myself against claims of superstition. I was recognizing and deliberately choosing the delegitimized components of myself that I maintained through practices of code switching (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1984). That is the side of me that learned to follow the sexagenary cycle of the lunar calendar[1] while given my English name in the elementary school classroom; the side of me that learned the practice of reading Tarot in the alleyways of Zhongxiao E. Road while internalizing how to produce a sociological fact using scientific research methods at a university in Taipei; the side of me that learned to decipher sortilege from temples while deciding whether or not to pursue graduate studies in the United States; the side of me that was always triangulating my understanding of reality by engaging in the "promiscuous traffic between different domains of knowing" (Conquergood, 2000, p. 145) via different technologies; the side of me that I cultivated in secret through careful compartmentalization until it began to intersect with my professional practice in profound ways.

I began asking questions about my teaching practice through Tarot. I would sit down, shuffle the cards, and replay the situation bothering me. Specifically, I would name the significant people and things in my mind, our various contexts, and the narratives of what had happened from my vantage point. Then, I would distill my concerns into questions and ask Tarot for metaphors[2] while drawing cards placed in specific spread arrangements. Last but not least, I would turn over the cards and begin close reading, both of the cards themselves and the guidebooks, to generate and hold multiple and at times contradictory interpretations of the situations. I recognized myself during my Tarot practice, especially with the innovative decks named previously. Over time, my Tarot practice became a site of refuge for my teaching practice, where its unapologetic words of anti-oppression and validation guided me to reflect on, interrogate, and reconfigure my internalized "self-doubt, anxiety, and shame as the 'Other' teacher" (Yoon, 2019, p. 87). It did so in part because it helped me place language playfully and experimentally on my otherwise unrecognizable, unnamable, and unconsummatable experiences in the present. In doing so, I was able be with and live in the present. By living in the present, I mean relentlessly, fearlessly, and continuously engaged in the project of making reality. Making reality involves revising, reconfiguring, and remaking the past and future

8 The sexagenary cycle 天干地支 refers to a system of naming time that is commonly practiced with the lunar calendar for Taiwanese folk religions. For a more detailed discussion of Taiwanese folk religions, see *台灣的民間宗教與信仰* Taiwan's Folk Religion and Belief [translated title] (2000) by Jianchuan Wang and Shiwei Lee.

2 Thank you, Meadow, for this language of describing Tarot's guidance as *metaphors.*

as malleable materials at the nexus where they interface: the present moment. And here, Tarot cards act as the tool and reading strategies act as the technique to construct this moment.

I have come to realize that I was engaging with Tarot as a technology of care in those moments. By care, I mean "a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible" (Fisher & Tronto as cited in Tronto, 1993, p. 103). However, as expectations to care are never ending in social justice activism, science and technology studies scholars' words on care redirected my attention: "The question, then, is not 'how can we care more?' but instead to ask what happens to our work when we pay attention to moments where the question of 'how to care?' is insistent but not easily answerable" (Atkinson-Graham et al., 2015, p. 739). On this point, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) reminded me that an ethic of care is always a contextually specific "hands-on, ongoing process of re-creation" (p. 6) and never a set of normative moral obligations. By weaving my practice as an art educator together with my practice as a Tarot practitioner, I was opening up the space where the question of how to care for myself and my students and, by extension, our world, in a just way could be continuously posed in an environment that reconciled the contradictory epistemologies that I balance. Most importantly, I found joy.

Conclusion

As adrienne marie brown reminded us, "what you pay attention to grows" (brown, 2017, p. 42). I encourage art educators to pay attention to *what* we pay attention to in the name of technology. In this article, I position Tarot as a technology in order to draw attention to assumptions technologies make about us and common assumptions we make about technologies, particularly in the field of art education. I encourage art educators to pay attention *to* Tarot, as I argue that technological innovations in Tarot can intersect with anti-oppression politics via their shared refusal of the hegemonic science-technology matrix. Further, I encourage art educators to pay attention *through* Tarot. By narrating my experiences with Tarot as a technology of care during my practice as an art educator, I suggest that Tarot provides a space for art educators to explore justice.

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Cosplaying while Black: The Transgressive Pleasure of Blacktivism

Christian Hines
The Ohio State University

This brief photo essay documents my accidental activism, a by-product created by participating in a personally pleasurable hobby, cosplay, while existing in the intersections of being Black and female. "Cosplay" is, combining "costume" and "play," primarily practiced at conventions where fans dress like favorite fictional characters. As cosplay gains mainstream attention, van Veen (2019) notes its increasing recognition "as a celebration of agency in the performative fandom of science fiction and fantasy" (p. 77), as an extended, enthusiastic, embodied engagement with pop cultural texts. Cosplay has not always been very visible in the Black community. As a child, when I discovered my love for superheroes and animé, my mom subsequently deemed it weird, labelled it witchcraft, and even considered it demonic. I was not free—as a young Black woman—to transcend the boundaries of reality, to explore living in an imagined, fantastical world of endless possibilities.

In some ways, this forbidden-ness amplified the overall lack of major characters of color in children's books, science fiction, fantasy, graphic novels, anime, etc. Academic scholar Ebony Elizabeth Thomas (2019) echoes this sentiment in her work *The Dark Fantastic; Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games* noting, "people sincerely believe that characters of color are out of place in the fantastic: issues of race and difference threaten to shake us out of the waking dream that we inhabit while engaged in the fantastic" (Thomas, p. 73). Racism infects fiction and fantasy multiple ways. I was painfully aware of the deficit of prominent Black characters in pop culture forms: movies, cartoons, and comic books.

Given this lack of Black protagonist options, my cosplay consists primarily of dressing as non-Black characters. This often elicits critical commentary questioning my motivations for such cosplay character choices: Why would a person of color play an originally white character? I echo van Veen's (2019) critique that cosplay only "affords two avenues for black participants:" 1) playing less-well-known or "oft-neglected black characters;" or, 2) "revision[ing], replay[ing], re-cut[ting]," and, I would add, *re-presenting* "default white" characters, "thus platforming the agency of black cosplayers" to choose any character to play/be (p. 79).

