RECLAIMING RELATIONS: EMBODIED PRACTICES
OF VISUAL ARTS EDUCATORS
KNOWING, BEING AND DOING EVALUATION

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Dedications

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Abstract

The articles in this work address histories of how visual art educators have come to exist within scholarship on teacher evaluation. This study, reconceptualized outside of methodology through a post qualitative framework of inquiry, embodies poststructural feminist theories of ethics, exemplifying living theory and process as ‘lifework’. (Re)situating the evaluative experiences of art educators through their own visual stories grounded in feminist ethics where research acts as sacred practice invites an exploration of more relational ways of being as teachers, leaders, makers, and researchers. In turn, this research seeks to open spaces where we ask what becomes possible in evaluative practice when we look to the arts as a model. Opportunities emerge as the resistances of art educators reverberate beyond current systemic boundaries and offer a possibility to think differently about evaluation. Utilizing the practices of quilting, the work charts a new course in how we come to understand the politics of knowledge and think and perform research and teacher evaluation differently as a practice of mending, challenging (mis)representations, building relational trust through power shifts and receptive listening, and constructing a true capacity for connectedness.

1. An Introduction

At my root, I am a lover of the arts, having had a glowing impulse to create for as long as I could remember. I live to experience the creative spark, the planting and sprouting of creative seeds just waiting to blossom into something new. I became a visual art educator because I believed in the idea that art opens windows to connect us. Artistry exists in all aspects of our world as a generative and productive force. These ideas, like seeds, have been dispersed over the hundreds of students that I have been so privileged in my life to teach, connecting them to new understandings about what is possible. What does it mean to be connected? To join together? To be linked and inseparable? In our increasingly connected world, this has become second nature. We are always connected, or can be connected relatively quickly, to just about anything. We can connect with people, connect materials, connect ideas, connect to transport or traverse, we can make connections, and even connect digitally. The ease of connection in our modern era has produced more questions about our increasing disconnect.

I first noticed this disconnect as a beginning teacher, my art classrooms always existing in the far reaches of the school building; the basement, the end of the furthest hallway, away from the other classrooms. It seemed to mirror the larger picture of how arts education is thought about and valued in the educational system as peripheral and in the margin; enrichment and extracurricular versus foundational. Art educators often experience this disconnect as a lack of funding for supplies, insufficient planning or class time, whole school initiatives and development that fail to address their content, underrepresentation in leadership capacities, and a teacher evaluation system that refuses to acknowledge the nuances of their practice. These experiences, inequities, and the

resulting questions pestered me, resulting in a journey to discovery, wondering how I might (re)connect.

I began this journey as a master's student in educational leadership and policy analysis, thinking that if I learned how to assimilate, to be a part of the system, I could change it. To a certain extent, it was successful. Joining the ranks of administration, I suddenly had an amount of credibility I didn't have before: doors opened, invitations extended, committees seated, teams led, and my 'art' in a certain sense, silenced. I had successfully participated in a system that worked hard to delegitimize how I come to know the world by quieting the very part of me that embodied my most authentic self. I knew there was so much more for me in this world. Re(connecting) at the beginning of my doctoral journey was painful. A rediscovery, unlearning and relearning, grappling with the intersections of my identity as an artist, researcher (emerging), and teacher, helped me to uncover the disconnect I experienced was the result of larger philosophical questions challenging the politics of knowledge and power. My questions about art teachers and the systems of schooling began connecting with what I was reading, making, thinking and writing. I had so many ideas, yet, my ideas and knowings still disconnected with standards in academia beholden to rules about what constitutes the known. You can make art, but 'research' is published. You can talk about evaluation, but only through this prescriptive formula and only if your study is 'scientific', and only if you are in this paradigm...And there I was, on the fringe again.

It took me back to my favorite children's story, *What do you do with an Idea?* In the story, Yamada (2013) renders the idea as a being, one which refuses to leave the boy

alone, even when the boy wished it would. The idea, once cultivated and taken care of, begins to transform.

My idea changed right before my very eyes...It spread its wings, took flight and burst into the sky...It went from being here to being everywhere. It wasn't just a part of me anymore...it was now a part of everything. (pp. 29-31)

Such ideas took flight as I immersed myself in poststructuralism and became more artistically engaged with my work with nudges from many scholars responsible for my studies, shifting from connectedness to relatedness. My questions refashioned to a more ontological set where I considered what it means to 'be' research and to exist 'within' encounters. It became impossible to think without post theories or without embodied methodologies. In fact, 'without' became fruitful; 'without' was nothing but possibility. Springgay et al., (2005) write,

Without is a space of active participation where one discovers that previous methodologies are not sufficient while simultaneously resisting the formation of specific criteria to replace them. Without 'intimates process rather than method and alludes to a condition in which you might find yourself while doing work'. (p. 898)

There was a resistance rising in me that celebrated all of the connection/disconnection, and I began to acknowledge the inherent relatedness in all of the work and experiences that had delivered me to this point as part of the process: Disconnection potentially a symptom of an overly connected world without relation. There was a deep relatedness between systems and ethics, between relationality and what I understood as my feminist roots, between teacher effectiveness and how it is teachers come to know, between

materials and affects, and suddenly, like the story, my ideas were in fact everywhere. The ideas sprouted up through my artwork, flourished inside each and every reading, and re-seeded more pathways and maps for my thinking.

Lifework...What the Posts Produce

The following articles are a result of this lifework. Drawing from Sara Ahmed, I wanted to build a dwelling that resists ideas and thoughts already assembled and invite others to dwell in new encounters with what might not be thought before, as a possibility of one way forward (Ahmed, 2017). Identifying as an a/r/tographer (Irwin, 2004) I became aware that what I was experiencing in the without, in the absence, was “loss, shift, and rupture...foundational concepts of a/r/tography [which] create openings...displace meanings and allow for slippages...creating presence through absence, they are tactile, felt, and seen” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 898). A/r/tography, the ideas of without, and of dwelling in a space of resistance, aligned with Kuntz’s (2021) description of post-qualitative inquiry as that which,

extends toward an engagement with processes. ...As a result, one necessarily begins by understanding the work of post qualitative inquiry as a practice (and later an enactment), one that by definition never concludes but results in a living of the theories to which one subscribes. (p. 216)

My work with visual art educators has exemplified living theory and process, one that has challenged ideas about knowledge, power, language, representation, and the doings of research. It is understandable that many in academia require more succinct and scientific procedure for research, where we can place studies, theories, and

methodologies in neat and tidy boxes of the known, as their positionality is different from mine. Drawing from Hendry et al., (2018), I wish to reconceptualize the work outside of methodology. It is not my intention to represent meaning through the stories of visual art educators, but to act from a position of ethical responsibility in which all research is narrative as a state of being (Hendry et al., 2018). “Narrative, as becoming, displaces the concept of ‘understanding’ and ‘experience’ of the other (there is no such subject) or on meaning (since this is always in flux), but on practicing/doing/being in the dance of connectivity and intra-action” (Hendry et al., 2018, p. 11) through relatedness. I have relied heavily on a penchant for artmaking to help ‘make sense of’ theory diffracted through my ideas as integral to the doctoral journey, leaning into arts’ “power to open our imagination toward the unimagined and uncertain” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 897). From this perspective, I felt confident that visual art educators may feel more comfortable communicating about evaluative experience through the arts, a language where they feel most present.

Working within this project, I proposed a study, drawing from St. Pierre’s (2014) assertion that “post analyses require a different approach from the beginning” (p. 3), “it must be invented, created differently each time, and one study called post qualitative will not look like another” (St. Pierre, 2021, p. 6). I troubled assumptions about ‘data’, ‘analysis’, and ‘findings’ due to my belief that one cannot be separate from them. We cannot be objective observers. This project moved forward in many iterations, starts and stops, responding within the encounters of many happenings one could never have predicted or known, as exemplified in the upending and shuttering of the world due to Covid-19. In the fear, grief, and trauma associated with the pandemic, one thing became

clear, my study of poststructural and post-feminist theories had prepared me for the ambiguity, messiness and chaos that comes with the sudden evaporation of the world as we knew it. It was something we all experienced, albeit in varied ways, yet it informed the shape of this work and must be acknowledged.

Like many, we became closed up in our homes with our families, and our work went online. We (dis)connected and related differently and were forced to figure out new spaces and ways to do our lifework. For myself, and many other working parents, we became elementary, middle, and high school teachers overnight, working hard to balance lifework amidst such uncertainty. We evolved, we moved differently, we gave grace, we started to listen to the world and to each other and we began to embody the very ideas we thought, made and wrote about. The pandemic had produced a snag and like Grosz (2001) writes, had caused a jamming effect “insert[ing] a stammer, a hesitation, or pause within the expected” (p. 69). Jackson and Mazzei (2011) write about snags as well, acknowledging that “we must live with the certainty that we are unsure of what may emerge until it happens” (p. 30). The jamming and snagging effects of this pause were both connected and related to concepts of ‘without’, and suddenly the work was teeming with possibility. The pause as pedagogical became “open and curious. ...honor[ing] the exchange between active and vibrant matter through listening and paying attention” (Hegeman, 2019, p. 68), which is exactly what I hoped the work would produce.

Sew/Sow(ing) Ideas

I was stirred reading the words, “Research that breathes. Research that listens” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 899). It inspired me to consider what this could look like in practice. How does research embody breathing and listening in a way that is radically related to the world? How might the work serve as an invitation to something that is always moving, shifting, reconfiguring, evolving and changing? It was in the conceptualization of renderings (Springgay et al., 2005) where this became thinkable.

Renderings offer possibilities of engagement. ...[they] are not methods.

...Renderings are theoretical spaces through which to explore ways of knowing and being research. They may inform the doing of research, the final representation, and or the ways in which viewers/readers understand and access an a/r/tographical text. For renderings also return and/or give back. (p. 899)

The work began with rendering, back and forth conversing through making, linking the ideas about theory, practice and research with arts educators and evaluative practice, engaging, connecting, and relating with the world, shaping the three articles. As a mixed

Figure 1

media artist I began stitching my thoughts together. The slowness of stitching often referred to as invisible labor (Sharp, 2021) provided a space for listening and breathing as the images slowly came into focus. Stitching images not only

called into question how knowledge can be represented, but problematized ideas about what might be considered art and who typically has participated in such art forms. I

Figure 2

thought and made with theory (figure 1) and my relations to the world around me, with other humans and nonhumans, nature, matter, and the not yet. I conceptualized ideas about what it means to listen as a researcher (figure 2), ‘being’ research as ‘being’ reading, ‘being’ writing and ‘being’ making. To ‘be’ insisted I get quiet and

‘be’ present in what was unfolding in front of me much like St. Pierre (2020) opines, “embrace the onto-epistemology and concepts of the philosophical tradition, including poststructuralism, described by philosophers...reading philosophy and allowing the intensity of philosophical concepts to re-orient thought” (p. 2). I thought through

Figure 3

mapping and wondered how I entered into the middle of hi(stories) and where those middles might lead (figure 3)?

Figure 5

foundation of support for student learning, while also helping students root themselves in their becoming by planting visual seeds to take root. I stitched the impact the pandemic had on my research (figure 5) and the pauses that came about. The trail system that

Figure 4

produced as my youngest son noticed a helicopter seed from a nearby maple tree and was awestruck throwing it in the air and watching it spin down to the ground. It imparted on me the necessity for relating, connecting and being present-listening. The lungs in figure

I thought about what it meant to be connected and related, (figure 4) and stitched out ideas about what the future looks like when visual art educators collaborate to improve the field. I thought about ‘rootedness’: We are rooted in making and also rooted as a content that often remains underground and underfoot, juxtaposed with art as a rooted

suddenly connected us to the outdoors, when we were all in lockdown within our homes. Seeds we started to pass the time led to conversations about preservation and fermented new ideas about what could be possible through pickle-making. I reveled in the wonder

6, posed a way to think of “research as breathing” (Springgay et al., 2008, p. 899). What gets produced and what flourishes when we are embodied with/in a research encounter

Figure 6

and what might this offer
educational research as a whole?
Maybe research as breathing
beckons us to consider the research
practice as life-giving, an extension
of our lifework as embodied
researchers. It was here where the
seeds of the sacredness of research
were planted, where I considered the
act of participating in the research

event with visual artists as spiritual. There was a trust placed in me to honor and value their stories and their makings, devoting their experiences in an effort to think evaluation differently.

Finally, I stitched out ideas about what I hoped would be produced by the work (figures 7 and 8). Not only did I want to validate and center the experiences of art educators, I wanted to disrupt current conversations about evaluation in unruly ways, to

Figure 7

Figure 8

invite people to visually engage with work that might reverberate; rethinking how systems currently work to discredit some forms of knowing and how the experiences echo out embodying the practices of both educators and evaluators.

In an effort to dwell in new ways and create more ethical, equitable and just systems, I stitched out a map of resistance (figure 9), a hopeful account of what is

Figure 9

possible when we seek ethical relationality as boundary traversers. 'Being' as unbounded, constantly shifting as a result of the true interconnectedness

and relatedness of the world, unapologetically swimming upstream. In the countless hours of stitching, I grappled, wrestled, challenged, resisted and engaged with my thoughts, ideas, theory, and images, all planting seeds to root the foundations for this dissertation. Ruptures, creating spaces to think as part of our ever entanglement with the world. Each article hopefully unravels and frays previous thoughts creating a new tapestry which firmly reclaims visual art educators experience and voice in the expanse of educational scholarship that has so effortlessly worked to discount it.

Three Articles

(Art)iculating Teacher Evaluations: Renderings, Reverberations, and Resistance is the first article in the series. Addressing the histories of how visual art educators have come to exist within scholarship on teacher evaluation, the article (re)situates the evaluative experiences of art educators through their own visual stories seeking to expose inequities that directly affect images of self-worth, teaching practice, and professional development and growth. Framed through a/r/tography as living inquiry, the article problematizes current scholarship which focuses heavily on the experiences of the evaluator, system of measurement and specific measurement tool, rather than exploring those directly affected or what might be produced within the evaluative encounter. Additionally, the article addresses a gap in educational scholarship both in terms of specific research about art educators and evaluation, and theoretically, employing post theories and post-qualitative inquiry to conceptualize new possibilities for thinking evaluation differently. Finally, the article strives to reclaim visual art educators' relationships to their practice, and to others, by illuminating how and where their efforts

through evaluative encounters resist standardized ways of knowing and further advocate for art education in their schools.

Working with representations of visual art educators' stories as images while listening to them speak about their experiences worked on me in interesting and surprising ways. It became apparent in the process that there was much overlap in how I was conceptualizing my thinking through stitching and how they were speaking and collaborating as a collective, supporting each other through their personal hi(stories) and experiences. *Conversations in Cloth: Mending Re/search as Being*, is in many ways an ode to the experience of relationality or relatedness and connection with/in a collective. This article seeks to reframe re/search as a sacred practice grounded in feminist ethics from a poststructural perspective. Research is explored through a conversation of making, where 'analysis' exists in time spent stitching together responses to the images of participants as quilt blocks, directly challenging the politics of knowledge. I felt compelled to honor and sit with the stories and experiences of others as a metaphor for mending or correcting ingrained assumptions about artmaking, teaching practice, arts role in the educational landscape and even the practices of research and how one arrives in the academy. The quilt blocks, embedded with the artist's images served as traces, marked by the intersections of many histories, each a memory of an experience passed, a thought had, yet holding invitations to explore something unfamiliar for the future.

