



# The International Journal of Lifelong Learning in Art Education

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## *Relationship Building*

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A Professional Journey Begins

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# Editorial: Connecting through Creative Collaboration

*“The research stories told here all speak to how relationship building through collaborative art making and dialogic discourse forges supportive connections...”*

Pamela Harris Lawton  
Founder and Senior Editor  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*

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This issue of IJLLAE is centered around the theme of *relationship building* through art education. Three questions were suggested for authors to consider: *In what ways does collaborative art making build rapport and relationship between participants? How can art foster empathy among participants with differing socio-political agendas/perspectives? And, how can art build sustainable relationships?* With this second issue we wanted to provide a framework to guide authors but be flexible enough for them to interpret the theme from a variety of viewpoints. The articles published present research with diverse participant populations in school, museum, and community settings and a range of educational approaches.

We open with a visual essay written by an intergenerational collaborative of art educators, McComb, Capling, DeMint, Miller, and Montero, who formed a professional learning community to create their own professional development activities addressing the needs and interests of k-16 art educators in their region. They meet to share knowledge, make art, and design

innovative curriculum, further illustrating how intergenerational professional relationships improve student learning outcomes while building meaningful collaborative relationships.

Liz Langdon examines relationship building through the lens of intergenerational mentor/mentee interactions, whereby mentoring is a form of collaborative personal and professional development. Langdon illustrates these ideas through the narrative of a mid-career art educator and the relationship she developed with an older adult artist as part of an action research project. The narrative is told through life history interview.

In *Building relationships: Art making and empty bowls*, Susan Whiteland questions how collaborative art making can foster relationship building for all stakeholders. Using a project-based learning framework Whiteland and her art education students researched food insecurity with middle school students in a STEAM program as a means of meeting a community need.

Angela La Porte's article, *Inverse inclusion: Transforming dispositions of disability and inclusion*, outlines new research she is conducting through a service-learning course with studio art students, preservice art education students and adult members of the community with special needs; an area little researched in our field. The goal is to transform preservice teachers' meaning perspectives about adults with special needs, helping them recognize ableism and dismantle ableist stereotypes. By inviting adult community members with special needs to collaborate with her students, Angela provided them with opportunities to exercise *inverse inclusion*, an approach that allows for students to rotate through a variety of roles: student, teacher, teacher's assistant, and observer to recognize ableism and its debilitating effects on community members and peers with special needs.

Co-authors Eli Burke and Carissa DiCindio describe an intergenerational museum art education program, *Stay Gold*, designed to build relationships between LGBTQIA+ youth and older adults through collaborative art making, story sharing, and conversations about art to combat feelings of loneliness, isolation, and disconnection. Through *Stay Gold*, participants were encouraged to consider their feelings of disconnection from the world, how they view their place in the world, and develop a sense of community with other members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

This issue closes with David Reuel Romero's article on the Tucson Museum of Art's *Memories in the Making* (MIM) program for persons with dementia and their care providers. With an ever-growing ageing population, increasing numbers of people are suffering from brain injuries. The MIM program offers gallery tours and art making activities led by docents with dementia training, unique to MIM. Romero's research involved conducting follow-up interviews with care providers to determine whether or not participation in the MIM program helped them reconnect with their family members suffering from dementia and network with other care providers experiencing similar circumstances.

The research stories told here all speak to how relationship building through collaborative art making and dialogic discourse forges supportive connections, decreases feelings of isolation, and provides opportunities for personal and professional growth.

This is my last editorial as senior editor/founder of IJLLAE. Incoming senior editor, Susan Whiteland takes the helm for the next two years. To our authors, reviewers, readers, and editorial staff, thank you for your continued support.



# Intergenerational Collaboration: A Professional Journey Begins

*“Do not settle for  
working alone or  
accept professional  
development that  
does not include the  
needs of the art  
teacher.”*

Camilla McComb  
*Eastern Michigan University*

Bonnie Capling  
*Dundee Community Schools*

Kristyn DeMint  
*Dundee Community Schools*

Courtney Miller  
*Great Oaks Academy*

Jane Montero  
*Dexter Community Schools*

## ABSTRACT

Using a Professional Learning Community model six art educators from four school districts and one university have come together to form the Instructional Design Collaborative.

## KEYWORDS

*collaboration, PLC, professional development, intergenerational relationships; peer mentoring*

*To correspond with the authors regarding this article:*

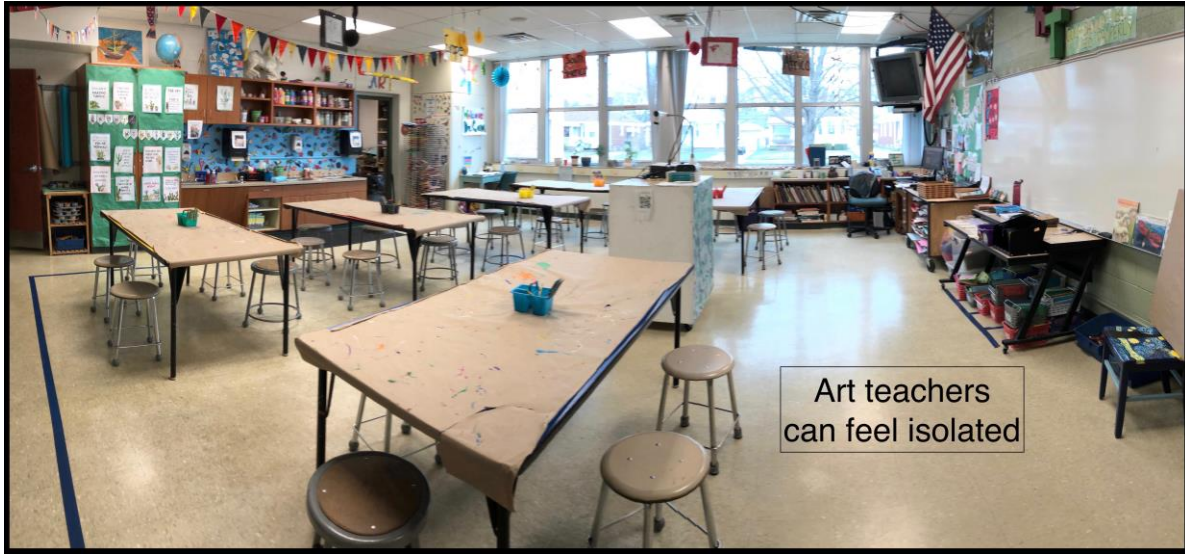
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### Seeking Community

Being an art teacher can feel lonely, especially when he/she is the only person teaching art in the school. This seclusion can follow an art educator from their first year of teaching and into their third decade of professional service. Many art teachers work alone in classrooms filled with exuberant, fun, and creative ideas, and yet they have few colleagues with whom to share their enthusiasm for the visual arts. To exacerbate the situation, the one time a month when an art educator has time to gather with others it is usually at a staff meeting where the art teacher is required to sit through professional development activities that have little to do with the profession of art education. Given this lack of consideration for the needs of art teachers, art educators in Southeast Michigan have created their own professional community.



### Building Community

Using a Professional Learning Community model (DuFour, 1998) six art educators from four school districts and one university have come together to form the Instructional Design



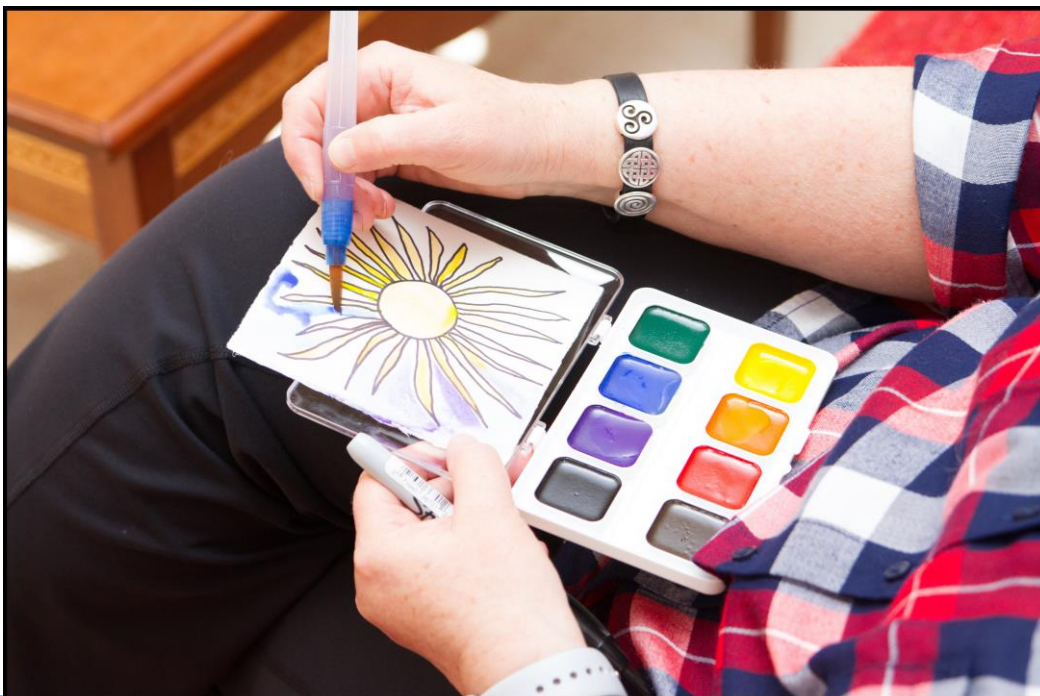
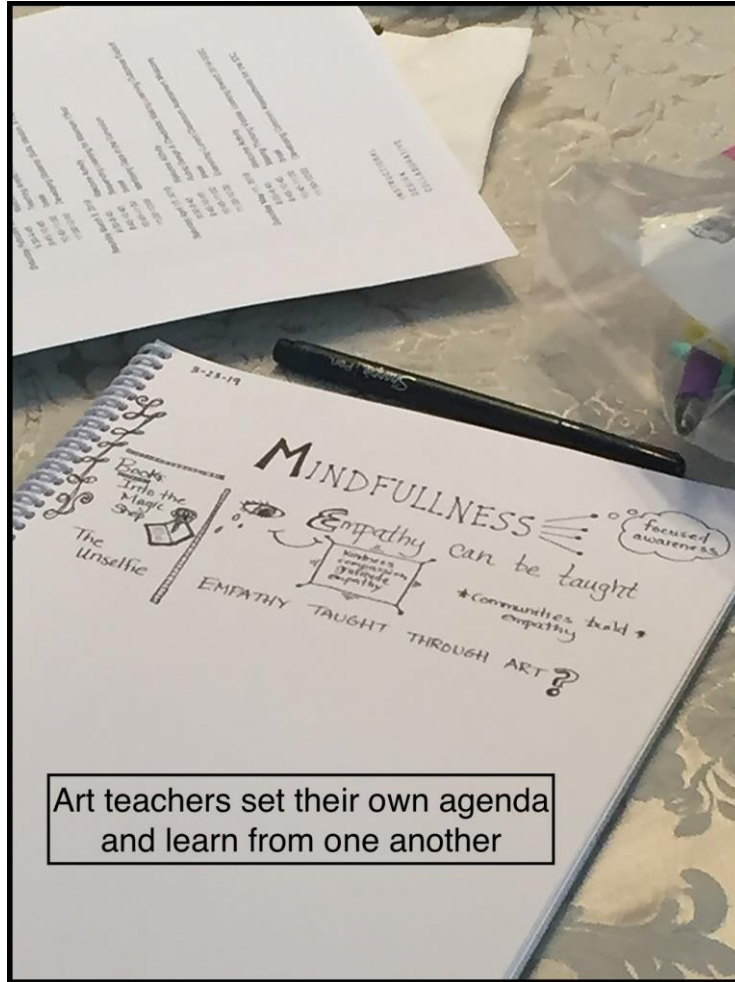
Collaborative (IDC1). The mission of the collaborative is to develop and connect the art education community to advance its professional development and build a culture of support and innovation. The IDC is a conceptual space that envisions professional development for art teachers and by art teachers. Since January 2019 the group has met five times, once each month to plan their own professional development. The monthly gatherings are sequenced and targeted to improve student learning while also building meaningful collaborative relationships among an intergenerational group of participants whose years of experience ranges from two to thirty-four years. The student populations they serve spans students with ages ranging from young fives to college undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students seeking teacher certification in art education.



### Sharing Learning

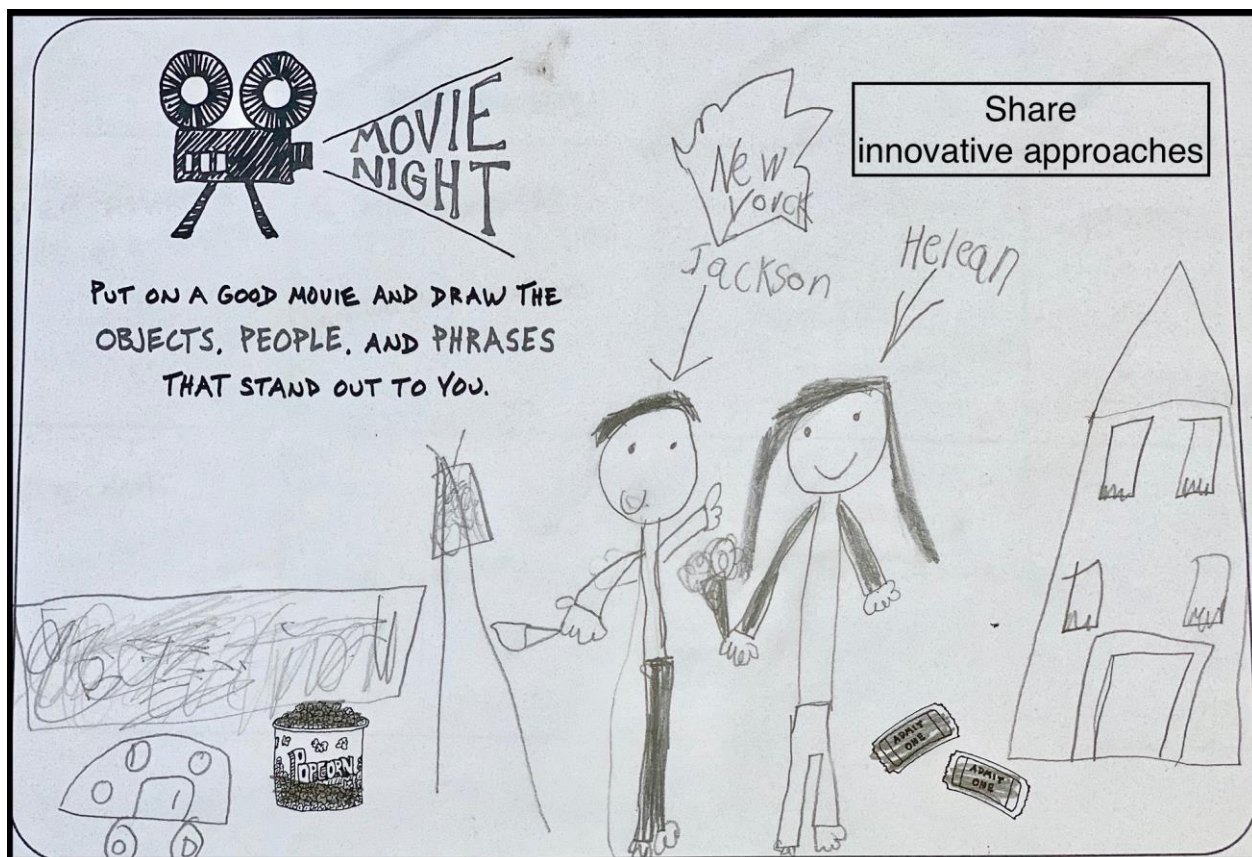
IDC members are lifelong learners, engaged in continuous improvement. For instance, during the April convening two members shared ideas gathered from their travels outside the state. The founder of the IDC shared a strategy of Visual Notetaking learned while she attended the National Art Education Association School for Art Leaders at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas. She delivered a brief presentation, showed examples of visual notetaking samples collected from pre-service teachers, and then led members in visual notetaking as a form of reflection during a 20-minute mindfulness exercise.

<sup>1</sup> The IDC was founded as a capstone project for the School for Art Leaders, sponsored by the National Art Education Association.





Afterward group members shared their meditations and reflected upon times when they too have used visual notetaking as a strategy in the visual arts classroom. Through discussion a question was raised: How can a visual notetaking strategy be used with younger children? One of the new teachers quickly spoke up and shared photos she had taken of her kindergarteners using visual notetaking to document what they were seeing in a short art movie shown to the class.



The IDC focus had been on making writing more visual, yet in that moment art teachers looked at the work of a five-year old whose world was already embedded in the visual. The realization of this spontaneous connection excited everyone at the table.

A second group member shared her experience of attending the 2019 Learning and the Brain Conference held in San Francisco, California.