Figure 1. *Three Princesses*

Though seemingly minor, van Veen argues Black cosplayers exercising this freedom of character choice "upsets the default universality of whiteness as the blank slate of …subjectivity" (p. 79). For Black cosplayers, claiming and exercising this right to play anyone simultaneously asserts, and reinforces, our inherent subjectivity by sheer virtue of performing this subjective act of claiming. As an adult, I take a lot of pride in exercising my choice to cosplay, and I derive a ~~lot~~ a great deal of pleasure from cosplaying as well.

Often, race has a very powerful, and highly inequitable, impact on fiction and fantasy readers from different demographic groups. Thomas (2019) observes:

> When readers who are White, middle class, cisgender, heterosexual, and able-bodied enter the fantastic dream, they are empowered and afforded a sense of transcendence that can be elusive within the real world…the implicit message that readers, hearers and viewers of color receive as they read these texts is that *we are the villain*. *We are the horde*. *We are the enemies*. *We are the monsters*. (p. 23).

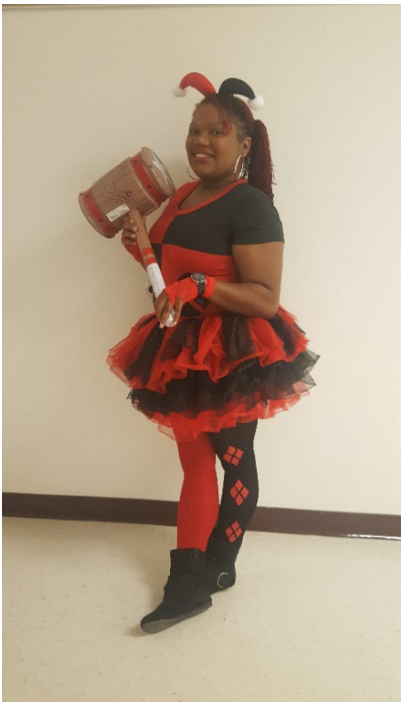

Figure 2. *Harley Quinn*

A major pleasure found within cosplaying, particularly from my perspective as a Black woman, is the chance to defy traditional roles and limitations, to choose identity options society traditionally withholds from us. I use cosplay as my own subversive, celebratory, immensely pleasurable form of Blacktivism, accessing this liminal space of fantasy, pretend, and play to embody and enact a refusal of restrictions based on my (racial) identity. Being Black in spaces that center white voices and white narratives is a form of protest, a disruption of societal norms that dictate that I should not and do not exist. My deliberate embrace of my disruptive existence—as a Black woman who will not be constrained *to* and *by* the available roles/characters of Black women (not) presented in pop culture—*is* my activism, my *Blacktivism*. My cosplay Blacktivism is a refusal of restrictions, an embrace of imagination and fantasy and dreams—realms of pleasure and forms of entertainment historically denied to Black people in the United States. Comic book characters and superheroes were not originally written by, for, or with much awareness of marginalized people, except stereotypically, when

they served primarily as background characters, victims, or villains. Superhero protagonists mainly functioned as an embodied ideal (and fantasy) of white, cisgender, heterosexual, powerful, masculine males. In contrast, van Veen (2019) argues, Black people cosplaying white characters "destabilizes" this idealized, and normalized, White male savior narrative and image. Like van Veen, Joel Gn (2011) asserts the idea that cosplaying cross-racially enables Black participants to insert our identities into these previously segregated and exclusionary narratives. From this point-of-view, consuming many of these original pop cultural texts, despite their predictable homogeneity and dominant perspectives, is pleasurable, pleasurable enough for cosplayers to engage more deeply. Blacktivism extends beyond cosplaying. The past few years has seen a growing amount of comic book writers and artists of color that are providing a disruption in the form of narratives and stories that showcase the lived experiences of BIPOC people. Writers such as Eve L. Ewing who took over after Brian Michael Bendis as the primary writer for the *Ironheart* run, a story about Riri Williams, a black girl who takes over the Ironman mantle after Tony Stark disappears and eventually comes into her own as the superhero Ironheart. Prolific writer, journalist, and activist Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote select issues on the Hugo nominated run of *Black Panther*, and writers Sana Amanat and G. Willow Wilson created a space for Muslim superhero visibility when they created Kamala Khan, the new Ms. Marvel. These BIPOC writers cause significant disruption to the comic canon by taking traditional white superhero mantles and rewriting and restorying them with youthful BIPOC characters.

Both Gn (2011) and van Veen (2019) present the concept of *crossplay* as enacted by fans. Gn defines *crossplay* as disrupting a character's "socially accepted gender" (see also Toffoletti 2007). Gn observes that many cosplayers enjoy modifying and inhabiting revised characters, noting in some cases cosplayers do this as a deliberately subversive and disruptive act. Building on this premise, van Veen (2019) and his Black cosplayer interviewees construct *crossplay* to include "gender-bending" along with "queering, disabled and interracial play that disrupts the white-abled canon of mainstream characters" while it "opens cosplay in general towards a [B]lack radical tradition of black performance" (p. 81). Both Gn and van Veen emphasize the transgressive nature and potential pedagogical liberatory power of such non-normative play. The further consumption of modified, disrupted images can then also be pleasurable for observers as well as the cosplayers themselves.