The final article, *Stitching Together New Images of Teacher Evaluation in the Arts*, builds upon the foundation of the two previous works, proposing a call to action for what becomes possible in evaluative practice. This article puts forward the arts as a model for how to think about, design, and deploy more just practices of evaluation

through the architecture of post-feminist ethics. Utilizing quilting as metaphor, questions current conversations in evaluation scholarship through relational trust, receptive listening and building a capacity for connectedness. Themes are threaded through each article as an act of curating the dissertation as a whole, situating messages of hope, advocating for the arts and art educators, and extending invitations to engage in new images of what effective teaching looks through radical ideas of connectedness. My sincere wish is that engaging with both the writing and images, one cannot help but question, leading to a fraying and unraveling of threads and scraps which then might be refashioned into quilts of our own, altering how we dwell and exist in the spaces in which we live and work, and how we become something different altogether because of our engagement.

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2. (Art)iculating Teacher Evaluations: Renderings, Reverberations, and Resistance

Abstract

Current practices in teacher evaluation fall short of their intended outcomes. Both educators and evaluators often share different opinions on the aim of evaluation. Visual art educators are rarely invited to conversations about policy or design of evaluation systems yet are impacted in ways that affect their professional growth, development, and sense of value. As systems of evaluation privilege certain types of classrooms and some ways of knowing, art educators' visual language is cast aside and often misunderstood. This post-qualitative study explores the (art)iculations of visual art educators and how each story transforms the way we can re-imagine evaluation. By looking at their evaluative experiences through an a/r/tographic lens, we see how their resistances reverberate beyond current systemic boundaries and offer a possibility to think differently about evaluation. As Manning and Massumi (2014) noticed, "...If it could be said, it wouldn't have to be painted...an unspoken language-a language of traces, of vibrations, of resonances" (p.66).

Art educators are a visionary group and boundary crossers in the truest sense. As purveyors of multiplicity, art educators understand the complexities of the intersections in which they reside. Opening windows to the vistas of the educational landscape, art educators see possibilities and connections. Their perspective acknowledges art + education and everything in between. Those in-betweens often hold disruption, the unknown, barriers, and openings that are cloudy and difficult to navigate. And yet, in those disruptions art educators flourish, with their insider-outsider status made visible, their dedication to their discipline and to their students realized. Art educators are beholden to the same standardization, policies, curricula, and prescriptives as all educators, yet from a uniquely specialized stance, and, unlike other educators, their content is often cast aside in order to promote and fund the disciplines which are tested, tracked, and legitimized.

Accountability, Quality, and Effectiveness

The accountability movement has drastically altered the terrain of teacher evaluation, rating teaching performance in efforts to “define, develop, and incentivize effective teaching” (Salazar & Lerner, 2019, p. vii). Priorities for teacher evaluation have been steadily shifting. As No Child Left Behind (NCLB) gave way to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), priorities for accountability were embedded in federal department of education initiatives, such as Race To The Top (RTTP), which created two essential goals of education: evaluating the quality of teachers and teaching, and identifying opportunities for professional learning through an evidenced-based process of what counts as effective teaching (Bradford & Braaten, 2018; Hunter-Doniger, 2013). Researchers looking across systems of evaluation have found that, most often, principals

use evaluative data to determine how much and what type of support teachers need, offer professional development opportunities, implement professional growth or improvement plans, and make important personnel decisions (Neumerski et al., 2018). One should note that focusing on growth and development of teachers and “on the collection and report of data are two different processes-one is growth and one is outcome” (Hairston, 2019).

Student achievement can be attributed to multiple factors, but much of teacher evaluation is focused on the quality of the teacher as a significant driver of student success. Educational researchers making claims “about teacher effectiveness are talking about a very specific and narrow set of teachers: those in grade levels and subject areas tested under state and federal mandates...which excludes the almost 70% of teachers [considered] ‘non-tested’ under federal requirements” (Shaw, 2016, p. 5), including art educators. The foundations of teacher evaluation have depended upon classroom-based observation tools (Salazar & Lerner, 2019). Even with more recent systems incorporating other measures of success, observations are “the only part of an evaluation system that nearly every teacher in every grade and subject experiences, and they are often afforded the greatest weight in determining a teacher’s final evaluation rating” (TNTP, 2013, p. 1), despite overwhelming claims, they do “little to help teachers improve or support personnel decision making” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2011, p.3).

Typically unanticipated, observational visits are “initiated with little sense of the classroom's history” (Gitlin & Smyth, 1990, p. 83), and, through rubrics, forms, and other one-size-fits-all measures, they use “labels to tell a teacher’s story” (Hairston, 2019). Although single measures of teacher effectiveness rank high for convenience, their quantitative outcomes cannot realize various ways in which teachers impact the growth of

their students, relationships with families and colleagues, or their impact on the larger school community; they cannot tell the story of teaching (Goe et al., 2008; Hairston, 2019). Scholarship on evaluation has focused on teaching, aiming at constructing unbiased measures often through rubrics, which hold assumptions that “their use ensures a level of objectivity for the evaluator” (Flynn, 2015, p. 211). Their use is supposed to assuage the unsettling feelings educators often have about evaluation, by proposing fairness, eliminating subjectivity, and bringing clarity to the process, so teachers understand what they are being evaluated on.

Due to the variation across teaching contexts, it is imperative to consider mismatches in subject areas, experience, and teacher’s ideas about how their own competency is shaped through evaluative relationships. Flynn offers a powerful perspective to investigate attempts at objectivity through measurement tools, stating that they offer a “single perspective or voice and further express a singular set of values, beliefs, perspectives, and dispositions that become a singular guiding perspective of an evaluation” (Flynn, 2015, p. 213). This singular perspective positions effective teaching practice as something that we can standardize, objectify, and norm, while dismissing many attributes of human interaction that one can never standardize, that are, in fact, subjective. Teachers and teaching practice are not one-size-fits-all, which does not work for all disciplines, based on an understanding that “teaching contexts differ greatly across subjects and grades” (Goe et al., 2008, p.49).

Advocating for A Visual Language

Visual art educators have persisted despite their peripheral status in the larger field of education. Rarely brought into policy or reform conversations, they have found

themselves “silenced or only listened to if they frame their ideas in language that is familiar and comfortable” (Salazar & Lerner, 2019, pp. 143–144). They invariably advocate for how arts education supports wider educational goals for students (Sabol, 2013), while making sense of changes in the context of the discipline they teach. Sabol (2013) discusses the complexity of what visual art educators face,

They must provide convincing evidence that the outcomes of arts education are compatible with broader national educational goals and objectives and are supporting learning in other disciplines in the curriculum. Unquestionably, such demonstrations should be required of all disciplines; however arts education continues to be targeted as a peripheral subject in a comprehensive education, even though the federal government has clearly identified it as a core learning subject that should be included in a comprehensive education. (p. 34).

Current research is limited in areas focusing on the evaluation of visual art educators, as well as how systems of evaluation are influenced by teacher perception. What exists is hidden in research focused on non-tested subjects and grades (NTSG), of which visual art educators are a part. Clustering NTSG educators, who teach a wide-range of disciplines, including core content from non-tested grades (Palumbo, 2014) fails to capture the nuances of their disciplines and stories.

Educational policies are trying to contain disciplines such as the arts under the power of a standardized evaluative language, whose designers and observers may not understand how to measure and evaluate the complexities of creativity, design, curiosity,

or the role arts play in cultivating visual literacy among students. Understanding visual art educators' perceptions of evaluation offers an opportunity to challenge ideas about language and representation, and demonstrates the need for evaluation systems that celebrate and acknowledge effective art education and provide visual art educators with the type of feedback that is generative and actionable. Understanding that “language as representation can never convey the complexity of human experience, particularly when experience is embedded in complex and shifting power relations” (Hendry et al., 2018, p.9), helped me to unpack the ways in which visual art educators could better (art)iculate their experiences. These ideas made me wonder who is served by the current evaluation systems. Whose story is being told and by whom? How can the lived experiences of art educators offer another perspective that opens up possibilities to encounter evaluation differently? How might a renewed understanding of evaluation, through the perspective of art educators, shift ideas about arts education as a whole?

Encountering the Work We Inhabit

As a lifelong art educator, curiosity has always been my driver. The arts have always given me a vehicle to explore how things could be filling in the spaces where words were not sufficient. I have realized early that, for many, curriculum taught through the arts could empower students to leverage a visual language and to become the world's thinkers and creators in new and exciting ways. In a peripheral discipline, many times administrators only entered the art space during an evaluation, and in post-evaluative conferences they often seemed lost in communicating what they had seen in the classroom and ways to improve. They were not able to make sense of how the one-size-fits-all tools aligned with content that fell outside of the boxes that had been pre-

determined by those who had not inhabited my space. It was difficult to convert what I was doing into reductionist ideas of the data they desired. Sousanis speaks to these ideas about languages as “powerful tools for explaining the ever-greater depths of our understanding...the medium we think in defines what we can see” (2015, p.52).

Administrators were not versed in my visual language and literacy and, because of the predetermined ideas about what effective teaching looked like, they were unable to define that accordingly. My evaluation “grades” were always great and yet, there was nothing for me; nothing was produced or generated in the encounter. The encounters left me frustrated yet curious and committed to learning more about what might be happening.

I earned my principal certification(s) hoping this might give me answers, yet it continued to leave me with the same lingering questions. As a researcher, I have come to know that I cannot be separate from the work that I do. As Rogoff (2013) stated, “The work I have chosen is simply the work I have encountered, encounters determined by the discussions I inhabit and the accesses I have” (“introduction”, para. 30). I am quite content to position myself in the speculative middle of this work and, drawing from the work of Adrienne Maree Brown, “our lives are our life’s work; what matters is that we are authentic with the questions, that we believe the answers, and we listen to each other accordingly” (Brown, 2017, p. 194). As I transitioned to a teacher of teachers, this felt more true to how I positioned myself as an artist, a researcher, and a teacher. I come to the research with questions that guided the work, but without predetermined ways of knowing: I am research. Drawing from the work of Elizabeth St. Pierre, exploring the stories of art educators’ encounters with evaluation is a journey in post-qualitative inquiry, which “doesn’t have pre-existing methods of data collection...data collection is

itself problematic in that it assumes a separation between data and the human...representation is not the goal...the goal is experimentation and the creation of the new” (2021, pp.5–6). Bringing together visual art educators to discuss evaluation sparked my interest in taking the less-worn path, undoing traditional ideas about social science research, education and evaluation, being immersed in the work I inhabit with others and inventing ideas and ways to respond to problems we all experienced together: creating the new.

I was invited to present a one-day collaborative workshop on evaluation in arts education to a graduate-level art education curriculum course at a large R1 institution in the Midwest, where I taught and attended. The eight participants, each enrolled in the course, spanned the entire K-16 spectrum and came from diverse backgrounds: rural, urban, and suburban spaces. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the course met virtually, via a web conferencing platform managed to give us a unique way to collaborate about evaluative experience through our shared love of our visual language: artmaking. Some may criticize the legitimacy of knowledge created from eight visual art educators on a summer morning in the middle of a pandemic as not representative, but their views, rendered in both words and images, texture and color, show how we can think about the evaluation of visual art educators and even evaluation as a whole. I invited each participant to create a piece of art which would illuminate their ideas, views, and feelings about their own personal evaluative experience; their own story in their own language, and what became of our time together was nothing short of extraordinary.

The Knottiness of Research

Research for me has been a resistance of sorts, a healthy rejection of rules and recipes, a desire to explore questions in ways the academy may view as unruly, or illegitimate. Much of social science and qualitative research falls into categories, enabling measurement. Pierre (2000) quotes Popkewitz reminding us that “clarity is always a distinction made through the positions of power both to sanction what is legitimate and to keep the unfamiliar at a distance and illegitimate” (as cited in Popkewitz, 1997, p.18) This definition of clarity might not only frame the conversation about what constitutes research, but also position ideas about the visual arts in education, especially in terms of evaluation. The re-searching for me has been a wandering, a traversing across and through ever-shifting boundaries, knowledge, and systems. I do not suppose that there are answers to questions “out there” (St. Pierre, 2014), because the “out there” and me are together a part of the world in which “we” cannot be separated. I also cannot be sure there are answers to such questions, as this presupposes that there is something to be found. I gather there are opportunities to see the world differently, to disturb ideas of what one might think they already know, and to accept that knowing and being are always on the move. The complexities of these entanglements between one and the world are messy, much like the process of creating.

Poststructural feminist theory guides the work I do, the questions I pose, the and way the work speaks to me. I am interested in the stories we tell and how stories come to matter through what is practiced and performed, but this is not my methodology. I reject the idea that predetermined research questions and methodologies can capture what might be discovered and how one might respond. In *Troubling Method*, Petra Munro Hendry

writes, “method became about control and knowledge; I was interested in emergence, becoming, and unfolding a more ontological set of questions” (2018, p. 31). Springgay and Truman offer similar methodological resistance through “approach[ing] methods propositionally, speculatively, and experimentally...it is the logic of procedure and extraction that needs undoing. Research methods cannot be framed as a process of gathering data” (2014, p. 204). The workshop has inspired a new opportunity to encounter “data”. In the unfolding of the conversation, the making, and sharing, “data” were emergent and becoming. Jackson and Mazzei remind us that “data are always partial, incomplete, and always in a process of re-telling and re-membling” (2011, p. ix); “data” shapeshift with each encounter becoming something new. In this study, participant artwork and visual stories told, “are not objects, they are practices, embodied entanglements which cannot be dissected (Hendry et al., 2018, p. 15) they take their “own initiative and create (themselves) in connection with other data” (Koro-Ljungberg, 2013, p. 275) and with theory. The relational encounters are like a dance, a graceful back and forth between theory and a re-encountering of what was produced in research; non-linear and always re-created. Grosz expands on the work of Deleuze, making clear that what we are up to is “thinking, about how to think while making, or rather while doing; to think as doing” (Grosz, 2001, p. 58).

Thinking as doing attracted me to a/r/tography as a way to illuminate how visual art educators were responding to their evaluative experiences. A/r/tography supports what happens in the between spaces, the liminal spaces, articulated by the “/” as an artist, researcher, and teacher, which “make sense and create meaning out of difficult complex questions that cannot be answered in straightforward or linear tellings” (Springgay et al.,

2005, p. 902). Liminal spaces are often sites of disruption, a becoming where certainty does not exist (Irwin, 2013); “it is not about mastering method but rather requires an ongoing rigorous, messy, and radical multiplicity of relationships” (Bickel et al., 2011, p. 98). A process of inquiry and a way of being-with, a/r/tography as a relational practice reimagines how we participate as a collective (Bickel et al., 2011) through our lived experiences and creatively troubles how we might investigate educational systems, such as teacher evaluation (Springgay et al., 2008).

