CASTING THE CIRCLE:
AN ARTS-BASED INQUIRY INTO CREATING SPACES FOR EMERGENT,
INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation
by
MARISA GWALTNEY CORNELL

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Abstract

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INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Although higher education generally recognizes the value of interdisciplinary

collaboration, few colleges and universities successfully encourage, facilitate, or

evaluate collaborative work. Disciplinary structures, individualistic mindsets, and a

lack of tangible support have been identified as common barriers to integrative

knowledge creation among faculty, while situation-specific "minimum critical

specifications" (Morgan, 2006) necessary for emergent collaborative work are more

challenging to both articulate and establish.

This qualitative case study examines the perspectives and processes of an arts-

based, interdisciplinary group of faculty at a medium-sized public university in the

Southeastern United States. The participant group, the Appalachian Expressive Arts

Collective, developed intuitively and has continued to self-organize without formal

institutional oversight. Framed by literature from the emerging field of expressive

arts therapy, as well as from organizational development, complexity science, and

professional satisfaction theory, this study combines ethnographic research methods

with an arts-based, qualitative methodology known as a/r/tography–a "living inquiry"

(Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005) that supports the researcher's aesthetic orientation toward data collection, representation, and analysis–in order to facilitate the emergence of relevant and meaningful themes. The inquiry into interdisciplinary collaboration is guided by six research questions that explore: how academic partnerships emerge organically; the relevance of the arts and complexity science to collaborative work; connections with curriculum development and professional satisfaction; and alignments between expressive arts and a/r/tography.

The findings of this study suggest that the primary component of the Collective's collaborations is deep relationship, facilitated by expressive arts perspectives and shared values, especially around creativity and healing. The Collective's organizational development, structure, and working processes are aligned with the Community of Practice model (Wenger, 1998) and can be viewed metaphorically as a complex "living system." Through a lens of complexity science, the Collective demonstrates that strong emergence is aided by a diversity of perspectives and a degree of relational tension. Educational leaders can support collaborative work by increasing opportunities and incentives for intuitive community-building among faculty, by providing holistic faculty development programs, and also by incorporating process-focused measures of collaboration into institutional assessment protocols. Implications for arts-based researchers and practitioners, aspiring collaborators, and institutional administrators are offered, as well as suggestions for further research.

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Thank you to my dissertation committee—Dr. Chris Osmond, Dr. Kelly Clark/Keefe, and Dr. Kate Brinko—for their encouragement, enthusiasm, and advice, and to Cohort 16 for their friendship and support. I am especially grateful for my research partners, the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, who welcomed me with authenticity into their creative and complex spaces.

Thank you to Melissa Johnson for her patience and flexibility with my five-year-long work/education/family balancing act, and to the Appalachian State University Graduate School for supporting my research with a Cratis D. Williams grant award.

Lastly, I am indebted Dr. Sally Atkins, "mama bear" to so many, for her gracious, wise, and guiding presence in my life.

Dedication

For Davy and Jovie, my daily collaborators in the art of life.

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CHAPTER ONE: LANDSCAPES–AN INTRODUCTION

Landscapes: artistic representations of an expanse of scenery

The theoretical advantages of interdisciplinary collaboration in various settings, from the classroom to research to practice, seem to be clearly acknowledged in the world of academia. Much research has been conducted that points to the benefits of interdisciplinarity for faculty and students, and in turn, society as a whole (Briggs, 2007; Frodeman, 2010; Karlsson, Anderberg, Booth, Odenrick, & Christmansson, 2008; Lattuca, 2001; Ritchie & Rigano, 2007; Sá, 2008). However, long-established institutional structures and educational systems that traditionally separate the disciplines often create logistical challenges for participation in interdisciplinary activities, if not obstructing them entirely (Briggs, 2007; Lattuca, 2001; National Academies, 2005; Sá, 2008).

Heeding the call for descriptive studies of interdisciplinary collaboration in practice (Briggs, 2007; Creamer & Lattuca, 2005; Sá, 2008), the present study intends to explore the collaborative processes of the Expressive Arts Collective – a long-standing, interdisciplinary group of professors at Appalachian State University (ASU), a medium-sized university in the southeastern United States – using an arts-informed, qualitative case study that will allow for deep inquiry and rich description.

Context

In 2005, The National Academy of Sciences (NAS), National Academy of Engineering (NAE), and National Institute of Medicine (NIM) jointly published a report, *Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research*, by the Committee on Science, Engineering, and

Public Policy (CSEPP.) The Committee proposed the following definition of interdisciplinary research:

> Interdisciplinary research (IDR) is a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice. (National Academies, 2005, p.26)

For the purposes of this paper, I am expanding the above definition of "interdisciplinary research" to include a variety of collaborative activities such as curriculum development, team-teaching, art-making, and performance, so as to minimize the emphasis on collaborative problem-solving in favor of a simple intention to *connect knowledge*. While the definition of research embedded in the CSEPP's report was likely directed toward scientific investigation, even with a broader definition of interdisciplinary *activity* or *work* in mind, the Committee's recommendations are wholly applicable to this study. The report encouraged interdisciplinary activity in all sectors of education and provided suggestions for implementation and policy, while also identifying "key conditions for interdisciplinary work" (National Academies, 2005, p. 19). These conditions include "sustained and intense communication, talented leadership, appropriate reward and incentive mechanisms (including career and financial rewards), adequate time, seed funding for initial exploration, and willingness to support risky research" (p. 19). Aside from the first item in this list of conditions (communication), the responsibility for the remaining key conditions falls onto policy-makers to create a successful environment. In order to do so, the report lists numerous recommendations for each of eleven categories of relevant system participants.

According to the report, academic institutions should "develop new and strengthen existing policies and practices that lower or remove barriers to interdisciplinary research and scholarship," "experiment with more innovative policies and structures to facilitate IDR," "support interdisciplinary education and training," and "develop equitable and flexible budgetary cost-sharing policies that support IDR" (National Academies, 2005, p. 195-197). Limited funding, disciplinary cultural differences, assessment challenges, and traditional academic reward systems involving hiring, tenure, compensation, and faculty course load, as identified by the National Academies' report (p. 88-89), are among many barriers to interdisciplinary research and collaboration.

The selected research site, Appalachian State University (ASU), is a medium-sized, rural, public university located in the mountains of North Carolina. As part of the University of North Carolina (UNC) System, ASU is governed by federal and state policies and funding guidelines, as well as institutional regulation. The UNC Board of Governors' (2006) *Supplement to Long-Range Planning 2004-2009* report addresses the needs of the 21st century economy through changes in education. From the *Supplement*:

> Our institutions must offer an education that prepares students for a work
>
> environment that is increasingly interdisciplinary, in which creative thinking,
>
> technical skills, business expertise and the ability to communicate in many
>
> ways to a variety of audiences must all be combined. (p. 39-40)

The UNC System's long-range goals also include a commitment to encouraging creativity and collaborative partnerships between faculty and external entities, as well as across institutions. No mention is made of facilitating *internal* collaboration, though perhaps this

responsibility was intended to be handled by academic administrators, and not by the collaborators themselves.

Historically, ASU has offered an Interdisciplinary Studies program, which includes undergraduate degrees in six concentrations, including an "individually-designed" curriculum. Interdisciplinary Studies has been housed under the larger University College structure, along with degree programs in Women's Studies, Global Studies, Appalachian Studies, and Sustainable Development, the Heltzer Honors Program, and a new General Education program. However, with the arrival of a new Provost in 2011, transitions are currently underway that will undoubtedly alter the University College identity and institutional role.

According to "University College History," the University College was created to facilitate resource-sharing and collaboration among its included programs. "At the same time, it allows interdisciplinary degree programs, general education, and other programs to develop in a university-wide rather than a department context, reflecting the world's growing need for interdisciplinary knowledge, skills, and habits of mind" (Haney & Hammett-McGarry, 2008, para. 7). Permanent and temporarily reassigned faculty in University College programs often work collaboratively and are compensated equally for time spent on shared projects. The University offers departmental compensation or "buyouts," either per credit hour or by salary, for all professors who are "borrowed" from their home departments to teach courses in a University College program (Appalachian State University, "Departmental compensation for University College and General Education Courses").

In the past, ASU has clearly shown commitment to creating institutional structure and incentive for establishing collaborative partnerships; however, outside of the (now-

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dismantled) University College structure, interdisciplinary-minded faculty and staff throughout the rest of the University seem to encounter limited resources and little incentive to pursue collaborative research or teaching. Aboelela, Larson, Bakken, Carrasquillo, Formicola, Glied, Haas, and Gebbie (2007), all members of health professions, collected data from existing literature related to interdisciplinary research as well as interviews with researchers in order to identify the "existence of a continuum of collaboration," "according to the level of information synthesis – ranging from sharing of ideas to full integration" (p. 338). They suggest that this continuum parallels the progression of collaboration "from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinary to transdisciplinary" (p. 339). At ASU, the "interdisciplinary to transdisciplinary" section of the collaborative spectrum has been incentivized primarily in an institutional setting in the form of the University College. For faculty that are beginning in a multidisciplinary situation–still operating solely in their home disciplines–the options for University-compensated partnerships are limited almost solely to working with those already engaged in interdisciplinarity. In its implementation of a structured format for collaboration, the University has limited the initiation of naturally-occurring, or *emergent*, collaborative relationships.

Despite these professional barriers, an interdisciplinary collaboration emerged organically, organized around a mutual recognition of shared arts-based processes among professors at Appalachian State University. Although its members are housed in a variety of distinct academic disciplines and departments (Human Development and Psychological Counseling, Theatre and Dance, Psychology, Music Therapy, Music Education, and Interdisciplinary Studies), the group was brought together by commonalities among their personal views on the value of aesthetic expression. Eventually, they would connect these

shared ideas with the emerging field of expressive arts, as they transitioned from multidisciplinarity to interdisciplinarity. Since then, a certificate program and a Master's degree concentration track have been established as part of the Human Development and Psychological Counseling department at Appalachian State University, while ASU Expressive Arts faculty and students have become leaders in the establishment of a professional field of practice that productively situates itself in the space between interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. The collaborative group, called the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, continues to work together, in various iterations and configurations, despite the many challenges associated with forging a new model of collaboration that is both informed by and contributes to the greater body of theory and practice of expressive arts, as well as to the curricula of University academic programs.