She prepared a brief presentation to help IDC members understand the range of concepts covered at the conference. She brought two books that she found especially engaging and gave the IDC members a synopsis of each. Through conversation members learned what leading researchers from the fields of Neuroscience, Psychology, Social Work, and Education, had to say on the topic of Educating with Empathy. Dr. Jamil Zaki, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, spoke at the conference advocating for the benefits of empathy as creating happier and less stressed people, a happier and more involved community, generosity towards strangers, and greater open mindedness. He also brought attention to the modern barriers of empathy; as cities become crowded and full of strangers, he asserted that there tends to be more solitary living, intensified feelings of being alone in a crowd, and greater reliance on social media for communication (Co-author. Personal Notes. February 17, 2019).

With this new information IDC members began sharing examples of empathy being incorporated into the existing school curriculum. They made one another aware of additional sources for learning about empathy such as Howard Gardner's The Good Project<sup>2</sup> and The Why You Matter Project<sup>3</sup> developed by local art teachers Geo Rutherford and Laura Naar. By learning about empathy IDC members began considering it a topic for lesson design and children's artmaking.

### Becoming Connected

Work within the IDC has provided renewed energy for those who have been in the profession for 30+ years, and it adds confirmation to those starting in the field that their ideas are valuable and valued within the art education profession. An IDC member with three years of teaching experience explained that:

For me, one of the most challenging parts of being a Visual Arts teacher has been to find a source for professional development where I can interact with other art educators in person and with regularity. The IDC has provided me with an opportunity to collaborate with a wonderful group of supportive, passionate, and strong educators who share my interests and provide a variety of insights into our profession that have helped me to consider my own practices through a new lens. Becoming a part of this intergenerational organization is truly inspiring. The strengths of each of our members coming from their different levels of experience and education help all of us to grow in these areas as well. From the beginning the IDC has been about growing and lifting one another professionally with the help of each one of our members, and we have held true to this as we look forward to the upcoming year.

<sup>2</sup> <http://thegoodproject.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.whyyoumatter.org/>



Another IDC member with 17 years of teaching experience described the value she saw in working alongside fellow art educators:

When art educators work together, we challenge one another to think, rethink and re-evaluate thoughts and ideas. We discuss what we are teaching, how and why. We begin to use common language which helps us to understand what quality work is. When our peers are advocating for our success, we begin to work more deliberately, and with more focus. Working through the creative process with others builds strong sense of community and trust. Trust grows the longer we work together because we develop a sense of respect for the learning and growth of our peers demonstrated in their work, and in our own.

The more we realize that working together fosters positive relationships, the more we will grow as artists and as art educators. Building rapport with colleagues increases success for everyone.



Meeting with a community of art teachers fosters a place of belonging where members are able to support and encourage one another. In just 10 hours of working together members feel more connected and empowered. Moving forward IDC members have planned a three-day work session for the summer and are planning a collaborative

partnership to pair IDC teachers with pre-service art teachers attending university so that teachers-in-training can develop lessons for real, rather than fictitious, classrooms. The goal of this work is to inspire college students by providing authentic classroom experiences which will help them to be ready to teach on day one of student teaching.

### **Reach out and Become Intergenerational**

The purpose in sharing this professional learning community - collaborative is to encourage art educators to step out of their classrooms/work-spaces and to reach out into the art education community. Do not settle for working alone or accept professional development that does not include the needs of the art teacher. Look for art educators who are just getting started, those working mid-career, and especially find those near retirement. Form your own professional learning community. Partner with an art education professor at a local university. This person is likely authorized to award professional development credits for the work you are already doing.

With a team of art educators, professional development credits available, and through careful documentation of your work and accomplishments, you will make a strong case for your administration to allow you to engage in the rich and rewarding work of professional development in the visual arts.

*All images © the authors.*

### **Resources**

- Bloom, P. (2016). *Against empathy: The case for rational compassion*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Press.
- DuFour, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Rhode, M. (2013). *The sketchnote handbook: The illustrated guide to visual note taking*. United States: Peach Pit Press.
- Srinivasan, M. (2014). *Teach breathe learn*. Berkley, CA: Paralax Press.

# Artists as Mentors: A Mid-Career Art Educator Rekindles Her Artist Self

*“The artist’s experiences, shared through the life story interview and studio visit, provided Rose creative inspiration through insights into another artist’s philosophy and content knowledge.”*

Liz Langdon

*University of Kansas Lawrence*

## **ABSTRACT**

*A mentoring relationship between a mid-career art educator and a late-stage artist, is facilitated through the art educator’s action research and life story narrative which is key in learning and sharing the artist’s philosophy. The author uses narrative inquiry and Deleuze’s sense and event to represent the affective knowing of IG learning and demonstrates psychosocial benefits of mentoring.*

## **KEYWORDS**

*action research; intergenerational learning; mentoring; narrative analysis*

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Figure 1. Oz by Mary Stephens

*Heart tokens are piling up under a collaged painting titled Oz (Figure 1). The ruby red slippers are a focal point among a background layered with text from newspaper clippings, a playbill and vintage entertainment figures. The melancholy expressed in the image seems to be reflected in the expression of participants gathered around it. I overhear them sharing concerns about the artist, who is missing from today's seminar, in whispered conversations. I overhear words--surgery . . . second opinions . . . suddenly. The artist Mary Stephens should be here to talk about her artwork, but instead Carol Rose, her co-presenter, will use video recordings to share her story and demonstrate Stephens's working processes in an afternoon workshop for fellow educators.*

This narrative accounting of an event marks the culmination of Rose and Stephens working together. Their story relays powerful knowledge and demonstrates an emotional bond, gained through an intergenerational (IG) mentoring relationship mediated through art. Most art educators initially learn from artists through the professional relationship of college student and professor (Jin, 2018). According to Zwirn (2006) the successful transition from art student to art educator/artist is often hindered because of gender related issues. Zwirn says this accounts for art educators being largely female, and professional artists being predominately male. The potential of IG learning between female art educators and artists offers possibilities to buoy mid-career art educators who face challenges related to age and

gender, and to amplify the wisdom of late-stage artists. The initiative I set forth in this research may serve as one form of remediation for the gendered nature of art education (Dalton, 2001; Sandell, 2004) and addresses older age as an asset, showing a late-stage artist as mentor, who articulates philosophical understandings represented in her artwork, providing lasting and affective professional development.

In a survey of art educators, Zwirn (2006) noted women repeatedly mentioned a need for respect and empowerment as artists, and some relayed an “inconsistent sense of their artist identities,” whereas, male art educators relayed a nascent confidence in their role as artist (Zwirn, 2006, p.173). Jin (2016) refers to post-secondary art education in university settings as adults in pursuit of change, looking not only for places to learn, but for mentors to assist them in professional or personal ways. Jin ponders how art professors’ philosophical understandings are represented in artwork, how it relates to teaching and how it influences students. Jin questions how psychosocial influences are involved in mentoring and teaching. These questions are addressed in the mentoring relationship described in this research, where participants share aesthetic understandings related to practice, demonstrating psychosocial growth. By analyzing this lifelong learning event for its relational dynamic, I will show that the affective learning was key in producing creative thinking (Beighton, 2015) – a valuable goal in art education.

### Adult Mentoring

Theory development in the field of IG studies is relatively new and was initially based on developmental theories identified as: social network theory, social identity theory, dynamic interactional theory and mentoring (Kuehne, 2003). Mentoring is a one-on-one supportive relationship between a younger and older person, which has mutually beneficial social/emotional benefits (Kuehne, 2003) and is mutually revitalizing, with benefits for both mentor and mentee (Chipping & Morris, 2006). Research supports mentorship as reciprocal and it suggests that older participants are encouraged to learn and grow as well (Parisi et al., 2009).

Adult mentoring between generations is considered a valid means of personal and professional growth (Fletcher, 2007). The “possible selves” construct is a person’s ability to realize her potential within a collaboratively supportive and challenging mentoring relationship in a social dialogic context (Fletcher, 2007, p. 76). Beyond dialogic exchange, the relational dynamic of mentorship is an aspect of lifelong learning which adds an affective and creative dimension in which creativity is more about time and processes than objects or spaces (Beighton, 2015).

Beighton (2015) uses Deleuze’s (1969/1990) concept of event to explain that in lifelong learning, events’ internal dynamism “embody dynamic change which relates events to what they are becoming rather than what they are” (pg. 16). In this way, an event is not



simply a happening or occurrence, but carries significance and continuity to the future for the participant (Deleuze 1969/1990; Williams, 2004). Beighton argues that the goal of lifelong learning should be affective and creative. The relational dynamic of mentoring relationships support affective learning by going beyond the formal boundaries of professional and IG helping relationships, and takes place in a mutually supportive and informal environment (Phillips & Hendry, 2000). Yorks and Kasl (2002) posit that because of the diversity among adult learners, in this case diverse in age, whole learning strategies that fully engage the affective domain are needed.

In considering adult to adult mentoring, complementary needs and assets may factor into its success. Late-stage artists have particular age-related needs and assets—they must deal with an increasingly smaller network of age cohorts as their multiple networks of professional connections and friends diminish (Jeffri, Heckathorn, Spiller, & Simon, 2007) and they have life stories and philosophies to return to the community (Baddeley & Singer, 2007). Cumming-Potvin and MacCallum (2010) strongly suggest that relationships formed between mentor and mentee through the activity of sharing stories allows participants to experience their lives and their world more meaningfully in a community of practice. Sharing a complete life story which highlights important aspects, through a guided interview allows the teller to share what is important in their life (Atkinson, 2007).

### **Life Story Interview**

The life story interview involves a dialog in which questions are asked, answers transcribed and the story of lived experience is retold through a narrative. The methodology is characterized by one person helping another in the telling of their own story (Atkinson, 2007). Atkinson (2007) says the life story interview facilitates reliving stories and in so doing, it brings to life again stories held in the “heart, mind and soul” (p. 238) or as affect, perception and duration, which values our pasts as the accumulation of experience and inherited knowledge (Deleuze 1969/1990). The life story narrative demonstrates intersubjective compassion through the interviewer bonding with the story teller and empowering the teller through the acknowledgement of their story (Atkinson, 2007).

### **Art Educator/Researcher**

Art educators often feel conflicted with multiple identities: as educator and artist, or educator, artist and researcher (Thornton, 2012). Thornton (2012) argues that the art educator’s integration of all three identities: artist, teacher and researcher are important for both fields of art and art education. He suggests action research is an effective means for art educators to define and research problems, develop a plan of action, and analyze and reflect on their solutions (Mills, 2011). It is professional development that is emergent, embedded in practice, ongoing, and teacher-directed (Burnaford, Fischer & Hobson, 2001). Art teacher action research groups guided in inquiry methods by a university researcher

enhances an art teachers' practice, by encouraging teachers to understand their beliefs and practices and how they came to be (May, 1993/1997).

Art educator researchers use visual journals as a way to archive experiences and insight for later use by recontextualizing information, which allows for critical analysis (Delacruz & Bales, 2010, p. 38). A journal's use in action research is a form of presentational knowledge that keeps alive the "comprehensive qualitative richness of actions and experiences" (Heron & Reason, 2008, p. 373). The recording of visual, auditory and tactile images can disclose important experiences because participants engage through action and memory in an elemental synthesis of experience with reflection (Yorks & Kasl in Heron & Reason, 2008).

### **Teacher Action Research with an Artist**

As part of my dissertation research to understand how to integrate local place into art curriculum through aging artists' knowledge, I organized action research inquiries with the local art museum and Carol Rose and three other art educators to identify local late-stage artists, who were at least one generation (20 years) older. Group members produced personal journals and a curriculum publication featuring each artist (NTIEVA, 2013) and presented their research to the community at the artists' exhibition at the museum. Their method of research was to identify and interview an artist, keep a journal, write a brief life story narrative for the curriculum they were developing, and teach it. The artists each gave permissions for the use of their story and all participated in community presentations, except for Mary Stephens.

My original research questions evolved and so did my understanding of action research as being "with rather than on" participants, which led to this research (Heron & Reason, 2007). My challenge in analyzing the participants' data was to show the path and connections of inquiry between the researchers and the artists that led to my conclusions (Sumara & Carson, 1997). I did this through narrative inquiry and the data provided by Rose and Stephens led me to a conclusion about what adult-to-adult mentoring looks like between an art educator and artist, and how it works.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative writing provided a link between the action and the meaning by mapping out interpretive paths between the participant experience of the action research and explaining a meaning, by reconstructing data into interpretive and analytical research texts to show social significance (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This allows for interpretation, which may deconstruct events, and allows for a post-structural reading (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004). I used Deleuze's (1969/1990) theoretical framework in which data work to reveal meanings of affective experiences of sense. Deleuze defines sense as felt rather than spoken. A Deleuzian post-structural approach looks at what texts do, rather than what they appear to say (Czarniawska-Joerges, B. 2004). I used sense theory (Deleuze, 1969/1990) as an

analytical tool to work with the context-embedded data, to keep preconceptions of IG experiences from distorting the “logic of evidence” (Lather, in Keifer-Boyd, 2014, p.199). I reassessed aspects of the narrative in which stories of experience emerged, and considered first the experience, or the sense of the event, as valuable to reflect upon (Boulton-Funke, 2015). Then I used psychosocial theory to identify and classify these qualities as a mentoring relationship.

I illustrate the psychosocial growth demonstrated in mentoring using the lens of life span theory developed through surveying narrative texts across the life span, which generalizes how different aged persons experience life differently (Baddeley & Singer, 2007), and I show how difference works positively in IG relationships.

### **Participants**

Rose is a mid-career art educator, who recently joined a high school art department after 15 years in an elementary position. Rose shared some dissatisfaction in her new teaching appointment. She expressed stress in switching grade levels, entering an established art department and being saddled with teaching all entry level art classes, which left her feeling inadequate. She chose Stephens to participate in her action research because she was acquainted with her from art classes at a local university two decades earlier, and admired her art. Stephens was well established in the art community, having lived and exhibited in the community since the 1990s, following a career as an artist in a neighboring state. Rose recorded Stephens’s life story through interviews and videotaping at her home and studio, demonstrating her collage and painting techniques.

### **Findings**

Rose shows a sensitive interpretation of the tactile aspects of Stephens’s story in this excerpt from the *Pride of Place* curriculum (NTIEVA, 2013):

Stephens recalls as a child how she loved to create, loved to paint, and how she particularly loved sculpting. She remembers how she started drawing using pencils and yellow writing pads she “stole” from her father. Her father was a “gauger.” Mary recounts how he used a beautiful metallic tool to measure the contents inside a tank in the oil fields. He wrote down his measurements on yellow pads and telegraphed the results. Mary loved his yellow writing pads! Then, she used the walls when she couldn’t find paper. In school, she loved to experiment with shading, but her teachers did not like that. She did have teachers who understood her, however. She remembers that she didn’t like edges; it took her a long time to understand that things have edges. She struggled with making edges on a two-dimensional surface. Yet she learned about edges after modeling with clay and experimenting with three-dimensional forms (Rose in NTIEVA, 2013, p. 78).

Rose interpreted the story through the eyes of an art educator, noting Stephen's early struggle to define edges on paper. I sensed Rose also found commonality with Stephen's childhood art experiences, as an artist, because in my exit interview with Rose, she recounted her own early child artist transgressions, using her mother's lipstick to draw on walls.

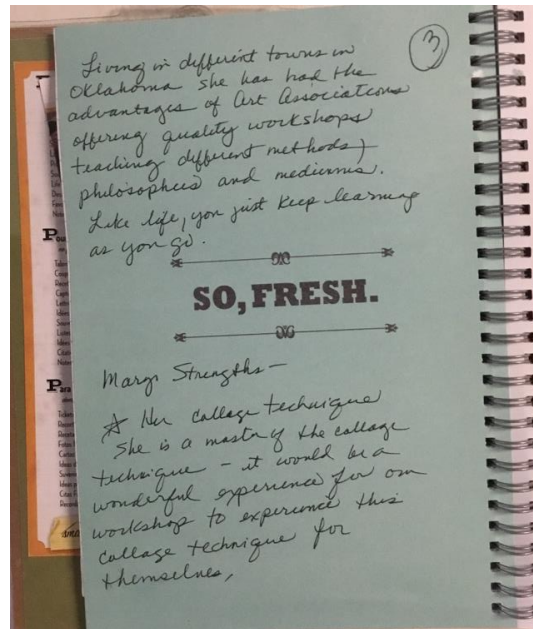


Figure 2. A page from Rose's journal

### Rose's Journal Pages

Rose used her journal to document learning from multiple sources: incorporating notes from our workshops, visual images, and personal encounters with Stephens, whose philosophy, quotes, and interview transcriptions dominated Rose's journal. When Rose wrote about Stephens's philosophy of art and chose to interpret it in poetry in her journal, she documented the experiential learning gleaned from Stephens and her artwork. Rose took handwritten notes of her interview with Stephens and transcribed them, adding a reflexive element to her journal by graphically emphasizing text important to her. Rose made the journal a document of her personal journey through this research, as indicated by her language and choices for inclusion. A page in Rose's journal demonstrates she valued Stephens's words, by graphically recontextualizing it. Rose created the poem *The Work of Mary Stephens (as a Sojourner)* from her interview with Stephens (Figure 3).