As we inhabit the work we encounter as a collective of visual art educators exploring evaluative experience through our language of artmaking, there was a “linger[ing] between...visual/textual, theoretical/analytical, and pedagogical/curricular matters” (Springgay, 2008, p. 902), and meaning was continuously negotiated and co-constructed between participants, artworks, stories, and myself as the researcher. Encountering the images rendered by the visual arts educators’ experiences with evaluation, through an a/r/tographic inquiry, coupled with my own experience as a visual arts educator, lit up many possibilities in the spaces between. When provided the opportunity to tell their own visual story of evaluation, renderings provided novel views of evaluation encounters as sites of resistance, advocacy, reverberating far beyond the confinements of the classroom.

Renderings, Resistance, and Reverberations

In education, words and texts are the privileged ways of knowing, explaining, and creating meaning. Evaluation exists as a text-based system, measuring effectiveness and performance through statements, standards, themes, and categories. The visual image has “on the other hand, long been sequestered to the realm of spectacle” (Sousanis, 2015, p.

54), pushed to the side as the supporting cast member but never the center stage. Visual literacy helps reimagine and solidify the image as a text, which produces something new, “unexpected intensities [that] generate affective and conceptual transformations that problematize, challenge...do things” (Grosz, 2001, p. 57). Images help us capture ideas that cannot be put into words, that remain hidden.

Renderings are, in this sense, about possibility, what we know, what we do not know, and what is possible to know; they are generative. When we see evaluation through the language of visual art educators, there are new ideas about what is, what is not, and what could be. Each rendering evidenced how sites of evaluation reverberated beyond the classroom, impacting relationships and shaping identity, while displaying varied levels of resistance.

The participants’ renderings illuminated conceptions of resistance in two ways: as a counternarrative or a counteraction to the imposition of evaluation, and as a form of advocacy, withstanding resistance through the evaluative process to elevate their teaching practice. Resistance mirrors the artistic process itself, as a “tolerance of messiness...many paths being walked on at once” (Brown, 2017, p. 119).

The messiness, advocacy, and counteraction also produce intensities. These intensities or “reverberations within a/r/tography call attention to the movement, the quaking, the shaking, measure, and rhythm that shift other meanings to the surface” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 906) Deleuze called this a stutter, when a limit to what language could produce is reached, or in our case, words, when there is a moment of shift, destabilization, or no choice but to think something that one has not thought before; art produces this stutter.

Figure 1

The hum of the art studio is not a traditional classroom space. Young artists are busy at work, and if you have never experienced it, it would appear a bit frenzied, with artists consumed by the intensities of their creative imagination. Evie, a high school visual art/ceramics educator in a rural midwestern town, explained what arises during evaluations when the setting becomes (un)familiar. I was struck in Figure 1 by the combination of images

and text, chaotic and unsettling; capital letters and exclamation points dodging paint and clay, spattered and smeared. Her image asks us to encounter evaluative experience as somewhat intrusive to the flow of her class, a class that many evaluators do not often experience. Resistance as a counteractive force resides here.

“My class is really loud all the time. I play music. I like to talk. They like to talk...students aren’t working on normal things...like coming into the room isn’t necessarily the back of the room. Administrators, in my experience, are typically formal, especially around a student...there is a hierarchy and I really don’t do that in my classroom. The kids are anxious too because the environment shifts” (personal communication, June 17, 2020)! The relational becoming of the visual art studio space counters the typical structure of school and, in turn, what it means to evaluate effective teaching practice according to predetermined ideas about what it is and does. Evaluator reactions reverberated through the space, “Once I had a principal fall asleep during...an

evaluation. A second time, he came in and I was mixing clay, so I had clay up to my armpit and he was like, *What is that?!* Other times, admin walk in with their suits while we are doing clay, and walk out” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Each of these encounters reverberated in time and space, affecting the studio in different ways. The (art)iculation of these experiences through the image is an “interrogation where difference and contradiction ask viewers/readers to reexamine assumptions, destabilizing forms of identification” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 903). It is in this rupture of resistance and reverberation that we seek new ideas about evaluation encounters.

Figure 2

Teacher evaluation is deeply ingrained in the fabric of education, as are attitudes to the arts place. Art educators understand that disrupting the systemic ideas about evaluation “take a profound nudge...a rupture in experience, illuminating

boundaries” (Sousanis, 2015, p. 25) and traversing them. Chloe, a high school visual art educator in a rural midwestern town, created this image, figure 2, to explore such boundaries, (art)iculating the possibilities of the open spaces in-between. She begins her story from the middle, the everyday interactions between administrators and the arts space; back and forth with the arts spilling out, yet still contained by the school structure. To the left is the experience of being evaluated, the black lines “coming into the art room...it’s just kind of foreboding that they ‘look in’ that way...the art room gets a little constricted in their minds. It’s like a very quick moment versus what it could be”

(personal communication, June 17, 2020). These parts of the image impact the final piece of the drawing, “reverberate[ing] at different frequencies...[and] can be read through one another for patterns of resonance and dissonance that illuminate new possibilities for understanding and being” (Barad, 2007, p. 142). The reverberation from the experience produced a counternarrative to what is, by wondering about what could be. “The black lines represent the evaluators being more regular...they’re intermingled...involved with what’s going on. Rather than the design pointing in, the arts are being advocated out...a constant mingling” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). What could be, “movement and displacement of meaning” (LaJevic & Springgay, 2008, p. 72) shows us the possibility of resisting traditional structures, building new encounters that honor the relationship between the two.

Figure 3: Frustrations with Evaluation

Teachers view evaluation as a space for growth, feedback, opportunities to improve practice, and as a way for the school to see how prized the arts are to student learning. Visual art educators often experience isolation as singletons in their

buildings, without large teams to collaborate. Ruth teaches in middle and high schools in a rural southern town, traveling on a weekly basis and often feeling isolated and unseen. She titled her work in Figure 3 Frustrations with Evaluation, (art)iculating surface-level comments by administrators during evaluative exchanges, which fail to address growth or

outcome. These comments, which often devalue the contributions that visual art educators make to their school communities, are juxtaposed against billboards, calling attention to what is being produced in the art room. The lack of being seen reverberates, sending messages that shape how Ruth views her effectiveness. “It’s all like good job...like it could be anybody...I get no feedback. My admin literally knows nothing of what I am doing...no matter how much I jump up and down...I’m not valued” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Ruth recounted a story where she had developed an entire curriculum through her graduate program, approached administration to discuss it, and was met with a “sounds good, go for it” without even looking at it. Despite feeling devalued and resisting against all barriers, Ruth continues to create and advocate for what art does and what students are learning in the art studio. The use of billboards exposing the ideas that the arts matter draws us to resistance as advocacy. Ruth has leaned on the networks in her graduate program to continue to advocate for the work that she does, allowing her to resist the oppressive encounters with administration she experiences. As a result of exploring this evaluative encounter, we see the importance of administrators building better networks with educators and needing to shift how they are as they enter any classroom space.

“Evaluations can make you fly high in the wind like a kite...or like missing a target...small; administrators only see a portion of the bigger aspect of what I teach, which is kind of hard to judge me on. I think that’s hard to base somebody’s teaching abilities on a small portion of what they see.” (Personal Communication, June 17, 2020). Charlie, a new elementary art educator from a small midwestern city illustrated what it looks like to be measured. Figure 4 explores divergent meanings of evaluation:

management and measurement, or growth and development. Charlie's idea for the ruler

Figure 4

stemmed from multiple meanings she attached to measurement. Her story of evaluation offers us to see both reverberation and resistance in a conversation. She was struggling to teach students how to utilize a ruler (a standardized skill in the district and not a required art skill) during an evaluation, “I asked him for help and, in the next class, he came in and helped me teach a ruler. It was

awesome, a relationship of teaching together was a really cool thing” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). In this case, the struggle produced a stammer, a hesitation, or a pause, and, within that pause, Charlie produced an act of resistance. She resisted ideas about standardization, and, in that moment, advocacy was produced. The principal came back to co-teach, constructing a new encounter from which they will both learn. This encounter reverberated in two ways: by building a new way of seeing each other, and by seeing the effects of value-added measurement. Charlie commented on this idea by saying, “Conformity to standardize does not showcase the broad spectrum of my teaching talents” (personal communication, June 17, 2020).

Figure 5

Lee is from a suburban Midwest town on the outskirts of a large metro area and teaches art to elementary school students. She has been evaluated each year by a different administrator; “they’re very rigid, like a check mark” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). She used a combination of collaged text and images, supporting the need for making her evaluative experiences more meaningful and impactful. In Figure 5, Lee (art)iculated her story beginning with a question:

What should be illuminated? The lack of consistency and stability in the evaluation process reverberates through her thoughts, with the melting clock in the center delineating two sides to her evaluative story. On the left, she ponders the connection between evaluation and advocacy, wondering how evaluations can become more meaningful. On the right, she explores how evaluations should be reflective for both parties in a way that is impactful, and, through this work, she embodies the idea of a relational encounter. She continues to advocate for her content despite the evaluative instability, while the work offers its own resistance of the known. Springgay et al., wrote, “Openings are invitations to leave room for encounters...encounters are meetings that involve surprise and conflict, that are not a coupling...but a mediated space of coming together and pulling apart” (2005, p. 906). I believe this idea is reverberating through this piece, offering a new way to co-construct meaning, not only in the art space, but also throughout the system of evaluation.

Sousanis (2015) wrote that “flatness is a contradiction of possibilities...one-dimensional thought and behavior” (p. 6). The idea of flatness permeates teacher evaluation. Flatness may define the form itself, as a one-dimensional, one-size-fits-all instrument. It might also be the evaluator who has trouble discerning the dimensional quality that inhabits the work of all teachers and their practice. We understand teaching as multidimensional, which may be where our current practices of evaluation fall short. Samuel was a middle and high school art educator in a rural northern community before teaching future art educators in a university setting. His (art)iculation resides in the resistance of the “flat evaluation form that we’re used to” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Figure 6 reveals this rupture in how we have come to think about evaluation.

Figure 6

His form is different from each view, creating a new topography of evaluation, showing “places of irruption [which] tear at the fabric of what is supposed to be—where language is strained, where meaning is missed, where destabilization occurs, and where excess produces a snagging that resists closure” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011, p. 8).

Samuel, using his visual story, has explored ideas about creating more dimensional evaluative encounters with ideas about administrators just needing to “spend more time with us...do artwork in the class with students...maybe if they’re experiencing it they can have interesting conversations with students which give them insight into a successful art program” (personal

communication, June 17, 2020). The creation of possibility echoes as a call to action, offering a shift from “the one dimensional to a more dimensional new” (Sousanis, 2015, p. 35).

There is considerable variation in the system of schooling across our country, determined by many factors, including state and federal legislation, resource allocation,

Figure 7

community demographics, teacher certification requirements, etc. For some, evaluative experience seems like an insurmountable problem, as its requirements vary from state to state and even from district to district. Laura, an elementary school art educator works in a low-income urban district that falls

under provisional accreditation in the Midwest. “There are more systems that play into evaluation since the state is watching” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Her photographic image shook our workshop to its core. Figure 7 shows a photocopy of one of Laura’s evaluations, blacked out for privacy, crumpled up and thrown on the ground next to a commercial dumpster. “I have very negative experiences with evaluation. The state keeps moving the mark on how to become fully accredited. Who is this for? The state, all of our stuff is state-mandated...another layer to our evaluation is a teacher absentee report...so then evaluation turns into a bully tactic. Not everyone who is in charge is incompetent or a bad person...with appeasing the state, there is a lot of stress

that tends to bring out the worst in people.” (personal communication, June 27, 2020). I look at the image through a lens of resistance, of taking one’s power back, an effort to physically disrupt a system that clearly works for no one. Using a/r/tography woven through the ideas of resistance and reverberation, one sees that the liminal spaces of living inquiry sometimes require openings of destruction where there is difficulty and discomfort. What was reverberated through the encounter with this story was resilience. “Resilience is unveiled when we are triggered, injured, heartbroken...challenged” (Brown, 2017, p. 126). In my opinion, resistance and resilience march hand in hand. It shows us the ability we have as educators to be strong, to (re)claim, and (re)cover.

Resistance and reverberation are sometimes entangled in ways that are creative and generative, ethically encountering others, and literally being with another. Power is decentralized and distributed; each party's strengths thrust to the fore at the time they are

Figure 8

needed. Mae is a second-year high school art educator in a small midwestern city. She (art)iculates evaluation as a space “where advocacy, liberation and understanding can occur” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Figure 8 demonstrates her evaluative story, “We have an administrator who is assigned to evaluate our department. She sits in our plan periods and listens to us talk about all kinds of topics, including rubric making and evaluation. She puts a lot of care

and intention and time into getting to know how our classrooms work” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). When administrators and evaluators foster deep connections with educators, specifically from non-tested subjects, a mutual trust and deep respect are formed; Mae calls this “magic”. This relationship very much resists the typical encounters that visual art educators experience. Salazar and Lerner describe this resistance as the “radical imaginary, where creation is “a strategy of dissent; transgression of limits; and a new space for thinking, feeling, acting, questioning, analyzing, and resisting” (2019, p. 146). This type of relational encounter can only be thought in a/r/tographic spaces, intersections where both art educators and evaluators meet in the middle, exemplifying justice.

Possibilities

The path of a/r/tography, of lived inquiry, always produces more questions than answers. The aim of this research is to generate new understanding, as the arts gives an ability to see the world through multiple perspectives. When we discover certain ways of knowing and being, we close windows to some ways of the world. If we can agree that evaluation should be reimagined and that it currently is not working like it could, then we must be open to something more just. We, as a/r/tographers, must resist to the idea that all educators are the same and can be evaluated the same. Charlotte Danielson said, “Doing it well means respecting what we know about teacher learning, which has to do with self-assessment, reflections on practice and professional conversation” (Randall, 2020, p. 5); a growth and improvement model, not management. Artful research asks us to respect and celebrate what visual art educators know and how they know it, and leverage that newness to possibilities. The days of one-size-fits-all models of evaluation

should be numbered, for each story of a classroom practice should be shared and constructed by those who participate in it. The stories of visual art educators matter. (Art)iculations of practicing visual art educators invite new ways of seeing; they “powerfully transform their understanding into forms that help us notice what we have learned not to see” (Eisner, 1995, p. 3), to move beyond the boundaries of what is and has been, and set out in new directions. Their renderings, I hope, will continue to offer sites of resistance through this work and continue to reverberate through many encounters readers and viewers have. “Hope gives us a sense that there is a point to working things out...hope does not only or always point to the future, but carries us through when the terrain is difficult” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 2). Instead of pushing visual art educators to the periphery, to the fringe, invite them in. Artists rightly inhabit and practice in the liminal spaces. These boundary crossers and traversers, who work from the center and the periphery, are prepared to help the system envision something new.