Expressive arts processes as used in the context of multimodal collaborations such as those of the Expressive Arts Collective offer not only a heuristic for understanding the nature of self-organizing interdisciplinary academic partnership and curriculum development; they also facilitate the meaning-making and relationship-building that contributes to personal and professional fulfillment. This study of the Collective offers a deep exploration of the their dynamic interdisciplinarity and arts-based collaborations as well the elements of such interactions that support overall satisfaction and ultimately influence faculty retention and productivity – an area of significant concern for colleges and universities. Glenn West (1999) suggests that a collaborative teaching relationship between faculty in different disciplines "typically results in a synergy that inspires renewed effort in one's own discipline as well as curiosity about the other discipline" (p.84). West offers this rejuvenation as a remedy to burnout and boredom among teaching faculty. However, interdisciplinary

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activities may sometimes require additional time and effort towards communication and coordination of projects, as well as extra time spent in team-teaching multiple courses or conducting joint research, thus leading to overwhelm. These complex engagements, like many aspects of personal and professional life, can be simultaneously rewarding as well as taxing of time and energy.

Statement of the Problem

Although interdisciplinary collaboration is a highly valued and sought-after component of academic institutions, even those colleges and universities which carve out "spaces" for interdisciplinary work struggle to offer tangible support for naturally-occurring partnerships and collaborative processes (Creamer & Lattuca, 2005; Sá, 2008). Institutions who seek to encourage generative learning are often tempted to adopt prescriptive structures to facilitate creativity, rather than imposing what Morgan (2006) calls *minimum critical specifications*:

> The principle of minimum specs helps preserve the capacities for self-organization that bureaucratic principles and mind-sets usually erode. It helps create a situation where systems can be self-designing as opposed to being "designed" in a traditional sense. (p. 111)

In relation to interdisciplinary work, these "minimum specs" are often vague and ill-defined, as educational leaders struggle to classify what actually occurs during the collaborative process. Though some research exists regarding faculty research partnerships, studies of collaborative "spaces" and hospitable conditions, or minimum specs, are scarce (Briggs, 2007).

Definitions of interdisciplinarity also vary, depending on both contexts and participants involved (Lattuca, 2001). In his introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, Robert Frodeman (2010) writes, "Interdisciplinarity represents a new word for a perennial challenge which will never be fully answered. Experienced hands can offer hints and rules of thumb constituting rough theory and practice of interdisciplinarity" (p. xxxi). He continues:

> But success at integrating different perspectives and types of knowledge – whether
>
> for increased insight, or for greater purchase on a societal problem – is a matter of
>
> manner rather than of method, requiring a sensitivity to nuance and context, a
>
> flexibility of mind, and an adeptness at navigating and translating concepts. (p. xxxi)

It is the work of these "experienced hands" that I have explored in my research of the Expressive Arts Collective. For over 20 years, the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective has continued to sculpt its loosely-structured, arts-based process of collaborative work, guided by intuitive and spontaneous connections around teaching, research, presentation, and performance projects. Using the expressive arts as a connecting thread, the Collective has developed its own spaces for collaboration and knowledge-creation, despite many departmental and institutional barriers. As an interdisciplinary group connected with an interdisciplinary field of study, and after much experimentation, the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective has created a working style all its own. Because academia recognizes the value of interdisciplinarity, yet is challenged to identify and facilitate it, this in-depth exploration of the Collective's expressive arts-based collaborative process provides valuable insight into environment, relationships, and interactive processes in order to understand and illustrate what academic interdisciplinarity can look like. "Grounded definitions of

interdisciplinary scholarship enhance our understanding of interdisciplinary scholarship because they capture interdisciplinarity in practice" (Lattuca, 2001, p. 261).

Research Questions and Methodology

In order to explore and describe the interdisciplinary work of the Expressive Arts Collective with respect to arts-based collaboration, organizational development, professional satisfaction, and curriculum development, I formed the following guiding research questions:

- How do academic partnerships emerge "organically" across disciplines, despite structural barriers?

- What role do the arts play in interdisciplinary collaboration?

- How does the Collective's collaborative work inform curriculum development?

- What role does professional satisfaction play in sustaining the work of the Collective?

- How does the inclusion of complexity theory augment more traditional perspectives of institutional collaboration?

- How does this exploration articulate alignments between expressive arts and the methodology known as a/r/tography?

The methodological approach of this qualitative case study combines the a/r/tographic concept of "living inquiry" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005) with traditional ethnographic techniques of observation and interview to form a structured, yet intuitive research project. Data were gathered through interviews conducted with each of the seven founding members of the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, as well as in observations of their working processes and interpersonal interactions during an annual event: a four day, intensive, residential workshop called the Expressive Arts Institute.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

As many academic institutions and their governing bodies recognize a growing need for interdisciplinary thinking and practice in the 21st century, support for and facilitation of intuitively-occurring interdisciplinary partnerships are limited by imposed disciplinary structures and implications of funding allocations (National Academy of Sciences, 2005; Sá, 2008). Additionally, interdisciplinary collaboration can take many forms and is not easily defined (Creamer & Lattuca, 2005; Klein, 1990; Lattuca, 2001). Therefore, while the specific working style of the Expressive Arts Collective may not function as a prescriptive model for future participants and settings, as a heuristic, or "rule of thumb," many of its informal structures, practices, and intentions could be applicable in determining appropriate minimum specifications (Morgan, 2006) for other would-be collaborators or educational leaders in other organizational circumstances. Expressive arts processes, in particular, as employed by the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, offer a fluid outline for encouraging the emergence of collaborative groups and projects. The Collective's arts-based, intuitive working processes and long-standing collaborative relationships offer insight into and implications for policy change surrounding the facilitation of interdisciplinary collaboration in higher education, as well as guidance for aspiring interdisciplinarians.

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the role of interdisciplinary, arts-based collaborative processes in facilitating and maintaining the academic spaces in which the Expressive Arts Collective developed organically and has become self-sustaining. It articulates my understanding of the role of their collaboration in creating the type of relational space that seems to contribute to professional satisfaction and stimulate curriculum development. Ultimately, my research is intended to provide rich description and exploration

of interdisciplinary collaboration in practice, in order to contribute to existing theory, inform educational policy-makers, and enhance the relationships between arts-based inquiry and ways of knowing.

The paper is structured as follows: Chapter One describes current organizational landscapes of higher education and introduces the purpose, significance, and approach of the study. Chapter Two presents a complex framework of literature, including theory related to expressive arts, organizational development, complexity science, and professional satisfaction. Chapter Three outlines the ethnographic and a/r/tographic framework of this project and details the specific methods used. Chapter Four offers representation and thematic analysis of collected data. Chapter Five includes discussion of results specific to the research questions, implications for academic stakeholders, and suggestions for further research.

Definition of Key Terms

Appalachian approach refers to the set of expressive arts teachings developed by the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective and the Appalachian State University Expressive Arts Program.

Community of practice (CoP) refers to Wenger's model of relational, collaborative organizational development.

Complexity science is the scientific study of complex systems, to include a variety of related theories (chaos theory, systems theory, complexity theory, etc.)

Emergence refers to the intuitive development of new structures and processes in systems or organizations.

Expressive arts work is defined as the use of arts-based approaches and activities to facilitate experiential learning processes and personal growth for groups or individuals.

Expressive arts therapy refers to the use of expressive arts approaches and activities in the context of psychotherapy.

Intermodal experiences involve the integration of multiple arts modalities into a single experience.

Layering is the technique of combining multiple arts modalities in an expressive arts experience.

Minimum critical specifications refer to the least-restrictive set of organizational requirements that allow a collaborative group to become cohesive, productive, and self-organizing.

Presence is defined as conscious attention to the relational, energetic, and environmental dynamics of a specific space and time.

CHAPTER TWO: TEXTILES–A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Textiles: the art or industry of forming fibers into fabric

In an effort to develop a holistic and comprehensive conceptual framework reflective of the meaningful and nuanced work of the Expressive Arts Collective, several seemingly-disparate bodies of literature are woven into a fabric which holds my collected data. Expressive arts therapy philosophies distinguish theoretical patterns related to the collaborative working processes and epistemological stances of the Collective; however, the essential components of the group's ongoing emergence, interaction, and relationship can also be bound together with fibers borrowed from studies of organizational development and professional satisfaction. Literature regarding interdisciplinarity and collaborative curriculum development also contribute to the semblance of my study.

Expressive Arts Therapy

Expressive arts therapy, by definition, is an interdisciplinary and connective field, strengthened by both theory and practice. The "inter"-discipline of expressive arts therapy continues to define itself, as it becomes more fully developed and widely recognized. Because my intended research subjects, the Expressive Arts Collective, work from the "Appalachian" approach to expressive arts therapy (which they developed through the course of their collaborations), the included literature has been drawn primarily from sources most influential to the Collective's philosophies. Additionally, having been trained in the Appalachian Expressive Arts tradition myself, the sources will often reflect influences on my personal approach as well. It is worth noting that a number of other theorists have addressed

similar principles regarding use of the arts in healing, and a diversity of perspectives on the subject can be found in the literature (Gladding, 2005; Malchiodi, 2005; Weiner, 1999). Even among the founding practitioners of expressive arts therapy, variations in philosophy, terminology, and technique exist (McNiff, 2009). As the field continues to grow, ongoing theoretical discourse will only be enriched by exploration and documentation of expressive arts processes, such as the present study of the Expressive Arts Collective.

The field of expressive arts is rooted in both the ancient traditions of incorporating the arts alongside each other in daily routine and ritual, as well as in the more recent academic and clinical developments of arts-based therapies, such as music therapy, art therapy, dance therapy, and poetry therapy (Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003; Atkins & Williams, 2007; Degges-White & Davis, 2011; Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2005; Levine, 1999; McNiff, 2009). Just as other academic disciplines have become sorted into categorical ranges of knowledge and specific areas of study, the arts have become specialized as well. A key feature of expressive arts therapy is its *intermodality*, or its use of arts modalities in tandem, demonstrated by a technique called *layering*. For example, an expressive arts experience might incorporate poetry-writing as a response to a musical piece, or a collaborative mixed-media collage project using bits of visual art and imagery, gathered materials, and written language, along with a movement-based interpretation of it. In expressive arts work the aesthetic modalities are not separated, but rather woven together seamlessly, as has been done since ancient times. Many early cultures and even some modern indigenous languages do not include a word to signify what is considered the Western cultural concept of "art" (Highwater, 1981; Hobart, 2007; MacDonald, 1996). In the field of expressive arts, the "arts" refer to the primitive concept of unified aesthetic

expression and its integration into daily life. "The arts belong together and they belong to all of us, in the service of life and well-being. This is the message of expressive arts therapy" (Atkins & Williams, 2007, p. xiii).