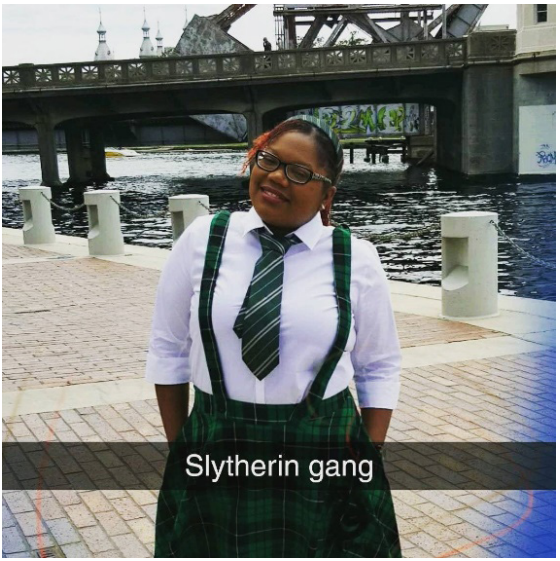

Figure 3. *Slytherin House*

Personally, I take pleasure in slipping into costume. The pleasure of my Blacktivism is rooted in what Adrienne Maree Brown calls "*pleasure activism*—the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy." (p. 9). When sliding into a piece of costume, donning a wig, or applying makeup, I am essentially transforming myself, temporarily becoming a different person, playing pretend. As a cosplayer, I see cosplay as an art form that I can use to experiment with different personas, identities, and roles in the process of (re)constructing my *self* (Freedman 2003). Cosplay is my form of disruption as a Black Woman. I outwardly display the identities that I inherently have as a woman of color, my heroism, my creativity, and my fearlessness. Showing up in my costumes allows me the freedom to express myself in ways that would normally be judged by the white gaze in society. In fact, many contemporary artists' examinations of identity are reminiscent of cosplay. In Nikki S. Lee's photography series *Projects* (1997–2001), Lee embedded with specific subcultural groups over time, adopting their visual, verbal, and behavioral markers prior to asking other people to take photographs that include her as a member of the group. Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-1980) series takes a similar approach, with Sherman manipulating Western cinematic vocabulary and tools to create/

embody a range of recognizable fictional characters, yet in ways that suggest disruptive, disturbing narratives. In *The Couple in the Cage: Two Amerindians Visit the West* (1992-1993), Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña satirize colonization's absurd processes while demonstrating its persistence and ongoing impacts. Nick Cave's *soundsuits* qualify specifically as Blacktivist, repurposing cast-off materials into costumes for camouflage and protection. He also frames them as celebratory, including them as living sculptures dancing in parades and public performances. Cave invites community engagement as he dons his soundsuits, his activism and performance invite the audience to question notions of identity, class, race, and gender, to have a line of inquiry into his art that is not judgmental and biased. Cave's blacktivism occurs in the form of art creation comes as a response to his identity as a Black man who has experienced racism and racial profiling. In more recent expression Genevieve Gaignard; a biracial mixed media artist, in her *Fantasia* (2020) used various images to create a collage that explored issues of race, police brutality, and the white gaze as a example of American culture. The placement of the images are meant to create dialogue within the piece and amongst the viewer.

Like these artists, though on a much larger scale, cosplay is an opportunity for exploration, for embodied inquiry into identities. Through cosplay, I become beloved characters in treasured narratives. I immerse myself within the texts themselves as completely as possible. I am not a passive outside voyeur, I am an active inside participant/agent (Rhoades & Daiello, 2016). In the same vein of these artists, cosplay allows for me to have agency and control the narrative of how I show up in the world. Cosplaying is pleasure in ownership, pleasure of making my own rules and defying normalized societal expectations. For me, cosplay has several notable impacts, personally and professionally as a (Black) educator. As a teacher, being a cosplayer helped me provide students with a greater sense of freedom, with permission (and a model) for experimentation and play. Marjorie Manifold (2013) observes that "[a]dolescents and young adults become fans of stories they intuitively or consciously recognize as profoundly relevant to their everyday lives as they are or as they wish them to be" (p. 13). Further, Manifold describes "fanart" production/performance as increasingly "entrenched and pervasive," noting adolescents desire to intensify their engagement with resonant texts and stories, co-constructing responsive, interactive, living texts that demonstrate "how youth are coming to see themselves and interact with others in the 21st century" (p. 18).

Figure 4. *Queen of Hearts*

Fandom, storytelling, and re-storying via costumes, through direct and personal interactions, allowed an interconnectedness to develop between my students, me, their life experiences, texts, and bigger ideas. As a high school teacher, every spirit week and holiday provided me with an avenue to dress up. Beforehand, students would flock to my door to ask me for advice on developing their own costumes; on the days themselves, students would flock to my door to see my outfits, to see me.

These interactions inevitably turned into discussions about favorite movies, tv shows, anime, and fandom of all kinds. Manifold (2013) asserts that such "play with popular stories increases the size and diversity of the community that can access knowledge, exchange differing worldviews, debate critical ideas, engage in aesthetic explorations, and improvise upon an original narrative" (p. 15). Using cosplay provided a way to demonstrate my knowledge of and commitment to contemporary and popular stories and characters, and to use myself as an active agent for visually re-storying these previously-exclusionary texts. Cosplay provides me with a unique way to connect to students and help them connect to—and comprehend—other complex texts as well as themselves. Becoming relatable to my students provided opportunities for their interests to

become my interests, for mine to become theirs, for our interests to overlap and merge. It provides opportunities for us to become a true community of learners together.

Figure 5.*Santa's Helper*

The power of creating these relationships, in turn, fueled and reinforced my use of cosplay to enhance my students' learning, using their collective fandom energy to engage them in texts, excite their imaginations, scaffold and frame their critical and creative thinking. Manifold also insists fanart is a strategy for artistic learning, that even when intended to render direct reproductions, copying is not only a strategy for learning artistic technique, but also a mindful exploration of relationships among visual elements, gesture, form, and meaning. Manifold realizes that when students find a compelling subject, their desire to engage, represent, and manipulate it, literally or abstractly, they then often voluntarily "seek knowledge about additional intricacies of proportion, perspective, drawing figures in movement, backgrounds, or aspects of good composition" (p. 16). Desire drives learning.

Figure 6. *Citizen of Wakanda*

My desire for, and pleasure from, immersing myself in the world of cosplay and fandom not only challenges societal norms as a form of resistance, it also serves as a platform for transforming my classroom into a space affirming of my students' identities, desires, and possibilities, open to the pleasures of exploration and imagination. Manifold's (2009) interview findings that cosplayers and fanartists use "excursions into fantasy" texts as a way to escape from, or as a complement to, their ordinary, constrained daily lives (p. 68). For van Veen (2019), such "fandom takes up a performative repurposing, remixing, acceptance, or contestation of narratives and imaginaries" (p. 77).

In "Visual Culture Learning Communities: How and what students come to know in informal art groups," art educators Karpati, Freedman, Castro, Kallio-Tavin, & Heijnen (2013) note that fanartists collaboratively "construct meaning through personal expression, social interactions, and identity development" (p. 105). In their follow-up piece, "Collaboration in visual culture learning communities: towards a synergy of individual and collective creative practice," Karpati, Freedman, Castro, Kallio-Tavin, & Heijnen (2017) conclude that participation in groups like cosplayers allows members

to experience and explore "the flux of identity to illustrate the range of possibilities of the self," positioning "the self" as something malleable, as potentialities rather than fixed product (p. 169). Cosplay is explicit acknowledgement of and experimentation "with different personas and life roles in the process of constructing the self," or, as one of their female participants suggested, 'it is the developing, and seeing yourself to develop all the time'"(Karpati et al, 2017, p. 169; see also Freedman 2003).