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3. Conversations in Cloth: Mending Re/search as Being

Abstract

Visual art educators frequently find themselves frustrated by teacher evaluation processes which often delegitimize the very visual nature of teaching and learning in their classrooms. Traditional qualitative methods limit possibilities for emergence due to certain assumptions about how one can come to know in the world and pre-determined research questions based on anticipated findings. This post qualitative inquiry explores the journey between both research participants and researcher through conversational making. The process of thinking, making and doing, redefines what is possible when the research event is thought as a relational encounter. Using quilting practices, the article charts a new course in how we come to understand the politics of knowledge and think and perform research and teacher evaluation differently as a practice of mending.

The foundations of research are inherently political. It was Lyotard (1984) in *The Postmodern Condition* who wrote, “knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: Who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?” (p. 9). Lyotard’s (1984) questions are as unruly and disruptive to me now as they were when I first came across them at the beginning of my doctoral journey. Coming from an arts-based background, I was used to having what I know and how I came to know it called into question by others as not being “evidenced-based” or numerically measurable, too subjective and open for interpretation. It would have been easy to fall into line, follow the rules and recipes, and research in “approved” ways, yet, thanks to Lyotard (1984), I am unruly. I am unruly in the way that Merriam Webster describes it as “not readily ruled” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), because sometimes those rules aren’t created for the way I come to know the world. It was Sarah Ahmed (2017) who wrote, “those of us who arrive in the academy that was not shaped by us bring knowledges, as well as worlds, that otherwise would not be here” (p. 10). Hence, the academy, through my curiosity and wonder, is shaped yet again by newness, having no choice to not be impacted by the encounter. Thinking about creative research shot through the musings of Lyotard (1984), I have come to identify what film study scholar, Laura Mulvey (Rogoff, 2013), describes as the curious eye,

Curiosity implies a certain unsettling, a notion of things outside the realm of the known, of things not yet quite understood or articulated, the pleasures of the forbidden or the hidden or the unthought, the optimism of finding out something one had not known or been able to conceive of before. (“Visual Culture-Vision as Critique”, para. 12)

This ontoepistemological way of existing stirs up good trouble and makes permissible ways of research that ask us to question, “imagine, invent and do the doing differently” (Taylor, 2016, p.6).

Re/search as a Collective

I hosted a one-day workshop with a group of arts education graduate students, during a summer course on curriculum, to explore their stories about evaluative experiences through an artful lens. I wondered, because of the way they artfully come to see the world through materials, if it might change how they told their story—running in opposition to the way evaluation stories are typically told, through single page reports, written by a supervisor, where they are numerically measured on predetermined outcomes. What more might we be able to understand through their thinking and making together? COVID-19 affected our ability to meet in person; therefore, we used a web conferencing platform to collect ourselves together. I was initially unsure that an online environment would allow our group to be with each other in a way that was supportive of the sharing and making of our lived experiences. I provided a prompt asking them to use art materials they had at their homes and create a piece of art encompassing ideas about the evaluation of visual art educators, including their own personal experiences, ideas for improvement, and future possibilities. What came from our time together was beyond what I had expected, and this article came about by complete surprise. I did not expect to transform ideas about research, data, and knowledge, or to experience the beginning of a collective movement, which happened in the doing. Wandering and traversing in and through the work and inventing and creating new ways to be and do research, again, left me examining the politics of knowledge.

Grounded in feminist ethics from a post-structural perspective, this work embraces “being with [as] the fabric of everyday life [where] bodied encounters create lived experiences together and nurture one another’s ethical relationality” (Springgay, 2008, p. 157). Certain assumptions about ethics make this work thinkable, i.e., asking questions about power, subverting hegemony, and acknowledging the politics of knowledge (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008; Braidotti & Regan, 2017), while offering us new ways to think about how we are in a creative process of becoming. This “life work” guided how the workshop unfolded as a collective of stories. The web platform allowed each of us to exist in the same digital space, the same size, where no one’s story was larger than another, addressing certain power dynamics. I drew from Sarah Ahmed’s (2017) work with the collective to think about what might be produced in our digital space.

A collective is what does not stand still but creates and is created by movement. I think of feminist action like ripples in the water, a small wave, possibly created by agitation of weather; here, there, each movement making another possible, another ripple, outward, reaching. Feminism: the dynamism of making connections. And yet a movement has to be built. To be a part of a movement requires we find places to gather, meeting places. A movement is also a shelter.

(p. 3)

Therefore, our research collective was born, a digital gathering space/shelter where our stories, spoken, made, heard, viewed, and supported rippled outward, connecting us through time and space. Research, as a collective, thus, became something actionable and productive, emergent and invented, flourishing within the research encounter and beyond.

I share St. Pierre's (2000) skepticism that finding out what is going on is likely not possible. I can neither know what I will find nor forecast it, as that assumes something knowable already exists. This inability to know what one might find is what produced the exploration of both the research process and data itself, making the emergent possible through creating ruptures where one can do the doing differently.

Re/search as Relational/Spiritual

Contemplating the politics of knowledge for me required an unorthodox approach to research, broadening typical definitions of the role theory, methods, data, and findings active in the process. Post-structural theory supports this redefinition by first acknowledging the uncertainty that "any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has the universal and general claim as the 'right' or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 499). This very doubt underpins how we can present an ontoepistemological approach to research, relinquishing positivist frameworks arguing knowing and being are separate from one another (Barad, 2007). A relational approach to research is best illustrated through the work of Karan Barad (2007) noting, "We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world, we know because we are of the world" (p. 185). This philosophical perspective problematizes how we can think and do research, pursuing knowledge as "always partial, incomplete and contingent" (Danvers, 2003, p. 51), reimagining how one can perform qualitative research. Research as relational is collective, an intra-action, between humans, non-humans, and the more than human, reading, writing, thinking, and making. I am in agreement with Hendry et al. (2018) that "all research is narrative" (p. 3), yet I am uncomfortable naming

this as a narrative methodology or paradigm. Hendry et al. (2018) address this discomfort,

The stories about research suggest there are tidy boxes in which scholars can place methodologies and themselves. Yet, these theories and categories have little relevance for the actual ways in which we engage in inquiry. I suggest that inquiries are often messy, blurred, chaotic and contradictory. (p. 173)

I am interested in bursting the boxes, being ‘without’ (Springgay et al, 2005), for being without asks us to dwell in the inquiry, think with/in the research event (Springgay and Truman, 2018), be content with the discomfort, and open to the movement that is building within the collective.

As I began working with the visual art educators, I knew that I wanted to approach the research encounter differently. Being a career arts educator myself, I thought it important for the work to amplify the language of artists: artmaking. Engaging and dwelling in the inquiry as a collective meant conversing through art, being entangled in the stories of others. Rogoff (2013) describes the necessity of art as “my interlocutor rather than the object of my study, it is the entity that chases me around and forces me to think differently, at another register or through permissions provided by another angle” (“Introduction”, para. 22). The idea of embracing visual language was also a means of listening and valuing the knowledge of arts educators; this allowed the research to become sacred. I drew from several feminist scholars to elucidate participating in a sacred research practice that listens and breathes. Hendry et al. (2018) describe it as “a sacred act in which being present to others is a site of wisdom, not knowledge” (p. 10), and Dillard (2012) notes that it “requires a radical openness especially on the part of the

researcher, who understands that her humanity is linked with that of people with whom he or she studies” (p. 81). It was in this conceptualization that I understood a radical form of relational embodied research commands that we are “bound together with the words and lives of others” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 906)

I started wondering what it really means to listen, ensuring I was not listening to hear with the intent of being selective, or listening through methodological or theoretical positions, but to listen as being-with, slowing down, being open to possibility, sense[ing], and nurturing an ontological position. I was reminded of Eve Tuck’s (2016) pedagogy of pausing, “intentionally engaging in suspension of one’s own premises and projects...an insertion of space in time...pausing unsettles the relentless march of educational research” (p. xii). The slowing down, pausing, opening up of oneself to another, and listening/viewing stories told by authors who had lived them prompted a radical way to exist within artful research that celebrates the interconnectedness of knowing, doing, and being (Danvers, 2003).

Re/search as Middles, Makings, and Meanings

There were two types of “data” produced in this research encounter. The first encompassed the happenings within the research event itself, participant artwork, conversation, and the chat feature within the virtual web platform. The second included the artwork produced within the analyzation process. Both operated in much the same way, amending previously held conceptions of the doing of research. During the making process, the arts educators were thrust into the act of thinking, making, and doing all at once, creating a visual image that harnessed ideas, thoughts, and experiences from the past, present, and future. The energy around the making event was palpable, as even from

a virtual distance, there was a hum in the “studio”; artists were activating their language in hopes that their stories would create a movement and ‘do’ something. I was reminded in this moment that for creatives, there is an urgency to make meaning from our minds, hands, and materials. Goulding (2015) captures the essence of such ‘aesthetic encounters’, writing, “works of art shake us out of passivity and activate our ethical and political orientations and obligations, enable (us) to notice and see...be more watchful, and wide-awake to new possibilities” (p. 167). They ask us to begin in the middle.

Elizabeth Grosz (2001), drawing from Deleuze, put it this way, “thought is perhaps best captured in between...in the middle” (p. 68). But what exactly is the middle? As the visual art educators were authoring their visual stories, they were operating within the intersections of many histories: their own history within their classroom and experience with evaluation, the histories of their observers, of evaluation policy in education, the role of arts education in schools, the future stories of the not yet, and even my history as the researcher, a true speculative middle. The speculative middle is a “thrust, a provocation for thinking-making-doing...speculative middles are affective forces” (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 207). It is important to note that my role as a researcher is never to find or seek anything, it is to produce thinking that did not exist before, to activate thought through the encounter itself. As artists, this is understood by the very idea that artmaking and the creative force within us is the “process of bringing something into existence” (Eisner, 1995, p. 2) that wasn’t there before.

For the workshop participants, and many working artists, bringing something into existence can be difficult. There is often discomfort and ruptures of new thinking as one navigates middles that are hard to see, confronting histories that are painful. Yet there is a

“joie de faire...an inherent joy in making...something important, even urgent to be said about the sheer enjoyment of making something exist” (Falick, 2019, p. 21). Negotiating these tensions is what Elliot Eisner (1995) refers to as being artistically engaged. Being artistically engaged is also about living inquiry, about the ethical relationality of being with the other. Not acknowledging the stories of visual arts educators’ evaluative experience through art would have been to silence a large part of how they come to exist in the world. The making in this case is life work, “It is felt, it touches, it moves, it resonates...a thinking feeling that occurs...across works in the making...thoughts gather in the work, not into language, into (making)...not to be looked at, but to be thought-felt” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, pp. 64–65).

The ‘feltness’ of the work generates meanings through the research encounter, merging narratives and swarming with possibilities. The meanings become, as the work intra-acts with spaces and others, in this case, virtually and beyond. Through this revisioning, the ‘data’ is always in a process of becoming, meanings continuing to be co-constructed by those that, in turn, engage with this work. Markedly, the meanings that came from the middles and makings sparked the need to do ‘data’ differently, working on me in ways that needed my own experiences to help make sense of. ‘Data’ was creating its own thoughts about what it wanted, and I had to push back on norms of data analysis, research, and an academic culture that tries to tamp down creative and inventive forms of research to fully be present and listen to the work of my participants. I had to dwell in the life work, mine, theirs and ours.

Re/Search as Mending

Little research exists about the evaluation of visual art educators, and even less from their own perspective. Much of what does exist is focused on systems and tools, policy and evaluators. As our workshop unfolded, it became clear that the stories the visual arts educators were narrating mattered and resonated not just with me but also between them. As each workshop participant shared their visual story, the chat blossomed with words of encouragement and support, ideas, and linkages from one story to another, acknowledging joy and pain, celebration and struggle. The sites of evaluation for visual art educators are overwhelmingly frustrating, yet there is resilience and resolve in the work of teaching people about the *'joie de faire'*: the human impulse to make meaning in the world. If making meaning was literally in the making during the workshop, what might I, as the researcher, come to understand differently through my own making? I am compelled to draw and map out ideas when I need to spend more time with information. There is something about the manipulation of materials that helps me conceptualize and think about what I am seeing, reading, or knowing. As I sat with the images, the conversations, and the chat transcript, I was overcome with emotion of my own. I desperately wanted to acknowledge the tremendous work of each of my participants and demonstrate how valued they are as visual art educators. I wanted them to feel seen and heard, and to fix the systems of evaluation for them. I wondered how we repair what feels broken? How do we make amends for the damage done? Looking back, not only was I pushing back on ideas of the politics of knowledge but also reorienting illusions about power, the marginalization of women, craft, reform, and connection. I needed to have these conversations, and so I did: in cloth.

A conversation is relational, taking place in relationships, whether that be between humans and/or matter. McNamee and Gergen (1999) name this relational phenomena an exploration where “each conversational object (is) transformed through an array of understandings (and) the relationship of those engaged in the pursuit may thereby be altered” (p. 18). I contemplated words that kept coming up in my thoughts and the literature such as ‘altered,’ ‘amends,’ ‘relational,’ and ‘story.’ It seemed necessary that I think about my own interests in textiles as a way to fully and spiritually be within the research encounter. I should note I am no seamstress; I just have a love for textiles. Textiles and quilts, in particular, have always interested me. The stitching together of disparate pieces create rich tapestries that are relational and provide “kinship” (Davis-Marks, 2020); they tell stories imbued with “the maker’s rhythm of attention” (Knauer, 2019, p. 191).

A deeper exploration of quilts and textiles aligned with how I was understanding the intersections of multiple power relations at work, within the research. Quilting has very much been an art form that has concerned itself with “established power structures” (Applebaum, 2020, p. 6) and the politics of knowledge. Quilters have used their craft to take up causes throughout history. Quilting bees provided a shelter for lived work, where artists produced political collectives generating “ideas about abolition, temperance, suffrage...and labor reform” (Applebaum, 2020, p. 43). In more recent history, quilt artists have used quilts as forms of resistance, “a subversive avenue for self-expression to people who have been historically marginalized due to their gender, education, financial independence, and access to materials” (Sharp, 2021). More importantly, they actualize history and memory including the stories and histories of women in particular (PBS,

2019). Much like quilters trying to remove barriers that view themselves as craftspeople rather than artists (Sharp, 2021), visual art educators are left in similar positions in the eyes of education, trying to make the content they teach legitimate. What drew me to begin quilting, piecing, and sewing was likely the same act of subversion, the need to make legitimate my own way of knowing as research, the marginalization of the visual arts and post qualitative work in the social science community and the academy, and the resistance of entrenched binaries such as art/craft, knowledge/power, and masculine/feminine. So, I began sewing.

I sewed quilt squares in response to each artwork that was created by the workshop participants. Their original artwork was scanned in and turned into a fabric transfer, which was incorporated and sewn into each block. They are deep and material conversations which take time, an invisible labor. “It’s the construction of the quilt- the actual making of the blocks that create space...the time involved, slow, the images...not immediate...(but) create movement, interactions and thinking in non-linear ways” (Ball, 2008, p. 4). Each block contains multiple narratives: thoughts, feelings, and wonderings, (art)iculating the experiences of visual art educators that should never be forgotten. Together, they extend the communal experience of our workshop, and hopefully, they shift how we embody the spaces and the work we live in. The act of sewing and piecing together was a practice of mending. “The needle is used to repair damage. It’s a claim to forgiveness. It’s never aggressive, it’s not a pin” (Parker, 2019, p. xix). The reimagining of research as mending put forth new possibilities about education, art, evaluation, research, science, knowledge, and power with each stitch.