Expressive arts practices and education developed simultaneously in several settings. A number of years before the Expressive Arts Collective began to explore its own integrative arts practices, art therapist Shaun McNiff (1981, 1992, 1998, 2009) was developing an expressive arts approach through his work at a mental hospital in the northeastern United States. He, along with psychologist, musician, and physicist Paolo Knill, dance therapist Norma Canner, poet Elizabeth McKim, and others, went on to develop an integrative expressive arts therapy program at Lesley University in Boston, Massachusetts–still a leader in the field of expressive arts. The theoretical work of expressive arts founding fathers Knill and McNiff represent intertwined and sometimes parallel paths toward the articulation of this emerging field, as they have each developed distinctive philosophical perspectives. Along with noted expressive arts scholars Stephen and Ellen Levine (1999, 2011), Knill established the European Graduate School (EGS), where he now serves as Provost. European expressive arts scholars (and EGS faculty) who have influenced the Expressive Arts Collective include Herbert Eberhart, Margo Fuchs, and Jürgen Kriz. Jack Weller and the California Institute of Integral Studies are also leaders in expressive arts education, though the literature does not reflect their prominence.

Philosophies and practices of expressive arts differ among various theorists and schools of thought. The Expressive Arts Collective's Appalachian approach incorporates theoretical influences from many notable voices in the field, but having developed somewhat independently, it also has its own unique elements. The Appalachian approach is closely

connected to the natural environment and peoples of the Appalachian Mountains, placing special emphasis on *ecotherapy, dreamwork, community,* and *ritual* (Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003; Atkins & Williams, 2007).

Expressive arts techniques are drawn from a variety of aesthetic fields, including visual arts (e.g., painting, drawing, collage); music (e.g., listening, creating, responding); literature (e.g., poetry, narrative, journaling, bibliotherapy); movement (e.g., dance, somatics, bodywork); ecotherapy (e.g., horticulture therapy, wilderness therapy); dreamwork (e.g., re-presentation, interpretation); theatre (e.g., performance, psychodrama, storytelling); and play therapy (e.g., sandtray, puppets) (Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003; Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2005; Levine & Levine, 1999, 2011; McNiff, 1981, 1992, 2009; Rogers, 1993, 2011). This is by no means a comprehensive list, but instead is meant to convey a general idea of the wide range of aesthetic activities used in therapy. Expressive arts therapy is a stand-alone discipline, distinct from broader categories of expressive therapies (a former descriptor) or creative arts therapy. Art therapist and expressive arts founding father Shaun McNiff uses the term "creative arts therapy" to refer to the larger body of arts-specific therapies, in addition to the intermodal field of expressive arts (McNiff, 2009). For the purposes of this paper, the terms *expressive arts therapy* and *expressive arts* will be used to describe both the principles and practices of this still-emerging field, as well as to describe the field itself. While expressive arts therapy is a recognized approach to psychotherapy, it is important to make clear that the collaborative processes employed by the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective are not considered "therapy" in a clinical sense, and are not intended as such, though an expressive arts-based experience in any setting is often restorative and "therapeutic" for participants.

Therapeutic foundations

The concept of *presence*, described by art therapist Arthur Robbins (1998) as "the shifting from inside to outside, self to other, affect to cognition" (p. 10), is not only a key element of traditional counseling; in a humanistic, arts-based experience it becomes a necessary part of creative expression and authentic communication. Robbins says, "In creative expression, there is a synthesis of primary and secondary process, a shifting in different levels of consciousness, and an organization of verbal and non-verbal communication" (p. 11). In order to be present, according to Robbins, we must be sensitive simultaneously to the frame, container, and energy of the therapeutic experience. These three elements together make up the *space* of a therapeutic experience. Therapeutic space is created when individuals enter into a relationship of mutual trust and communication as they work together towards awareness and healing.

Expressive arts therapy is based partly on principles drawn from humanistic psychological theorists, particularly Carl Rogers' (1961, 1980) client-centered therapy and the essential notion of *unconditional positive regard*. The work of existential philosophers Viktor Frankl (1984) and Rollo May (1975) explored the process and context of meaning-making and its necessity to human life. In *The Courage to Create*, May (1975) says, "…art and imagination are often taken as the 'frosting' to life rather than as the solid food" (p. 124). He then asks, "What if imagination and art are not frosting at all, but the fountainhead of human experience?" (May, 1975, p. 124). (Many expressive arts practitioners believe that they are.) Other humanistic theoretical influences include Fritz Perls' (1969) holistic Gestalt therapy, Virginia Satir's (1972, 1983) systemic approach to family therapy, and Abraham

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Maslow's (1962) concepts of self-actualization and the hierarchy of needs. Person-centered expressive arts pioneer (and daughter of Carl) Natalie Rogers (1993, 2011) identifies a number of arts-related, humanistic principles in her influential book, *The Creative Connection,* including the following:

- All people have an innate ability to be creative.

- The creative process is healing.

- Personal growth and higher states of consciousness are achieved through self-awareness, self-understanding, and insight, which are achieved by delving into our emotions.

- Art modes interrelate in "the creative connection."

Adapted from N. Rogers, 1993, p. 7-8.

Expressive arts theory also draws from Depth Psychology, which deals with the psychodynamics of the unconscious mind. Carl Jung, James Hillman, Alfred Adler, and Donald Winnicott are significant contributors to depth psychology perspectives and frequently cited in expressive arts literature. Jung's work with dreams, images, archetypes, and his concepts of *synchronicity* and the *collective unconscious* (Jung, 1963; Jung & In Franz, 1964; Jung & Hull, 1973), as well as James Hillman's post-Jungian Archetypal Psychology (Hillman & Moore, 1990), are particularly relevant. McNiff (2009) suggests:

> I do not think that the expressive arts therapy community…has fully appreciated the archetypal dimensions of the spaces it creates. The expressive arts therapy studio is a realm of integration and creation, a place of health and healing…a milieu where we are inspired and supported in taking risks to do the new things that are the basis of transformation in both our inner and outer lives. (p. 177)

Potter and poet M.C. Richards (Richards & Haynes, 1996) illustrates the arts' archetypal

relationships in this way:

> When we play with the primary material, like clay or fiber or color or movement or
> sound or speech – we are activating our connection with the archetypal world, the
> great sources of universal imagery. We can come to greater self-knowledge, seeing
> what we make, feeling our souls moving through our hands. We can come to know
> ourself as a human person, a shared nature and a shared community and a unique
> being. These become our authenticity, out of which we may live and work and create
> and suffer and enrich the soil for others by our becoming part of it. (p. 127)

Expressive arts therapy, unlike many other types of therapy, emphasizes the art-

maker's *experience* during the therapeutic process, rather than focusing solely on the artifact

created (Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003; Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2005;

McNiff, 1992, 2009). The product need not be aesthetically-pleasing or clinically-revealing

to the therapist; instead, the value of the artistic outcome lies in the meaning and personal

growth that it represents for the client. The therapist accompanies the art-maker through the

process of self-exploration using artistic modalities, but s/he does not impose any clinical

interpretation of significance onto the artistic expression. (In the field of art therapy, for

example, the artistic product may be used for diagnostic or other interpretive purposes.) The

emphasis on process over product contrasts with the mechanistic, outcome-oriented

evaluative practices typical of many modern systems, including some forms of education.

This is not to say that the creative products of expressive arts work are irrelevant; rather,

artistic pieces are instead used for purposes (such as community-building, self-expression,

and further aesthetic interaction) that differ from measurement against an established

standard. This idea, says Eisner, "that the way something is formed matters," is a "lesson that education can learn from the arts" (2002, p. 197).

Expressive arts therapy also does not require artistic competency–only the willingness for self-exploration. Knill, Levine, & Levine (2005) call this principle "low skill/high sensitivity," in which aesthetic appreciation leans toward the cultural, rather than the technical. They add, "…this understanding of aesthetics is not a free pass to 'anything goes' but rather an example of cultural sensitivity" (p. 97). Native American writer Jamake Highwater (1981) describes the unifying quality of the arts in *The Primal Mind*:

> There is an artist in all of us. Of this there is simply no question. The existence of a visionary aspect in every person is the basis for the supreme impact and pervasiveness of art. Art is a staple of humanity. It can serve as a class distinction but it does so unwittingly. In fact, art has fundamentally the opposite relation to society insofar as it can function for any economic, intellectual, or social group. (p. 15)

The art-making process of expressive arts activities, using layered modalities, provides an opportunity for participants of any background to deepen self-awareness and to enhance emotional and intellectual clarity. While the therapist serves as facilitator of the process, the intention of expressive arts therapy is to allow the client to draw meaning intuitively from his/her own experiences, trusting that the process will reveal the insights that are most needed in the moment. "Trust soul, trust image, and trust your own gut" (Allen, 1995, p. 63). A core construct in the field of expressive arts is that very idea: *trust the process* (Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003; McNiff, 1992, 2009). Expressive arts therapists assist the client in navigating internal complexity and chaos, with the belief

that recognizable and interpretable patterns will emerge through the healing, transformative

process of artistic expression. Like the therapeutic space created in a counseling relationship,

an expressive arts collaboration is based on a similar foundation of mutual trust and respect,

openness to emergent questions and issues, and willingness to be transformed. The act of

creation conceives the space and assembles resources out of the complicated, swirling depths

of the soul to form a moment of sense and clarity–an event that is explained by Paolo Knill's

crystallization theory. Crystallization theory suggests that under the ideal conditions (often

facilitated by the arts), a "seed" of creativity will form and begin to take on a structure of

order and transparency, like a crystal (Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2005). In studying the

Expressive Arts Collective I have explored both the "seeds" and "spaces" generated from

their unique collaborative relationships, while cultivating my own crystals along the way.

Wenger's Communities of Practice

The Expressive Arts Collective has evolved into an example of what Etienne Wenger

calls a *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger & Snyder,

2000). Wenger's concept of communities of practice is an organizational development

model that has seen a significant increase in popularity over the last ten years. A community

of practice (CoP) is defined as a group in which participants "share their experiences and

knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems" (Wenger

& Snyder, 2000, p. 139). Collegiality and shared passion around a particular area of

expertise or project can spur the development of such communities, although once

established, "the organic, spontaneous, and informal nature of communities of practice makes

them resistant to supervision and interference" (p. 139). As Wenger himself acknowledges,

this newly-articulated form of collaboration has been in existence for thousands of years.

The challenge for educational institutions, then, is to determine how to create spaces for collaboration and knowledge creation without imposing excessively-restrictive structure or oversight.