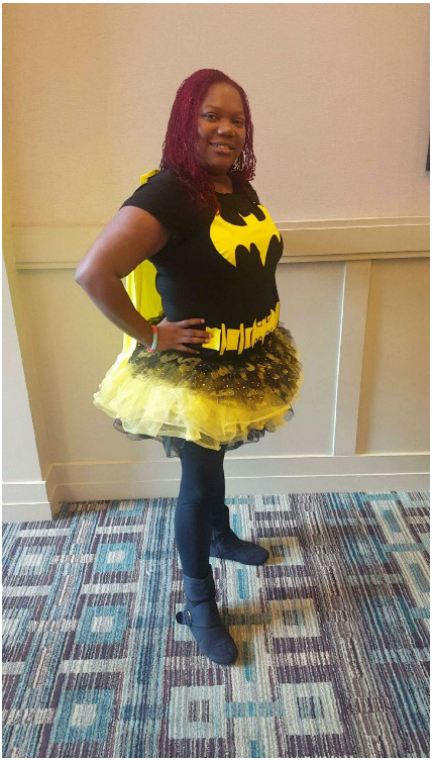

Figure 7. *Batwoman*

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Being able to explore and extend my identity and positionalities resonates with my experiences. When students and other people of color see me in costume—embracing, revealing, and reveling in my authentic Black nerdy self, defying the unspoken racial rules and invisible barriers—it helps affirm that there is space for difference, and for Black girls specifically, in fandom, in fantasy, in imagining different potential futures, and enjoying the process of envisioning and dreaming. The call for manuscripts for this special edition referenced Adrienne Maree Brown's (2019) call for using pleasure

activism and "our radical imagination [as] a tool for decolonization, for reclaiming our right to shape our lived reality" (p 126). Cosplaying as a Black woman as a form of Blacktivism and as a teacher allows me opportunities to demonstrate not only the pleasure of these fantasy imaginings, but also the subversive power in claiming the right to participate, to insert myself in narratives, to alter them regardless of their original intent. In this way, texts become political and experimental sites, with cosplay providing a framework for playfully disrupting them, changing them, opening them. Cosplay provides a context, method, and tools to use pleasure, joy, strength, and community to disrupt dominant discourses and interrupt persistent inequities, to envision and work toward a better, more inclusive future. One with Black superheroes, too.

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White empathy and the educational neutralization of hip-hop

Albert Stabler, Ph.D.
Illinois State University

ABSTRACT

There are many reasons why the rich popular tradition of hip-hop culture has become attractive to teachers as a means of engaging students, and many classroom experiments with hip-hop have surely met or surpassed the teacher's curricular expectations. The political implications of such pedagogical appropriations are worth considering, however. I reflect in this article on my own experiences as a white art teacher and hip-hop enthusiast working with students of color in a large city. Drawing on Black Studies theorists associated with a tendency known as "Afro-pessimism," I make larger connections between the philanthropic aspirations of white teachers like myself and the experiences of Black and brown students in American public schools, as well as the troubled history of sentimentalist anti-racist white mimicry in education and American culture more generally. While I used graffiti art in several lessons over the years, my most meaningful classroom encounter with hip-hop was whimsical and accidental, when a sound project took an unexpected turn. Using this experience as an informative example, I contend that the sensuality, humor, and resistance that appears throughout much of Black popular culture, while fascinating to non-Blacks in and beyond the U.S., remains inaccessible to an anti-Black institutional gaze. It seems to me that hip-hop thrives in Black and brown public schools via infiltration, rather than through an instrumentalization that, in its politics of respectability, seeks to negate the pleasure that gives it life.

Prominent Black education scholar Christopher Emdin has advocated on many platforms for the use of hip-hop as a means of engaging students of color, including his recent guide on cross-racial pedagogy, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood… and the Rest of Y'all Too* (2016), as well as in a TED Talk and on the PBS NewsHour. The idea of white teachers as potential anti-racist allies, promoting meaningful social change in and through education, is not new with Emdin. The literacy interventions of renowned Black women scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995, 2009) and Geneva Smitherman (1997, 2006) have been central in the development of multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy, and, by extension, the use of hip-hop in the classroom.

For more than two decades, a number of white teachers in majority-nonwhite public school classrooms have been using uplift-focused lyrics by renowned 1990s rappers/lyricists like Lauryn Hill, and acts like Arrested Development as a means to draw students into reading and performance. Beat looping and graffiti-style lettering have accompanied many lessons in music and art as well as literature and history. Years along, with many books and journal special issues to its name, hip-hop education is essentially its own educational subfield (Dimitriadis, 2001; Runell & Diaz, 2007; Hill, 2009; Petchauer, 2009; Broome, 2015), as well as being a subfield of "hip-hop studies" (Forman & Neal, 2004). The use of hip-hop in education has spread far beyond the U.S. to many places touched by American popular culture (Viola & Portfilio, 2012; Söderman & Sernhede, 2016).

My interest in this essay is not in condemning Emdin, or any Black educational thinker who is endeavoring to combat the alienation of young Black people from places and practices of learning, an alienation that rap lyrics have often made explicit (Madden, 2015). But, speaking from my personal experience as a teacher, I hope to make a case for why white teachers, of any age or level of pop-culture literacy, should reconsider their employment of Black popular culture forms as a vehicle for the delivery of curricular content. My argument boils down to a concern, developed through both reading and personal experience, that students of color generally, and Black students in particular, may have very little reason to believe that white teachers have done the work necessary to recognize the age-old and ongoing role of everyday actions by "good white people" (Sullivan, 2014) in reiterating and shoring up the American ideology and structure of racialized exclusion.

Therefore, why should students trust that a white teacher is appropriating a nonwhite cultural form with any investment in understanding or preserving the elements that make the form meaningful to communities of Black and brown people? What these teachers are mostly doing, I would contend, is attempting precisely not to understand, but to defuse the power of Black and brown culture through employing an educational form of respectability politics, a program toward which their students are often highly skeptical (Kerrison, Cobbina, & Bender, 2018).