Conversations in Cloth

Art rooms are busy places and can appear chaotic to those who have very rigid

Figure 1

expectations of classroom behavior.

Evie, a high school visual art/ceramics educator, struggled with evaluators who didn't understand the dynamics of her classroom, the mechanics of ceramics, or the incredible work she put into building relationships with students that

propelled their creative endeavors. She said it often felt like the classroom had to quickly “Behave!” when an evaluator entered and discussed the challenges that were presented for students as they felt their environment shift. Workshop participants sent resounding “Yes’s!” through the chat window as Evie was discussing her struggle, offering questions such as, “Yes, how might ‘behaving’ look differently in an art classroom” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020)? Others commented, “The expectations in other classes are students sitting and working quietly...our students are supposed to all be getting up, getting supplies, working collaboratively and talking” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Evie stated that “even though it’s dirty, loud, and crazy in my classroom, more than art is being created there” (Personal Communication, June 17, 2020). The quilt square I created in Figure 1 offers messages juxtaposed diagonally. I wanted to acknowledge the difference between the way Evie saw her classroom as vibrant and full of creative energy, with many students on task working on many different types of art,

and how she perceived the administrators view of an on-task classroom. In the upper left corner, this was demonstrated through the alternating triangles surrounded by a patchwork of various fabric scraps and fringe trim, and in the lower right corner, with the same triangle patterns sewn together surrounded by strips of fabric sewn in similar directions. I embroidered the etymology of the word ‘behave,’ retrieving the word from the punitive way in which she used it, offering her the ability to see that she is in fact thoroughly (be) bearing herself (have) in exactly the way she is meant to: she is ‘behaving.’ The embroidered rocket ship in the upper right-hand corner is lifting off with what more is being created in the art room—taking risks, creating, connecting, and dreaming—all of the qualities she is instilling through relationship building.

Teaching at a provisionally accredited school poses many challenges for teachers. Laura, an elementary visual art educator, told her story of evaluative experience with a

Figure 2

shocking image, a photograph of her crumpled up, blacked out evaluation form next to a dumpster. Her school’s provisional status determines additional measures of evaluation such as educator absentee reports. She has such negative evaluation responses that she had difficulty

seeing possibilities amidst her experience. Her image elicited profound responses from our collective, “Unfortunately, we sometimes feel thrown away if we aren’t valued by those that evaluate us” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020), with another replying,

“This is horrifying” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). Others recounted their own experience with bureaucratic processes, “It’s all mandated gibberish, regular feedback doesn’t happen for me...I wish it did” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). Working this out in cloth was challenging. I wanted to show Laura that even in the black and white world of state mandated evaluation processes, there was hope. Selecting bright watercolor patterned fabric offset the neutrality of the piece, as shown in Figure 2, I embroidered a poseable artist mannequin on strings like a puppet. Laura had systems imposed on her without her control; however, her crumpling of the paper was in fact an act of resistance, a cutting of the strings. In our workshop, she acknowledged that she wanted her administrator to know that she is “a smart and capable woman” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). I included this in purple embroidery to demonstrate her burgeoning agency in the process and to validate that she is in fact both smart and capable, a welcome contrast to an otherwise difficult work.

Evaluation is thought of by many educators as a hoop they must jump through, something they all experience but most never gain from. Samuel, a high school visual art educator turned university instructor, used his story to open spaces to think of evaluation differently. He offered participants the option of removing the ‘flatness’ of teaching and creating a new construct of evaluation that exposes the dimensionality of teaching, offering a suggestion that evaluators should even sit in and do artwork with students, to have a better grasp of what art educators are producing in the classroom. Our collective responded swiftly in the chat, “Hands on! Making them do artwork too. LOVE” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). Samuel ended his story stating that in order for evaluation to be more productive for visual art educators, “they (administrators need to

spend more time with us” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). This struck a participant who wrote, “Yes! I think more regular moments in the classroom!” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). I wanted to commend Samuel for his ability to produce excitement in the other workshop participants about what can become of evaluation. His positive nature and ideas about dimensionality directly placed art educators as possessing

Figure 3

the ability to change the narrative, to create a movement to change. I used bold colors of cloth in Figure 3, layering squares and triangles in an improvised pattern to create a sense of dimension, looking at the profession from many angles. I quilted on top of the piece using intersecting lines to demonstrate the connections lighting up at the intersections of his and the other participants’ stories. The embroidery and watercolor on the white triangles extend Samuel’s ideas by offering new questions. If administrators see art education

through student lenses, how might this enfranchise art education? How might we reevaluate time spent to consider a more relational aspect to evaluation?

Lee is entering her fourth year of teaching visual arts in an elementary school. Her experience with evaluation has often felt very rigid; in her words, “like a check mark” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). Her work was very purposeful about moving beyond box checking and considering what should be illuminated in evaluation. She mentioned frequently in our workshop that there should be reciprocal support, welcoming

connections between teachers and administrators, which would create transformative

Figure 4

evaluative experiences. I utilized a cross quilt pattern made up of single squares, sewn together, to create interlocking crosses, as shown in Figure 4. Each intersection values her ideas about building connections between teachers and administrators and finding ways to work together.

Still new to the profession, I was struck by Lee's ability to participate in current rigid evaluative systems yet leverage her confidence in her field to become an advocate for arts education. I embroidered a drop of water hitting a puddle and rippling out, much like her ideas about becoming relational. Through her agency and voice, advocating for what art produces, elicits movement, like ripples in water to make positive change not just for herself but also for her students and the school community with whom she works.

For brand new teachers, evaluations can feel very overwhelming and foreign. Charlie, a new elementary art educator, understands this feeling well. She drew a huge response from the collective, describing her experience with difficulties she had

Figure 5

effectively teaching students how to use a ruler (a district standard, not an art standard) during an evaluation. She asked her principal for help, and he returned the next day to co-teach the lesson with her. The chat was immediately filled with ideas, “What if we walked our admin through our thinking and the

lesson plan before the evaluation and then collaborated with them to enhance the lesson?” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). “Yes! Even if they (admin) didn’t have anything to add, they could see the process! We love process!” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). Even though Charlie was agreeable to her principal helping, she hit on another idea stating, “Conformity to standardize evaluation does not showcase the broad spectrum of my teaching talents” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). I created the quilt block in Figure 5 to mimic the idea of standardization, stripes of differently patterned fabric all aligned in rows, marching toward the same destination. Charlie’s brave action to ask the principal to help had more to do with building a relational encounter that would ensure the principal returned to see more of what Charlie could do in the art room and less about the district mandated skill she needed to teach. I want

Charlie to know that teaching students how to use a ruler in the art room has no bearing on her ability to teach art well, that each encounter is in fact a small snapshot of a singular time that does not tell the story of your teaching, represented in the circular bursts in the lower left corner of the piece.

Many visual art educators are singletons in their buildings which make frustrating evaluative experiences even more difficult. Ruth shared with our collective her experience working in both a middle and high school. She feels as if her evaluations are very superficial, not offering substantive feedback for growth. She works tirelessly to

Figure 6

provide an art curriculum that produces powerful learning experiences for students and feels looked over as “the other teachers get all the glory” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). Workshop participants were quick to chime in the chat with words of encouragement and

acknowledgement about how difficult it must be for her. Her image shows what appears to be a roadside with billboards and an airplane pulling a sign shouting at the viewer to notice. It felt important that Ruth see the work she had put into developing a meaningful curriculum not go unnoticed. I cut free form shapes representing roads and appliqued them on to background fabric. There is great difficulty in managing multiple schools, multiple administrators, and vast differences in students. I could see there were many competing relations. The question I posed through the quilting, in Figure 6, was, how

does Ruth flourish? I embroidered flowers over the entirety of the work in an effort to shift how each pathway might open a different future for Ruth, to gain the feedback she values and for the arts to be recognized and noticed as powerful contributors to students' education. This calls on evaluators to work to better understand the unique situations visual art educators are in.

Encountering stories of evaluation in our workshop spanned time and space. As a collective, we were sharing stories from our past experiences to create movements for the future. Chloe, a high school visual arts educator, mimicked this idea through the work she

Figure 7

shared. She created something related to a timeline, visually comparing images of what evaluation has felt like, her current normal everyday interactions with her administrator, and what she wishes it could be. She told our group she wished administrators knew “how art works to enrich

each student in their own individual way, resisting ideas that they are just a number in the class” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). The final illustration in Chloe’s timeline was an explosion of colors and lines showing a constant mingling between the ideas of visual arts educators and administrators. I hoped that Chloe would see that this was a powerful interpretation of what evaluation could be. Chloe’s use of the word ‘enrich’

piqued my interest. As a verb, enrich has multiple meanings: to add value, improve quality, and add beauty. I couldn't think of a more perfect word to describe how a relational encounter in evaluation should be. I used contrasting fabrics to think with her iteration of a timeline in a grid like pattern shown in Figure 7. Using top stitching, ribbon, and further contrasting fabric, I set out to explore how thinking of evaluation as enriching for students, teachers, and administrators adds beauty and opens space for possibility. Possibility is the force that ruptures current practice and motivates our collective movement. To honor this, I embroidered 'possibility' diagonally disrupting the grid like flow of the quilt block.

When we meet the needs of both educators and administrators, magic happens. This was the case for Mae, a high school visual art educator, who wowed our collective with her beautiful story of evaluative experiences done well. Mae shared with the group that there is an administrator who is assigned to their department, sitting in on meetings

Figure 8

and listening, putting an incredible amount of time and attention to getting to know how their classrooms and department work. One participant wrote in the chat, "I love that connection to

administrators seeing into the process of designing our curriculum" (Personal

communication, June 17, 2020). Mae felt a true human connection with her administrator and offered the encounter as a space “where advocacy, liberation and understanding can occur” (Personal communication, June 17, 2020). I utilized fabric scraps that embodied connection and magic. An improvised pattern allowed me to investigate the time spent listening, hearing, and feeling the way a classroom works, through the lens of an administrator. I wanted to continue the visual conversation with Mae, who included birds being released from two hands. I saw this as a possibility for our movement to see that they too can be released from what cages them. What happens when we give visual art educators freedom to fly? What gets produced in encounters when administrators acknowledge they need to do more listening?

Making Amends

American filmmaker Ken Burns said, “Quilts are the textile pages of our shared history...a DNA of culture...a wonderful mix of styles, designs, colors, peoples who are negotiating lives” (PBS, 2019). This statement resonates with the quilt blocks I created, thrust into speculative middles where the stories of visual art educators and my own intersect with theory, practice, and a desire to be unruly. The scraps of fabric, while unraveling notions of who and what is discarded, are mended together to transform into something beautiful, and that is a hopeful act. The act of making, thinking, and doing is never easy. “Thinking involves a wrenching of concepts away from their usual configurations, outside the systems in which they have a home, and outside the structures of recognition that constrain thought to the already known” (Grosz, 2001, p. 60). The work illuminates possibilities when we think of research as life work, as a collective spiritual act, where we can exist within the research encounter as a way of listening and

being. To mend phenomena discussed in this work is to dwell in it, to be better from participating with the other, and to acknowledge that there is no one answer forward but infinite possibilities. Nick Sousanis (2015) wrote,

Even as we hold and stitch distinct viewpoints together, the space between them doesn't collapse. It's not a process of closing, of being finished. Rather each new engagement generated another vantage point from which to continue the process anew. A distance between always remains...Incompleteness reveals there is always more to discover. (p. 150)

As I stitched and sewed, mending systems, structures, and ideas, spending time with our collective's stories and the engagements of others, I understood fully research as being, embracing the humanity of others, experiencing our relationship with the world, in which we are a part, and building a foundation where we relinquish inflexible beliefs about knowledge. As Freire (2000) said, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 72). Material engagement as a collective, relational, and spiritual practice was the vehicle for his work, enchanting me with wonder about what is possible in the academy, mending my own spirit in the process.

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4. Stitching Together New Images of Teacher Evaluation in the Arts

Abstract:

Historically, many evaluation systems have failed to provide the type of accurate and actionable data that inspires real change in teaching practice. For teachers in non-tested subjects and grades, such as the arts, evaluation remains equally ineffective. Producing misleading images of teaching practice due to the restrictive and prescriptive ‘look-fors’, current evaluation models prove it difficult to measure the types of teaching prevalent in art classrooms. This article serves to disrupt current conversations in evaluative practice and spotlight the evaluative stories of art educators through the lens of quilting. Thinking with quilting proposes changing evaluative practice using the arts as a model. Inviting arts educators into the conversation offers potential to challenge (mis)representation, build relational trust through power shifts and receptive listening, and to construct a true capacity for connectedness.

The Context for Change

Teacher evaluation has historically been a site of contention in education, shaped by competing degrees of educational policy and legislation, and research and practice, yet its effectiveness remains elusive. Systems of evaluation are in place to accomplish varied objectives such as ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality educator, providing targeted professional development, and making management decisions about instructional teams and personnel. While there is a vast assortment of evaluation models and methods to choose from, very little has changed in the way teacher evaluations are performed. Over the last decade, most states have worked to reform evaluation systems that could not provide “meaningful, actionable data” (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2019), commonly employing observations of teaching practice and rubrics as measurement strategies. What is becoming clear is that teacher evaluation carries divergent meanings and purposes for teachers and administrators, and therein lies the challenge. Significant purposes of evaluation also highlight its problems: analytically rating/grading teachers mirrors current trends towards high-stakes assessment, and providing effective feedback to support the growth of educators is challenging amidst varied contexts and disciplines (Randall, 2020; Bergin et al., 2017), where accountability for school leaders in the feedback they give is rare (TNTP, 2013). Bergin et al. (2017) note that there is “little empirical evidence to support the use of (observation of teaching) ratings for either purpose, especially in authentic contexts, despite the high-stakes associated with them” (p. 19).

Art educators have found themselves in a dilemma struggling to conform to evaluations that do not account for the uniqueness and complexity of what they teach;

“assessed in exactly the same way as other teachers, with little or no differentiation of approach” (Palumbo, 2014, p. 35). The assumption that we can broadly evaluate all educators using the same criteria through standardized approaches is dangerous and traps us into seeing only what we are looking for. “As long as teacher evaluation systems require a single-number output that corresponds to a single category of effectiveness, the richness of feedback possible...may be lost in the reductionist rating derivation” (Shaw, 2016, p. 7). The prescriptive and narrow system of looking at evaluation will only encumber change. Knoster et al. (2000) describe the context that directs most change efforts within the American educational system,

The context for change is deeply rooted in western civilizations standing the details of how things work...how to build a better mousetrap. In light of this orientation, one should not be surprised that most changes in school systems represent a natural evolution of the how-to-mind-set as many educators seek to find the details or the how to's, in the form of a recipe for change as if schools were just another version of machinery to be tooled. (p. 94)

The paradox exists in the humanity of teaching. Effective educators can never be fully described by numbers because what makes good teachers transcends the extent of what we can know and measure. Palmer (2014) describes this as a capacity for connectedness: “The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts, meaning heart in its ancient sense, the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self” (para. 12). To change ideas about teacher evaluation requires an unfamiliar inquiry. It requires a look at educators on the periphery, ones who consistently remain unserved by the process, and disciplines that fall through the cracks.