Across a variety of populations and contexts, communities of practice share several key features, according to Wenger (1998). Firstly, a CoP fosters a relationship of *mutual engagement* among participants, which defines the community. "A community of practice is not just an aggregate of people defined by some characteristic. The term is not a synonym for group, team, or network" (Wenger, 1998, p. 73-74). Wenger adds:

> When it [mutual engagement] is sustained, it connects participants in way that can become deeper than more abstract similarities in terms of personal features or social categories. In this sense, a community of practice can become a very tight node of interpersonal relationships. (p. 76)

In addition to its professional interconnectedness, the Expressive Arts Collective has developed equally meaningful personal friendships that extend beyond academic pursuits. They are not only colleagues, but also friends.

Wenger's (1998) second identified characteristic of a CoP is *joint enterprise*. He offers three specifications for a joint enterprise:

1) It is the result of a collective process of negotiation that reflects the full complexity of mutual engagement.

2) It is defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it. It is their negotiated response to their situation and thus belongs to them in a profound sense, in spite of all the forces and influences that are beyond their control.

3) It is not just a stated goal, but creates among participants relations of mutual accountability that become an integral part of the practice. (p. 77-78)

Within communities of practice, the joint enterprise is continually focused and refocused, as the participants interact and negotiate the meaning of their work through mutual engagement, or *relationship*. In similar ways, meaning-making and relational engagement are facilitated through an expressive arts experience, in which participants use methods of aesthetic expression to deepen meaning, connection, and relationship.

Wenger's (1998) final CoP characteristic is a *shared repertoire*, in which he includes "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice" (p. 83). As collaborative groups create new knowledge and develop community-specific ways of knowing, a shared repertoire, or connotative language is bound to emerge, also contributing to the sense of connection and depth of relationship among community members. Expressive arts therapy, as well, refers to an "expansion of repertoire" in terms of opening new, shared frames of reference through arts-based play (Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2005).

Expressive Arts Collective as CoP

As has been previously-described, the Expressive Arts Collective developed out of a discovery of similar values around the healing power of the arts. Over time, the group has grown to a core of seven faculty, often joined by a number of additional collaborators in various projects and performances. Expressive arts-related groupwork relies heavily on the synergy of individual and community relationships for inspiration and growth. This type of collaborative, synergistic interaction "empowers the *partners in learning* to achieve more

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than they set out to do as individuals. The partners fuel one another, creating an energized dynamic, electric in its feel" (Saltiel, 1998, p.8). In reviewing literature on collaboration in general, several key elements seemed to surface regularly: the most common being the presence of relationships built on mutual respect and trust. (Forman & Markus, 2005; Ritchie & Rigano, 2007; Sgroi & Saltiel, 1998; Wenger, 1998). Collaborators also often share common goals, affection for the people and process, complementary talents, flexibility, and open-mindedness (Briggs, 2007; Karlsson, et al., 2008; Lattuca, 2001; Sargent & Waters, 2004; Sgroi & Saltiel, 1998; Wenger, 1998). These characteristics are evident in the Expressive Arts Collective, particularly when viewed as a community of practice. In its willingness to teach, write, talk, laugh, play, perform, listen, and *be present* with each other, inside and outside the realm of academics, the Collective has managed to maintain the shared affection, trust, and lightness of heart that have seen them through more than 30 years of working together.

Complexity Science

Ecological metaphors are applicable in many areas of organization, education, and relationships. Complexity science (including complexity theory, chaos theory, complex adaptive systems, and strange attractors), in particular, is increasingly used to describe new ways of conceptualizing organizational "spaces" and experiences (Gilstrap, 2005; Morgan, 2006). Unlike Darwinian models of natural selection (that emphasize competition), when a complexity perspective is applied to organizational development, collaboration becomes key. Organisms in nature exhibit nonlinear, yet patterned behaviors, responding to internal and external stimuli, energy consumption, and events (Gilstrap, 2005). In 1950**,** biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy authored a now-classic essay outlining what he called *General Systems*

Theory. Much of the published literature on complexity sciences list von Bertalanffy and General Systems Theory as significant theoretical influences. Von Bertalanffy hoped to offer an alternative framework with which to understand the complexities and interconnectedness of living systems, which the reductionist perspectives of scientific method were unable to account for. Rather than an *either/or* point of view, systems-oriented approaches remain open to *both/and* thinking.

The "collective process of negotiation*"* (resulting in joint enterprise) that Wegner refers to can be described metaphorically by way of complexity science's concept of *emergence*. When organizational collaboration results in something new but "nevertheless *completely explainable*," then *weak emergence* has occurred (Osberg & Biesta, 2007, p. 33). However, in a case of *strong emergence*, "what emerges is always radically novel" (p. 34). Emergence principles suggest that emergent knowledge is not created by the *parameters* of an experience, but rather by the experience itself. Deborah Osberg (2009) discusses the process of "enlarging the space of the possible" (a phrase coined by Brent Davis and Renata Phelps) in the context of teaching and learning, saying, "…engaging with other ideas, with the multiplicity of ideas, we enter new spaces of possibility, spaces which were previously outside the realms of our imagination" (p. vii). As a collaborative community of practice, the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective accomplishes this act by using integrative arts practices in order to experience and create new knowledge. "In this sense it is *the plurality of the ideas* that creates the 'academic ground' in which it becomes possible to enlarge the space of the possible" (Osberg, 2009, p. vii). Returning to Morgan's (2006) minimum critical specifications:

The central idea here is that if a system is to have the freedom to self-organize it must possess a certain degree of 'space' or autonomy that allows appropriate innovation to occur. This seems to be stating the obvious. But the reality is that in many organizations the reverse occurs because management has a tendency to overdefine and overcontrol instead of just focusing on the *critical* variables that need to be specified, leaving others to find their own form. (p. 110-111)

In addition to creating the space for emergence, processes or interactions must also "find form" in order to inspire it. In one explanation, Claus Otto Scharmer (2001, 2007) introduced his concept of "presencing," based on the work of philosophers Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl, as part of his "Four Fields of Conversation." The four categories are identified as: *downloading* (autistic system), *debate* (adaptive system), *dialogue* (self-reflective system), and ultimately, *presencing* (generative system.)

FIELD STRUCTURE OF ATTENTION		STREAM OF SOCIAL REALITY CREATION	
1. I-IN-ME	○	1. DOWNLOADING talking nice	SPEAKING FROM WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR empty phrases polite, cautious AUTISTIC SYSTEM
2. I-IN-IT	○	2. DEBATE talking tough	SPEAKING FROM WHAT I THINK exchange of divergent views I am my point of view ADAPTIVE SYSTEM
3. I-IN-YOU	◌	3. DIALOGUE reflective inquiry	SPEAKING FROM SEEING MYSELF AS PART OF THE WHOLE from defending to inquiry into viewpoints I can change my view SELF-REFLECTIVE SYSTEM
4. I-IN-NOW	◌	4. PRESENCING essential emergence	SPEAKING FROM WHAT IS MOVING THROUGH co-creating something new presence of an emerging future whole GENERATIVE SYSTEM

Figure 1: The Four Fields of Conversation (Scharmer, 2007, p. 274)

Scharmer's version of presencing describes "a state of mind that transcends the distinctions between 'inside' and 'outside', between 'I' and 'thou', and between knowing and acting" (2001, p. 141).

Olen Gunnlaugson (2011) unites Scharmer's complexity perspective of *presencing* with Osberg & Biesta's (2007) idea of the *space of emergence* to describe "a process-method of generative conversation that involves sensing, seeing into and apprehending complex emergent ways of knowing and inquiry within collective contexts of learning and inquiry" (p. 1).

It is in the last level of conversational complexity, *presencing*, where Gunnlaugson suggests that Osberg and Biesta's notion of *strong emergence* occurs. Much like Arthur Robbins' (1998) notions of therapeutic presence discussed earlier, the higher level of consciousness and sensitivity achieved in presencing is a key element in facilitating the creation of new knowledge and meaning. The arts, as well, especially when used integratively, have the ability to elevate human consciousness and to promote alternative and complementary ways of knowing (Allen, 1995; Eisner, 1994, 2002; Levine & Levine, 1999). The Expressive Arts Collective's collaborations, anchored in the principles of expressive arts, exemplify the emergent nature of meaningful artistic and educational processes.

Through the lens of complexity science, the creation of new constructs and knowledge becomes less like science and more like art. Like plowing a field, planting a seed, and watching beauty emerge from the soil, the creative process is intertwined with the concept of chaos. In art and in life, from a jumble of ideas, images, and emotion, a well-formed expression will emerge, if we only *trust the process*. Even as order emerges, an element of chaos remains at the core – perhaps the energy that Iris Saltiel (1998) describes:

> The potential and power of collaborative partnerships is the power of humanity. It is the power of human touch, the life force emitted and exchanged between human beings through physical, intellectual, and emotional pathways. We give energy and life to one another. This is at the heart of understanding the power of collaborative partnerships. (p. 91)

The work, energy, and "life" of the Expressive Arts Collective will be explored in the present study with an eye towards Fritjof Capra's (1996) key criteria of living systems:

- *pattern of organization* – "the configuration of relationships that determines the system's essential characteristics,"

- *structure* – "the physical embodiment" or substance "of the system's pattern of organization,"

- *life process* – "the activity involved in the continual embodiment of the system's pattern of organization." (p. 161)

These criteria, he says, "are so closely intertwined that it is difficult to discuss them separately" (p. 172), underscoring the importance of a holistic and dynamic inquiry. Additionally, Capra points out that in the theory of living systems, the concept of *life process* is equated to cognition, or "the process of knowing" (p. 172), an area particularly relevant to the creative, academic work of the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective. In other words, living *is* knowing, regardless of intelligence, ability, or expertise.

Complexity science speaks of an interconnectedness that mirrors both expressive arts and interdisciplinary collaboration. But more importantly, it brings us to the edge of what is known, toward the intuitive emergence of new understandings and patterns of awareness created through relational and generative learning processes. The Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective functions in this same space, where living is knowing, and there is always a surprise at the end (Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003).

Faculty Development and Professional Satisfaction

In addition to the questions of *how* and *where* faculty come to participate in interdisciplinary collaboration, a third important question is: *why*? The core members of the Expressive Arts Collective have continued to return to their collaborative projects throughout

decades of academic service, either because of or in spite of the rewards and challenges the work presents.

Over the last few decades, faculty responsibilities in higher education have become increasingly more diversified and complex, as well as more demanding of time and intellect. These "expanding faculty roles" are a primary concern for faculty today, regardless of age or status (Sorcinelli, 2007, p. 5). Faculty requirements often include classroom planning and instruction as well as academic research and writing, professional presentation, collegial collaboration, mentoring, institutional service, and community interaction. Beyond mastery of content knowledge, college and university faculty are expected to be successful and effective not only in pedagogical strategies, but also in research and publication, campus involvement, and professional practice. A recent study's findings suggest that full-time, college faculty work an average of more than 50 hours per week (Jacobs, 2004) in varying combinations of the teaching, research, and service requirements that most institutions demand, either formally or informally. As faculty positions continue to require greater competency and effort in a broader range of work, job satisfaction becomes an institutional concern with regard to attracting and retaining the most qualified professoriate.