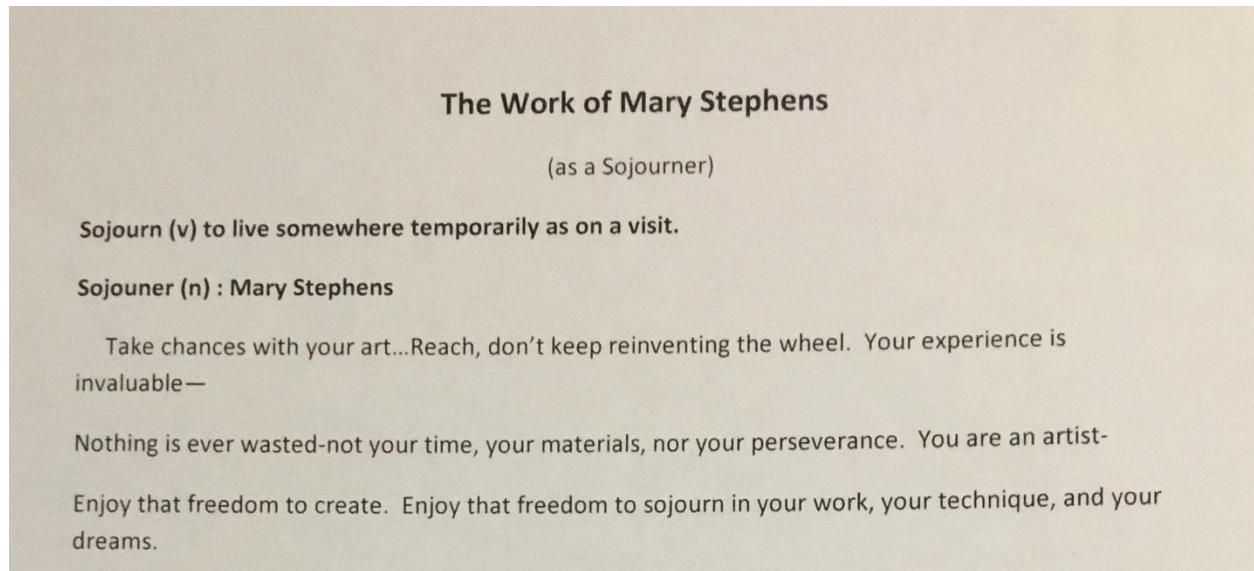


Figure 3. Rose's journal page The Work of Mary Stephens: as a Sojourner.

Rose's reflections in poetry based on her interview demonstrates she benefited personally through Stephens's sharing her aesthetic philosophy. In her exit interview, Rose iterated the reflective aspect of her journal, which represents her own personal preferences in art and research. Explaining why the journal had become so important to her and how it functioned for her, Rose said,

These were things that Mary [Stephens] said, and I wrote things down because I just was like a sponge with her. I wanted to absorb everything she could tell me. I really benefited, I think, doing this research with her. (C. Rose, personal communication, June 3, 2013)

#### **Rose co-creates knowledge.**

Rose's journal conveys the richness of her experiences (Heron & Reason, 2008) and provides insights into her connections with Stephens as an artist, highlighting what she learned from Stephens's life story interview and studio demonstration. Her journal functions to transfer her experiential learning in action research into affective learning through her reflective and creative process, (Yorks & Kasl, 2002).

Viewing Rose's recorded interviews with Stephens gave me the opportunity to see and hear source material for Rose's journal. In her journal Rose commented upon what Stephens told her and reformatted it poetically, demonstrating she valued this new found knowledge. In this way Rose recontextualizes a segment of the life story interview, representing a collaboration with Stephens.



This excerpt from the audio recording reveals Stephens' art philosophy as she talks about content:

**Stephens:** I like to be able to communicate to someone through my painting. Nothing is more satisfying [than] to have someone look a long time at my paintings and ask questions. "Why is that in the painting?" I don't always have an answer, because sometimes it is serendipity. Things just happen. I love that, when things just happen. Leave it alone and paint will do what it will do.

**Rose:** A happy surprise.

**Stephens:** Absolutely.

(C. Rose, personal communication, March, 2013)

Rose's journal notes included this remnant of the recorded conversation: "Her favorite word is 'serendipity,' which means 'when things just happen, it's a happy surprise!'" Note here that Rose combines Stephens's definition with her own and demonstrates the situated emergence of this narrative. Rose revisiting the aesthetics conversation, marks it as an important event of understanding and exemplifies the relational dynamism and creativity available through lifelong learning (Beighton, 2015) and is what Deleuze (1969/1990) would call the pure event.

At the conclusion of the community presentation Rose led a studio experience, teaching collage technique learned from her studio visit with Stephens. I video-recorded Rose working confidently with the adults at the workshop quoting Stephens "serendipity," to reflect her mentor's art making philosophy, as she taught collage and painting in repeating workshop sessions.

### IG Learning and Mentoring

In our formal exit interview, at the culmination of the teacher action research I asked Rose about intergenerational learning and whether she thought that was part of what was happening in her relationship with Stephens. She said,

I didn't see it at first. At first . . . I thought it was just for the pure research, but after researching her and . . . meeting her, getting to know her, I realized that there was an intergenerational concept going on between the two of us, because she's a little older than me. But comparing her to myself, and then to my students—yes, there was some learning that was taking place . . . [for] me as student. (C. Rose, personal communication, June 3, 2013)

IG learning through mentoring has a strong affective component, and Rose had not considered the learning component until I brought it to her attention.

The following conversation took place the next week, and demonstrates the depth of their emotional bond. Rose recounted her last conversation, when Stephens told Rose she had received a diagnosis for what looked like ovarian cancer.

'My stomach's been hurting.' That's what she said to me. . . I called her [Mary Stephens] and she must have been lying down, and I think we talked about 30 minutes, and that's when she explained what was going on (her illness) ...she made it sound like 'I'm going to be back.' . . . I love her, I think she is wonderful, an awesome person (personal communication, June 10, 2013).

Stephens had flown to Boston to see a doctor where her family lived, and had planned to be back in Wichita Falls, TX to mount an exhibit in the fall (Carter, 2016). It was Stephens's absence from the summer seminar which brought this close relationship into sharp relief and through writing the narrative analysis, excerpted in the introduction above, I came to identify the psychosocial qualities of mentoring and its relational dynamic that encourages creativity.

## Discussion

### Art Educator/Researcher/Artist

This data demonstrates how art educator/artist/researcher identity comes together (Thornton, 2012). Rose's positioning as researcher empowers and builds confidence through blending new knowledge and creative practices. In retelling Stephens childhood memories, Rose clearly shows her interest as an art educator in how a child artist perceives the world and this connects her with Stephens through shared ways of being artists, which includes ways of seeing and being in the world (Baddeley and Singer, 2007). As Rose documents the child artist's perceptions and struggles, the narrative has elements of the co-creation of story between child and parent, capturing the child's voice and providing adult explanations (Baddeley & Singer, 2007). Rose co-created the story of growing as an artist, and related to her own childhood memories of drawing on walls. Rose's narrative construction of self-as-artist through this process is revealed as she shares her childhood artist transgression.

Additionally, Rose participated creatively with Stephens by collaborating in an aesthetic perspective. Rose's journal extended her experiences by reflecting on events and creating poetry. When Rose combines Stephens's definition of serendipity with her own "happy surprise," she demonstrates the situated emergence of the narrative, in which Rose's collaboration with Stephens, grows her knowledge about artmaking, and her identity as an artist. The relational dynamism of the event and her creative response demonstrates what Deleuze (2004) would call the pure event and Beighton (2015) highlights as the creative possibility in lifelong learning.

### Social Development in Mentoring

The affective quality of learning shared in the data is unique to this relationship, but can be generalized through the interpretive lens of psychosocial growth found in mentoring relationships, which supports the art teacher's artist identity (Zwirn, 2006). Rose's reflections and presentations demonstrate a deep admiration for Stephens. Rose had significant conversations with the artist which benefited her by adding depth to her art knowledge and buoyed her sense of confidence, both ways of embracing the possible self as artist (Fletcher, 2007).

I sensed Rose's psychosocial growth through the research. Rose had projected a lack of agency and ill-ease in her teaching position, which appeared to improve following her work with Stephens. Rose relayed confidence as she taught Stephens's approach to collage and painting to adults in repeating workshop sessions at the community presentations. The importance of agency is found in a survey of middle-aged adults' life story narratives by McAdams, Hart, and Maruna in Baddeley and Singer's (2007) discussion of life span theory. Middle-aged narratives shared a common theme of agency, including achievement, status, self-mastery, and empowerment (Baddeley & Singer, 2007p. 193). Rose's new found agency and empowerment indicates psychosocial growth and increased the respect and empowerment female art educators may be lacking as artists (Zwirn, 2006).

The dialogic context of the mentoring relationship helped Rose develop her possible self as artist/teacher/researcher (Fletcher, 2007; Thornton, 2012). Rose succeeded in transferring research to both teaching and creating while presenting curriculum and an art-making experience to her peers and high school students. The mentoring relationship empowered Rose to realize her potential as an artist and in new roles as teacher-trainer and secondary art teacher, increasing her status and contributing to a sense of agency.

### Mentoring

Rose said that she was like a student to Stephens, although her inquiry with the artist began as a researcher, she came to see Stephens as more than a research subject, and instead as a teacher and friend. Beyond Stephens's sharing her philosophy of life and art and demonstrating her art techniques, she welcomed Rose into her personal life by sharing details which Rose took to heart. Stephens shared personal confidences, including health concerns and sadness over the death of a grandchild, bringing to life again stories that affectively shared pain and bared the heart (Atkinson, 2007).

Stephens benefitted from being a mentor, because she found in Rose someone to share her feelings with (Chipping & Morris, 2006) and who could return her stories to the community (Baddeley & Singer, 2007) while reflecting significant aesthetic understanding. Typically, a theme of reminiscence dominates the older adult's narrative (Watt & Wong, in Baddeley & Singer, 2007, p. 195) and in telling her story to another artist Stephens gained

support and developed camaraderie. Rose's friendship countered losses of Stephens's local artist cohort, which the action research group had become aware of, and the event of IG mentoring offered Stephens even more, because she gained validation and recognition of her life's work from sharing her reminiscences.

### **Needs and assets**

In Deleuze's theory described in 1969/1990 *Logic of Sense*, difference from the norm is sense producing. For instance, marriages are usually age similar, so a May to December marriage may leave us puzzled. Awareness of sense leads to a search for meaning, and an unsettled sense can lead to research possibilities. Although the events of this research brought Rose and Stephens together through the common element of art, it was the difference in their life experiences that produced sense in ways unique to mentoring relationships. By examining differences based on each of their needs and assets related to life experiences they shared, I offer an explanation for why this powerful mentoring relationship developed.

In mentoring Rose and Stephens each reflected an issue related to distinct age-related themes typified in life span theory—middle adulthood agency and older adulthood reminiscence. This event of lifelong learning produced dynamic change in Rose as she gained knowledge and confidence in "becoming," being open to the challenge of learning, like her students. Rose's need for agency and professional support in her teaching role was met by the assets found in Stephens. Stephens's complementary need for camaraderie, often lacking for a late-stage artist, was supplied by Rose, who became a confidante. In writing an ode to Stephens's aesthetic, Rose uses time and process creatively within the relational dynamic of her mentor to produce poetry which influenced her art making and teaching as well. The creativity released in this relational dynamic supports Beighton's (2015) concept of the creative aspects of lifelong learning privileging time and processes over objects and spaces.

### **Conclusion**

Female art educators can find effective ways to build knowledge and confidence as artists through IG mentoring relationships which benefit both parties. Using a complementary approach where each participant knows they have something to give and also recognize they can admit weakness or need can bring results, and through collaboration, a dynamic creative production can result. Although this is a single instance where an IG relationship promotes deep learning through mentorship, it demonstrates potential as an invaluable form of professional development for art educators because it offers affective learning. IG mentorship with a late-stage artist extends adult education by inspiring creative work and theory development. Co-equal IG mentorship is important because it builds an appreciation of the needs and assets of each participant and encourages psychosocial health and development. I recommend that art educators and

artists share time and stories, as part of research which is valuable professional development promoting the artist/art educator/researcher identity. Further research into the uniquely gendered nature of this positive experience is recommended.

The artist's experiences, shared through the life story interview and studio visit, provided Rose creative inspiration through insights into another artist's philosophy and content knowledge. This provides a valuable form of lifelong learning outside of the academy and workplace and opens opportunities for late-stage artists to engage with community.

### Epilogue

Mary Stephens went to Boston for treatment of ovarian cancer and was never able to return to her home to exhibit her work (Carter, 2016). She died two years after her diagnosis. Carol Rose gave presentations about Stephens to her students around Texas and the US.

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## Building Relationships: Art Making and Empty Bowls

*“I’ve learned how to work with other individuals...The variety of populations helped me become more comfortable teaching in front of and talking to all ages. I got to experience the young, mid-life, and older students which was interesting, challenging, and rewarding all at once.”*

Susan R. Whiteland

*Arkansas State University - Main Campus*

### **ABSTRACT**

How can collaborative art making foster relationship building for those involved? A Problem Based Learning project that investigated food insecurity and the creation of clay soup bowls provided an answer for a number of students, and various community members. This article follows the story of a university professor’s involvement with her students in a partnership with a local intermediate school when they pursued an initiative to include art in their STEAM based curriculum dedicated to meeting a local need. Older adults, elementary students, and a variety of other interested individuals joined the effort and demonstrated how art can build relationships.

### **KEYWORDS**

*Problem Based Learning, Empty Bowls, Art Education*

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### **An Artful Relationship**

There is chatter. There is playfulness. Both artists sit at rectangular tables intent on their work. The younger one, an eleven-year-old Hispanic girl, smiles up at the camera. She continues to circle her clay bowl's rounded edge with her thumb and fore finger while she tells the interviewer her favorite food is spaghetti. The older one at least fifty years beyond the age of her counterpart, carefully pinches the fluted edge of her handiwork and announces to the videographer that she has created a soup bowl. The two artists are joined virtually while separated by time and place. Their common purpose through art making is digitally recorded and then shared with each as a means to help them engage together in an artful relationship.

Merriam-Webster (2019) identifies relationship as the state of having something in common, shared interests or efforts with synonyms including affinity, association, connection, kinship, linkage, partnership and collaboration. The two females mentioned in the introductory scenario were connected by their common experience of making ceramic bowls for a project named Empty Bowls, a grassroots endeavor to raise money to fight hunger (Blackburn & Hartom, 2007). The bowl makers' art engagement served as a catalyst to link them together, take part in an informative video about their art making project and have the opportunity to later meet in a celebratory event. While Lisa and Izzy's encounters may not continue as an ongoing association, their art experience was valued, promoting a relationship with social emotional benefits.

Holochwost, Wolf, Wolfbrown, Fisher, and O'Grady (2016) report that art activities foster a sense of belonging for students engaged in them (p. 17). St-Amand, Girard and Smith (2017) say that a sense of belonging is a basic need that leads people toward relationship building (p. 108). This article tells the story of how art was involved in building relationships. Art making was a vital ingredient for a number of individuals who collaborated together in an effort to solve a real-world problem on the local level—food insecurity. Art set the stage during the process of problem solving for not only impacting individual participants but also acting as an impetus for building sustainable relationships among community partners. How to solve a problem and build relationships through art making are questions considered in the following narrative. The article examines planning stages, curriculum standards, class assignments, exhibition events, and reflections. A constructionist lens supports the framework. There is not a predetermined way or definitive end result that was followed to involve art in the process of solving the problem of local food insecurity. Holochwost et al. (2016) explain that constructionist lens learning is a social, interactional process that takes place in various contexts. The authors suggest that to use this pedagogy in a classroom setting (1) a problem should be defined, (2) information should be gathered, (3) different points of view should be sought, (4) solutions should be developed, and (5) feedback should be conducted to determine how the solution met the identified needs (p. 113). These phases are not linear but may occur at different stages of solving the problem.



While the final outcome of how to tackle food insecurity was ill defined and somewhat unstructured in this story art was involved and relationships were built.

### Planning Stages

It was early in the school year and a local intermediate school invited me as a university liaison in the area of art education to a round table discussion with several school personnel. During our meeting we framed a problem for students to solve. We used problem-based learning (PBL) as our outline. PBL is an educational strategy characterized by problem solving, integrated curriculum, and active learning (Savin-Badin, 2000). Often PBL favors the interaction of small groups working together to solve a problem of personal interest (p.21). We considered a problem that was trans disciplinary and related to subject content in science, technology, engineering, art and math. In the course of our discussion I mentioned that the problem of food insecurity might be an area to investigate since many of the students at the school were benefactors of the free and reduced lunch plan associated with being enrolled in a Title 1 school (Food Research & Action Center, n.d.). The problem of food insecurity directly related to the students' personal lives. I shared that the Empty Bowls project typically involves making ceramic soup bowls in an effort to raise money for local food pantries or a food bank. The conversation exploded. We discussed how the school could host a community event and provide soup for those in need, display artworks related to food insecurity and offer musical entertainment highlighting composers who had struggled with a personal need. We also talked about a *canstruction* sculpture made of unopened canned food that could later be donated to the food bank. We had the idea that the canstruction might resemble an 8-bit pixelated image of a food item and be created in collaboration between math and art students. We talked about social studies and language arts students becoming involved through poetry writing or study of the Great Depression. We also imagined the school's maker spaces working out prototypes for effective delivery of food items to and from a food bank. The excitement was palpable. We each left the planning meeting with an agenda of things to do.