Just as working-class young white people have identified themselves in opposition to an unwelcoming middle-class educational culture memorably described in European contexts by British cultural studies thinkers following E. P. Thompson (1963/1964), as well as throughout the writings of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the aforementioned alienation of Black students and students of color from spaces of schooling has everything to do with these spaces being coded as white. Scholars like Ladson-Billings and Smitherman, among

countless others, have not only repeatedly made analogous points in the context of African-American schooling, but have intervened to ameliorate these circumstances

My intention is not to denounce these vital contributions, but to be more specific with regard to the remit of the white teacher who works primarily or exclusively with Black and brown students. In a nation where public schools are increasingly nonwhite (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018), and teachers are persistently predominantly white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), the work of self-awareness is emphatically not to be waved off in the name of empathy and good intentions. The student, not the teacher, should be the main concern.

That being said, I am addressing teachers—primarily fellow white teachers. I will try to define "white empathy" and give some background on my own long unilateral relationship to hip-hop culture, using this experience as a backdrop for my own years of work as an art teacher with Black and brown students. In making my own autobiographical connection to the world of hip-hop I invoke Macklemore, a successful and sincere but mediocre white rapper who worked to pacify the pleasures of rap, taking part in a long history of literal and liberal blackface. I go on to introduce the ideas of Black thinkers directly or peripherally associated with a recent school of thought known as "Afro-pessimism," a philosophical point of view that understands world history through a descriptive lens of anti-Blackness.

Through this lens the well-meaning sincerity of white education professionals towards students in Black and brown schools can be understood, at least in part, as a form of paternalistic voyeurism. Following this, I share an anecdote of a class project I led in which I felt that hip-hop was deployed to good effect, largely because the musical element emerged without my curricular intention or control. My conclusion summarizes the points I hope to make about ways in which race and culture are not static specimens for disciplinary deployment in the classroom, but are living sources of tension and conflict that upset any presumed consensus regarding the school as a neutral, ahistorical space.

Funk lessons[1]

I love hip-hop culture and I love working with young people. I am a white man who grew up in a white suburb in the 1980s listening to Run-DMC and the Fat Boys, among others, and became a young adult in the 1990s listening to A Tribe Called Quest and Wu-Tang Clan, among others. Around that time, in the late '90s, I also became an art teacher in a large Midwestern city, working with groups of Black and brown young people. My teaching drew on ideas expounded in *Bomb*

the Suburbs[2], a 1996 collection of essays on graffiti art, hip-hop, and city life by the local white writer Billy "Upski" Wimsatt. In addition I took inspiration from *Subway Art*, Martha Cooper and Henry Chalfant's 1984 collection of photos of New York transit graffiti pieces and the artists who made them, and the 1983 hip-hop documentary *Style Wars*, which Chalfant collaborated on with director Tony Silver.

I'm also a lifelong draughtsman who was trained as a painter, and so I not only admire but can copy and riff on elements of the vivid graffiti to be found in big-city train yards, past and present, with pencil, marker, or paintbrush—though rarely in spray paint. I have shown graffiti exemplars to many of my groups and classes, and I once taught a class on graffiti art to teenagers in the county foster care system. When I became a full-time art teacher in the city's public schools, I did keep spray paint and varied caps on hand for poster and mural projects. All of this was rewarding, and resulted in some nice art, usually made with rap and R&B pumping in the background. Inspired by fellow white teachers who did hip-hop-themed recording projects, I once led a project with a four-track, and later downloaded beat-making software in my classroom. In 1998 or so, a white friend recorded a rap I wrote to help a class of eighth-graders of color learn about the Constitution. In 2007, this friend and I recorded our own goofy rap album. But through it all, I never forgot that I was a poser.

I don't mean that I was a poser for loving hip-hop music and culture. Anyone can be a fan, of course. But the bar for authenticity is high when a teacher invokes a living cultural form in the classroom, and it's way higher for a white teacher working with students of color. I don't share the under-represented history of communal resilience and resistance that my students shared; I inhabit the historic position of free whites who have been granted advantage, visibility, and power through implements of law and culture, founded on and maintained by institutions that enacted violence, deprivation, and neglect upon nonwhites. This is worth dwelling on, not in order to devalue the enjoyable play with expressive materials and cultural forms happening in classrooms or anywhere else, but, when borrowing or

appropriating popular culture, to recognize that this culture emerges not only from an aesthetic tradition, but from a largely unrecorded, perhaps untranslatable community history. It is valuable for all

2 In Bomb the Suburbs, a point relevant to this discussion is made in Wimsatt's interview with graffiti artist and teacher Lavie Raven, who opines that the purpose of hip-hop is not to reform but to bring about the end of substandard education ("wack public schools") in urban Black and brown neighborhoods (p. 105).

teachers to recognize that the cultural assets of marginal groups are in fact assets, not indications of lack or ignorance (Eller, 1989). But pursuing the understandable pedagogical urge to replace the idolatry of art forms found in Eurocentric museums with racialized popular culture can risk an unfortunate drift toward condescension.

Though he was after my time, I recognize a similar inclination toward white empathy in Macklemore, a white rapper who debuted in 2005, and who has ever since performed a "woke" or "positive" self-awareness. Macklemore recorded songs critiquing homophobia ("Same Love," 2012), materialism ("Thrift Shop," 2012), and white privilege, twice ("White Privilege," 2005, and "White Privilege II," 2016). Illustrating his flair for performing a politically conscious stance, he took to Twitter in 2014 to publicly self-flagellate after he won four Grammy Awards, beating out a number of Black rap artists, but magnanimously telling Black rapper Kendrick Lamar that Lamar was "robbed" (though without offering to give up his Grammy).

At one point early in his career, Macklemore (known as "Professor Macklemore" for a while) spent time facilitating writing workshops at a juvenile detention facility (Matson, 2011, para. 12). Clearly, while Eminem[3] proved that talent (and misogyny) could make a white rapper famous, Macklemore demonstrated that preachy ethical posturing is another route to successful hip-hop self-branding. But I submit, as a white person who shares some of Macklemore's tastes, beliefs, and life experiences, his example highlights the drawbacks, aesthetic and otherwise, of white folks instrumentalizing hip-hop as a teaching tool. These dangers are demonstrated throughout the history of American performance.