Measures of professional (job) satisfaction have been considered from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, but for the purposes of this study, I am most interested in those factors that may address the Expressive Arts Collective members' ability to sustain its work over the course of such a length of time and associated changes.

Much of recent literature related to job satisfaction among faculty in higher education is based on the decades-old theory of *motivators* and *hygiene,* developed by Frederick Herzberg and colleagues (Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson, & Capwell, 1957; Herzberg,

Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959).   Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction have traditionally been

measured on a single, low-to-high scale, ranging from absolute dissatisfaction to absolute

satisfaction (Iiacqua, Schumacher, & Li, 1995). The Herzberg model suggests that

professional satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not fall at opposing ends of a spectrum, but

are instead influenced by two disparate sets of factors: intrinsic and extrinsic (Herzberg et al.,

1959; Herzberg, 1987). Satisfaction and dissatisfaction may occur simultaneously and to

different extents in a single individual. The Herzberg "two-factor" model proposes a

connection between intrinsic rewards (or *motivators*) and job satisfaction, while correlating

extrinsic influences (or *hygiene*) with job dissatisfaction. Herzberg introduced and

categorized 14 factors connected to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Those termed

hygienes (company policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relationships,

salary, working conditions, status, and security) were identified as having environmental

sources, while *motivators* (achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility,

advancement, and growth) originate internally (Herzberg, 1987).

Subsequent researchers have suggested that the relationships among job satisfaction,

dissatisfaction, and associated dynamics are much more complex than the two-factor model

is able to capture, noting that some factors may serve as *both* motivator and hygiene in

alternate situations (Oshagbemi, 1997). Herzberg, however, never implied mutual

exclusivity of his dualities, stating that in his research, "motivators were the *primary* cause of

satisfaction, and hygiene factors the *primary* cause of unhappiness on the job" (1987, p. 113,

emphasis added). Hagedorn (2000) offers an updated model of job satisfaction, based on the

two-factor model as well as a number of other sources, including career and life cycle

theories and the influence of demographics (primarily from her own research) on job

satisfaction. Hagedorn's model identifies a category she calls *Mediators*, which

encompasses three areas of influence: Motivators and Hygienes, Demographics, and

Environmental Conditions. A separate category collects *Triggers,* i.e., Changes or Transfers.

In order to measure productivity outcomes related to satisfaction level, Hagedorn also

established a Job Satisfaction Continuum, ranging from "Disengagement" to "Appreciation

of job" (actively engaged in work.) The results of her initial investigation suggest the most

significant mediators to be: the work itself, salary, administration, student quality and

relationships, and institutional climate and culture. Collegial relations, while listed as part of

the Environmental Conditions mediators, appeared to be the only factor not specifically

measured in the data set.

Retention

For practical reasons, faculty satisfaction is often studied with attentiveness to

retention of quality academic professionals. Determining how best to meet the professional

and personal needs of new faculty, in particular, aids colleges and universities in successfully

attracting and retaining the most productive and outstanding professoriate. Basing his work

on previous models of employee turnover from economics, psychology, sociology, and

education, Smart (1990) developed a causal model of factors influential in professors'

decisions to relocate. He divides his variables into three distinct areas: individual and

institutional characteristics; contextual, work and environment measures; and dimensions of

faculty satisfaction. "Faculty intention to leave the current institution" serves as the

dependent variable. Smart's findings suggest that the degree of faculty satisfaction

(organizational and career) *is* related to the intention to leave an institution. Salary

satisfaction was found to be significantly influential *only* for non-tenured faculty. Smart's

research also implies that forms of institutional governance perceived by faculty to be autocratic (less participatory) have a negative effect on faculty satisfaction.

Much of the research exploring factors related to faculty retention identifies *collegial support* as a primary category of influence in relation to job satisfaction (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005; Boice, 2000; COACHE, 2010; Hill, Leinbaugh, Bradley, & Hazler, 2005; Manger & Eikeland, 1990; Sorcinelli, 1994; Trower, 2011). Sorcinelli (1994) writes, "Few areas are more important to academic life than the intellectual and social dimensions of collegiality" (p. 475), while Ambrose, Huston, and Norman (2005) report that "collegiality stood out *by far* as the single most frequently cited issue" among their faculty study participants (p. 813). Similarly, the findings of Barnes, Agago, and Coombs (1998) indicate that the strongest predictors of faculty withdrawal from academia are "frustrations due to time constraints" and "lack of a sense of community" (p.466). In a Norwegian study on faculty intention to leave, Manger and Eikeland (1990) found that while salary had "practically no influence," the quality of collegial relationships was the most significant among all variables, "predicting rather strongly intention to leave the university" (p. 289). Marston and Brunetti's (2009) investigation of satisfaction among professors at a liberal arts college yielded data reflecting the importance of "having good faculty colleague relationships" as significantly higher than "practical factors" (security, tenure, schedule) but slightly lower than "professional factors" (satisfaction with the work, intellectual challenge, academic freedom, and opportunity for creativity) (p. 327).

In 2010, the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education published the results of a job satisfaction survey of more than 9,500 pre-tenure faculty at research institutions across the United States. The

questions addressed five categorical themes: Tenure; Nature of the Work; Policies and Practices; Climate, Culture, and Collegiality; and Global Satisfaction. The COACHE data illustrate that new faculty desire greater personal and professional interaction both with professional peers and with senior faculty, as well as access to informal opportunities for mentoring. When the data are sorted by discipline, the areas of physical sciences, biological sciences, and medical/health professions score highest in satisfaction regarding "opportunities to collaborate with tenured faculty," while social sciences, business, education, and "other professions" rank among the least satisfied (COACHE, 2010, p. 46).

Despite frequent mentions of *collegiality* in relation to job satisfaction, literature that investigates the subject in depth is scarce. A similar search on *collaboration*, often associated with *collegiality*, yields largely medical- and nursing-oriented literature, which would, at first glance, appear to be only tangential to the topic under review. However, medicine and health-related professions are working to establish a precedent of collaborative patient care that can be viewed as a model for collaboration in other fields. Basing their work on Adler and Heckscher's previous business-oriented writings, Adler, Kwon, and Heckscher (2008) offer the field of medicine as exemplary area wherein a new system of "collaborative community" (as compared to hierarchical and market-type structures) has become the dominant model of professional interaction. The authors explain that, unlike Ferdinand Tönnies' Gemeinschaft (reciprocal, group-oriented) and Gesellschaft (mechanistic, self-interested) concepts of sociological interaction and associated divisions of labor, the Adler-Heckscher collaborative community operates in "collaborative interdependence" and with "simultaneously high collectivism and individualism" (Adler et al., 2008, p. 366). The collaborative community bases their trust on *contribution*, *concern*,

honesty, and *collegiality*, rather than the *loyalty* and *duty* or *integrity* and *competence* associated with Gemeinschaft or Gesellschaft. In the authors' example, collaborative medicine, work is evidence-based and practiced interdependently with a focus on the interests of both patient and community.

Productivity, collaboration, and curriculum development

Most university faculty job responsibilities fall into three categories: teaching, research, or service. Depending on institutional and departmental priorities, each category's importance may vary. Terpstra and Honoree (2009) surveyed approximately 500 faculty members in American higher education to identify the effects of the "relative emphasis" of each focus area on the resulting effectiveness of teaching, research productivity, service, and job satisfaction. They found that when teaching and research were valued equally by the institution, faculty reported higher levels of satisfaction. Tierney (1999) acknowledges the three areas but writes:

> The problem, of course, is that I have pointed out how the academic world is changing. We need more diversity, not less; we need more possibilities to tap into individual strengths rather than try to force everyone into one model. At the same time, there are core activities that exist in the organization – teaching, research, and service – but rather than isolate them from one another, what we might do is think about how they fit together. (p. 47)

Many faculty may participate in collaborative activities which fall outside the defined scope of these three categories. In the fields of fine and applied arts, for example, public performance and art shows are often reflective of both productivity and effectiveness, while also offering an opportunity for personal self-expression, which can play a role in job

satisfaction. Art does not fit neatly into any one category. Not necessarily "research," it may require, nonetheless, a great deal of precise experimentation and study, and can present (or *re-present*) observation, analysis, and conclusions reached. Nor is art considered "service," although visual and performing arts on college campuses often beautify and entertain as well as instruct. Artistic displays and performances can be educational, but may differ from classroom teaching in both intention and experience. More recently there has been a push to redefine and broaden the definitions of academic scholarship to include these more difficult to describe projects and collaborations (Sorcinelli, 2007). Studies like the present one support that effort, as much of the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective's collaborative work falls outside the scope of traditionally-recognized academic involvement.

Faculty who teach in praxis-based fields (including the majority of the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective), such as education, counseling, and the arts, are not only focused on philosophical foundations of their disciplines but must also facilitate the translation of theory into hands-on experience for their students and themselves. A counselor-educator, for example, may teach counseling theories and supervise counseling interns in academia, yet could also provide therapy professionally in a community setting. Fine arts faculty, as well, may instruct and prepare students for performance or presentation while also performing regularly themselves. Professors of education, of course, are expected to teach pedagogy and andragogy while modeling the same.

Educators who are also skilled practitioners must work within a structure of interconnected, parallel responsibilities related to both personal practice and the education of students towards a personal practice of their own. Professional satisfaction factors for practitioner-educators, then, may include elements related to either or both arenas of work.

In an article describing the "Bringing Theory to Practice" project, Herzig (2007) discusses the need for faculty development opportunities that create "novel spaces" for the exploration and integration of "research, pedagogy, and civic engagement" (p. 31). Herzig, herself a professor, argues for a more holistic envisioning of expectations for both students and faculty in higher education, leading to a healthier and more balanced connection between academic and personal lives. Faculty development is frequently mentioned as a beneficial process for enhancing collegial collaboration, relationships, and overall morale. The "Bringing Theory to Practice" project, as described by Herzig, is one such opportunity for community knowledge-creation and integration through professional development and collaboration. Similarly, Uchiyama and Radin (2009) offer a "curriculum mapping" exercise as a purposeful method of curriculum development that, through a shared experience, additionally strengthens collegial relationships, builds community, and creates collective knowledge. "Curriculum mapping fosters respect for the professional knowledge and expertise of all instructors" (p. 273). Participants in Janet Miller's collaborative inquiry group, detailed in her book, *Creating Spaces and Finding Voices* (1990) found that their shared, reflective process empowered them to participate more actively in both their professional and personal lives.