My first task was to develop a relationship with a representative from the local food bank to gather more research about fighting hunger in our local community. I also planned to contact area schools and discuss the potential of working together to produce ceramic bowls for an Empty Bowls event that the food bank may want to sponsor. Art was leading the way for building community relationships.

### Curriculum Standards

The National Core Arts Standards (2015) value the synthesis of relating knowledge and personal experience to making art (Anchor Standard #10) and relating artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context in order to deepen understanding (Anchor Standard #11). A project such as Empty Bowls has the potential to meet these national imperatives. I envisioned that while working with various school districts in the community

my university students who were training to become art educators could write lesson plans that fit the curriculum standards for visual art and share in a community wide experience such as the Empty Bowls project. I could see my art students teaching others how to make clay bowls while combining hand building techniques, personal experience and societal context in the process.

I contacted an area teacher who had welcomed my students into her class over several years. I met with Mrs. Smith, a teacher in the gifted and talented program (Arkansas Department of Education, n.d.) from another school district and discussed the Empty Bowls project that the STEAM middle school in our same community was undertaking. She was very interested in promoting a similar art experience for her fourth and sixth grade gifted and talented students. Mrs. Smith recalled an intergenerational art activity that my university students had conducted in the past with her students. She felt that the art activities between her students and older adults at an assisted living facility had proved very meaningful for the students. She wanted to incorporate working with older adults again but this time through the Empty Bowls project. She suggested that we contact an area assisted living facility and I agreed to do so.

### **Class Assignment**

My special problems in art education class seemed the perfect context to introduce an intergenerational component along with the Empty Bowls project. I was eager to suggest the challenge to my students during our next class meeting. Holochwest et al. (2016) found that art students have a significantly higher ability to try new materials and skills. They seek ways to make meaning, through art. They identify and develop their own ideas. Art students develop a sense of belonging. They are committed to setting and reaching goals in specific situations. They also have a growth mindset believing that with effort, persistence, revision and risk taking they can be successful (p.17). I felt confident that my future art educators would exemplify what Holochwest et al. postulated.

Two students enrolled in the class, Rayven and Mykala, were doing independent study work with me. Early on, we met to discuss class goals and student learning objectives. The two women decided that they would research information about our region's food insecurity and prepare a lesson introduction that they could use for instructing various groups with whom they would engage in making clay soup bowls. We brainstormed the names of partners and organizations we had previously worked with and others that we had heard may want to team with our university for art instruction. As we discussed the project more ideas bubbled to the surface. We already anticipated teaching the students in Mrs. Smith's classes. Also on our list for instruction were residents of the Villa Assisted Living facility including members of a memory care unit. Mykala said that she would like to introduce the Empty Bowls project to her sorority sisters on campus feeling like they would want to participate in the art making activity as a service project. We agreed to schedule a

bowl making session at the sorority house. We added plans to teach the hand building clay process to a faith-based women's recovery group as suggested by Mrs. Smith. We also talked about traveling to a local human development center to provide an opportunity to make bowls with individuals who had intellectual challenges. Working with this group resulted from an associational contact that I had with an art teacher at the facility. In addition to the bowls that would be made under the supervision of my future art educators I planned to invite several area schools to take part in the project suggesting that they could make bowls in their art classes or through their art clubs.

After discussing objectives for the special problems class Mykala, Rayven and I created a working schedule of where we would be from week to week. Over a period of 12 weeks Mykala and Rayven demonstrated how to roll and attach clay coils to make soup bowls to over 90 students. The university students typically introduced each lesson with a presentation about food insecurity and shared the goal of using art to help others. The university students told each group that they taught that there were many in the community who were working together with a common purpose. The teaching went beyond giving instructions in the hand building process to developing relationships and a sense of community.



Figure 1. University student leads clay bowl lesson

St-Alban et al. (2017) make six recommendations for positively influencing students to develop a sense of belonging at school. These suggestions correspond to building relationships with others.

- The first recommendation is to encourage active listening. This implies providing time, space and openness for students to express themselves.
- A second recommendation is to provide social support and effective teaching strategies.
- A third recommendation is to encourage cooperative learning tasks or teamwork.
- A fourth recommendation is to help students develop positive social emotional skills such as learning how to collaborate, communicate and negotiate; identify personal feelings toward self and empathy toward others.
- A fifth recommendation is to encourage students to develop common interests with their peers within the classroom.
- A sixth recommendation is to encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities that are related to a common interest outside of the classroom such as involvement in the arts (p.113-114).

These principles apply well to relationship building through art and specifically to what my future art educators were experiencing as they engaged with community members when teaching how to construct clay bowls for the Empty Bowls project. As my students taught others how to mold the clay into a bowl form they were engaging in active listening and providing for students to openly express themselves. My students were able to share their enthusiasm for the art making process and help their students experience success. These characteristics are related to St-Alban et al.'s (2017) recommendation of providing social support and effective teaching strategies to encourage a sense of belonging. My university students encouraged teamwork and collaboration among the art students that they were instructing. This was evident as they experienced their students' desire to help one another with the construction and glazing of their clay bowls. As my future art educators introduced art lessons, they encountered a variety of skill levels, physical dexterity attributes and ranges of intellectual capacity among students. Because of this experience they were able to identify their own personal feelings and empathize with others different from themselves.

Rayven reflected on her experience of teaching in the various contexts and said, "I've learned how to work with other individuals..." She also said, "The variety of populations helped me become more comfortable teaching in front of and talking to all ages. I got to experience the young, mid-life, and older students which was interesting, challenging, and rewarding all at once." In regard to what she saw develop within the students she taught she said, "It was interesting watching the students ... develop compassion towards those who are food insecure" (R. Hatchett, personal communication, December 8, 2018).





*Figure 2. Older adult smooths clay for soup bowl.*

Mykala made a similar observation about what she saw among the students she instructed. She said, “I personally loved this way of teaching. It helped our students learn more than just how to make a ceramic bowl.” Mykala also felt that she was helping to instill a lifelong lesson of helping others. (M. Lemmons, personal communication, December 9, 2018).

Both of my students recognized that engagement in the arts can foster meaningful experiences that influence feelings of belonging for the ones they were teaching as well as themselves.

The fifth and sixth recommendation that St-Alban et al. (2017) encouraged was for students to develop common interests inside and outside of the classroom with art activities being one of the suggestions. The Empty Bowls project aimed at solving the local problem of food insecurity used art making as a common denominator that brought people together within a classroom and beyond to impact a community.



*Figure 3. Soup bowl glazed and ready for firing.*

### **The Big Reveal**

On the twelfth week of the Empty Bowls project a celebration was planned for the residents of the Assistant Living Facility, St. Bernard's Villa. Fired and glazed bowls from both the Villa's residents and Mrs. Smith's students were put on display for all to see. During the construction and glazing phase of the bowls my students and I took pictures and recorded the artists at work. We intended to create a media production that could be shown in a joint gathering on the final day of the project. During the process of making the bowls both the children and older adults were aware of each other and recognized that they were creating the clay soup bowls for a common cause. Both groups anticipated meeting each other during a field trip event where the students would travel to the assisted living facility. The Big Reveal is an example of how art educators can utilize their unique skills and opportunities to orchestrate flexible experiences in community settings to serve people of a variety of ages, abilities, and needs.

I arrived early at the theatre room at the Villa on the day of the Big Reveal to prepare for the celebration. Several rows of tables designated as seating for the older adults were lined with chairs facing a large video screen. Along the side and back of the meeting space additional tables were set up. I unpacked boxes of the handcrafted bowls and arranged them on the side tables. The back tables were laden with water cups and dessert plates. In addition to the ceramic bowls provided by Mrs. Smith's fourth and sixth grade classes she involved her other students who had not made the soup bowls by having them prepare refreshments for the party. They were bringing the snacks with them on the school bus and once they arrived would share their treats with the older adults.

Recreational therapists gathered some of the older adults to the theatre room prior to the start of our final event. Other residents often strolling in with walkers made their way past the displayed bowls to the sitting area. Most of the 15 residents who participated in the Empty Bowls art project were seated at tables and looked eager to begin the festivities. I welcomed them and explained that the children would be joining the group shortly. I pointed out that the residents' ceramic bowls were on display and that they were welcome to keep their bowl at the conclusion of the party for the cost of a donation to the Food bank of Northeast Arkansas or they could make it available for others who may want to make a donation. As it turned out all of the residents were able to keep their artwork due to one of the social worker's influence. She sensed the value of providing a tangible reminder for the older adults of their participation in the art experience. Woywod and Davenport (2013) say that an art product can be instrumental for individuals living with dementia or memory loss. It can trigger the feelings of productivity, engagement and belonging to a group. It can also help with the reconstruction of memories. Because several of the assisted living residents were also members of the memory care unit at the facility it was important for them to acquire possession of the soup bowl that they had made. Doing so offered another level of significance to the act of art making and relationship building.

After my welcome to the older adults and a few guests including a local television reporter the children's bus arrived and with it a current of excitement. It was not long before all of the empty spaces in the room were occupied with children from the elementary school. The room was overflowing with about 60 enthusiastic faces. I took advantage of having both older and younger generations together and introduced a Tic Tac Toe get acquainted activity. Each participant was given a game card and encouraged to find someone from a generation other than their own who could identify with a characteristic on the card. In keeping with the theme of food and hunger the card made statements such as, "find someone who has eaten birthday cake in the last 3 months" or "write the name of someone who lived during the Great Depression when there was food scarcity" or "write the name of someone who has eaten alligator". One of the older adults readily admitted she had enjoyed this unusual delicacy and shared about her experience. She further captured the attention of her listeners by showing pictures of her grown son posing next to an alligator. As individuals filled their card with the names of people in the room that identified with the card's statements they were rewarded with a piece of candy; but more importantly they were prompted to start a conversation with a new friend.

Following the game activity, we presented a video on the room's theatre screen that starred individuals from both the older and younger generations engaged in their art making process for the Empty Bowls project. Included in the movie were clips of students who shared information about the food insecurity problem in our community. In one clip all of the children on camera knew that one out of four children in Arkansas were food insecure. One of the movie's closing shots advertised an upcoming soup kitchen event and a luncheon

planned as a way to offer ceramic bowls to community members for donations to the food bank.

It was a couple of days after our Big Reveal event before I was able to visit Mrs. Smith's class at the elementary school. She greeted me with the news that the bowls her students made for the Empty Bowls project were being purchased by a local church and given to the students who made them. The gesture not only helped the hungry it also made it possible for the children to have a visual reminder of their art making experiences and the relationships prompted by them.

### **Soup-er Lunch and a Pop-Up Soup Kitchen**

The next event on my art educator's schedule was an organized fund-raising lunch scheduled at a coffee shop near our campus. The proprietor had agreed to let my students display all of the bowls that they had gathered for donation from the numerous community organizations with whom they had worked. The coffee shop also agreed to donate a dollar for every bowl of soup that was sold during their lunch hour on that day. Taking on the role of art curator one of my students, Rayven, and I carefully chose and arranged the bowls for display. Often the presentation of artworks is overlooked as a process that can be compared to art making. Ventzislavov (2014) says curatorship is a fine art in itself. With this viewpoint in mind Rayven and I were experiencing another avenue for building a relationship based on our art activity as we worked together to display the soup bowls. A representative from the food bank joined us for the Soup-er Lunch event and accepted donations from coffee shop patrons who wanted to support the Empty Bowls project. All of the bowls that did not sell were carefully wrapped and boxed for the Pop-Up Soup Kitchen to take place later in the week at the STEAM intermediate school.

On the evening of the Pop-Up Soup Kitchen a host of children greeted visitors as they entered the double doors leading to the school's gymnasium. We were escorted through the gym and into the cafeteria where students manned the cafeteria serving line. We were given soup, bread and a dessert donated by volunteers. We were entertained by live guitar music and several songs by choir students. Children continued to bring additional desserts and bottled water our way if requested and offered seconds on servings of soup. The room was decorated with posters related to food insecurity and a pixelated image of a soup bowl made from unopened cans of food was displayed as a focal point in the room. Before leaving we were given a hand-made ceramic soup bowl as a reminder that many in the community are hungry.





Figure 4. "Canstruction" of soup bowl image.

The number of participants taking advantage of the free soup kitchen that night was minimal. The children had posted flyers around the neighborhood and advertised on the school marquee and in social media posts about the event but few people ventured out during the evening to take advantage of the opportunity. The crowd who did attend was primarily made up of teachers, administrators and parents of the children who were directly involved in the activities. The school principal did not seem disheartened by the turn out but openly praised and celebrated the students for their effort to make a difference and their compassion for being a part of something greater than themselves.

A couple of days after the Soup Kitchen the local food bank conducted their annual canned food drive. The canstruction made by the intermediate school was disassembled and donated to the effort. Shortly thereafter I delivered over 200 community made bowls to the food bank to store until they would be used for the food bank's first Empty Bowl luncheon scheduled to take place in the Spring.

## Reflections

When the school term was over my two future art educators commented on their final exam that their time in the class had been meaningful and that they would carry the things they learned into their future classrooms. Their reflections mentioned relationships they formed as a result of teaching art among different ages and ability levels. As instructor for the course I considered the ways I saw art experiences bring people together during the semester. I recalled the initial discussion I had with community partners. Our decision to promote art making in the fight against hunger brought us closer together as a committee. I witnessed young people and older adults develop a bond through their common experience of making soup bowls. I noted the same bond between members of a class, sorority, club, organization and individuals develop as they engaged together to create art for a common purpose. While not all of the intended outcomes for the semester were realized the influence of art making on the development of relationships was a situation that was confirmed and celebrated. I can point to the experience of making soup bowls in the Empty Bowls project as an illustration of how making art collaboratively can foster the building of relationships for all those involved and the likelihood of maintaining future relationships among community partners.

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# Inverse Inclusion: Transforming Dispositions of Disability and Inclusion

*“Inverse inclusion is a novel approach to preservice teacher pedagogy and has the potential to transform preservice teachers’ dispositions about disability and inclusion, particularly through student/peer relationships.”*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Inverse inclusion, a novel pedagogy, transforms preservice teachers’ dispositions about disability and inclusion during an action research study of two university intercession service-learning course collaborations with a community-based art program for adults with disabilities (clients). In this approach, university students (preservice teachers) rotate and reflect on roles as student, teacher, teacher’s assistant, and observer within an inclusive art class. Among these rotations, the student position relinquishes their hierarchical perspective as teacher, assistant, and observer, and situates them as a collaborative learner, conducive to building egalitarian relationships with clients. Based on qualitative data from university student participants in the form of pre and postquestionnaires, reflections, and focus group interviews, most students transformed their perceptions about disability, increased their own confidence and advocacy for teaching in an inclusion setting, and were most influenced during their role as student working alongside clients.

## **KEYWORDS**

*inclusion, disability, preservice teacher education*

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## Introduction

*Inverse inclusion* is a novel approach to preservice teacher pedagogy and has the potential to transform preservice teachers' dispositions about disability and inclusion, particularly through student/peer relationships. The approach involves the rotation through roles as student, teacher, teacher's assistant, and observer during a service-learning course collaboration with a community-based organization for adults with disabilities.

Service-learning<sup>1</sup> and inclusion<sup>2</sup> are two prime examples of preservice teacher experiences. Both approaches are common progressive practices, and yet, have the potential of perpetuating and solidifying stereotypes. Some service-learning experiences such as assisting and teaching members of a community with disabilities or acting in similar hierarchical roles may limit inclusive interactions to forms of charity and volunteerism (Bowen, 2014), and may position the disabled as weak with limited knowledge and abilities. As a result, negative stereotypes toward the disabled may be ratified and persist (Burns, Storey, & Certo, 1999). Similarly, the practice of inclusion often mimics a contemporary form of integration according to Keeffe and Carrington (2007), as students with disabilities are asked to "fit into existing and unchanging institutional structures" (p. 10). This distortion of inclusion has been termed *inclusionism* by Keifer-Boyd, Bastos, Richardson, and Wexler (2018), an insidious form of ableism<sup>3</sup>. A factor in these practices may be influenced by the inadequate preparation of preservice teachers, evidenced internationally by researchers in general education (Keeffe & Keeffe & Carrington, 2007; Melekoglu, 2013; Singh, 2016) and art education (Cramer, Coleman, Park, Bell, & Coles, 2015; Guay, 2003; Lund & Massey, 2004; Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013). It is time to consider teacher preparation programs "that broaden real life experience and understanding of diversity" in order to "enable pre-service teachers to question assumptions about the historical hierarchies between individuals in society and critique traditional approaches to education" (Carrington and Sagggers, 2008, p. 795).