In the Jim-Crow-era tradition of blackface, white performers (though not only white performers) donned black tar or burnt ash on their faces and performed stereotyped Black roles for white audiences that were comic, melodramatic, or often both. Hartman (1997) writes, "The blackface mask… fortified a restrictive and repressive notion of blackness, which, although elastic enough to permit white self-exploration, could not trespass the parameters established to maintain racial hierarchies" (p. 29). Blackface affectations can be seen to persist to this day in the work of many white musicians, as well as that of reform-minded white liberals, teachers included. Kyla Schuller (2017) links dominant white American ideas of evolution in the nineteenth

3 Eminem is an enormously successful white rapper who debuted in the early 2000s. Early on, his authenticity was bolstered by working with the legendary "gangsta" producer Dr. Dre. Eminem quickly gained renown for his savagely clever wordplay, improvisational skill, and unique lyrical delivery.

century to a "sentimental biopolitics" whose most visible expression may have been Harriet Beecher Stowe's bestselling 1852 abolitionist tearjerker, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a story which would become a staple of the blackface "minstrel" theater. Bringing this sentimental narrative of "transracialism" into the twentieth and twenty-first century, scholar Alisha Gaines (2017) looks at the history of spectacular attempts by liberal-minded white journalists and other racialized "impersonators" to create notoriety through disguising themselves as Black and publicly attesting to the suffering they experienced (cf. the now-infamous cases of Rachel Dolezal and Jessica Krug). Such histories need to be in the front of white teachers' minds when trying to pedagogically operationalize Black culture. Weighty considerations remain key to negotiating the interpretation of culture in school.

Wokeness on snooze

Afro-pessimism is a bracing theorization of race that draws from and critiques both radical Black political theory and the Continental philosophical tradition. The psychic, phenomenological, and structural forces that Afro-pessimist thinkers are concerned with are summed up under the heading of "anti-Blackness," a tendency that underpins but is distinct from white supremacy. The significance of white supremacy is to some degree acknowledged by progressive whites, including many teachers. Such teachers often bring cultural forms associated with nonwhite groups into their classrooms, seeking to disrupt assumptions that all important cultural figures are white, but not to disrupt the beliefs that underpin their own authority. Anti-Blackness as a term that identifies the production of Black suffering as psychically necessary for sustaining the everyday economic, political, and legal functioning of civil society.

Acknowledging the delusion of superiority can be a cathartic gesture, but anti-Blackness, which names a default exclusion of Blacks from all non-Black social spaces, and which feeds on white people's charitable intentions, persists. Macklemore again provides an instructive example. Like progressive white teachers, he announces that he has privilege, thereby reinforcing a sense of moral superiority for white fans, but not sparking their self-awareness, nor centering the work and voices of Black or brown people. "One never really knows which is more severe," Afro-pessimist scholar Frank B. Wilderson III (2008) reflects: "the blithe disregard of White Americans, or the pious remorse through which they purify themselves" (p. 112). My unease with the white curricular employment of Black culture in an educational system permeated by ever more subtle forms of oppression finds articulation (although little comfort) in this school of thought, in which racial stratification is fundamental and historical scars are largely permanent. In the 2013 zine *The Wanderings of the Slave: Black Life and Social Death*, the author R.L. states:

> The violence of anti-Blackness produces black existence; there is no prior positive blackness that could be potentially appropriated. Black existence is simultaneously produced and negated by racial domination, both as presupposition and consequence. Affirmation of blackness proves to be impossible without simultaneously affirming the violence that structures black subjectivity itself. (p. 3)

This might be one way of summing up the tenets of orthodox Afro-pessimism. For Afro-pessimist thinkers, working in a specific interpretive lineage of the acclaimed anti-colonial philosopher, psychologist, and partisan Frantz Fanon, there cannot be a thorough social or cultural recognition of Black people as full human beings, let alone citizens. This is due to the irredeemable abjection of the category of Blackness, a category that arose alongside and facilitated colonial subjugation and modern chattel slavery.

Blackness thus represents a form of existential deadlock, even as some Afro-pessimist theorists posit Blackness as a fundamental condition or position for all meaningful theorizing (Spillers, 2006; Sexton, 2012). Through the widespread perpetuation of anti-Blackness as a shared psychic and political reality, Black people continue to inhabit the slave's subhuman position, enduring "social death" (Patterson, 1982). From this perspective, it would seem unlikely that appropriations of Black artists by white-dominated institutions would benefit the young people whose forebears and elders created, and whose peers are creating, the culture being appropriated in spite of, and in opposition to, white-dominated institutions. As the eminent Black educational theorist Carter G. Woodson (1933/2009) observed long ago, "the philosophy and ethics resulting from our educational system have justified slavery, peonage, segregation, and lynching" (p. 4). If race is a fundamental phenomenological (rather than biological) category of the modern era, as Afro-pessimists maintain, there is something cynical in presenting cultural forms back to the subaltern communities[4] they came from as a gesture of *noblesse oblige* made by the dominant group.

Speaking of the philanthropic white "friends of the Negro" that descended on the American South following the Civil War, Black historian and Afro-pessimist Saidiya Hartman (1997) recalls how

4 This paper runs the risk of falsely suggesting that Latinx communities (who clearly suffer under xenophobic white supremacy) were and are less than central to the development of hip-hop culture. A postcolonial critique of hip-hop education drawing on Latin American scholars could productively overlap with this one focusing on Afro-pessimism.

"teachers, missionaries, and plantation managers strived to inculcate a self-interested ethic that would motivate the formerly enslaved to be dutiful and productive laborers" (p. 128).

While this applies to a somewhat distant historical moment, it's hard not to see the connections to the ongoing phenomenon commonly referred to as the "white savior complex," a notion which has fueled the educational deskilling of teachers and privatization of schools promoted by groups such as Teach For America (Brewer and deMarrais, 2015; Waldman, 2019). A similar "empowerment" ethos is applied to the use of hip-hop as a teaching tool by Samuel S. Seidel in *Hip-Hop Genius* (2011), a book promoting the High School for Recording Arts charter school in St. Paul, Minnesota. It's not the case that all teachers in either of these programs are homogeneously white[5], nor that they are uniformly lacking in musical or teaching ability. But a push toward entrepreneurial self-improvement links these initiatives with Reconstruction-era philanthropy, as well as with contemporary neoliberal policies that presume a post-racial world.