Several studies list professional autonomy, flexibility, or freedom as factors in faculty satisfaction (Hill, et al, 2005; Manger & Eikeland, 1990; Marston & Brunetti, 2009). The Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective has the ability to create and develop coursework and identify new areas of research, within and between disciplines. Opportunities for co-construction of meaning through collaboration translate not only into increases in personal and professional growth and job satisfaction, but ultimately, a more innovative curriculum as

well. Both Adler-Heckscher's concept of the "collaborative community" and Wenger's "community of practice," though focused most often on corporate rather than educational arenas, may offer potential for knowledge-creation unlike other, more structured forms of professional collaboration in the field of education.

Briggs (2007) links methods of curriculum collaboration with Wenger's communities of practice and proposes that the framework can offer a new model of "continuous planning" in curriculum development. Briggs says:

> Most importantly, a community of practice framework suggests that climates conducive to curriculum collaboration are created not by formal structures and directive leadership but by a combination of enculturation, freedom and support to experiment, and informal opportunities and individual actions that provide examples and inspiration to others to strive for excellence in curriculum practice. (p.706)

The field of curriculum – encompassing content, methods, and theories of teaching, learning, and knowledge itself – is deeply intertwined with faculty development and collaborative work, as each moment of enlightenment, personal growth, or group realization contributes to the quality and meaning underlying curriculum as a whole.

Interdisciplinarity

Although many empirical studies and models of job satisfaction include collegial relations as an area of interest, few include opportunity for interdisciplinary work as source of satisfaction for faculty in higher education. Since Herzberg's identification of common factors in job satisfaction in the 1950's, subsequent studies have often employed survey methods in which respondents prioritize a number of predetermined categories, allowing little room for free response. When Ambrose, Huston, and Norman (2005) conducted a

qualitative study of faculty professional job satisfaction, nearly one-third of interviewees identified interdisciplinarity as a positive, motivating factor in academic work. The authors suggest that by using open-ended questions and interview techniques, they were able to elicit more honest and meaningful responses from study participants. Though the resulting narrative data were more challenging to categorize, it was highly relevant to the specific institution, and potentially to higher education as a whole.

In conjunction with the survey data from pre-tenure professors, Trower (of COACHE, at the Harvard Graduate School of Education,) published the results of a 2011 job satisfaction survey of 1,775 tenured faculty at seven participating institutions. Survey themes, identified from preliminary focus groups, include institutional governance and leadership; interdisciplinary work and collaboration; engagement with the academic community; mentoring and being mentored; work and personal life balance; appreciation and recognition; and faculty recruitment and retention. While the theme "interdisciplinary work and collaboration" is not a category shared with the pre-tenure survey, the subject clearly becomes more significant as faculty progress through the stages of academia. Out of a collection of 17 dimensions of academic life, professors of both types (associate and full) were least satisfied with "support for interdisciplinary work," with associate professors expressing slightly less satisfaction than full professors. Values shown relate to a 5-point scale in which 1= Very dissatisfied, 2= Dissatisfied, 3= Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, 4= Satisfied, and 5 = Very satisfied. An asterisk indicates that the construct was rated significantly lower by associate professors than by full professors.

	ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS Mean	FULL PROFESSORS Mean
Support for teaching	3.71*	3.84
Departmental collegiality	3.70	3.79
Departmental leadership	3.56	3.46
Collaboration	3.48*	3.65
Health and retirement benefits	3.44*	3.55
Departmental engagement	3.43	3.52
Department quality	3.41*	3.53
Facilities and clerical support	3.40*	3.51
Promotion clarity and expectations	3.36*	4.08
Senior leadership	3.19*	3.33
Support for service	3.16*	3.32
Appreciation and recognition	3.14*	3.34
Support for research	3.10*	3.31
Division leadership	3.09	3.18
Personal and familial support	3.01*	3.19
Mentoring	2.98*	3.28
Support for interdisciplinary work	2.51*	2.72

Figure 2: 17 Dimensions of Academic Life (Trower, 2011, p. 9)

More specifically, study participants overwhelmingly reported that their institutions did not successfully facilitate, evaluate, or reward interdisciplinary work, despite, as the study points out, an increasing demand and desire for interdisciplinarity in education.

	ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS		FULL PROFESSORS	
	% Agreeing	Mean	% Agreeing	Mean
Campus facilities are conducive to interdisciplinary work	21%	2.46*	26%	2.62
Interdisciplinary work is rewarded in the merit process	23%	2.46*	29%	2.71
Budget allocations encourage interdisciplinary work	23%	2.47*	25%	2.60
Interdisciplinary work is rewarded in the promotion process	26%	2.53*	32%	2.80
My department understands how to evaluate interdisciplinary work	30%	2.66*	35%	2.85

Figure 3: Support for Interdisciplinarity (Trower, 2011, P. 10)

Studies of interdisciplinary working groups have found that collaboration among academic disciplines not only facilitates the building of relationships based on mutual trust and respect, it can also give participants a confidence boost in unforseen ways. Unlike traditionally compartmentalized academia, interdisciplinary collaboration creates a forum where "expert status" must be let go in order to open the door to learning. In a study on an international, interdisciplinary, scientific research program, Karlsson et al. (2008) observed that after joining collaborative groups, participants found that their own skills became valuable in areas where they had not expected to play a role. Interdisciplinary collaboration has been shown to uncover hidden strengths and encourage creative contribution regardless of knowledge depth, leading to broader and more innovative thinking and working processes.

"College professors typically work in environments that are high-pressured, multi-faceted and without clear borders" (Hagedorn, 2000, p.6). Ultimately, a healthy and positive working environment for collegiate faculty is good for faculty, students, and community members alike (Hagedorn, 2000; Herzig, 2007). Decades of research overwhelmingly suggest, with little variation, that faculty are happiest and most productive when situated in a supportive, collegial academic community with freedom to collaborate and innovate. However, as Briggs (2007) points out, "Unfortunately, understanding conditions that may nurture curriculum communities of practice and curriculum collaboration does not directly answer questions about how to initiate such conditions" (p. 705). For colleges and universities who would strive to maintain the personal and professional growth of the institution and its academics, intentional efforts to create faculty development opportunities for collaboration around knowledge creation, meaning-making, teaching, and research will be essential, as will continued studies into the process and nature of the work itself.

Theoretical Framework in Synthesis

Academic collaboration, particularly among members of different disciplines, is a complicated and unique experience (Briggs, 2007; Creamer & Lattuca, 2005; Klein, 1990; Lattuca, 2001). Interdisciplinary in itself, the field of expressive arts therapy provides a dynamic, intuitive, and multidimensional process for interdisciplinary collaboration. By weaving together literature from the areas of expressive arts, organizational development, and professional satisfaction, I have created a theoretical framework which will support a necessarily thorough and rich exploration of the interdisciplinary, collaborative intricacies of the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective. Concepts from complexity theory, in particular, allow us to talk in new ways about traditional perspectives from organizational development, curriculum development, and professional satisfaction theory and to conceptualize constructs from the practice-oriented but still under-articulated field of expressive arts. Complexity theory also contributes an idea essential to this project–*emergence*–which is echoed by much of the included arts-related literature, as well as by the arts-based methodology detailed in Chapter Three.

While I have made attempts to create a graphical illustration of my framework, it seems that oversimplification of the totality of concepts embodied by the literature review would be both detrimental to the exploration process and misrepresentative of my holistic objectives. Methodologically, the inclusion of metaphorical imagery helps to address this challenge and supports a fuller depiction of the integrated theory and data. Again, the guiding research questions offer an outline for this multi-layered study of collaboration:

- How do academic partnerships emerge "organically" across disciplines, despite structural barriers?

- What role do the arts play in interdisciplinary collaboration?

- How does the Collective's collaborative work inform curriculum development?

- What role does professional satisfaction play in sustaining the work of the Collective?

- How does the inclusion of complexity theory augment more traditional perspectives of institutional collaboration?

- How does this exploration support alignments between expressive arts and a/r/tography?

I have endeavored to shape a project in which my research methodology remained true to my underlying theoretical framework in a reciprocal way. In other words, once I created the "space" – both theoretically and methodologically – for studying collaboration, I was obliged to respect my own constructs and "trust the process."

CHAPTER THREE: BRUSHWORK–A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Brushwork: a painter's distinctive use of a paintbrush

Collaboration, as a process, can follow many paths, depending on the participants, environment, and underlying intentions. Expressive arts experiences offer intuitive, integrative ways of knowing and relating, thereby providing a potentially rare and highly productive lens through which to view academic interdisciplinary collaboration. Using a descriptive, qualitative case study framed by traditional ethnographic methods, as well as arts-based theory, I have explored group dynamics and individual views on collaborative processes among an established, interdisciplinary group of professors at Appalachian State University. In addition to logistical workings, I have examined the connections, layers, and relationships that develop throughout their collaborative processes. I'm interested not only in *how* the Collective works together, but also in *why*.

Due to the depth and intricacy of the expressive arts philosophies and complexity science concepts discussed in the previous chapter, my research objectives require a multidimensional and complex framework with which to view the collaborative work of the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective. The intention behind selecting a qualitative case study framework is to produce an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 21). Langer's (1957) description of "dynamic form" speaks to the type of conceptualization I crave when she evokes the image of a waterfall:

You can photograph a waterfall with an ordinary little camera, if you stand back

enough, just as you can photograph a house or a mountain. The waterfall has a shape,

moving somewhat, its long streamers seeming to shift like ribbons in a wind, but its

mobile shape is a permanent datum in the landscape, among rocks and trees and other

things. Yet the water does not really ever stand before us. Scarcely a drop stays there

for the length of one glance. The material composition of the waterfall changes all

the time; only the form is permanent; and what gives any shape at all to the water is

the motion. The waterfall exhibits a *form of motion*, or a *dynamic form*. (p. 48)

With a qualitative methodology that provides "thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Glesne,

2006) and allows for data collection from a variety of contexts and perspectives, I am able to

"write the waterfall, not the stone" (Grumet, Anderson, & Osmond, 2008, p. 153) by

portraying a fuller depiction of the "dynamic form" of the Collective's collaborations and

identifying insights that may be applicable to other collaborative spaces and participants.

Epistemological and Theoretical Context

My research is guided by constructivist and subjectivist epistemology, reflective of

my belief that knowledge is co-created through interaction–with others, with environment,

and with self. I also believe that knowledge is embedded in the context of meaning and

shared experience, which acknowledges an emphasis on interpretation of both. These

constructivist and subjectivist perspectives, as well the interdisciplinary and arts-based nature

of my topic, lead me to approach this project from a theoretical perspective of interpretivism.