It requires a commitment to not just build another mousetrap, but rather forge connected relationships. In an effort to design better systems of evaluation which work for and with all educators, we have to ask different questions. Michel Foucault argued, “people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don’t know is what, what they do does” (Dreyfus et al., 1983, p. 187). The first two prompts resemble the workings of a machine, the latter ask us to extrapolate on how what we do produces affects. What do evaluations produce and what gets produced in the evaluative encounter? How might understanding evaluative experiences from peripheral disciplines, such as the arts, produce an unfamiliar inquiry which we can learn from?

An Artful Look at Teaching

This article is not a deep dive into teacher evaluation practice, nor does it promise a definitive answer to questions posed, as that would assume these are knowable. What I hope, is that it inspires those of us involved in evaluative practice to see differently and revise our thinking; to entertain the idea that what we are currently doing isn’t producing a capacity for connectedness, building trusting relationships, or serving educators or students well. To do this, we must wrench ourselves away from “systematicity” (St. Pierre, 2021) and stir up more ambiguous conversations about “self + other”. We can look to the arts as a model for how to build an equitable infrastructure of evaluation that honors the connectedness of teaching.

It is no coincidence in literature concerning teacher evaluation, that evaluative practice is continuously described as representing an overall ‘picture’ of teaching. No matter the tool or system used, many evaluators and designers of evaluation utilize visual imagining to represent what’s happening in classrooms. For example, “accumulation of

visits over time provides the overall ‘picture’ of that teacher...a more complete ‘picture’ of learning” (Randall, 2020, p. 52); selecting “more comprehensive models capture a richer ‘picture’ of a teacher's performance” (Toch, 2008); “evaluation systems have been carefully designed to provide a comprehensive ‘picture’ of what teachers do” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012, p. 14); and “no single data point can paint a complete ‘picture’ of a teacher’s performance” (TNTP, 2010), to quote a few. An image, and by extension, art, is a qualitative language (Sandell, 2012), presenting a “visual representation of something abstract” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). How is it that one can garner an accurate picture of a teacher, a classroom, student learning, or a practice of teaching through lists of predetermined behaviors, and scripting when we understand teaching, and art teaching in particular, to consist of the very aspects of teaching that are the most difficult to measure? Danvers (2003) refers to ‘intuitive modes’: “tacit knowledge, implicit knowledge, non-verbal learning, learning-by-doing, (as) very resistant to analysis or unconscious awareness but are central features of practice and learning in the arts” (p. 52). Randall (2020) uses the term ‘teaching intangibles’, to describe the artistry of teaching. These teaching practices “call for intuition, creativity and improvisation” (p. 84), the aspects that aren’t quantifiable, and cannot be systematized into neat categories.

The art classroom exemplifies the teaching and learning processes described in intuitive and intangible modes of teaching. Burton (2012) has described teaching practice in the visual arts classroom as choreography vital to learning, “facilitating a practice of shared classroom give-and-take,” (para. 4) where students put into practice how artists work in a studio. Excellent teachers in the visual arts understand how critical it is to teach visual literacy, where students learn to navigate our increasingly visual world. Not only

does this entail an informational approach where students are utilizing critical thinking to interpret, analyze, and then hold multiple perspectives about visual images, but also a transformative approach where students are making and communicating meaning and understanding through creating their own visual possibilities, building interdisciplinary linkages that engage them with their interconnectedness to the world and each other (Sandell, 2012). To guide students as visual learners through this choreography means “teachers intercede or stand back as they read the initiating cues offered by pupils, often responding to issues that are tacitly (rather than explicitly) expressed...(to inspire) reflection, perception, imagination, and decision-making” (Burton, 2012, para. 10).

Though literature does recognize the difficulty in evaluating for such aspects of teaching, particularly in terms of evaluator accuracy (Bergin et al., 2017), little has been discussed for improvement. Almost entirely, these aspects of teaching practice are beyond pre-defined parameters and almost entirely relegated towards the end of evaluation forms in ‘additional information’. In an interesting juxtaposition, Craig Randall, founder of *Trust-Based Observations*, honors this as the humanness or art of teaching, rather than the technical, and writes that honoring this ‘art’, “foster(s) an environment that demonstrates support for the highest form of teaching practice...[where evaluators] begin to support what might be seen by some as unusual or unorthodox.” (Randall, 2020, pp. 85-86). The highest form of teaching practice! If we are of the belief that these skills, very present in art rooms across the country, are of the highest form of teaching practice AND also seen by some as unusual or unorthodox, we must ask ourselves how to think about the practice of teaching and learning, knowledge and evaluation very differently. We must stop seeing art and science as oppositional, rejecting

the assertion that educational research must be scientific in order to determine what works in our schools (St. Pierre, 2014). Eisner (1995, p. 1) wrote, “artistry is not restricted to what we think of as art...the arts have no monopoly on art. There is art in science just as surely as there is art in art.” Knowing that no measure is perfect, how might we provide better ‘evidence’ that leads to making better decisions? This necessitates a shift in what gets acknowledged as evidence. Springgay (2008) illustrates what such infrastructure might be like,

We cannot create a simple list of expected behaviors and have them function as ways of being ethical, rather ethics itself involves a rethinking of embodiment as being-with [and] moves us from empathetic understanding where the other is ultimately consumed, to openness and risk, attention to ambiguity, and to what we cannot know beforehand. (p. 156)

Creating evaluative experiences and encounters from this perspective — using multiple modalities and asset-based designs — asks us to make powershifts and answer the call of what our doing, does? How do we define evaluation as an invitation for collaboration?

Encountering Educators

Shifting conversations in evaluation compelled me to think about educational research differently. Challenging representation in all facets of the research process caused a rupture and nudged me to wander across the boundaries of research fashioning new connections. As an educator myself, building a capacity for connectedness meant that I must acknowledge that I live in the space in which I work. For this reason, I come into encounters with a perspective enriched by feminist ethics. I draw from the work of Sara Ahmed (2017), believing that:

Living a feminist life...might mean asking ethical questions of how to live better in an unjust world; how to create relationships with others that are more equal; how to find ways to support those who are not supported or are less supported by social systems; how to keep coming up against histories that have been concrete, histories that have become solid as walls. (p. 10)

Shaking loose singular perspectives of knowing and being offers an opportunity to experiment and explore, seeing the subject as collective and creative (Irwin, 2013). Collectively, this way of existing opens a window into the challenges peripheral educators face with evaluative practices, exposing power differentials and claims that their content is often unfamiliar, while creating opportunities to invite a more dimensional and relational approach. Designing better systems for educators means encountering educators and listening to their stories about what gets produced in their evaluative encounters and how they envision a different way forward.

On a sunny day in June, I met with a group of visual art educators taking a summer graduate curriculum course to discuss and collaborate on this very topic. We had collectively been experiencing the effects of the pandemic for several months by then; web conferencing platforms becoming the norm for encountering any educational content/collaboration, yet there was an excitement as everyone logged on. Happiness at ‘seeing’ other familiar art educators, relief that a tremendously difficult school year had come to an end and hope for what next year would bring was evident. Even though my own experience as an art educator and administrator prepared me for collaborating on this topic, my feminist positioning required me to position this as an ethics that “does not claim to know in advance, but seeks to know what that addressee is for the first time in

the articulation of the question itself” (Springgay, 2008, p. 156). I needed to just listen, to be, and to exist in our collaborative space creating and building the capacity for connection. I had reservations about this. How could I extend an invitation to connect and redefine the ‘other’ or the ‘encounter’ without existing in the physical space? Generating possibilities from this concern led me to prompt the educators to ‘speak’ with their art voice, to make a visual representation of their encounters with evaluation.

I resist the naming of research components, as this forces one back into the norms of qualitative research, the very ideas of which I would like to disturb. What I am interested in is the encounter itself, how we collect and organize ourselves in the unfolding of something new. How do we as “multidimensional, collective and plural” (Irwin, 2013), creatively tell our stories and what then do those stories produce? The collaboration of our group, the materials and the stories told, sparked a ‘methodology’ requiring the “linear and nonlinear (to be) spun together while maintaining a focus on *Figure 10*

how different types of combinations or perceptions move(d) understanding ahead to new places” (Ball, 2008). The combinations of such perceptions resulted in powerful and poignant artistic works embodying evaluative encounters which were shared with each other in our virtual space. Looking at our shared screen, each educator encompassing their respective space, filled with ideas and materials representing their identity, with stories spilling out, both similar and dissimilar, stitched together to create a bigger picture of what was, is and could be, created an opening to see a new way forward, quilted together in that moment (Figure 1). Policy makers, evaluation system designers and evaluators themselves can learn to build a capacity to connect, to bring front and center the intuitive modes of teaching, and to use the arts as a model and muse when they explore evaluation as quilting.

Quilting and Evaluation

It occurred to me while seeing our patchwork web quilt of stories that quilting integrates several ideas intersecting the arts, education, and research. Art education is a predominantly female profession. As of 2019, 86.9% of those graduating with degrees in arts education were women (Data USA, 2019). Recent data trends suggest that in elementary and secondary schools, only 56-60% of teachers report that their schools provided any professional development programming in the arts, down from over 73% two decades ago (Sabol, 2013). Elementary teachers, specifically, teach in isolation as the only art educator responsible for designing, implementing, and assessing varied curricula impacting all students in the building, typically seeing each specific class for a short period of time weekly. The significant and complex demands of the profession are rarely taken into account during the evaluative process, including making professional

development, personnel, and funding decisions. Shaw (2016, p. 5) passionately details, “how absent art teachers have been from the national conversation and research agenda,” furthering the grip ‘science’ has on what is valued in education, as research on teacher effectiveness claims only a very small group of educators teaching in subjects and grades operating under federal and state directed testing requirements. Scant research in the area of evaluation of art educators, coupled with the folding in of art educators under the umbrella of ‘non tested subjects and grades’ in broader evaluation literature, seemed to render art educators invisible.

Quilts have served many purposes throughout history. The rise of the Industrial Revolution saw a “fabric of a nation” coming together around many social movements, “such as those related to abolition, suffrage, labor rights...and education” (Applebaum, 2020, p. 5). Quilting provided a collective opportunity for women from various backgrounds to come together utilizing a visual language to express themselves and their desire for reform (Applebaum, 2020). “Quilts have been deployed throughout history by marginalized people to confront instances of violence, oppression and exclusion,” (Applebaum, 2020, p. 5) and to “address the ways in which products of domestic labor, which is often performed by women and people whose work is undercompensated are rendered invisible” (Gershon, 2020, para. 6). Quilts’ visual and material language has situated the telling of hi(stories), movements, and peoples, showcasing the connection between some/one. The visual and material language of quilts, the desire to create a capacity for connectedness, to make the invisible visible, and the longing for stirring up what gets produced through research compelled me to examine evaluation as quilting.

The art sharing from our virtual session produced such interesting ideas about the struggles, celebrations and possibilities for a more nuanced and esoteric perspective about evaluation. Each art educator's artwork was turned into a fabric transfer which I sewed into a quilt square, embedding elements of each educator's story, conversation with the group, and thinking with my own ideas from reading post-feminist theories, ethics, and making with embroidery and fabric. It was experimental analysis completely informed by 'being-with' others as part of the research encounter. I created two digital quilts from scans of the actual quilt squares sewn together, manipulating them in various configurations to tell a story of art educators' experiences with evaluation (Figure 2 and 3). This 'story' offers teachers, evaluators, evaluation designers, and policy makers the opportunity to enter into a new space to think, one that eliminates binaries of art vs

Figure 2

Figure 3

science, celebrates teaching at the very highest levels of practice, and makes thinking, making, and teaching visible. Through the research encounter, I would like to contend that looking at evaluation as quilting affords us the ability to drive evaluation to challenge (mis)representation, build relational trust through listening and honoring the stories of teaching and learning, and frame a true capacity for connectedness.

Challenging (mis)Representation

Art teachers are inherently challenging representation through visual literacy. By removing the grip that our society has on words/text as ‘the’ way to know and communicate, art teachers open new worlds to students as they explore ways of making meaning beyond what words can afford us, as well as decoding meaning from an increasingly image rich world. When words are no longer enough, we invite a new voice; images. This problematizes the very nature of how evaluative tools are administered. How can we know with words what we are experiencing through images and internal processes of the mind? McNamee and Gergen (1999) quote Shotter, “Our ways of accounting for things have a coercive quality to them; only if it makes sense of things in certain approved ways can we be accounted by others in our society as competent responsible members of it” (p. 87).

The standardization of teaching practice operates in much the same way. Two educators in our group shared stories of their own (mis)representation. One discussed evaluation in a provisionally accredited school, where teaching performance was tied to value added measures, teacher absentee reports, and bully tactics by administrators, commenting that the stress of being directed by the moving targets of the state had

brought out the worst in people. In schools like this where certain types of “evidence” reign supreme, it can be difficult to feel valued as a contributor to the school community and for the content you teach. For educators who already exist on the periphery, it can be even more devastating. “Evaluation and my school have too many problems...I have such negative experiences with it...it’s the least of my worries (personal communication, June 17, 2020). When asked what their principal should know? “I am a smart and capable woman” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). In this case, evaluation served as a tool for compliance, compelling this teacher to proclaim her worth, rather than celebrate her practice.

Sometimes, teacher evaluation includes skills not typically taught by the arts. In another visual story, an educator had difficulty fulfilling district mandated skills within the context of art due to barriers, such as being in an elementary setting with limited time per week, having multiple adaptations to make for each grade level, and time subtracted from other art learning objectives. When we restrict content to “certain ways of knowing”, we miss out on the interconnectedness of all things and the ability to work together across the curriculum to build knowledge and skills naturally where learning sticks. Her frustrations about her evaluative (mis)representations through measurement were clear, “conformity to standardize evaluation does not showcase the broad spectrum of my teaching talents” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Offering educators freedom to integrate skills where they naturally align allow both evaluator and educator to learn from the experience and consider that there are multiple ways to arrive at solutions, another hallmark of the arts.

Thinking through quilting historically, we should consider that “quilts carry messages and information into places that would not normally be receptive...they are subversive. “Working with quilts somehow places itself between language and image such that it does not express either and yet expresses both” (Ball, 2008, p. 4). When administrators can think within the space between image and language, they can see what lies beyond things — beyond pre-determined lists or standardized skills. What meaning can be drawn from what I am witnessing beyond this utilitarian messenger of the evaluative tool itself? Knowledge is not standardized, it is always situated, partial, contingent and on the move. Challenging mis(representation) through quilting gives permission to use the form as a tool, not a test; to be willing to “revise, re-think and re-formulate — to be open to new facts and ideas, and to seek out alternative perspectives that are challenging and revitalizing” (Danvers, 2003, p. 52). To challenge such (mis)representations, we first have to be able to build trust through honoring the stories told in teaching.