There still remains the matter of whether a white teacher can collaborate with youth of color in an urban diasporic Black and brown musical and literary tradition that has been used in large part to critique and oppose white institutions, often in subtle, indirect, or occluded ways. The presumably transgressive act of bringing hip-hop into the K-12 curriculum may be viewed instead as a negation of transgression. Jared Sexton (2008), another noted Afro-pessimist, comments on theories of multiracial identity in terms that resonate with the educational appropriation of hip-hop, noting that "critical discontinuity is… covered over as the processes of representation are effaced in favor of a supposedly self-evident product" (p. 50). The discontinuity that Sexton locates is specific to the term "representation," a word which, as postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak points out, has two distinct meanings; there is the recognized *subject* of political representation, and the appreciated or interpreted *object* of artistic or metaphorical representation (as cited in Sexton 2008, p. 50). As the history of colonial spectacles attests, the representation of a community's tradition under an external locus of (aesthetic) authority doesn't translate into that community being granted power.
Important questions and difficult experiences have been discussed for years in rap music, sometimes but by no means exclusively by rappers who meet schools' criteria for respectability (Bowen, 2014;

5 Terrenda White (2016) examines and addresses the direct effect that Teach For America has had on the declining numbers of Black teachers working in public schools.

Cooper, Morris, & Boylorn, 2017). But the situating of such music in a classroom as a teaching tool may be a hard sell for students of color, precisely because of the kind of obstacles that Sexton describes, both within and outside the institution of schooling. What makes it harder is that the violence explicitly on the surface of some rap music, even when expressed in terms that a teacher can countenance, even when centuries of repression are acknowledged, also communicates an "unthought" violence to some listeners and not others (Hartman & Wilderson, 2003; Hartman, 2008). The restaging of this violence is linked to what Sexton (2010) calls "an inadequate understanding of the relations of power," (p. 89) in which schools themselves are implicated. "Black optimist" scholar Fred Moten, a sympathetic critic of Afro-pessimism and an admirer of Hartman's thought, references Black art's "enfleshment of the un- or sub-representable" (2007a, p. 218). This traumatic kernel is not readily available for class discussion, perhaps especially when the discussion is facilitated by a white teacher. In addition, while it is not the case that the content of rap music is immune from critique, the anti-Black impulse to police and suppress a perceived "excessiveness" of Black bodies, culture, and pleasure, sometimes with deadly violence (Fleetwood, 2011; King, 2013; Winters, 2018; Strings, 2019), cannot be bracketed out of a critique of hip-hop by a white spectator.

When Black and brown alienation and aggression are detoured toward uplift by a teacher, astute observers of hip-hop pedagogy might identify "a metanarrative thrust" that Saidiya Hartman (2008) says is "always towards an integration into the national project." "(P)articularly when that project is in crisis," she notes, "Black people are called upon to affirm it" (p. 185). Contextualizing resistance among many youth of color to national projects such as public education, Moten invokes Black leader Fannie Lou Hamer's injunction to "refuse that which has been refused to us" (Hartman & Moten, 2016, 34:20). In an earlier piece, Moten (2007b) also speaks of Black music as "resistance to constraint and instrumentalization" (p. 3). Given that many low-income Black youth may have come to perceive the role of white-dominated schools to be policing and punishment rather than providing valuable skills and knowledge, a sufficient level of shared understanding may not exist in dissociative spaces where those very young people find their expression muffled and hijacked.

Inside the class, outside the culture

One of the most amusingly off-the-rails projects I ever facilitated during my decade teaching art in an urban majority-Black neighborhood public high school was one in 2006 involving the creation and recording of vibrations using homemade contact microphones. I had written a grant for an audio project, and we

had spent a couple of weeks using hand tools to make "canjos," functioning stringed instruments made from large cans, boards, guitar strings, and adjustable tuning pegs. I shared examples of improvised instruments that appeared throughout the history of African-American music, and I brought in a white friend who is a sculptor, musician, and sound artist to show students how to use inexpensive supplies to create contact microphones, also known as pickups, that permit recording and amplification. The visiting artist showed how these pickups could be used to record any vibration on a solid object to which it was mounted. Additionally, there were a handful of cassette recorders on hand, and I encouraged students to manipulate recordings by placing masking tape over the erase head when recording with their pickups.

As it so happened, barely any students were enchanted by the avant-garde possibilities of creating musique concrète (European connotations intended). I had thought there would be experiments with percussion, along with musical loops on the canjos, but pretty much every student held the contact microphone to their throat and recorded themselves rapping. I had no principled objection to this, but the content of the lyrics was, by and large, thoroughly unfit for the ears of school administrators, or of parents and family members for that matter. Profanity was just the tip of the iceberg. Lyrics about sex, drugs, and violence were varied, imaginative, hilarious, and altogether appalling. There were familiar themes of neighborhood and consumer pride, and impressive insults. While I did try to keep a lid on targeted verbal abuse, much of the content would likely be described by many adults as inappropriate for a school setting. Regardless, students were as happy and engaged as I had ever seen them.

I ended up keeping all the tapes—which was one way I could avoid getting in trouble for having allowed students to record such brazenly taboo content in my class. I didn't share them with anyone outside my classroom, as I obviously hadn't solicited permission from the creators' guardians. Still, I had a strong though unrealized urge to create an education-as-empowerment-themed display with headphones as part of my final grant presentation, in order to see the looks on listeners' faces. I did organize a final event in a local arts center featuring a local electroacoustic instrument builder and musician, at which event visitors could try out canjos, pickups, and recorders, but no local rap artistry was on offer. I do consider this project a success, and it could be called a classroom deployment of hip-hop culture. But what made the final recordings so special, from my point of view, was their total lack of pedagogical direction.