Interpretivism, developed as a contrast to value-free positivist views (Crotty, 1998),

acknowledges the value-laden "situatedness" of the researcher and reflects the systemic

nature of knowledge and knowing.

Bricolage, a term coined by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and expanded upon by Kincheloe (2001, 2005), offers an approach to interpretive, interdisiciplinary inquiry that is quite relevant to the multiplicity of framework and methodology in the present study. Users of bricolage, *bricoleurs*, work at the intersections of various theoretical perspectives and methodologies, creating synergy through "deep interdisciplinarity" (Kincheloe, 2001, 2005). Kincheloe (2001) suggests:

> As bricoleurs recognize the limitations of a single method, the discursive strictures of one disciplinary approach, what is missed by traditional practices of validation, the historicity of certified modes of knowledge production, the inseparability of knower and known, and the complexity and heterogeneity of all human experience, they understand the necessity of new forms of rigor in the research process. (p. 681)

Bricolage opens opportunities for qualitative researchers to actively interpret and respond to both the practice and process of inquiry in a rigorous and reflexive way (Kincheloe, 2005).

Artist, educator, and researcher Elliot Eisner (1994, 2002), has long been a proponent of arts-informed education, research, and practice, as well as of a broader view of knowledge. Eisner and colleague Tom Barone were among the first to delineate arts-based educational research (ABER) as a recognizable methodology—though the arts and inquiry have long been connected (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008). In *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, Eisner (2002) argues that an arts-based curriculum is conducive to developing positive personal abilities (also desirable in a researcher), including relational attunement, heightened perception, creativity, and linguistic articulation of experience. He says:

Work in the arts is not only a way of creating performances and products; it is a way

of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions,

satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a

culture. (Eisner, 2002, p. 3)

Arts-based educational research methodologies must function simultaneously as "practice,

process, and product" (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006) in order to

capture the many curricular, pedagogical, epistemological, and ontological layers of the field.

This multi-tasking, aesthetic approach is productive because "thinking in the arts is a form of

qualitative inquiry in which sensibility is engaged, imagination is promoted, technique is

applied, appraisal is undertaken" (Eisner, 2002, p. 232).

Arts-Informed, Qualitative Case Study Metholodgy

A/r/tography's context of "living inquiry" joins together the arts and scholarly writing

in a way that facilitates the type of representation I desire. Moving beyond even the concept

of bricolage, which blends together research approaches that are already established,

a/r/tography intends to focus on the "unnamed something" that is not yet known (Springgay,

Irwin, & Kind, 2005), similar to the novel outcomes of Osberg and Biesta's (2007) strong

emergence. "It is an inquiry process that lingers in the liminal spaces inside and outside—the

between—of a(artist) and r(researcher) and t(teacher)" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2008, p.

84).

As previously explained in this paper, expressive arts takes a perspective, akin to

a/r/tography, valuing intersubjectivity, intermodality, and the layering of artistic expression,

experience, interaction, and environment to create a meaningful and self-actualizing process

of knowing. French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theories regarding perception and

embodiment are often cited in arts-related literature, including expressive arts and a/r/tography. A key concept of Merleau-Ponty's theories, according to expressive arts scholar Stephen Levine (1996), is the idea that "we are in the world not as disembodied consciousnesses but as beings who perceive the world through the senses" (p. 133). Merleau-Ponty's ideology suggests that "perceptual, emotional, and cognitive life are viewed as subtended by an intentional arc that situates us in our past, our future, our human setting and our physical, ideological, and moral situation" (Haworth, 1997, p. 137). This emphasis on temporality, reflexivity, and interpretation appeals not only to expressive artists, but also to a/r/tographic researchers.

Pioneering a/r/tographers Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springgay (2008) describe a/r/tography as method of inquiry "with an attention to the *in-between* where meanings reside in the simultaneous use of language, images, materials, situations, space and time" (p. xix). In the present study, aesthetic influences are evident in both the expressive arts underpinnings of the identified participant group, as well as in the expressive arts training and approach of the researcher. The intent behind selecting an arts-informed methodology is not to produce representational "works of art" in lieu of thorough academic examination, but rather to venture into inquiry with the spirit of creativity, intuition, and openness to emergence that is common to both expressive arts and a/r/tographic experiences. "A/r/tography is not a formulaic-based methodology. Rather, it is a fluid orientation creating its rigor through continuous reflexivity and analysis" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 903).

The fields of a/r/tography and expressive arts similarly question disciplinary and modal divisions, and share comparable and sometimes overlapping philosophical foundations

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about the role of the arts in facilitating communication, self-awareness, and meaning-making. Methodologically, a/r/tography's inclinations can be summarized in this way:

> The language we have learned so well to use for building frames and fences, theories and theologies, and—especially in education over the last sixty years—to create specious divisions and to play methodological games is a language we continue to question. We have so many languages available to us; a/r/tography's richness brings these to bear, and in doing so, deepens what it means to inquire. (Neilsen, 2008, p. xvi)

> Both fields are also embedded in practice – establishing a particular orientation to knowledge through the work of practitioners prior to the development of a theoretical framework (Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003; McNiff, 1992; Irwin & Springgay, 2008). Like a/r/tography, expressive arts therapy relies on the arts to ground itself in an "aesthetic theory of practice" (Atkins & Williams, 2007; Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2005).

Unfortunately, despite their commonalities, it appears that these two fields (a/r/tography and expressive arts) rarely engage in dialogue together. Though there exists little precedent for the use of an a/r/tographic methodology with an expressive arts-oriented theoretical framework, it seems a natural fit for the topic under review. "A/r/tographers call out to one another from many different locations in many different voices, all enthused with the possibilities of attending to other ways of creating, researching, and teaching in rhizomatic connections without end" (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008, p. xiii). The present study answers that call, in the voice of expressive arts therapy, with similar intentions and hopes for emergence.

Site and participant selection

As determined by the selected case (chosen for previously-described reasons of uniqueness and complexity), the study's participants are members of the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, an interdisciplinary, collaborative group of faculty at Appalachian State University, a mid-sized, rural, public university, located in the southeastern United States. While the group also often includes additional collaborators, for the purposes of this study, I was most interested in the seven principal members recognized as the core collaborators whose work contributed to the establishment of an expressive arts-oriented academic program of which I am a graduate. In addition to my experiences as a student in the program, I have also interacted with the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective in a number of roles, from conference planner to editorial assistant. My experiences and familiarity with the Collective offered the benefits of an established rapport with individual group members and also broader access to their working processes. The ideas of subjectivity and reflexivity are addressed in more detail later in this chapter.

This project has been determined to be exempt from further review (#12-0243) by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Appalachian State University. Before proceeding with data collection, participants were asked to sign an informed consent [Appendix A] advising them of the voluntariness of their involvement, any foreseeable negative effects of participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time (Glesne, 2006). Permission for audio recording and photographic documentation was also obtained. Data sources include observation of group activities, interviews of individual participants, and archival review of related documents and artifacts.

Observation

Opportunities for observation included planning meetings, performances, plenary sessions, meals, interactions with students, and team-taught workshops. I spent four days observing the Collective as they facilitated an intensive, residential expressive arts institute for nearly 70 participants. All seven members of the core Collective group served as institute facilitators, along with other colleagues and collaborators. The institute, titled *Art in Community*, is an annual event with a unique title and theme each year.

Field notes were recorded in the moment of observation and/or after the sessions, depending on the parameters of the activities. A field notebook and digital journal were also maintained, with space provided for both description and reflection (Creswell, 1998). Sketches and other non-written descriptions were also included in the field notebook.

In previous research experiences with the Collective I have found myself situated at points throughout the "participant-observation continuum" of involvement, including observer, observer-participant, participant-observer, and full participant (Glesne, 2006). While I anticipated this variability and feel comfortable in any of these roles, I could not predict, from experience to experience, where I would be positioned during this study.

Interviews

To complement my observational data, I conducted interviews with each of seven core Collective members. I gathered information directly from participants through interviews lasting between one and two hours. As is common in qualitative research (Merriam, 1988), interviews were semi-structured, guided by a list of open-ended questions (based on the research questions and theoretical framework) that were expanded upon by the interviewer in a dialogue with interviewee responses. Interviews were digitally recorded and

later transcribed for analysis, with the exception of "Kara," whose interview was only partially-recorded due to a computer glitch. Kara later provided shorter, written responses to the questions from the missing section of recording. Some in-session notes were also taken during each interview.

I completed a preliminary pilot study in 2009, during my doctoral coursework, which led me to construct this similar but more formal and sustained exploration for my dissertation research. The current study's interview guide [Appendix B] was based on the pilot study interview questions, and expanded upon to reflect the broader research questions first stated in Chapter One.

The final request in my interview guide ("Describe a metaphor that relates to the collaborative process.") deserves special attention in relation to my research design. I invited additional imagery as part of my a/r/tographic data collection process in order to generate a dynamic conceptualization, like Langer's (1957) waterfall. Methodologically, "(t)he doubling aspect of metaphor increases and provokes a reconsideration of each other. This process of doubling and re-doubling infuses a/r/tography within a continuum, a turning back, and a moving forward" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 904-905).

Using a framework of collaborative writing, Ritchie and Rigano (2007) classify turn-writing (piece by piece) as cooperative, and lead-writing (in which writers take turns producing first drafts) as more collaborative. Conceptualizing their process with a metaphor, the authors describe their approach to writing as a duet played on piano. Alvesson and Skoldberg suggest, "The point is that having access to several different metaphors facilitates offering various comprehensive images of research, thus reducing the risk of latching on to a one-sided favorite conception" (as cited in Ritchie & Rigano, 2007, p. 126). The complexity

science metaphors discussed in the previous chapter provided a starting point for exploring metaphors that describe the Collective's work; however, as part of my data collection, I have also solicited metaphorical imagery during interviews and subsequent discussion and arts-based activities to generate additional metaphorical and symbolic description. In addition to asking my questions directly, I felt that the introduction of metaphor gave participants an opportunity to communicate the complexities of collaboration in a more imaginative, artistic, and holistic way.

Archival review

Both individually and collectively, the selected participant group has produced a number of documents and artifacts, from a published book to television interviews. I incorporated data gathered from these items into my pool for verification and analysis in relation to other collected information. Early versions of the Collective's expressive arts publications, in particular, helped to confirm information regarding timelines, leadership, participation, and support.