Service-learning and inclusion experiences can be important transformative practices in preservice teacher education if a social justice perspective is embedded into the curriculum (Bowen, 2014), which embodies a collaborative social interaction component (Santos, Ruppard, & Jeans, 2012) that promotes reciprocal relationships. According to Burns, Storey, and Certo (1999), Gent and Gurecka (2001), and McLean (2011), programs that "foster relationships between diverse groups" (p. 19) can challenge participants' misinformed preconceptions and transform their own dispositions about people categorized as *other*. Service-learning can create an environment where differently abled people can

<sup>1</sup> Service-learning is a model for teaching and self-reflection where students gain knowledge, acquire skills, and work collaboratively in a community environment (Felton & Clayton, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Inclusion values diversity and reduces the hierarchical power of the dominant culture to legitimizing all people within a society (Keeffe & Carrington, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Ableism is disability oppression or the discrimination of people with disabilities (Dastañeda, Hopkins, & Peters, 2013)



“work together, sharing ideas, planning to achieve certain missions and goals” (Carrington & Sagers, 2008, p. 802) in a friendly, respectful, and caring community where inclusion at its best can exist. The emphasis on this type of partnership encourages preservice teachers to gain a new perspective, to step outside of the privileged teacher or hierarchical service roles commonly held by university students to a more educative and transformational experience through reciprocal relationships.

### **Overview of Art Education’s Challenges with Disability and Inclusion**

References in art education for exceptional (Clements & Clements, 1990), special (Gerber & Guay, 2006), differently abled (Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013), or disabled (Derby, 2016; Wexler & Derby, 2015) are limited, and often lack a critical disability studies’ perspective (Derby, 2016). Historically, preservice teacher preparation coursework has incorporated broad definitions of disabilities, recommended pedagogical practices (Blandy, 1994; Gerber & Guay, 2006; Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013; Wexler, 2009), and required a designated number of service hours with students with disabilities in the form of observation, facilitation, and teaching (Bain & Hasio, 2011) with the hope that educators would be prepared to enact inclusive environments for all students to learn together. Yet, many art teachers continue to feel inadequately prepared to teach students with disabilities (Cramer, Coleman, Park, Bell, & Coles 2015; Dorff, 2010; Kraft & Keifer-Boyd, 2013) while inclusionism persists (Keifer-Boyd, Bastos, Richardson, & Wexler, 2018).

In response to the shortcomings in teacher preparation programs, some art educators have attempted to bridge the gaps. Derby (2016) used action research in two art education courses employing a form of disability studies pedagogy to confront ableism. Based on the critical analysis of art and visual culture data, a disability attitudes survey, a focus interview, and reflections collected from the course, his students changed their attitude toward ableism and their own belief in socially constructed disability stereotypes. Another course example had a service-learning component that included teaching and volunteering ten hours of collaborative art making at a community-based program for adults with developmental disabilities (Alexander, 2015). Questionnaires and reflections revealed that preservice teachers gained confidence and reduced feelings of anxiety about the community partnership, and developed leaderships skills, relationships, and changes in their perceptions of community engagement. In a similar special topics course, Bain and Hassio (2011) found that through discussions, art projects, and reflections preservice teachers gained confidence and skills after teaching art to middle and high school students with varied mental, behavioral, and cognitive disabilities. The two-week university art education course included teaching fieldwork in three self-contained classrooms and the opportunity to meet with paraprofessionals, special educators, and occupational therapists to enhance lesson plan development that catered to student interests and accommodations.

In a resource by Kraft and Keifer-Boyd (2013), preservice educators taught art, served as instructional support for inclusion students in grades 9-12, and critically reflected on their coursework. The mission was to “create a reciprocal and nurturing environment accessible to everyone involved using art as a vehicle for a creative and expressive journey of self and others” (p. 55). This book provided a model for bridging theory to practice for teacher education programs. Although student growth documented in the above publications is commendable, there remains a gap in the research relative to how collaborative inclusive experiences in preservice teacher education can impact attitudes toward disability and inclusion.

Similar to the above experiential approaches and studies in preservice teacher education, I developed a community-based service-learning course in which students practiced as teachers and instructional support for a community-based art program for adult clients with disabilities. Within two years, the course evolved into a novel pedagogy, *inverse inclusion*<sup>4</sup> (La Porte, 2015; La Porte and Whiteland, 2017), as preservice teachers acknowledged their desire to participate as art students alongside the clients. This reflective response from my students inspired a revised platform for multi-experiential roleplaying that I soon applied with a focus on inclusion and collaboration. I refer to this practice as inverse inclusion since it inverts the conventional hierarchical learning experience as teacher, observer, and assistant to one that places the participants in rotating multi-perspective positionings, beginning with a side-by-side collaborative inclusion experience, followed by hierarchical roles mentioned above. The following study is an attempt to better understand the efficacy of *inverse inclusion* and its transformative aspects on preservice art teachers’ beliefs of disability and inclusion.

### Mode of Qualitative Inquiry

In order to better understand the efficacy of inverse inclusion for preservice teacher educators during this two-week art education course, I implemented an action research study using qualitative data collection. Stringer’s (2013) action research model in education includes sequential steps: the development of a study design, data collection, data analysis, and concluding insights that inform future revisions on teaching practice and continued research. I used Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) method of data coding of pre/post-questionnaires, end-of-the-week and daily written reflections, and a focus group interview with the preservice teachers. Then, I applied Miles and Huberman’s (1994) recommendations for charting categories within the data and axial coding each segment. Themes emerged from the triangulation of data to understand the efficacy of the inverse inclusion experience on preservice art teachers throughout the role rotations. This research is relative to the efficacy of inverse inclusion’s role rotation experiences and the possible

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<sup>4</sup> Inverse inclusion provides preservice teachers direct experience in various interactions from multiple roles: working as students alongside people with disabilities, as art teacher, as teacher’s assistant, and as observer.

transformative implications based on reflections shared by the university student participants.

### **Service-learning Participants and Environments**

This study encompasses data collected from two separate groups of university students during a two-week service-learning course taught on two different occasions in collaboration with a community-based visual art program for adults with disabilities. A total of seventeen students provided data for plausible insights on how the pedagogical approach described as inverse inclusion can transform student dispositions relative to ableism, teaching confidence, relationships, and beliefs about inclusion. Most of the university students were preservice teachers. One was a graphic design major, two were M.F.A. graduate students in art. All but one student was female. Four were of minority backgrounds. One had a disability. Another had an adult son with a disability. Most had limited to no interaction with individuals with disabilities. One who also had a disability worked with a mixed ability high school flag corps team. Two others had family and/or friends who were disabled.

These university students participated in a community-based art class with up to fifteen adult clients with mental, physical, and/or learning disabilities. The cooperating agency provided no background knowledge of the clients' particular mental, physical, and/or developmental disabilities. These adults, referred to as clients by the community agency, lived with family, in their own homes, or in clustered duplex housing near the main program complex. Two separate agency sites served them: one for performing arts, recreation, advocacy, and skill building, the other devoted to visual art. The class met three hours each day for eleven days over a two-week period.

The first session of this class met onsite at the community facility for client accessibility. The second two-week session had a limited number of clients (ten) due to the facility's flood damage and client travel restrictions and met at the university and a nearby museum. Another difference between the two groups was that one had a final exhibition and reception open to the public at the university while the other only shared artworks at the end of each art lesson and had socialization time and food with participants during the final class.

### **Description of the Service-learning Experience as a Prioritized Inclusion Practice**

This service-learning course approach was a prioritized inclusion practice more than a service-oriented program. Unlike inclusion classrooms where art teachers instruct a few students with disabilities, and reverse inclusion (Schoger, 2006), where a few students learn with a majority of students with disabilities in a self-contained classroom, *inverse inclusion* allowed preservice teachers to serve multiple participatory roles fostering varied interactions with clients with disabilities from a community organization. Both classes began with an

inclusion experience for all participants as an art unit co-taught by me and other collaborators. Smaller mixed groups of students and clients learned together throughout each introductory unit during the first three days of class.

The big idea of the first unit taught in 2016 included the reinterpretation of imaginary stories. Defining what a story could be and how other artists have created stories from cave walls to film, and literature. Following the presentation, teams set out to create storyboards of reinterpreted or original stories that would later be made into a Claymation production. Members of each group contributed to the writing of the story, at least one character or prop out of clay, and/or the backdrop and recording of the story (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Creating stop-motion claymation

Due to time constraints and availability of clients, the university students spent the third day of class in the computer lab putting together the stop-motion photos, text, and sound. Participants viewed and discussed the videos at the end of the next day with popcorn.

The introductory unit taught in 2018 revolved around gardens. The first day, students, clients, and six junior high school students from a local private school traveled from the university to a local museum to view an art exhibition of artworks inspired by gardens. Upon arrival at the museum, students met with their mixed groups and got to know each other through ice-breaker discussions about personal interests and experiences with gardens. Then, they gathered as one large group to talk about Miriam Shapiro's artwork in the gallery with a museum educator. Afterwards, I encouraged individual students to sketch some elements of a garden in the gallery or in the museum's outdoor landscape (see Figure 2).





*Figure 2. Sketching at the museum gardens.*

The second day, all students met back at the university to recap what they experienced at the museum. Then, I introduced a brief history of gardens from Eastern and Western cultures and some contemporary artists inspired by gardens. Finally, each group planned and created a design for their own mixed media garden. In order to maintain some organization, every person had to contribute something that they imagined to be a part of the garden, including at least one prominent object such as a fountain, a pathway through the garden, and some element that was repeated in the garden (see Figure 3).

The third day, I shared some videos of their local botanical garden and a garden that I visited in Italy, Villa d'Este, while the groups finished their own gardens and shared ideas and inspirations. Following the introductions on both occasions when I taught this course, students rotated through roles as teacher, teacher's assistant, observer, and student working alongside clients. Since students spent most of their experience as students, the following emerging concepts overwhelmingly reflect that role.





Figure 3. Developing collaborative garden designs.

### Transforming Dispositions Most Influenced by the Student Role

The majority of students from the 2016 and 2018 classes provided some evidence of disposition transformations in written and verbal reflections. The axial coding and triangulation of data from pre/post-questionnaires, a focus interview, and daily reflections over a two-week period revealed changes in university students' views of disability and attitudes toward the pedagogical practice of inclusion, and were most influenced while in the student role, learning alongside the clients. Students also noted increased confidence in teaching and relating to clients. I reference supporting quotes throughout this article with fictitious names in order to personalize student voice and maintain anonymity.

### Initial Dispositions of Disability Stereotypes

Initial speculations from preservice teachers about disability seemed to parallel common stereotypes held by the general population. When asked on a prequestionnaire prior to the first day of class, most preservice teachers agreed that regardless of abilities, clients had the potential to be creative, but students from the 2016 class seemed to have a skewed and discriminatory attitude that disability automatically coincides with challenges, neediness, and limitations. Robbie stated, “I think that a lot of them excel at something, and sometimes that is art, and they just need a little help getting there,” and “it’s just harder for them to focus” (Robbie, personal communication, May 16, 2016). Lily suggested, “special needs students make good art students, but their technical abilities are generally less than other students” (Lily, personal communication, May 16, 2016). In addition to prequestionnaire responses, preservice teachers noticed that their peers used a high-pitched voice when speaking with clients, similar to how adults might interact with young children (*baby talk*) or *elderspeak* with older adults (Williams, Kemper, and Hummert, 2004). The weekly preservice teacher reflections noted this type of voice interaction as demeaning, yet correctable in the future. It is difficult to confirm the individual disposition changes between pre and post-questionnaires or reflections as the course progressed, but some data offered evidence of student revelations and renegotiations of past beliefs about disability and inclusion.

### Transforming Perceptions of Disability

A shift in preservice teachers’ beliefs about disability evolved throughout the course. Most stated in reflections and a post-questionnaire that their side-by-side role in the course best influenced their change in disposition about disability. Three categories of transformation in perceptions about disability occurred. Preservice teachers gained an understanding of: (a) social justice and equity viewpoints; (b) clients’ creative potential; and (c) clients’ ability to focus.

### Social Justice and Equity

A more nuanced understanding of social justice and equity developed among many participants. Students began to view themselves as similar to clients rather than the common understanding of “we” and “they” that often separates people based on ability characteristics (Rusch, 2003). Andréa, a Latinx student, achieved this consciousness as she realized her cultural identity to be similar to having a disability. She stated in a focus interview,

For me, it opened my eyes to another community that gets sometimes tossed to the side; thinking about equality and inclusion, I felt it was a societal issue, but I had never given it as much attention as I had to during this course. I am building a relationship . . . and now I can have more empathy towards clients . . . to understand that they might also have societal issues that I might have for being Hispanic. (Andréa, personal communication, May 25, 2018)

Another student, Kelly, jokingly admitted that she depended on the clients. For example, from a focus group interview, she stated to a client sitting next to her, “What does Jorge want us to do next? I don’t know. I wasn’t listening” (Kelly, personal communication, May 25, 2018). This type of side-by-side experience also led Carla to view everyone as equals, regardless of ability, as contributing members of the class, working on the same project [collaborative garden design]. She said, “It puts you in your place and kind of levels the playing field . . . side-by-side time just shows you that quickly, that we have a lot more in common than what we may think” (Carla, personal communication, May 25, 2018). Students began to form reciprocal relationships and see the adults with disabilities as equitable contributors to the art class through relationships that can, according to McLean (2011), transform stereotypical dispositions about disability.

### Questioning Mental, Physical, and Creative Ability

As relationships developed, the university students began to question their initial beliefs associated with disability and creativity. Jenny responded in a weekly reflection, “Before this class, I was honestly worried that teaching students with disabilities meant having a lesson modified in 15 different ways. But this class brought me to realize just how capable these clients are and if there is a modification that needs to be made . . . there is more that the clients can do than we probably realize” (Jenny, personal communication, May 23, 2018). Another student mentioned in her post-questionnaire that “It’s easy to assume things about other people and groups before you spend time with them or create art with them. So, it was cool to have those preconceived ideas torn down, and I was amazed to see the artwork that was created” (Cathryn, personal communication, May 20, 2016).

Students discovered clients’ creative potential by making art alongside the adult clients. One mentioned how the side-by-side interactions during one of the course introductions, *Stories through Claymation*, challenged notions of disability:

And I always thought that you had to teach at a more elementary level . . . But coming in, getting right into the Claymation part and seeing . . . imaginations . . . The clients thought of things that I never could have thought of and especially make them. . . did things that I would have never been able to do. That was definitely an eye-opening experience for me. (Cala, personal communication, May 18, 2016)

Kelly also gave credit to the clients for helping her come up with new ideas: “being alongside was a more important part of the experience. . . I began to realize the creativity possessed by the clients. They are not afraid to be creative. It seems . . . pure, like the unbroken creativity of a child” (Kelly, personal communication, May 27, 2016), a common goal of many professional artists. And when given the opportunity, according to a daily reflection by Jenny, “clients came up with interesting and creative ways to make art.” Maria, a student from the 2016 class noted similar responses describing the clients as “capable individuals, very intelligent, and very creative” (Maria, personal communication, May 27,

2016). Robbie agreed, “The clients are very creative, more creative than most people” and “I hadn’t realized the potential of their abilities as art students . . . If they struggled with something, they wanted to figure out a solution in another manner” (Robbie, personal communication, May 27, 2016). Sammie also realized her transformed beliefs: “For a long time, I didn’t really think about how the clients could excel at art, but once I got into this course, I realized how great the clients can be” (Sammie, personal communication, May 27, 2016). Students’ experiences resembled what McLean (2011) referred to as “the conflict experienced between the realities of experience and existing preconceptions (p. 14) or “dissonance inducing experiences that can promote conceptual change” (p. 16). Students became aware of their own discriminatory practice and renegotiated new beliefs.

### **Reconsidering the Restrictions of Focus and Ability**

My students expected to find a restricted ability to focus among clients as a characteristic limitation of disability, but found that expectation grounded in stereotype, not in fact. One preservice teacher’s demeaning statements mentioned earlier changed in a postquestionnaire as she learned from her side-by-side observation that clients exhibited determination and enthusiasm while participating in the art class. This was a common transformation realized by the university students. Jorgé commented, “I was surprised that the clients were so focused when they worked on the projects” and “side-by-side allowed me to get to know them and their abilities more than just teaching” (Jorgé, personal communication, May 25, 2018). Carla also admitted that “I now view students with disabilities with a new lens: picturing their determined and excited faces. If they struggled with something, they wanted to figure out a solution in another way” (Carla, personal communication, May 25, 2018). These student reflections began to offer hope for breaking down the persistent ableism views expressed by students in prequestionnaires.