Figure 1. *Display of canjos, recorders, pickups, and handouts at a local arts center, May 2006*

It wasn't that I failed to offer directives, procedures, or hands-on guidance, or that students failed to attend to my facilitation. But the deliberate choice of students to depart from my recording suggestions was what created something like a glorious mess. In the end, students got access to new tools, and they used them in ways that were entirely outside of my curricular intent. This may be the only way in which a truly critical school project can be said to succeed-- particularly in the public schools of a segregated city, particularly in the deindustrialized wasteland of white flight where I taught, particularly in the classroom of a suburban white rap fan like myself.

Beats, rhymes, and discipline

Despite my claim of success, my lesson could easily be seen as a failure (Spillane, 2012), either as a lesson on sound art or as a lesson on hip-hop. While teaching in the city I did several other projects that would be better candidates for examples of success and solidarity, as well as of my own self-branding. But what makes the sound project such a success, to me if to nobody else, is that it was an unexpected result that did not respond in any way whatsoever, positively or negatively, to institutional intentions. To the best of their ability, the students simply ignored the classroom. As it happens, rap was what made that possible: rap not as an articulation of a difference-transcending American diversity narrative, but rap as a tradition rooted in exile from any American narrative whatsoever.

The amateur rappers in my classroom declared a refusal to cooperate, while taking advantage of my white fantasies of respectable Black

and brown transgression. They asserted what Édouard Glissant (1990/1997) termed *the right to opacity.*

The recordings my students made comprised a meaningful act of refusal, but not because Black and brown students can't learn and grow intellectually with adult guidance. It's because the kind of educational services provided to segregated majority-Black communities derive from racist practices and policies that very few teachers, including me, have the ability to subvert, even though those services are necessary, underfunded, and very difficult to replace when taken away (as they frequently have been in American history, and particularly in the recent history of my city). Whether or not the recordings my students made were subversive, they were evasive, evoking a quality Moten has described as "fugitivity" (2007a, 2007b, 2008). For Moten, fugitivity is a necessary element in Black cultural flourishing, given the impossibility of recognition by white institutions of learning and culture.

Black people have overcome immense hardship to educate themselves and their children (Green, 2016). But the education provided by white people in powerful positions to Black communities has always reflected apartheid distinctions in discipline, implicit and explicit, that echo patterns of policing practice and housing segregation. Discipline in white schools has traditionally been an inward-directed virtue of self-control that authority figures aim to instill, whereas in Black and brown schools admonishments regarding personal responsibility are accompanied by external penalties, attested to in innumerable analyses of the "school-to-prison pipeline." And in my city (as well as elsewhere) this punitive ethos extends to the level of the school system, where nonwhite-majority neighborhood public schools such as the one where I worked are frequently slated for total administrative overhaul, if not outright closure and replacement by charter schools (Jankov & Caref, 2017), a process that reduces rather than expands opportunities for many Black families (Waitoller & Super, 2017).

The white empathy curriculum of pedagogical hip-hop extends this discipline, even as it presumes a shared sense of resistance and solidarity. When John Rankin, an earnest abolitionist cited by Saidiya Hartman (1997), describes in a letter the "incoherent song" voiced by a coffle of enslaved people he encountered (p. 22), he takes it upon himself to imagine himself and his family in their circumstances, and thereby to render their suffering legible. But Hartman blisteringly scrutinizes the presumption of these sorts of projection, which find titillation and outrage in the most grotesque displays of torture, while repeating the denial, then enshrined in law, of Black people's capacity to offer their own witness. The violence of the institution can only be brought into view by extreme examples of incineration

and dismemberment, or by placing white bodies at risk. (p. 21) Both like and unlike the blackface minstrel shows of yesteryear, Black and brown popular culture has a complex relationship with white institutions. It enacts defiance, even as it exists both in reaction to and reliance upon those institutions, and their thirst for violence.

Rap has undoubtedly been absorbed into and formed by "fugitive" forms of informal learning that have ensured the cohesion and vitality of Black communities for centuries, while also feeding the fantasies of white fans. But focusing on the pedagogical aspect of the music eclipses its affective functions, which respond to marginalization and trauma with provocative and politically significant expressions of autonomy, struggle, and rage, not to mention transgressive violence and pleasure. Pedagogy flattens the music, draining its meaning, by foregrounding a false transparency that reassures white teachers.

Without a doubt, teachers who lead hip-hop lessons care about their students. My goal here is not to dissuade white teachers from expressing concern for their students, white or nonwhite, nor from treating them with care and respect. Rather, following Hartman (1997), my goal is "to highlight the dangers of a too-easy intimacy… and the violence of identification" (p. 20) when, for empathetic whites, "the central term of this identification (is) suffering" (p. 22). For caring white teachers, caring is not the problem. The problem is the uncritical indulgence of empathy, which needs to be understood as a paternalistic assertion of authority (Gaines, 2017). While white teachers can offer many resources to their nonwhite students, including kindness, openness, and patience, there are limits set by history on what can be shared, either in words or through unspoken understandings.

But, as my class project shows, this limitation can yield expression. Drawing on the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan and the philosopher Alain Badiou, Derek Hook (2013) seeks to address the psychological dissonance in post-apartheid South Africa through "raising impotence to impossibility," saying "that this 'irresolvable'—that which cannot be explained away or fully recovered from—undergoes a form of mediation in view of a forward-looking commitment" (p. 118). Putting that lesson into this context, the autonomy of open-ended artmaking can have surprising results, while forced efforts at empathy may inhibit the spontaneity that could enhance mutual recognition.

Following the argument of Fanon's essay "The Negro and Recognition" in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/1986), Afro-pessimists are often skeptical regarding recognition, whether interracial, individual, or "intramural" (Spillers, 2006), let alone sanguine about solidarity (Sexton, 2010; Wilderson, 2010). What Afro-pessimism suggests, however, is that, especially but not exclusively in white-

dominated institutions, contradiction, conflict, and deadlock may be more honest and relevant themes than respectable "urban education" motifs of self-discipline, overcoming, and uplift. For art teachers particularly, the creative potential of dissonance and refusal is hard to direct, but it is also undeniable. As pedagogically unsatisfying as it may be, there may be something inspiring in the ceaseless provocation that, while not a dynamic in Macklemore's oeuvre, can be detected throughout the art and music of the neo-colonial Black diaspora. As Geneva Smitherman (2006) herself acknowledges, "the Black musical tradition represents an outlaw musical form" (p. 98).

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