Trusting the Stories of Our Teaching

In every evaluative encounter, exists a structure of power at play; a differential between evaluator and evaluated. One ‘observing’, and ‘rating’ another. We cannot be objective in such cases because we cannot separate the teacher from the teaching or the evaluator from the evaluation. We teach who we are just as we lead who we are and as students, we learn with who we are: never an either/or, but a both/and. We must build relational trust, “the connective tissue that binds individuals together to advance the education of students” (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 44) and the growth of educators and administrators. From a feminist perspective, this includes shifting ideas about “how

power can be held” (Brown, 2017, p. 66), and necessitates a different kind of observing through embodied listening, a being-present. Amidst the rapidity and diversity of our communication, the “act of listening has become a skill we use less and less, and school environments are no exception” (Collins, 2021, para. 4). Evaluation practices are filled with ways we listen ‘for’, hoping to hear something that aligns with prescribed teaching behaviors, yet listening as being, actually refers to a letting go.

Several teachers offered visual stories of evaluative experiences begging for power to be held differently and a more receptive ear. One such visual story argued that evaluation was rigid, like a check mark, with little attention given to how important meaning-making is for students. Threaded through the story were directives of the importance of advocating for and educating evaluators about the importance of arts education and how to engage in conversing about best practices in arts teaching. The most important thing that evaluators can learn from my experience, one of the teachers claimed, “is to foster a positive, reflective, meaningful evaluation and connection” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). For administrators, building this type of relational trust means becoming vulnerable, shifting who can hold the power in the relationship, and exposing your own potential biases or unawareness about the arts and arts instruction.

For some, this power shift causes worry that more open communication may result in a loss of power (Collins, 2021). One educator shared a story of being dismissed for her ideas about curriculum in her classroom. She relayed how evaluations were casual walk-by’s with no real feedback on how to improve. As a passionate artist and educator, she worked to create a new curriculum focused on big ideas and critical thinking, moving

students to respond with materials and connect with each other and the world around them through art. “She didn’t even look at it, it was like, sounds good, go for it” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). When I asked what she wanted her administrator to know she replied, “See what my students are learning! Look at what I am teaching!” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Listening as being-present and observing is to practice receptive listening, not listening to “respond, defend, or resolve...but as an opportunity to develop insight into experiences and perspectives that are not your own; a key component in developing empathy” (Collins, 2021, para. 10). Listening and shifting power in this way facilitates the type of relational trust that leads to more collaborative, ethical encounters.

Several stories were woven into another visual image. This image communicated encounters where an evaluator fell asleep during an evaluation, how another administrator thought both of the arts educators (secondary) in the building were the same person for almost an entire year, and another who walked into a ceramics class while clay was being mixed and pronounced, “What is that!” Others would witness clay and just walk back out in their administrative dress. This inability to ‘listen’ will never generate the trusting relationships, honor stories, or value the knowing that it takes to move forward or to build better systems for educators, students, or administrators. When we walk away without listening, or refuse to acknowledge someone’s personhood without being receptive, we miss all of the wonderful things that are happening, what is being learned, taught, and communicated (spoken or not). I asked the teacher what they might offer to the administrators who, on more than one occasion had not worked to their potential to build a trusting relationship, “Even though it’s dirty, loud and crazy in my

classroom more than just art is being created in here” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Receptive listening takes time and effort and requires letting go, being open to live with the unfamiliar. Leigh Patel (2016) offers a powerful description of what this entails,

Learning, similarly, is an act of letting go of what one knows for what one does not yet know. Learning that holds tightly to what is presently known is to want the safety of assimilation, and sacrifices the much messier desire of transformation.

(p. 95)

This type of ‘listening’ and trust building are what the system should ask of us. A system that resists assimilation and longs for transformation.

Quilts mirror receptive listening and power sharing, honoring the stories of others through “the untold hours with needle, thread and cloth” (Knauer, 2019, p. 1). They help us learn to listen by slowing down, and spending time. “Quilts take a certain amount of time and focus to create, and this is the best antidote to the speed at which we are inundated with information and changing ideas and perspectives” (Knauer, 2019, p. 27).

In a PBS documentary film on quilts, filmmaker Ken Burns said, “quilts are the expression of who we are in the best kind of way” (PBS, 2019). If we look at each evaluative experience as a quilt block, we are looking at teaching experience inclusive of the teacher, their history and experiences, and the histories and experiences of the students within the classroom, shot through the lens of our own. Some quilts were used to mark important points in lives and histories and they inevitably embody the maker (PBS, 2019). How might evaluation, thought in this way, as an embodiment of the maker, challenge current structures of evaluative systems? When we connect through trusting relationships built on listening and being present, we learn to innovate by seeing

everyone's quilts. Evaluation becomes less isolating and opens up possibilities to see connections we can stitch together. As evaluators, thinking through quilting asks us to listen, to slow down, to honor expertise, be receptive to the unfamiliar, and hold space to see the bigger picture, building a capacity for connectedness.

A Capacity for Connectedness

Evaluation is isolating, one person peering in on the ecosystem of a classroom and using a diagnostic to determine where on the spectrum this particular lesson sits. To think of evaluation with an asset minded approach is to invite collaboration; to seek the ways in which we are all 'critically connected', like waves, where each is unique, but together; be responsive (Brown, 2017). Current evaluation systems are too focused on dissecting teaching practice into its various parts absent from the whole, promising that multiple visits will give us the 'picture'. Even if we believe this to be true, it will not happen without also challenging (mis)representation and building relational trust. If we want to 'see' the real picture, we have to 'be' the real picture. Being connected with each other fosters interdependence where "we meet others needs in a variety of ways, we can lean on others and they can lean on us, we have to decentralize our idea of where solutions and decisions happen, and where ideas come from"(Brown, 2017, p. 86). Several art teachers in our group had experienced connectedness in this way or had offered this capacity for connectedness as a real solution to improving evaluation.

One teacher created a past, present, and future representation of her evaluative encounters. On one end of the spectrum was a circle and a dark line protruding into the art space from evaluators who were not regular spectators in their class, feeling almost ominous in ways. The present tense illustrated regular everyday interactions with

administrators where art exists daily in a more natural back and forth with other classrooms in the school system. On the other end of the spectrum was a possibility for what it could be, “intermingling...enriching and not another thing that goes unread” (personal communication, June 17, 2020). When there is regular interaction, a different understanding and curiosity about what is produced in the art classroom creates a foundation for building connections with each other. “Art works to enrich each student in their own individual way, they aren’t just a number in a class” (personal communication, June 17, 2020), and maybe art educators also should not be defined by a number on a scale. When we think of evaluation in these terms, we can learn from Eisner (1995, p. 4), speaking about relationships like those in a piece of artwork: “Collectively these relationships display a sense of coherence, a holding together that is so well integrated that a discussion of the ‘parts’ of the work seem awkward” (p. 4). We cannot separate the parts of evaluation and maintain a true capacity for connectedness.

Creating a capacity for connectedness values the contributions that each content brings to the educational landscape with equal bearing. Another story involved an administrator who saw the many angles of an educator’s classroom because they spent time there. Spending time when evaluators are not doing an evaluation allows evaluators the ability to see a classroom environment from multiple dimensions. In this case, the administrator had struck up a relationship with this educator outside of a traditional power differential. There was a trust in each other's expertise that was evident through the following critique

I want evaluators to know that art and art education are valued...through contemporary art education research and most importantly by students in my

classroom...maybe administrators could come in and do artwork with students and have conversations with them and see for themselves what is happening in here...they just need to spend more time with us. (personal communication, June 17, 2020)

Learning together creates connectedness, where we can honor each other's role in the bigger picture of a school's function. This is healthy for group dynamics, when everyone can, "let go and let other people hold their expertise...call it forward and learn...learning is an essential function of making good decisions" (Brown, 2017, p. 171). Making good decisions has to be collaborative and exist outside of the confines of evaluative diagnostics. They may be a part, but they should not be the whole.

For evaluative systems to work for everyone, there must be a dance of the individual and the collective, a harmony. One educator from our group had an ideal visual story to tell, one where all of the pieces fit together. An administrator was assigned to their team (secondary) and sat in on several of their planning meetings, got a sense for how they thought together, built curriculum together, and designed assessments and rubrics together. Because of the deep capacity building, listening, learning, and honoring the expertise the educators have, the evaluations existed as an extension of the planning, to see how students flourished, to see what the work was producing. She called this type of mutual trust and human connection "magic" (personal communication, June 17, 2020). Brown (2017) discusses these phenomena, when we shift "to meaningful collaboration...deepen relationships, (and strengthen bonds), the more possibility we can hold" (159). Integrating many complex thoughts, ideas, histories, experiences, and needs

creates common ground where each individual takes the lead at the right time. How powerful it must feel to exist in a system that is working.

The essence of looking at evaluation through the lens of quilting is to demonstrate the capacity for connectedness. Quilt artist Jim Kohler said, “you take what you have, put a little creativity into it...even though it's just a utility quilt and you get something remarkable” (PBS, 2019). As school leaders, we can approach evaluation the same way, sometimes looking creatively at our utilitarian tools and measures. If we choose to be receptive, to honor the art of teaching, and to connect with others, we can gain something remarkable: radical relationality between the evaluator and the art educator. Quilts are “subtle nudges toward a more intimate relationship with things and with the world” (Knauer, 2019, p. 73). In a world where so much is vying for our attention, where the pressures to perform are evident at all levels in education, evaluation as quilting holds promise that slowing down, being present, and allowing space for creativity can improve practice. “This is what human beings are required to do. Take raw materials and transform them into something greater than the sum of their parts...and that's what quilts do, that's what art does,” (PBS, 2019) and I would argue that is exactly what we can learn from to transform educational experiences for our students and to rethink how we evaluate our teachers. While we may see each individual fabric up close, stepping back and opening space invites us to see a representation of what true collaboration looks like, which is how we all come together to make a difference in the lives of our students.

Making a Difference

This article was not written to present findings, I have found none. It was written to disrupt current conversations about the evaluation of art educators: To elevate their

experiences and change the direction where we are headed and to entertain the possibilities that exist when we wrestle ourselves away from the already known. Rather than writing more how-to's or instructions for building better mousetraps; might we first paint different landscapes, stitch together foundational tapestries illuminating the differences that make each of our teaching practices unique. The implications of such thinking and re-visioning impact all educators. When we are inclusive of educators who lie outside the borders of tested subjects and grades, we make it better for everyone. When we familiarize ourselves with the life and learning produced in the art classroom, we then make the familiar strange. "Allow(ing) the complex to remain complex (means) existing boundaries are transcended, borders become links, distinct viewpoints remain, now no longer isolated...integral to the whole and in this integrated landscape lies the potential for a more comprehensive understanding" (Sousanis, 2015, p. 37).

Quilts are the vehicle for subverting such systems; the trojan horse offering protection, utility, and warmth. Knauer (2019) writes:

Quilts cannot be contained. Quilts are tricksters; they shapeshift. Quilts are impossible objects, occupying a space outside the patriarchy, outside a capitalist system of value; outside feminism, racism, and class; outside the ivory tower of Art-with-a capital-A; and outside of time" (p. 93)

Transforming systems of evaluation mean we must "transform both individually and collectively" (Brown, 2017, p. 203). We need to be willing to stand outside of the systems in which we are participants and listen. Listen to our educators; respect their classrooms as intersections of hi(stories); challenge the ways education (mis)represents what counts as knowledge and evidence; challenge who is allowed to sit at the table to

make decisions and design systems; build relational trust that can exist only when we are present alongside the journey of another; thus, quilting together an infallible network of connectedness and producing new images of what effective teaching looks like, and may we never see a quilt in the same way again.

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5. Conclusion Opening

The word conclusion is impossible in a poststructuralist paradigm. Conclusion signifies a “judgement...the last part of something...final” (Merriam-Webster, n.d). A further look at conclusion at its roots revealed a latin origin “concludere, which combines, ‘con’, ‘completely’, and ‘claudere’, ‘to shut’” (‘In conclusion - Dictionary definition”, n.d.). Living inquiry, research that listens and breathes (Springgay et al., 2005), resists finality and closure; it cannot be shut. There are no outcomes (another description of conclusion) because it presumes that we set out to find something from the beginning. While this part of the work may be ‘finished’ in terms of the dissertation process being brought to the end, it is the very start of the coming after, the what's next, the opening of the new. Therefore, I reject such notions of conclusion in favor of an opening, proposing this dissertation as an opening, “cut deliberately and act[ing] as invitations to enter into and look through, offering new views and perceptions, encouraging dislocations and disruptions” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 906). I hope that such disruptions produce urgency for those encountering the work to rethink how evaluation practices might come to exist differently, that participating in embodied research practices move us to become more present in our lifework, and that we re-vision what ‘evidence’ can look like.

Resisting conclusion requires doing things differently, operating ‘without’, embracing ambiguity, messiness, and chaos, “emerg[ing] with the possibility to become something different” (Sousanis, 2015, p. 97). Threaded through this dissertation are foundational and disruptive questions, resisting closure and producing openings. What

gets produced through research? How does one come to know and demonstrate knowing in a way that honors identity? What becomes possible when we resist typical forms of academic research? How do we engage with research in more ethical and relational ways? In my opinion, such questions result in openings for growth; to increase our capacity. What lies beyond? The work in published forms provokes newness that can't be realized yet as each individual's encounter exists differently and in constant flux and entanglement with the world. The process of the work as 'becoming' has already produced new lines of flight, seeds for the future, more possibility and, and, and...

I began to curate an Instagram account to 'park' noticings and new questions as they pertained to the process which has since blossomed into many threads of ideas waiting to be woven and stitched into something new. I'll end here with an opening, snapshots, traces, and, and, and...

art.iculate.ideas

...

art.iculate.ideas Is this any less powerful than traditional research? Who determines forms of research? How might the viewer add interesting "data" to further ideas about what might be happening here? #whatisdata #whydata #qualitative #qualitativeresearch #qualitativeresearcher #postqualitativeinquiry #doingresearchdifferently #thinkingmakingdoing

11w

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MARCH 4

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...

art.iculate.ideas More (re)search photos... thinking/making...(re) visioning... #thinkingmakingdoing #thinkingmakingconnecting #mapping #poststructuralism #poststructuralist #qualitativeresearch #qualitativeresearcher #postqualitativeinquiry #stitchingideas #stitchingtheory #disruption #radical

11w

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MARCH 4

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...

art.iculate.ideas Re-visioning how we conceptualize growth and vision. How does each part of the learning/leading/teaching cycle encounter the other? Ethical encounters must be flexible and adaptable with open spaces for newness to emerge.
#ethicalencounters
#postqualitativeinquiry
#qualitativeinquiry
#qualitativeinquirer
#artsbasedresearch #learnleadteach
#revisionresearch #emergence

11w

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MARCH 7

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...

art.iculate.ideas Doing a lot of listening today.... "research that listens" ... #artography
#researchthatlistens
#qualitativeinquiry
#qualitativeinquirer
#postqualitativeinquiry
#artsbasedresearch

10w

Be the first to like this

MARCH 13

Add a comment...