### **Developing Transformations About Inclusion and Teaching**

Two changes in beliefs about inclusion and teaching developed as: (a) student advocacy for inclusion and (b) confidence teaching an inclusion art class. Self-reported transformation in my students’ attitudes towards inclusion was highly influenced by their student role. While most students had limited or no inclusion experience, many agreed in a prequestionnaire that inclusion was important. However, all but one initially envisioned it as the student with a disability on the receiving end, whether accepting assistance or emulating a cued role model. According to Gent and Gurecka (2001) this approach to service-learning can perpetuate stereotypes as students act exclusively in a hierarchical role.

Only Carla understood the benefits of inclusion for all learners in the prequestionnaire. She had recently experienced inclusion in a university ceramics course and found friendship in a creative peer with a disability. By the end of the class, she expanded on the importance of inclusion, “I’m much more open and excited at the idea of having an inclusion classroom. I think I am very likely to advocate for that once I become a teacher. . . There are social skills, empathy, understanding, and so many other things that



we can learn as students to become better humans” (Carla, personal communication, May 25, 2018). She noted that a required reading had suggested that teachers often automatically associate students with disabilities with class disruptions, and an obstruction to student learning. Carla reflected on the reading, “This class has proved this to be wrong . . . and has made me want to include students of all abilities in my classroom. I think there is so much for everyone to learn” (Carla, personal communication, May 22, 2018). This type of positive peer interaction seemed to also be transformative for other preservice teachers, as in the following comments from a variety of student reflections throughout the course. Andréa said, “I was able to see how beneficial this type of classroom environment can be to both students and teachers because I was able to experience both perspectives [as a student and teacher]” and “witness the students’ work more closely” side-by-side (Andréa, personal communication, May 22, 2018). She saw it as improving her own verbal communication and reflection at a personal level as well as allowing for a more open understanding of others. When asked about inclusion prior to the class, she supported it and was willing to “help anyone who can benefit.” By the end of the class, she stated, “It benefits not only students with disabilities, but all students in general . . . all students can learn from each other” (Andréa, personal communication, May 25, 2018).

As beliefs about inclusion changed, students gained confidence about teaching art in an inclusion class. One preservice teacher, Kelly, who had more extensive teaching experience, stated during a focus interview, “I was nervous about teaching, but then, as soon as you taught, and we got to be alongside . . . that really helped me not to be nervous about teaching” (Kelly, personal communication, May 25, 2018). She went on to explain how important the relationships supported that transition, “Those gals [clients], I like them so much. They are so nice and made you feel super comfortable. I thought it would be awkward, I would mess up or not know what to say or . . . treating them like children and be too easy” (Kelly, personal communication, May 25, 2018). Ann also offered a reflection based on her side-by experience,

I feel that it was more apparent how easy having inclusion is just being able to participate in it. Because I did when I was younger, I had a couple of inclusion classes, but there was an aide always with the individuals. We didn’t really interact . . . as much. So, it was nice being in more of an inclusion class, like this class, sitting beside the clients and working with them. It isn’t as much of a struggle as some people would think. (Ann, personal communication, May 25, 2018)

Ann commented that overcoming a fear of teaching and planning for an inclusion class was the most important learning outcome, to not be intimidated by inclusion, that “some things might not work out, but that’s a risk regardless of the abilities of your students” (Ann, personal communication, May 25, 2018). Most students felt more comfortable with inclusion after the side-by-side collaboration during the first three days of class. Being thrown into the student role [side-by-side] on the first day of class, Jenny claimed, “it made me a lot more comfortable” (Jenny, personal communication, May 25, 2018). Ann wrote that



she needed to know more information about a student with a disability before feeling comfortable talking to them, but

You don't do that with abled people . . . In this class, you didn't have the chance. . . I think it was really beneficial to just hang out. . . It was a better experience than anything else. . . I loved it. (Ann, personal communication, May 25, 2018)

Jorgé believed that the comfort level grew out of acting in roles as students and teachers. He wrote in a postquestionnaire, "Each day as we got to know each other better, the confidence and trust grew on both sides" (Jorgé, personal communication, May 25, 2018). Reciprocal relationships seemed to promote teacher confidence in this study as suggested by the literature (McLean, 2011; Santos, Ruppard, & Jeans, 2012), which is often lacking in inclusive education (Cramer, Coleman, Park, Bell, & Coles, 2015).

### **Reciprocal Relationships as a Factor in Transforming Ableist Beliefs**

Reciprocal relationships with clients also bolstered my students' teaching confidence in an inclusion setting seemed to begin transforming attitudes towards disability and inclusion. According to McLean (2011), these types of interactions relate to Festinger's (1957) dissonance theory, when preservice teachers are abruptly placed into uncomfortable interactions that challenge their ableist beliefs, discovering that their stereotypical preconceptions do not match their new experience. As Carla mentioned during a focus group interview, "You form a different type of relationship rather than if you were just helping or just teaching them, because you become friends . . . You start talking to each other . . . learning more about each other (Carla, personal communication, May 25, 2018). Andréa who once felt nervous about how to socially interact with people with disabilities, established "a way of communicating and building a relationship." She claimed, "It brought me closer with an inside perspective, and was able to enhance my communication and relationship . . . in order to make the learning environment more enjoyable to not only the clients, but myself as well" (Andréa, personal communication, May 25, 2018).

Inverse inclusion placed students in an awkward position on the first day of class. Ann commented, "This class being so fast-paced, we just get thrown right into it. We meet them on the first day, and we're hanging out . . . Being thrown into this situation immediately, you learn immersively" (Ann, personal communication, May 14, 2018). This might be similar to what Mezirow (2000) refers to as a "disorienting dilemma" where transformation occurs when we have a disturbing/disruptive experience that challenges one's beliefs and forces a critical reassessment of them. According to McLean (2011), this approach "can trigger a jolting or enlightening experience that impels movement away from hegemonic understandings. . . Significant personal distress, jarring events, crises or disorienting dilemmas and integrating circumstances can trigger perspective transformation" (p. 18). The "inverse" experience presents a novel perspective, challenging

the associations implicit in ableism, and creating an environment conducive to reflection and revision.

The relationships were unlike the conventional teacher/student hierarchy. Carla admitted during a focus group interview, “You become friends . . . You start talking to each other . . . learning more about each other” (Carla, personal communication, May 25, 2018). Andréa added,

Every time I meet someone with different abilities than those of my cousin [who is disabled], I find myself nervous about how I should behave socially. In this gathering, since we had students of all abilities, it kind of helped me establish a way of communicating and building a relationship. It brought me closer with an inside perspective. (Andréa, personal communication, May 25, 2018)

Also, an important factor during interactions was an establishment of trust among participants, sharing information about themselves, interests, their families, and past jobs. Heidi stated, “It gave me a chance to know them on a personal level” (Heidi, personal communication, May 27, 2016). For her, it was important to see beyond difference in order to begin to establish relationships. According to Kelly, the most important part of the class was “getting to know the students [clients], creating an environment of trust” (Kelly, personal communication, May 25, 2018). In a postquestionnaire, Sammie said, “I made an amazing friend, sitting and talking with on the level of student earned me this” (Sammie, personal communication, May 20, 2016). Having enjoyable experiences together also added to the positive relationships. Santa commented in a focus interview “We had a blast. I really had a great time” as she and a client had been “laughing so hard” together (Santa, personal communication, May 27, 2016). These types of intimate relationships of equity and trust are conducive environments for learning and occur more frequently among inclusive community-based settings rather than hierarchical school environments (Carrington & Saggars, 2008).

### Conclusion and Implications for Inverse Inclusion

Emerging concepts from this study relate to the efficacy and transformative aspects of inverse inclusion on preservice teachers’ dispositions about diversity and inclusion. Preservice teachers’ reflections included three perceptual changes of disability. Ableist notions that separated preservice teachers prior to the class seemed to begin to offer another view as equal human beings, friends, breaking down the hierarchy often found in service-learning (Bowen, 2014). Many began to realize clients’ ability to intensively focus on art and have more creative ideas than previously expected. Reducing preconceived stereotypes as McLean (2011) suggests can happen through reciprocal relationships. Students also changed their beliefs about inclusion regarding advocacy and confidence toward inclusive pedagogical practice. Similar to Alexander’s (2015) study, preservice teachers experienced collaborative art making and a decreased anxiety about teaching. Excerpts from the qualitative data begin to offer perspectives on the benefits of inverse inclusion as a pedagogical practice that can begin to dismantle social constructs of ableism

through positive collaborative relationships. Ultimately, if teachers can believe in the individualized potential of all students, achievements can prosper (Florian, 2009). The key element of inverse inclusion is the flipping of hierarchical roles as teacher and assistant to more equitable relationships. These egalitarian interactions through art education offer transformative possibilities and have possible implications for dismantling other social constructs such as racism and ageism.

Despite the positive implications noted above, this article barely scratches the surface of possibilities for transforming preservice teacher education. In addition to the limitations of the researcher, site, and participants, future consideration should be given to understanding how adults with disabilities might be influenced by participating in this type of inclusive art education experience compared to their typical segregated community art class, and their perception toward the university students. The limited perspectives from university student participants and lack of feedback from the adults with disabilities leaves the reader open to question the equitable distribution of benefits. Future research should be considered using both qualitative and quantitative methods, engaging other participants and alternative sites to further investigate the potential transformative implications of inverse inclusion.

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Staying Gold: How a  
Group of University  
Students Created  
Intergenerational  
Connections Through  
Art Museum  
Programming and  
Community  
Collaboration

*“...works of art provide  
ways in which  
experiences can be  
shared, and the art in  
the museum provides  
inspiration and  
discussion that  
continues while  
making art together.”*

Eli Burke and  
Carissa DiCindio, PhD  
*University of Arizona*

**ABSTRACT**

*In this article, we examine ways in which an intergenerational art program, Stay Gold, helped build relationships between queer youth and elders in an art museum to combat loneliness, isolation, and disconnection. This museum program was initially designed by university students in a graduate art education course to help form connections between queer youth and elders through art-making, sharing stories, and conversations about art. Participants play a large role in shaping the direction of the program, and the program continues to grow and evolve to include more opportunities for collaboration between youth and elders through group projects and dialogue. Although this is not a formal study with IRB approval, the participants mentioned here are all over the age of 18 and gave written permission to use their words and art in the article.*

**KEYWORDS**

*intergenerational learning, art museum education, LGBTQIA+ community*

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**Nothing Gold Can Stay**

By Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,  
 Her hardest hue to hold.  
 Her early leaf's a flower;  
 But only so an hour.  
 Then leaf subsides to leaf.  
 So Eden sank to grief,  
 So dawn goes down to day.  
 Nothing gold can stay.

In this article, we examine ways in which the intergenerational art program, *Stay Gold*, helped build relationships between queer youth and elders in an art museum to combat loneliness, isolation, and disconnection within our community. This museum program was initially designed by University of Arizona students in a graduate art education course to help foster connections between queer youth and elders. <sup>1</sup>

University students chose *Stay Gold* as the title for this program as a way to invite LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual/Agender) youth and elders to consider how they do, or don't, connect with their community. LGBTQIA+ people commonly experience a disconnection from the world, affecting not only how they view it, but also impacting how they view their place within it. The meaning behind the name *Stay Gold* was meant as both an encouragement and a way to encompass intergenerational participation. *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost... "focuses on the inevitability of loss - how nature, time and mythology are all subject to cycles" (Spacey, 2017). It was also used in the novel, *The Outsiders*, by S.E Hinton (1967), and subsequently the film of the same name.

University students felt these texts, and the meaning behind them, were highly relatable to both youth and elders in the intergenerational program entitled *Stay Gold*. The poem, *Nothing Gold Can Stay*, focuses on suffering from loss and refers to nature and life as a cycle, while the film *The Outsiders*' meaning is filtered through the lens of youth. The latter serves as a reminder to appreciate one's unique view of and place in the world, and to try to remember to look at things earnestly, openly, and with curiosity. It encourages us to retain our innocence and to try to look for the beauty in life, while also acknowledging the challenges. It is a call for curiosity and vulnerability in how we engage with the world. We wanted this for the participants of *Stay Gold*.

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<sup>1</sup> While this is not a formal study with IRB approval, the participants are all over the age of 18 and gave written permission to use their words and artworks in the article.

## History of the Project

*Stay Gold* grew out of a graduate class project in art education at the University, taught by Dr. Carissa DiCindio, an assistant professor, and in which Eli Burke, was a doctoral student. The University of Arizona Museum of Art (UAMA) invited students in Dr. DiCindio's class to consider programming they could create to connect to *Mapping Q*, a community arts education program that invites LGBTQIA+ youth to critically analyze representation of identities within museums (Farrar & Pegno, 2017). *Mapping Q* culminates with an exhibition by the participants in this program at the UAMA, and this new program was scheduled to take place during this exhibition. Eli Burke had previously worked with *Mapping Q* through his role as a museum educator and teaching artist.

In addition to *Mapping Q*, Burke had also worked as a teaching artist with another program at the UAMA called the *Latona Project*. This workshop series, designed by Becky Black and David Romero during their time as graduate students in the art education program, was "developed to examine issues of changing LGBTQIA+ senior identity within art museums" (UAMA, 2016). Burke was moved by the powerful experiences the participants had in making art together based on objects at the UAMA. In class he discussed his experience with his peers and the class decided to create a program that gave both seniors and youth a space to work together to create a broader sense of community through the shared experiences of discussing and creating art collaboratively.

In researching other programs like *Stay Gold*, we found that there weren't many in existence. After our first run of *Stay Gold* we did discover a program at the Portland Art Museum, *Powerful Self*, which began at the same time in 2017. "*Powerful Self* is the culmination of a conversational workshop between newly acquainted intergenerational persons from within Pacific Northwest LGBTQIA2S+ communities." (Portland Art Museum, n.d.) This program also culminated in an exhibition. Other programs we discovered for the intergenerational LGBTQIA+ community were geared specifically toward artists or artist residencies.

We built *Stay Gold* from the ground up by listening to the LGBTQIA+IA+ community as we interacted with participants through other community programs. Collaboration with the community was key in developing this program, involving two museums, the local University, the LGBTQIA+IA+ youth center, and our "senior pride" community as the foundation for cultivating participation.

## Intergenerational Learning and the LGBTQIA+IA+ Community

For this program, the graduate students in DiCindio's class were interested in working with intergenerational queer audiences to create a forum for them to connect with each other through museum experiences and art-making. A 2010 study by AARP Research found that people identifying as LGBTQIA+ have a greater risk of being "chronically lonely," and those

who identify as LGBTQIA+ who are in midlife and older are more likely to be lonely than those who do not (Anderson & Thayer, 2018). As a result of lifelong discrimination and marginalization, coupled with many 55+ LGBTQIA+ individuals being rejected by family and friends early on in their lives, or having to keep their identities secret for fear of being rejected, this community has been left behind by many of our cultural and educational institutions. There is an abundance of normalized and normalizing spaces offering arts programming, and yet little opportunities specific and relevant to the lived experiences and identities of the queer community.

This is not exclusive to the 55+ queer community. Queer youth also feel the effects of loneliness. Whether through a fear of coming out or feeling rejected and bullied by family, friends, and peers after coming out, these youth are more likely to keep their feelings and identities hidden, creating more pockets of isolation. This isolation has increased due to the use of social media. While online communities can offer spaces of support, they can also become spaces of trauma where unmediated dialogue occurs. Queer youth are more likely to be bullied or harassed on social media, in chat rooms, and through text messages. They report that they do not feel safe online, at school, and traveling to and from school. These experiences lead to lower grades, depression, and low self-esteem (GLSEN, 2013).

With these factors in mind, University students felt it was important to consider the ways in which an arts program could bring these two communities out of their private spaces and into a shared physical space. An intergenerational arts program offered a way to combat the effects of loneliness, isolation, and create a safe space where participants could communicate and create new memories face-to-face.

Cortellesi, Harpley, and Kernan (2018) observe that intergenerational learning is often seen as learning transmitted in one direction, from older to younger generations, but that it can also be multidirectional. Because youth and elder generations are often separated from each other through social institutions, they can have misconceptions about each other, linking childhood with impulsiveness and elders as stuck in their ways. Citing Wentzell (2013), the authors argue that activities that bring these groups together “can question both of these assumptions, providing young children and older people the opportunity to express and experience different selves, to be active learners at any age and to build connections instead of disjunctions” (p. 425).

With the 55+ LGBTQIA+ participants having a lifetime of experience, much of which paved the way for today’s LGBTQIA+ youth, and youth participants coming to the program with fresh perspectives free from the weight of history, we believed that these two groups would have a lot to share with one another, in effect bridging the gap between them through shared knowledge, experiences, and creativity. The role of sharing experiences holds a critical place in the *Stay Gold* program through reciprocity and collaboration (Lawton & LaPorte, 2013).



From the start of *Stay Gold*, we considered ways that we could incorporate opportunities to share narratives and find connections with each other through art-making, conversations, and gallery activities (Lawton, 2004, 2010). Like Kerka (2002), we observed that these connections “foster the development of communication and reflection skills and formation of new perspectives about oneself and others” (p. 2). This reciprocal relationship was at the core of our initial conversations about *Stay Gold*, and one that was reinforced by Chelsea Farrar, curator of community engagement at the UAMA and organizer of *Mapping Q*, and youth of *Mapping Q* as we worked with them in planning for the program.