Post

art.iculate.ideas ...

art.iculate.ideas A series is emerging... piecing, quilting, stitching together new knowings... How do we disrupt academic structures to allow for new demonstrations of knowing to emerge? #qualitative research #qualitative researcher #postqualitative #disruptacademia #emergence #newknowings #postqualitative inquiry #artsbasedresearch

10w

Be the first to like this

MARCH 13

Add a comment... Post

art.iculate.ideas ...

art.iculate.ideas Research sampler... "research that breathes". How is re-search life giving? #researchaslife giving #lifework #researchthatbreathes #qualitative research #qualitative researcher #postqualitative inquiry #poststructuralism #stitchedresearch

10w

Be the first to like this

MARCH 13

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art.iculate.ideas

...

art.iculate.ideas Research crosses boundaries, time, place... intersects between persons and ideas. Thinking about relations emerging because of (re)search. [#radicalrelatedness](#) [#connection](#) [#boundarycrossing](#) [#postqualitativeinquiry](#) [#qualitativeinquiry](#) [#qualitativeinquirer](#) [#emergentresearch](#)

10w

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MARCH 15

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art.iculate.ideas

...

art.iculate.ideas Stacks upon stacks.. thinkings/makings/doing and many provocations/questions are nestled in these stacks... [#thinkingmakingdoing](#) [#postructuralism](#) [#emergentstrategy](#) [#postqualitativeinquiry](#) [#qualitativeinquiry](#) [#qualitativeinquirer](#) [#artsbasedresearch](#)

10w

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MARCH 15

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Post

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...

art.iculate.ideas Maps on maps... maps of spaces, places... but also maps of thinking and traces...slow work/mind work... thinking/making/doing...#mapping #maps #spaces #inbetween #thinkingmakingdoing #thinkingtraces #tracesofthought #qualitative research #qualitative researcher #postqualitativeinquiry #slowwork #poststructuralism

9w

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MARCH 17

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Post

g-animal only makes sense insofar as *both* the subject and the animal are transformed in the encounter.²⁶

Thought is what comes between a cause and its habitual effect, between one being and another, a fissure between strata that allows something from them to escape, to unhinge. It is an unhinging—perhaps a deranging—of expectation, order, organization, to replace them not with disorder or disorganization but with reordering. Rather than assuming a pure positivity, the jamming effects of thought do not simply actively produce (new thoughts and new things or assemblages) but intervene, to insert a stammer, a hesitation or pause within the expected; though they may actively function to passively interrupt habit and expectation by allowing something already there in the series, in the subject or object, to become.²⁷ Thought, like that space outside the actual which is filled with trajectories that need release. It is

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...

art.iculate.ideas When reading Elizabeth Grosz think about Deleuze...and you are overcome with emotion... that's when you know what you know... it's knowing because it's thought-felt...and this stutter helps you to keep going...#thoughtfelt #stutter #deleuze #elizabethgrosz #poststructuralism #qualitative research #qualitative researcher #postqualitativeinquiry

9w

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MARCH 18

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Post

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art.iculate.ideas In progress...thinking about what reverberation looks like... how is it thought-felt? #reverberation #artography #livinginquiry #stitchingresearch #beingresearch #postqualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquirer #poststructuralism #progress #practice

9w

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MARCH 21

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art.iculate.ideas Thinking about the seeds of the research. Wondering how pandemics, quarantines, mothering are entangled in the becoming of the work? Would the thinking have been different without these relations? #researchseeds #artseeds #artsbasedresearch #pandemicresearch #livinginquiry #embodiedresearch #entanglement #relationality #poststructuralism #postqualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquirer #artsbasedresearch

9w

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MARCH 19

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Post

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...

art.iculate.ideas When different research practices/becomings/encounters begin intersecting. It's as if it had been planned... research as ontology operates this way because the researcher understands the connectivity entangled in all things! #intersections #wonder #responsibility #ethicalrelations #visualresearch #whenpracticesconnect #postqualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquirer #dissertationprep

8w

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MARCH 23

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...

art.iculate.ideas Re/searching... curating ideas from others which open spaces to think about phenomena in the world just a bit differently. Building new imaginings and possibilities. #curating #researching #possibilities #qualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquirer #postqualitativeinquiry #poststructuralist #theory #writingprocess #dissertation

8w

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MARCH 25

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Post

art.iculate.ideas

...

art.iculate.ideas Building images of what can be... as much as I embrace ambiguity, complexity and the messiness of work...I enjoy structures within which I create... process
#buildingideas #writingprocess #organizingwriting #dissertation #postqualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquirer #ambiguity #poststructuralism

8w

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MARCH 25

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Post

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...

art.iculate.ideas Sometimes old school is the way to go... building new ideas with the existing work at my fingertips... my tactile nature needs to see and touch and spread out and interchange and reimagine how the past can influence the present then influence the future.. #writingprocess #dissertation #curation #buildingwriting #oldschool #sourcerolodex #postqualitativeinquiry

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MARCH 26

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art.iculate.ideas

art.iculate.ideas Reverberation...
dynamic movement... in/outside...
echoing #reverberation
#artsbasedresearch
#thinkingmakingdoing
#postqualitativeinquiry
#qualitativeinquiry
#qualitativeinquiry #artography
#poststructuralism #stitchedresearch

8w

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MARCH 27

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Post

art.iculate.ideas

art.iculate.ideas Beginning to piece it
all together... thinking about
reverberations as something always
happening across time. Each encounter
has elements of the past and the not
yet wrapped into one. #notyet
#possibility #whatcomesnext
#whatbeyond
#whatbecomesthinkable
#poststructuralism #sewingresearch
#sewingthinkingdoing
#quiltingasresearch
#qualitativeinquiry
#qualitativeinquiry
#postqualitativeinquiry

7w

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MARCH 31

Add a comment...

Post

art.iculate.ideas

...

art.iculate.ideas How do we repair evaluation? How can we mend policies, relationships, and advocate for something that looks different? #repairingresearch #sewresearch #researchasmending #makingamends #postqualitativeinquiry #researchasinquiry #postqualitativeinquiry #qualitativeveresearch #qualitativeveresearcher #poststructuralism #artsbasedresearch #artography #postfeminism

7w

Be the first to like this

APRIL 2

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Post

art.iculate.ideas

...

art.iculate.ideas Layers upon layers of thinking making doings... this piece speaks about value, about being seen, about what it means to know, about being worthy of the work that we do... #postqualitativeinquiry #sewingandstitching #qualitativeveresearch #qualitativeveresearcher #artsbasedresearch #visualstories #quiltblock #researchasquilting #layers #artography #postfeminism #relationalethics

6w

Be the first to like this

APRIL 8

Add a comment...

Post

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...

art.iculate.ideas Dissertation support... when animals just know their people need them...[#relationality](#) ...being in tune to the world with which we are all a part. [#posthumanism](#) [#poststructuralism](#) [#postqualitativeinquiry](#) [#qualitativeinquiry](#) [#dissertation](#) [#writingprocess](#) [#artography](#) [#humannonhumanmorethanhuman](#)

4w

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art.iculate.ideas Focused intentional work... each block represents a deep relationship with a story. A willingness to participate slowly and intentionally... a conversation with "data". Stitching, mending, repairing, curating, conversing, connecting, creating... research through thinking, making doing... how does doing research this way honor the work as a sacred practice? [#researchasspiritual](#) [#sacredpractice](#) [#stitching](#) [#mending](#) [#repairing](#) [#visualstories](#) [#stitchingresearch](#) [#sewingresearch](#) [#postqualitativeinquiry](#) [#qualitativeinquiry](#) [#pushingboundaries](#)

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art.iculate.ideas Where does the work begin? One will never know. These are all speculative middles. In the spectrum of time and space we enter in between pasts and futures... to think research differently is to understand the middle...and to see research as a possibility of futures.
#speculativemiddles
#timespacespectrum
#thinkresearchdifferently
#postqualitativeinquiry
#qualitativeresearch
#poststructuralism #relatedness
#researchasquilting

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art.iculate.ideas "A ritual is an intentional practice that brings awareness out of the past + future and into the right now"... how is the dissemination of research ritualistic? Maybe being present to the process of the now helps us to better seek possible futures?
#researchdissemination
#dissertationprocess #ritual
#writingprocess #light
#intentionalpractice #multiplefutures
#postqualitativeinquiry
#qualitativeresearch

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art.iculate.ideas Making sense of the words, for me, starts with an image... what does theory "look" like?
[#makingsense](#) [#wordsandimage](#) [#drawingwords](#) [#researchprocess](#) [#researchpostitnotes](#) [#postqualitativeinquiry](#) [#qualitative research](#)

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art.iculate.ideas Thinking really hard about Foucault today... [#foucault](#) [#poststructuralism](#) [#politics of knowledge](#) [#postqualitativeinquiry](#) [#qualitative researcher](#)

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art.iculate.ideas Plans and maps... we are forever traversing boundaries.... this is where resistance lies... the power to create, reorganize, relate... it all happens in the continuous shifts in the new and uncharted...
[#resistanceasmapping](#)
[#traversingboundaries](#)
[#boundarycrossing](#) [#boundaryshift](#)
[#poststructuralism](#)
[#postqualitativeinquiry](#)
[#qualitativeresearch](#) [#stitchingresearch](#)
[#artography](#) [#artsbasedresearch](#)

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art.iculate.ideas The blinking cursor... sometimes endlessly maddening and at the same time a pause, a space for what's coming next... I'm trying to see the positive of the blinking cursor today... [#blinkingcursor](#)
[#researchaswithout](#) [#pause](#)
[#pedagogicalpause](#) [#whatsnext](#)
[#dissertation](#) [#postqualitativeinquiry](#)
[#qualitativeresearch](#)

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4 views

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art.iculate.ideas Thinking about these terms and the computer sticker... placed together unintentionally yet offers one space to think about permission. What is allowed and who gets to allow it? I get to make a big deal of research that is a big deal...rendering and knowing is decided by the doer...and what becomes of the doing gets decided through the encounter...
#newmeanings #alwaysconnecting #ideaseeds #dissertation #postqualitativeinquiry #qualitative research #thinkingmakingdoing #rendering #poststructuralism

3w

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art.iculate.ideas Trying to break out of the boxes, but the post-its won't let me... it's an interesting thought to be writing about artful work that doesn't fit in mainstream categories using tools that very much do... #burstboxes #burstcategories #researchtools #postresearcher #qualitative research #postqualitativeinquiry #getridofthebox

2w

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MAY 5

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art.iculate.ideas Choosing to do new work means celebrating the way in which I arrive in the academy...Inhabiting the work, and provoking a stutter by Deleuze's standards...a stutter which resists closure so that space is made...
#choosenew #embraceknowing #iarrive #disruptacademia #postfeminism #feministhomework #deleuze #stutter #postqualitativeinquiry #qualitativeresearch #artsasknowing

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MAY 6

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art.iculate.ideas Thinking about the ritualistic themes to embodied research practices...it takes energy to be with others in the production of the not yet...
#obsidian #researchgift #ritual #researchasritual #selfcare #empower #keepgoing #postqualitativeinquiry #dissertation #qualitativeresearch

1w

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7 DAYS AGO

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art.iculate.ideas The middle... thinking about writing as an installation. How do we come to the writing process in the ways we think about art installations, show installations, curations?
 #middleassemblage #assemblage #researchassemblage #researchinstallation #postitart #postitresearcher #buildideas #writingprocess #dissertation #postqualitativeinquiry #writingasinstallation #writingascuration #qualitative research

1w

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7 DAYS AGO

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art.iculate.ideas The research event, impacted by COVID-19, allowed opportunities to quilt together experiences of evaluation... our collective "bee"... creating a movement to think evaluation differently...
 #pandemicresearch #pandemicresearchplan #quiltingbee #zoomresearch #researchcollective #opportunity #poststructuralism #relatedness #connection

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7 DAYS AGO

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art.iculate.ideas Closing in on the end of the writing portion of the work... and while popcorn may have kept my mouth busy... there has been so much more generated... what feels like the end is really the unpopped kernels... waiting to be stirred up, set ablaze and explode with new ideas, wonderings and questions. The end, is always the beginning...which is why we always start in the middle.
#researchasgenerative #writingprocess #dissertation #theendisthebeginning #postqualitativeinquiry #qualitativeinquiry #ideasareeverywhere #dissertation #instagramresearchjournal

5d

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5 DAYS AGO

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art.iculate.ideas Stitching new boundaries for (re)search... constructing maps for multiple futurities...

3d

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3 DAYS AGO

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art.iculate.ideas This trusty machine... participated with me in the work... and made it possible to think with cloth... I often wonder how and where inanimate "things" participate alongside us in the world..co-conspirators in the enactment of knowing, being and doing. #conspirators #researchparticipants #sewingresearch #thinkingwithcloth #inanimatethings #thingpower #qualitativeinquiry #postqualitativeinquiry #artography #ethicalrelations #posthumanism

1d

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1 DAY AGO

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art.iculate.ideas "... there are people who think that only people have emotions like pride, fear, and joy, but those who know will tell you all things are alive, perhaps not in the same way we are alive, but each in its own way, as should be, for we are not all the same. And though different from us in shape and life span, different in Time and Knowing, yet are trees alive. And rocks. And water. And all know emotion." - Anne Cameron ... and thus...the need for an embodied and ethical relationship with the world...

1d

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1 DAY AGO

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Post

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Vita

Lauren Hermann was born in Columbia, Missouri on April 18, 1980. She graduated from Hickman High School as a proud Kewpie in 1998 with honors. A four-time tiger and legacy graduate, Lauren received her BS Ed in Secondary Education graduating *cum laude* in 2002. In 2015 and 2016, she received her M Ed, and Ed S respectively, in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis and in 2021, received her PhD in Learning, Teaching, and Curriculum, and certificate in qualitative research, all from her beloved alma mater, the University of Missouri.

Lauren holds certifications in K-12 arts education and both K-8 and 7-12 administration. During her career as an elementary arts educator, Lauren worked to ensure equitable access to quality arts education for her students. She chaired the fine arts department and served on many school and district committees including co-chair of the district curriculum and assessment team, professional learning team, building leadership team, and summer school administrative intern. She served as a model classroom for project-based learning and collaborated with classroom teachers on many projects.

Lauren returned to the University of Missouri in 2017 to pursue her PhD. She has since taught undergraduate and graduate methods courses in arts integration and elementary art curriculum steeped in the social justice issues of our time, along with assisting professors in core graduate arts education courses. Lauren has had presentations accepted at many national and international conferences. She has co-authored publications and is a published artist. Lauren's research interests include how to make educational practices more ethical and just. Through poststructuralist theories, she embraces emergent, embodied and a/r/tographical research practices.

Lauren resides in Columbia, Missouri with her husband of 19 years, Steven, and her three sons Quentin, Spencer and Trip. An avid reader and museum goer, she has many books going at once and loves studying contemporary art, particularly art that is politically motivated. In her free time, she enjoys biking on the Katy Trail, being outdoors, traveling, cooking, and almost always has a DIY project in the works. During the school year, you'll find her cheering on her sons at cross country and mountain biking meets, basketball games and golf matches, as well as rooting for her Mizzou Tigers!