Intergenerational programs and programs for older adults can be transformative (Lawton & LaPorte, 2013). Creating opportunities for youth and elders to share stories and learn about and from each other are at the heart of *Stay Gold*. From the beginning of the program, we worked closely with participants to empower them to be co-creators in these projects. They helped to make decisions on the format, projects, and direction of the program.

Falk and Dierking (2013) stress that social interactions play an important role in shaping visitors’ experiences in museums, and that these social components are often what are remembered from museum visits. Through these social interactions, museums have become sites for mental health support and well-being. Museums “can provide opportunities for self-development, spiritual and artistic growth, and social connection...The museum offers potential therapeutic opportunities such as a safe space, acceptance of uniqueness and celebration of differences, imparting of information, and installation of hope” (Bennington, Backos, Harrison, Etherington Reader, & Carolan, 2016, p. 34). For *Stay Gold*, the works of art provide ways in which experiences can be shared, and the art in the museum provides inspiration and discussion that continues while making art together in studio spaces. The projects were designed to be open-ended, allowing participants to work together to problem solve, share ideas and suggestions, and experiment together.

### **Evolution of *Stay Gold***

The invitation to participate in *Stay Gold* is open to queer youth, elders, and allies ages 13-99. We used listservs, fliers, word-of-mouth and social media to promote the program. Youth are not required to have parental permission to participate due to the fact that many youths are not out to their families and requiring this could pose a risk to stable housing and their emotional and physical safety.

*Stay Gold* started as a four-week program and has expanded to ten weekly sessions due to increased participant interest. We ask participants to register at the beginning of each program, keeping that registration open throughout the duration of the program. Some participate in all of the individual sessions while others drop in and out of the program, attending when they are able. We wanted to remove as many barriers as possible for participants. In allowing for flexibility in attendance, elements such as transportation,

changing work schedules, and other unforeseen events did not inhibit participation. Participants often bring friends with them, and these connections have helped the program to grow. In the first four-week pilot program we had a consistent number of 17 participants, nine youth and eight elders, attending most sessions. In this last program, 26 people participated and included 17 youth and nine elders. The program was initially designed with little funding, using existing supplies in the School of Art at the University of Arizona and the UAMA, but it is now supported through the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson where it takes place.

The first program of *Stay Gold* was developed by the art education class and focused on storytelling through bookmaking and zines. The students in the class and the youth who were part of *Mapping Q* thought it was important for participants to learn about each other's histories and experiences through narrative projects. This original program took place at the UAMA and in the art education classroom at the School of Art. Students worked with Chelsea Farrar to select works of art from the museum's collection that focused on storytelling and personal experiences. University students in the art education class worked with participants to create different formats of zines and books.



Figure 1. Book made in the first iteration of *Stay Gold* (Artwork by J.P., 2017)

The activities for *Stay Gold* are largely choice-based. We provide general outlines for projects linked to exhibitions; however, participants have the ultimate say in what they want to create each time. For the second iteration participants chose to create a time capsule at the UAMA. Everything they made during the program went into the time capsule. In this iteration participants created self-care playlists, self-portrait drawings using 50 objects that define them, a newspaper front page where participants could highlight topics they found

relevant to them that day, love notes to themselves, a collaborative project that mapped the intersections in their lives, and videos where they talked about how they were and what they were currently doing with their lives. Everything went into the time capsule and participants chose the future date at which time the group would meet again and open it. The time capsule is now stored in the Arizona Queer Archives on the University of Arizona campus until we meet again to revisit what we created.

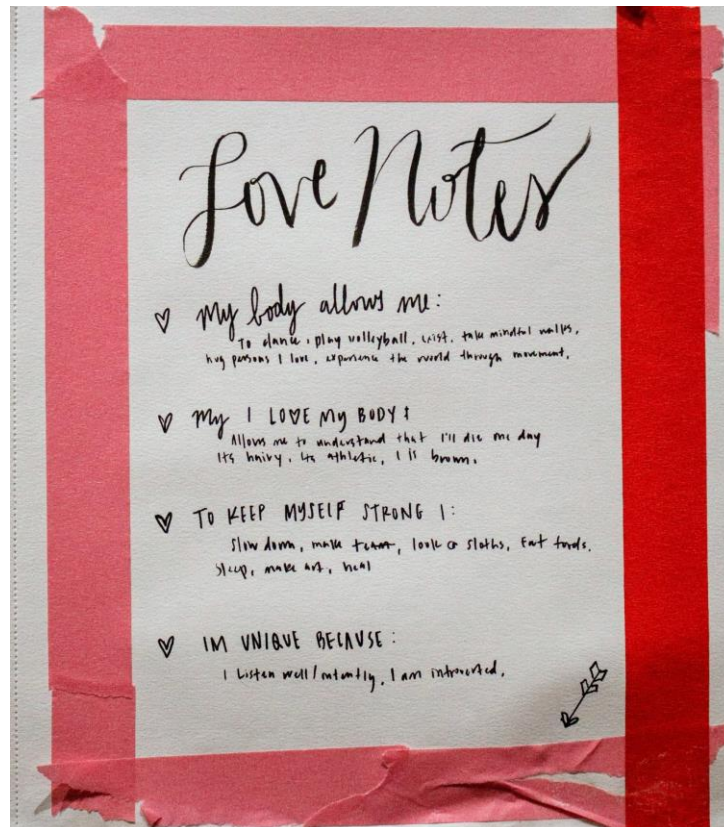


Figure 2. Artwork made by participant in the second iteration of *Stay Gold*. (Artwork by J.W., 2018).

After the first year of *Stay Gold* ended, the program moved to the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson where Eli Burke is Education Director. For the third season, the program was linked to the exhibition “Blessed Be: Mysticism, Spirituality and Occult in Contemporary Art.” Participants focused on what sacred space means to them (or doesn’t) as members of the queer community as a whole and also how it intersected (or didn’t) with the lives of participants. We created pocket shrines, made soul paintings, worked with clay to make vessels, created oracle cards, designed sigils, attended lectures, and collaborated with another community organization on the memorial project *Made for Flight* for Transgender Day of Remembrance.



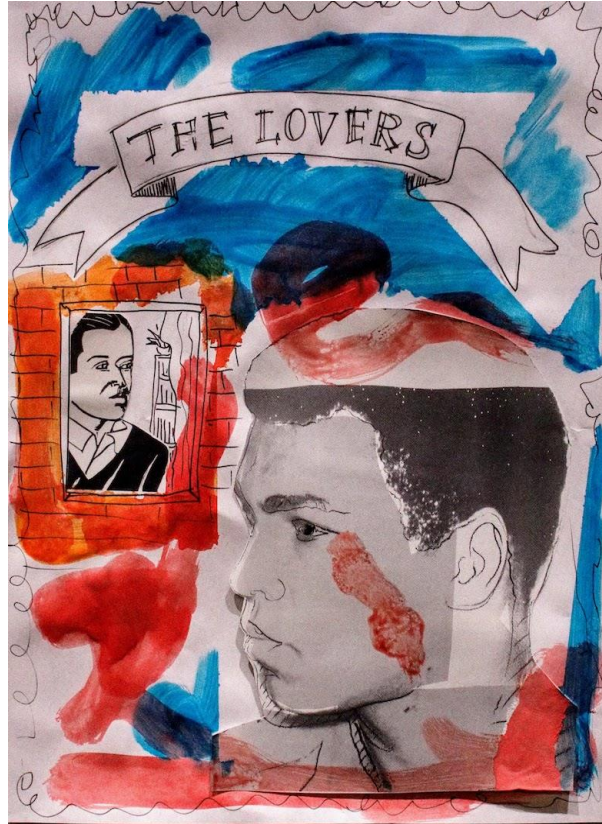


Figure 3: Oracle Card made by participant in the third iteration of *Stay Gold*.

The fourth season of *Stay Gold* was linked to the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson's exhibition, "Dazzled: OMD, Memphis Design, and Beyond." This exhibition highlighted dazzle camouflage used in WWI. Ships were painted with disorienting designs to confuse the enemy. This was a perfect platform for participants in *Stay Gold* to talk about the ways in which participants have either had to camouflage themselves or have been camouflaged by others. As the program continues, the facilitators of *Stay Gold* are focused on finding new ways to build communication between older and younger participants through group projects that focus on youth and elders working together. Participants created mixed media paintings that camouflaged safe spaces, mapped safe spaces, attended a performance workshop, learned how to work with virtual reality programs, painted camouflage-inspired self-portraits, and collaborated on drawing and gallery activities.

In addition to the exhibition linked to *Mapping Q*, *Stay Gold* participants were invited to exhibit their work at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson where the *Stay Gold* currently runs. We wanted to create and opportunity, through *Stay Gold*, to celebrate the work of LGBTQIA+ individuals in our community and give the public opportunities to experience the artwork of *Stay Gold* participants.

Although we focused this article on the program itself, in the future we plan to do an extensive research project that incorporates the participants' voices and perspectives. Graduate students in art education at the university continue to be involved in the program through class projects, museum internships, volunteering, and as participants. Although participants interact with the exhibitions through dialogue, artmaking, and gallery activities, the interactions the participants have together through these explorations of materials, themes in the exhibition, and conversation, are the focus of the program.

### **Facilitator Experiences: How has the program impacted us as both facilitators and participants?**

**Eli Burke:** My experience with this program has been profound and deeply moving. Approaching this *Stay Gold* from the perspective of a learner/student rather than my usual role as museum educator allowed me to access this program on a more personal level and also gave me time to consider my experience within the program as we were moving through it. For the first time in my life I had found myself in a classroom filled with people of all ages who were part of my community. What would learning look like when I did not have to navigate the entanglements of identity? I had always felt like an outsider within educational spaces. This was new for me.

The intergenerational aspect was also key, for I had been in many spaces serving queer youth, however I never had access to a space within which I could interact with the 55+ queer community. This was very validating and created a feeling of safety within an educational setting that I had never experienced before. The opportunity to connect with the 55+ members of my own community and gain a deeper understanding of their lives and personal challenges and triumphs validated my own experience and also gave me hope that things are evolving in a positive direction, despite any temporary setbacks or bumps in the road. In a way, it allowed me to zoom out and see the big picture, not just struggle within my own little bubble of time and experience. Not only did this program teach me the value it held for participants, but it also highlighted on a deeply personal level, the ways in which I still had room to heal from my past experiences as a member of the queer community and a hopefulness that this was even possible.

**Carissa DiCindio:** *Stay Gold*, in particular, has shown me how critically important it is to create art museum programs with individuals who have been marginalized in these spaces in the past. As an ally, I am thankful to be a part of this program. I am grateful for the opportunity to form my own bonds with participants through the art we create together and learn from the informal conversations we have in the museum. Art education students, staff at the museum, and participants in the program usually take the lead in designing the sessions, and I am happy to help support the program behind the scenes and by working with art education students who continue to be involved beyond class assignments with this program.



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# Rekindling Lost Connections: Using Art Museum Educational Programs to Strengthen Personal and Community Relationships

*“The power of a museum educational program is often not seen so readily, but in this docent’s account one can see how art-making can greatly improve the quality of life for the PWDs [persons diagnosed with dementia] and their care partners.”*

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*University of Arizona*

## ABSTRACT

Persons diagnosed with dementia (PWDs) or with an intellectual disability are often marginalized by society, as are their care partners (Innes, Archibald, & Murphy, 2004). In the United States, the dementia community is growing due to the aging population and increasing numbers of persons with brain injuries (Hurd, Martorell, & Langa, 2013; Plassman et al., 2011). There is a need to find better ways to enhance the quality of life for PWDs and their care partners, and art museum dementia programs often provide a solution to this need. Prompted by the author’s own observations of the Tucson Museum of Art’s (TMA) dementia program, this article examines: (1) museum and art education strategies, (2) the use of other disciplinary theories, and (3) how an art museum dementia program positively influenced the lives of the participants. This article supports the following conclusions: (1) Museum dementia programs are strengthening the relationship between PWDs and their care partners, (2) that shared experiences have a positive effect on both, and (3) museums must continue developing effective educational strategies and creative environments for this population.

## KEYWORDS

*museum education, art education, dementia programming, intellectual disabilities*

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## Introduction

Dementia, once described as the silent epidemic, is set to become a worldwide problem due to the combination of longevity and the advancement of the baby boomer generation into senectitude (Larson, Yaffe, & Langa, 2013). It is reasonable to assume that many people will eventually be affected by dementia in their lifetimes, either personally, through a friendship, or because they have become care partners. Dementia is not a specific disease, but rather the umbrella term that describes neurological conditions that affect cognition. There are many different types of dementias, Alzheimer's disease being the most common form. Because of the progressive nature of dementia, personal relationships suffer and may become disconnected due to the stress of care giving and behavioral changes in persons diagnosed with dementia (PWDs). Dementia (Rhoads, 2009) can be treated, managed, and slowed in its progression. However, there still is no known cure that either stops or restores cognitive losses. Because of the uncertainty about how rapidly dementia may develop, many care partners are exploring different ways in which to sustain whatever connections remain between themselves and the PWD. One approach is the use of art museum tours in combination with a studio art-making experience for both the PWDs and their care partners.

## Creativity and Dementia

The visual arts may be one of the first vehicles used to initiate the awareness of aesthetics, communicate human feelings, and advance the development of culture (Lewis-Williams, 2002). As early as the Paleolithic period, one finds evidence of humans employing visual depictions to express their emotions about events in everyday life. These artifacts signal the emergence of a human cognition that would evolve into fully developed human intelligence (Gretton & ffytche, 2013; Lewis-Williams, 2002.) Creativity, whether to solve a problem in daily life or to satisfy the need for artistic expression, has been recognized as a human characteristic and a way to express the experience of human existence. Hayes and Povey (2011) wrote that "creativity is stimulated by the pulse of life through our veins: by the very fact that we are breathing living beings" (p. 22). Creativity and the expression of one's creativity is an important aspect of living, and it is needed throughout one's lifespan. In addition, creativity and artistic expression play an important part (Hannemann, 2006; Cohen, 2000) in maintaining brain cells, particularly those associated with memory. Artistic expression has positive influences on emotional health; it is known to help manage depression and anxiety, and to combat feelings of isolation. Essentially, creativity promotes an overall sense of well-being.

For PWDs, the sense of healthy well-being (Cohen, 2000) can be difficult to maintain as cognitive control lessens with the progression of dementia. Maintaining the physical health of PWDs often becomes a priority over their emotional needs, causing an imbalance between physical and emotional states. As Hannemann (2006) wrote, "When addressing the longevity of the elders, especially dementia patients, we have to analyze more than the

current needs of food, shelter, and physical health” (p. 62). Art museum programming for PWDs and their care partners creates a sense of connection with community and supports the feelings of well-being for both (Camic, Baker, & Tischler, 2015; Lamar, Luke, Logsdon, & Morrissey, 2015).

### **The Complex Relationship Between PWDs and Their Care Partners**

A better understanding of this relational dynamic could benefit future studies of gallery touring strategies and refine museum education studies for persons living with dementia. To this end, I examined and analyzed data by using different psychological theories and perspectives of grief, loss, and human development by Kübler-Ross and Boss. Boss’s theory of ambiguous loss (2002, 2007) specifically addresses the complex feelings of loss when caring for someone with dementia. Care partners for PWDs face a greater challenge than other care partners because the PWD often appears physically healthy yet cannot connect with them emotionally due to their impaired cognition (Rhoads, 2009). Many times, the relationship between the PWDs and their care partners appears to be intact to outside observers, yet the relationship may be undergoing stress due to unusual behaviors brought on by dementia (Boss & Couden, 2002). Accrued knowledge of the dynamic between the two would provide the art and museum educators with a better understanding of the behaviors displayed by either the PWD, care partner, or both. This point is supported by the investigation of PWDs and their care partners as participants in art museum dementia programs. Lamar, et al. (2015) stated,

It is also imperative that the museum staff be properly trained in assessing the PWD’s reluctance and aiding the CP in their participation. They should have training from an organization that is well versed in dementia and dementia related behaviors. (p. 40)

The knowledge of theories surrounding ambiguous loss and grieving would help museum and art educators understand what PWDs and their care partners are experiencing in their lives.

### **Museum Educational Programming and Dementia**

One of the first art museums to provide museum education for PWDs was the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. However, it was not until 2006 that MoMA established its “Meet Me at the MoMA” program for PWDs and their care partners, in collaboration with museum educators and experts in the field of Alzheimer’s disease. This decision led to a nationwide awareness that prompted art museums to establish their own programs for PWDs.

Several museums have created their own educational and studio programs for PWDs using MoMA’s work as a reference point, launching several dementia programs throughout the country: for example, the SEPIA and Memories at the Museum Alzheimer’s programs at the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego, California; the “here:now” program at the

Frye Art Museum in Seattle, Washington; and the Memories in the Making program at the Tucson Museum of Art in Tucson, Arizona. There are also many variations of programming for PWDs, which often include storytelling, poetry reading, music, and dance. Another development has been the growth of community collaborations between the museums, local arts organizations, and healthcare institutions. For example, the Phoenix Art Museum's Arts Engagement Program is a partnership between the museum, Banner Alzheimer's Institute, and Maricopa Partnership for Art and Culture. The program is based on the work of the Alzheimer's Project at MoMA. Since the advent of that project, there has been a progressive interest in art museums presenting dementia programs, which vary depending on the community the museum serves and the resources that can be found.

### **Methodology of the Study**

This investigation sought to understand how dementia programming in art museums influenced the lives of the PWDs and their care partners by gathering and analyzing observations on their actions and responses while viewing and making art. The study differs from other investigations in that it examines the relationship between PWDs and their care partners through semi-structured interviews, which included care partners, art and museum educators, museum professionals, and dementia experts.

### **The Present Study**

I chose to conduct a qualitative, single case study at the Tucson Museum of Art's (TMA) "Memories in the Making" program" (MIM). In the second year of my graduate studies at the University of Arizona, I accepted a unique internship that allowed me to participate in the MIM program and observe how it operated through a yearlong cycle. This internship also gave me the opportunity to form relationships with the staff of the Desert Southwest Chapter—Alzheimer's Association and the MIM participants, which later allowed me to conduct interviews for this study in greater depth than would have been possible otherwise.

### **TMA's MIM Program**

The TMA and the Desert Southwest Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association formulated their own version of a museum dementia program in the early 2000s. This relationship was formed with the goal of running a seasonal program that would be facilitated by members of the museum's educational staff and populated through the membership of the Desert Southwest Chapter. It would be known to the Tucson community as "Memories in the Making," a museum educational program designed specifically for members of the dementia community. TMA asked that its docents work with the local Alzheimer's chapter to provide and expand the program content. The docents used the existing curriculum but added three new elements: (a) a trained docent to work with PWDs and their care partners, (b) the inclusion of care partners in all activities, and (c) an artist/educator trained in working with people with intellectual disabilities, who would be responsible for studio art-making activities. These additional elements provided by the



docents set the TMA's program apart from other museum dementia programs that did not require dementia training.

### Participants

I sorted the participants by their roles in the MIM program: (a) museum professionals, (b) artist/educators, (c) dementia experts, and (d) MIM participants. I chose not to interview PWDs because of the unpredictability of their cognitions and because I felt that care partners, museum professionals, and artist/educators would be a more reliable source of information. I believe that my prior contact with the participants helped me establish a connection and a level of comfort that encouraged them to disclose deeper and more personal insights about their experiences. The University of Arizona Institutional Review Board approved my research investigation in May 2017 and included the approval criteria for all participant selection, information used for recruitment, semi-structured interview questions that would be posed to the various participants, and consent forms. All participants volunteered to be interviewed, and no form of compensation was given to them. Any data that were collected have been stored in a secured location in accordance with the IRB's directive.

In addition, my professional ethics as a licensed professional counselor in the State of Arizona guided my questions and the way I approached each participant. The design of the investigation reduced the risk of any harm or danger to the participants in the study. If the participants felt that they would prefer to stop or withdraw from participating, they could do so at any time, but none of them opted to do so during this investigation. Demographic information about the participants can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Participant Information

Participant	Sex	Age	Ethnicity	Education PhD=Doctorate M=Masters B=Bachelors	Role	Time/Place
01	F	30-40	White	M/PhD	Museum Educator	120 min/ business office
02	F	30-40	White	M	Artist/Educator	57 min/restaurant
03	F	50+	White	M	Artist/Educator	90 min/studio
04	F	50+	White	M	Artist/Educator	120 min/home
05	F	60+	White	M	Docent Educator	240 min/home
06	M	30-40	White	M	Dementia Expert	105 min/office

Table 1 (continued).

07	F	60+	White	M	Care Partner	58 min/restaurant
08	F	60+	White	B	Care Partner	45 min/restaurant
09	F	60+	White	M	Care Partner	90 min/office
010	M	60+	White	M	Care Partner	60 min/coffee shop
011	F	60+	White		Care Partner	90 min/home

### Procedure

I contacted study participants by email, phone, or in person so that I could fully explain the research project. I also gave them an informational sheet with more details about the investigation, along with a copy of the consent form. They were able to review all the materials, including the interview questions that I would be asking, ahead of time. They were given at least two weeks to reflect on how to respond to my questions. The interviews were scheduled for 60 minutes, but the average interview time was 98 minutes. Interviews were conducted at locations where the participants felt most comfortable in discussing information that was personal and potentially sensitive. Many of the participants chose to be interviewed at a coffee shop or restaurant. The other interviews were conducted at participants' homes and business offices, and at my office. To ensure as much anonymity as possible, I used numbers to conceal the identities of the participants.

### Data Collection

I interviewed and audio recorded 11 individuals, who participated voluntarily and were associated with the TMA's MIM program. The interviews were recorded in their entirety using a digital recorder and were then professionally transcribed verbatim. I took great care not to disclose any identifying information to the transcriber. Once I received the transcribed interviews, I performed an initial review to begin the data coding and analysis. I continued to review the data for a total of 12 times to formulate a framework or approach to the data analysis. Table 2 shows the type of data, sources, and details of the data that I collected.

Table 2. Different Types of Data Collected

Type of Data	Sources	Specific Info
Interviews	11 participants	1 Museum Education Curator 1 Docent Educator 1 Dementia Expert 3 Artist/Educators 5 Care Partners

**Table 2** (continued).

Art Pieces	MIM program and Alzheimer's Chapter Personal Pieces from the collection of PWDs and care partners	Unidentified participants' work—combination of works from both PWDs and care partners
Program Collaterals	Alzheimer's Chapter and TMA Training Docent	Programming Information Training Curriculum

### Data Analysis

Early in the process of data collection, I discovered that it was difficult to separate and maintain various emerging themes and their patterns. This issue was addressed by Vasimoradi, Turunen, and Bondas (2013) in an article reflecting their experience with the data analysis process. They wrote that “like other qualitative methods gathering and analyzing data are conducted concurrently in descriptive qualitative approaches, thus adding to the depth and quality of data analysis” (p. 401). This led me to create coding systems that would allow the voice of each participant to be heard.

During the first pass through the data, I highlighted instances where the voice of the interviewee was distinctive in describing their encounters with dementia. As this progressed, I found that other patterns were emerging, so I coupled the highlighting with descriptive coding, which further helped me organize the data into topics or themes.

Later, as I reviewed the data from the first interviews, I realized that I needed to go further to refine my coding system, so I used, NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program, to help me organize the data so that they could be effectively analyzed. I also incorporated a coding system that would assist me in preserving the voice of the participant by using a process called verbal exchange coding, devised by H. Lloyd Goodall (2000).

Goodall (2000) outlined a coding approach that departs from the traditional coding systems found in qualitative research. Verbal exchange coding uses verbatim transcripts of the conversations with the interviewees. Goodall starts by determining the category of the conversation and then follows with a reflective review of the exchange. These notations (either reflective or analytical) are written directly into the transcription. The transcriptions should include all forms of communication as well as stops and starts, facial cues, and nonverbal cues. Goodall then utilizes one of the five forms of verbal exchanges, which are as follows: (a) phatic communion or ritual interaction, which typically appears in the form associated with societal patterns of communication; (b) ordinary conversation, which focuses more on demographic information; (c) skilled conversation, a focused type of conversation with the intent of using information in a pragmatic manner; (d) personal narratives that disclose information or episodes that were meaningful in the person's life; and (e) dialog that is a higher form of an exchange and that reflects a personal and deeper connection between the interviewer and interviewee. Saldaña (2016) stated that “Goodall advocates a more holistic and truly interpretive approach to the data. . . . His methods are applicable to both transcribed dialogic exchanges or preexisting fictional and non-fictional texts” (p. 36). In my investigation, I compared my notes taken during the interviews with the

notes made during the first pass through the transcribed interviews. Then those comments that I had noted, either during or right after the interview, were entered into a table under the various themes that emerged.

### **Reliability of the Study**

Andrew Shenton (2004) discusses the need to use the highest forms of analytical rigor possible to avoid criticism about reliability in qualitative research. He expands E.G. Guba's work by discussing, in depth, four ways in which a researcher can establish trustworthiness. They are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For this study, I established credibility by using sound research approaches. I started with a constructivist paradigm as the foundation of the design and used case study approaches to collect my data. In addition, I reviewed my findings with experts in the fields of museum education and mental health. My background as a licensed behavioral health professional added another layer of credibility to this study since I have had training and cases that involved brain trauma and dementia. The issue of transferability is addressed in the descriptions of each interview and can be found in field notes and weekly research log summaries. I reviewed my data to compare them against well-known models in dementia and museum education in order to ensure their dependability. Finally, I addressed confirmability by describing in depth, in my weekly analytical memos, any research design changes that occurred or updates that I noted.

Yin (1994) recommended that all case study designs should embrace approaches that would ensure the reliability of the analysis. He suggested the use of a four-test strategy to establish reliability: construct validity (established by triangulation of multiple sources of evidence and member checking), internal validity (the use of traditional analytic tools), external validity or analytic generalization, and reliability of the design on which the research is based. In contrast to Yin's framework for establishing reliability, Stake (2005, 2008) had a different perspective on how these issues should be addressed. He offered an umbrella term he called *triangulation*, which uses four strategies: data source triangulation (the cross checking of all sources), investigator triangulation (using multiple investigators,) theory triangulation (the use of two or more theories that would explain the uniqueness of the case), and methodological triangulation (using multiple methods such as observations, questionnaires, and interviews to gather data) (Stake, 2005, 2008). Even with these designs and investigative approaches in case study research, there is not a defined framework for testing that researchers can use to determine the reliability of the study.

### **Impact of Reconnection Through Participation**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the impact that museum gallery touring and art-making had in strengthening the relational connection between PWDs and their care partners. This purpose was fulfilled by means of information gathered from the perspectives of care partners, museum professionals, and artist/educators.

In the following excerpt, the wife of a PWD reveals how the dementia program affected her life with her husband:

**Interviewer:** What was the dementia program experience like for you?

**Care Partner I:** Well, it was wonderful. My husband loved the tours. He listened, and he enjoyed them very much.

**Interviewer:** Were you able to discuss anything related to what the docent brought out, maybe converse a bit about it afterwards?

**Care Partner I:** On the way home he would say, "I really had a good time today" or something to that effect. I really liked it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, but what did you like?

**Care Partner I:** Well, one thing was being able to get out away from home and sort of socializing with other people—being with other people who understood what was going on. I would try to work with my husband, and sometimes we worked together but sometimes we didn't.

**Interviewer:** Did you keep any of the things that you both worked on together?

**Care Partner I:** Yes, I did. I kept them even after he had passed because they mean a great deal to me. (Care Partner I, Personal Communication, November 11, 2017).

While in this case the experience for the PWD and the care partner was not always completely successful, in the end, however, the encounters were positive and formed a lasting and meaningful memory for the care partner.

For another care partner, the dementia program gave him the ability to work out his own connection with creativity and art while concurrently connecting to his wife, who was in the middle stages of dementia. In the following excerpt, he talks about how attending the program helped him find a creative side, relax with his wife, and make connections with other participants that were meaningful.

**Interviewer:** What was that experience like, being in the studio with your wife?

**Care Partner II:** I actually like doing stuff with the clay and painting with watercolors. You know, interestingly enough I got into my stuff and I noticed that I wasn't paying a lot of attention to what my wife was doing. I mean I wasn't a caregiver at that point. I knew she was in good company being cared for by good folks. And I didn't feel like I had to be on duty. I had my piece of art to figure out and that was okay.

**Interviewer:** What about making relationships with other participants?

**Care Partner II:** We did find ourselves building relationships and that was probably as important as the art thing itself. It was getting to know some people that kind of became regulars and it was good to see them—the sense of community was good.

**Interviewer:** What about your wife's experience?



**Care Partner II:** She did really good stuff in the studio even though it was hard for her more and more to complete the task. But earlier on she was great. In fact, they gave her an award at this annual thing at the last Alzheimer's conference. (Care Partner II, Personal Communication, November 30, 2018)

The lives of many PWDs, and those who care for them, become increasingly difficult due to social isolation. Moreover, people often assume that creativity is no longer possible in dementia. Museum programming for those with dementia destroys this assumption and mitigates social isolation by providing an opportunity to experience once again the joy of art-making and the company of others.

Another perspective comes from an interview with the docent in charge of training other docents to conduct the MIM gallery tours. In this short excerpt she discusses the impact that the program had on the relationships of the participants.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel that the dementia program affected the participants' lives?

**Training Docent:** Well, I can tell you what was most gratifying and what I focused on week-to-week were those positive changes happening between the couples. It started out in the studio when we, as a group, were just relaxing doing something fun together with the art materials. No one had to be concerned about what the final product was, so there was a sense of freedom. It was also fun for them because they were able to start to connect with others who were sharing the same experience in managing dementia—this allowed them to make friends sometimes outside of the program.

**Interviewer:** How did this impact the care partner from your perspective?

**Training Docent:** Keep in mind that Alzheimer's is the type of disease that is very isolating not only for the PWD but also for the caregiver. There isn't really any opportunity to relax or to have fun or connect for either. I know because the couples would tell me at sessions that they were socializing outside of the program, which was so really great to see those developments! Spouses were finding people who were in the same situation as themselves, and it allowed them to relax so they didn't have to worry so much about the behaviors of their loved one when together, either in the program or outside of the program; it made their lives a little bit easier. (Training Docent, Personal Communication, January 21, 2018)

The power of a museum educational program is often not seen so readily, but in this docent's account one can see how art-making can greatly improve the quality of life for the PWDs and their care partners.

From the perspective of the artist/educator, the TMA dementia program presented another type of opportunity to connect through art. In the following excerpt, one of the artist/educators at TMA recalls a specific case:

**Interviewer:** Were there any examples you were able to observe where there were positive changes for the participants in the studio?

**Artist/Educator I:** Well, yes. There was one man, I don't remember his name, but he came with his wife, and he used to be a jeweler years ago and they were from Italy. They loved being in the studio. Yes, so people in the group didn't know him as a jeweler. And I think he had kind of forgotten that connection in his life or that he could be creative now that he had Alzheimer's.

**Interviewer:** What happened when he got into the studio?

**Artist/Educator I:** Well, in the studio he got really focused on just drawing. He completely rejected anything that we were doing as a group. He didn't want to do anything that involved color, he didn't want to do this, he didn't want to do that, he just wanted to draw. That happens sometimes with this population. But it was exciting to see the person express himself in a creative way. Sometimes his wife and I would talk about how excited he got working on his pieces. They were fabulous—it was fantastic to watch, you know. His wife said that it made her happy to see him engaged, still active in his mind, and able to produce and create like he did prior to his dementia. She said for that brief time, she had her husband back.  
(Artist/Educator I, Personal Communication, November 21, 2018)

The museum and studio experience ask nothing more of the PWDs and their care partners than to be in the moment, either experiencing or creating with one another.

## Conclusion

This study found that art museum dementia programs provide several important benefits to both PWDs and their care partners. The first finding is that participation in such a program gives the PWDs and their care partners the opportunity to re-establish a lost relational connection. By fostering an experience that is not dependent on memory or skill, but rather on engaging in gallery touring and art-making, the programs provide the opportunity for PWDs and their care partners to come together as equals. The participants in the present study reported an increase of emotional connection, which was important for their emotional health. This benefit is often overlooked, as reported in the research conducted by Hannemann (2006) and Cohen (2000).

In addition, this shared involvement alleviates the sense of ambiguous loss, as described by Boss, which care partners often experience. Such loss is felt by care partners because, while physically present, the PWD is often emotionally and psychologically absent. To bridge that gap, art museums are employing strategies, such as inclusive touring led by docents trained to work with PWDs, to further the participation of the PWDs and their care partners, thereby strengthening and nurturing the reconnection between them. In a wider sense, these shared museum and studio experiences help to create a bond among all the participants, resulting in the formation of community—something that is typically missing from the lives of PWDs.

### Implications for Further Study

Museum and art educators are challenged to find additional ways to expand the curriculum for PWDs and their care partners. A further study could examine how to include more effectively all stages of Alzheimer's and other dementia-related conditions. Researchers also need to ask, and seek answers to questions such as: How effective are traditional art education approaches to teaching those with dementia? If these are not effective, can better approaches be created for use in the classroom and studio? Do art and museum educators need to create new approaches to ensure that care partners' needs are being addressed and met in their programming?

More research and development is also needed to (a) provide better education about dementia for art educators and museum professionals, (b) recognize the need for continuous improvement of museum dementia programming, and (c) encourage increased perseverance in assuring that inclusion is sustained in museums for PWDs and their care partners. Also, there should be much more consideration of larger and more comprehensive programs for PWDs—specifically, museum dementia programming for those in the latter stages of dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

At present, there is no cure for most types of dementia, so as the PWD population grows, it will be even more important that museum and art educators respond by creating programming that supports PWDs and their care partners reconnecting and rekindling personal and community relationships.

### About the Author:

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