Subjectivity and reflexivity

In the context of my interpretive and arts-informed theoretical perspective, intersubjectivity and reflexivity become key methodological elements. To maximize my reflexivity as a researcher and allow myself space for creative response, throughout the research process I maintained a journal containing textual as well as visual elements (rocks, leaves, photographs, drawings, etc.), as well as a digital journal, each of which have allowed me to explore my own angles and alignments with the work. Relevant pieces of the journal have been incorporated into my final narrative.

Given my own experience with both the Collective and expressive arts work as a whole, my transition into a researcher role was at once easier and more complicated than an unfamiliar observer's might be. During the pilot study I was encouraged by the enthusiasm and welcome extended to me during my observations, yet also frustrated by the tension I felt between acting simultaneously as both participant and observer. During the current study's research process, I felt similar tensions and also observed some unexpected pushback from the Collective in response to my role as an academic researcher. My commitments to process and emergence allowed me to maintain flexibility in these various circumstances, which mitigated some of the situational tensions. Other tensions are discussed further in Chapter Four.

Analysis

Collected data were analyzed for themes and key concepts, then connected and interpreted more fully through narrative using illustrative quotes and vignettes. Interviews were transcribed from digital recordings and then coded. Preliminary codes were categorized using notecards (Glesne, 2006) to allow for tactile manipulation during analysis but were later transferred to digital documents, which were also printed, cut into pieces, and manipulated. Once initial themes and key concepts began to emerge, I communicated with several participants via phone, email, and in person for clarification purposes.

Thematic analysis began as soon as the first data were collected, and continued throughout and beyond the data collection process. My integrated theoretical and methodological orientation allowed for emergence of interconnections and synchronicities, therefore the process of analysis was ongoing.

As described in the data collection section, a fieldwork journal was maintained with designated space for real-time documentation and intuitive analysis as well as subsequent reflection and exploration. Research memos (Maxwell, 2005) were also used to record observations and responses throughout research and analysis. Because the project is both holistic and emergent, allowing space for this reflexivity enriched not only the process itself but also the resulting interpretations and analysis.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Due to the uniqueness of the participant group and rich descriptions involved in qualitative research, generalizability is not a goal in studies of this nature (Crotty, 1998). Corrine Glesne (2006) points out, "The work of qualitative researchers is to accentuate *complexity*, not the *norm*, and to emphasize that which contributes to plurality rather than to a narrowing of horizons" (p. 219). As a heuristic, a study of the Expressive Arts Collective offers conclusions that may be highly transferrable to current or future practitioners with similar intentions. This project articulates the complexity of collaborative processes in a dynamic form, creating infinite potential for establishing points of connection with other participant groups and settings.

Validity concerns were addressed by triangulation of sources, methods, and theory, collection of "rich data," and clarification of researcher bias through reflexivity (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988). I collected respondent data and performed member checks (Creswell, 1998) through follow-up meetings, personal communications, and invitations for feedback, which provided additional interpretive and clarifying elements for my study. Various drafts of the pilot study write-up, dissertation proposal, and final paper have also been made available to the Collective, with solicitations for comments, throughout the research process.

An additional consideration around limitations and ethics involves my connectedness to the Collective. One of the seven original Collective members, Dr. Sally Atkins, serves as director of the ASU Expressive Arts program and stands at the forefront of the growing international expressive arts community. Dr. Atkins has been my teacher, supervisor, mentor, and friend since 2005, when I began my Master's degree studies in counseling and expressive arts therapy. I was assigned to her service as a graduate assistant until I received my diploma in 2007, and was again fortunate to be able to continue our work together from 2008-2011, as a doctoral research assistant. I owe many of my sensibilities as an expressive arts therapist, researcher, and teacher to Dr. Atkins. Her influence was evident as I prepared this document, and particularly through the research phase of my project, as she, along with the entire Collective, became a participant and collaborator. Although the possibility for bias is inherent to every experiential research project, in keeping with the productive nature of subjective understanding, I do not see this relationship as a limit as much as it is a strength. While mindful of how my associations with the Collective, and especially Dr. Atkins, may have shaped my perceptions, I believe that these personal connections have enhanced both the collection and analysis of my data in ways that, had the relationship not been present, would not have been possible.

Because my selected participant group is a publicly-recognized and published entity, complete confidentiality was not possible. However, in order to protect individual confidentiality and encourage openness, pseudonyms were used when attributing any data collected to specific participants. Participants selected their own pseudonyms in order to add a layer of personal meaning to the requested anonymity.

Summary

Neither collaboration nor the arts seem inclined to unfurl their developing leaves in a linear fashion, which comes as no surprise to non-linear kindred spirits like myself. Those of us that choose a circuitous path through life spend extra time in sensory and reflective investigation–crawling at eye-level with the family dog, sniffing each citrus fruit in the produce aisle, transferring the shapes of clouds with pencil to paper. Creativity and contemplation are present in each step–a sort of collaboration with life. As Eisner (2002) points out, "Aesthetic qualities are not restricted to the arts; their presence depends upon how we choose to experience the world" (p. 231).

The Expressive Arts Collective, over many years of community-building and dialogue, has fine-tuned their shared approach into an art form. In order to study the intellectual, emotional, and soulful processes involved in their collaborative experiences, I determined that a qualitative approach full of imagery and connection would most completely capture the intuition, knowledge, attitude, and practice that are grounded in such a unique intertwining of process and product. The study results are not intended for generalization or for application as a prescriptive model for collaboration; rather, the work of the Expressive Arts Collective can be viewed as a unique, exemplary guide, to be used as a heuristic–a dynamic form–for future potential collaborative spaces and groups in academia or elsewhere.

CHAPTER FOUR: SCULPTURE–REPRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Sculpture: the art of shaping multidimensional images

Setting: Wild Acres Retreat Center; Little Switzerland, NC. May 2012. 1:30 pm.

The hexagonal, wooden-walled auditorium space offers an expansive view of foggy mountains and green trees. About half of the room's silver metal and pink upholstered seats are filled with anxious and excited Expressive Arts Institute participants who have just arrived for four days of intensive training. From the auditorium stage, a gong sounds, signifying the ceremony's opening and silencing the chattering audience. After a brief welcome, we hear a few beats of percussion, and the introductions* begin.

(* Names have been changed to participants' self-selected pseudonyms.)

Announcer: "Adrienne!"

Adrienne strolls into the room, singing: "High ay ay ay-y, high ay ay ay…" She steps to her harp and strums a melody. The percussion continues softly.

Announcer: "Kara!"

Kara processes in silently and sits at the piano. She joins Adrienne and the percussionist in their musical improvisation. The other instruments fade slightly, to give Kara the focus.

Announcer: "Heyoka!"

Heyoka, wearing a red clown nose and a too-small, plastic fireman's hat, peeks around the doorframe at the back entrance of the auditorium. Several laughs rise from the audience. He

strikes a bundt pan with a soft-headed drumstick, waving the pan around to spread the reverberation. Approaching the stage, he sits in a chair and picks up a tomato-colored, plastic trombone. After playing a few phrases, he begins shaking a turkey call. Gobbleglobbleobbleobbleobble! As Heyoka performs, the others respond musically to his instrumentation.

Announcer: "Slammer!"

Slammer, dressed in blue jeans and bright white sneakers, strides to the stage and talks about poetry. He reads several haikus. Adrienne has switched to Native American flute.

Announcer: "Luna!"

Luna steps to the stage and states, "I am a dreamer." Talking with her hands and gesturing broadly, she tells of three dreams, connected by images. The music continues.

Announcer: "Lottie!"

Lottie runs headlong into the auditorium, screaming wildly, and ricochets off the front of the stage. Adrienne has returned to the harp and Heyoka to trombone. Lottie finds an empty row of seats and climbs onto them, balancing in places, falling once. "It's about risk-taking," she says, straining through a handstand before losing her grip and tumbling over a chair. "It doesn't always work." She scampers around and makes her way to the stage.

Announcer: "Artemis!"

Artemis walks to the stage, barefoot, and stands behind the vase of rhododendrons she brought from her own home. The music quiets. She recites an original poem:

Tell me, she said:
What is the story you are telling?
What wild song is singing itself through you?

Listen:
In the silence between there is music;
In the spaces between there is story.

It is the song you are living now,
It is the story of the place where you are.
It contains the shapes of these old mountains,
The green of the rhododendron leaves.

It is happening right now in your breath,
In your heart beat still
Drumming the deeper rhythm
Beneath your cracking words.

It matters what you did this morning
And last Saturday night
And last year,

Not because you are important
But because you are in it
And it is still moving,
We are all in this story together.

Listen:
In the silence between there is music;
In the spaces between there is story.

Pay attention:
We are listening each other into being.

[Poem used with permission of the author.]

Announcer: "The Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective!"

As I have suggested in previous chapters, interdisciplinary collaboration is a complex

and situationally-unique process. I can think of no better introduction to this study's

participants, the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, than the way in which they chose

to introduce themselves–through music, dance, dreams, and poetry. These introductions, of course, are simply snapshots of the personalities, relationships, and collaborations that represent the Collective, which will be brought further into focus by the data and analysis presented in this chapter. Their work together is arts-based and deeply relational, and challenging to depict in any summary form. Throughout the course of this project, the Collective members have both directly and indirectly voiced their concerns about the reductionistic tendencies of traditional research, and I have attempted to carry those concerns forward with me as I identify thematic threads throughout my data. In the book *Turbulent Mirror: An Illustrated Guide to Chaos Theory and the Science of Wholeness*, Briggs and Peat (1989) suggest, "The difference between reductionism and holism is largely a matter of emphasis and attitude. But, in the end, that difference is everything" (p. 202). My consistent intention has been to take a holistic view of the Collective and its work, using illustrative quotes, vignettes, and descriptive observations to fill out the broad conceptual framework woven together in Chapter Two's review of the related literature. Metaphorical imagery, as well, will be a crucial tool as I sculpt my analysis and representation of the collected data.

In previous chapters, I have introduced several theoretical concepts drawn from complexity science, including Capra's (1996) three key criteria of living systems: *pattern of organization, structure,* and *life process*. As Capra observes, the criteria are so closely interrelated that they cannot be easily separated. I feel much the same about the themes of my research. By viewing the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective as a living system, I can be attentive to the many and varied thematic threads–analytical paths through the data–and also remain aware of how interdependent these threads are. To provide an initial structure, mindful of the interconnectedness of the themes, I'll begin a systematic but non-

linear exploration, loosely organized around Capra's three key criteria, which, for the chapter format, I have repurposed into two, broader categories: Pattern of Organization and Structure/Life Process. I will turn later to the concept of emergence, which offers the conceptual space for analytical tensions to become productive and enlightening.

Pattern of Organization–Relationships

The first of Capra's key criteria, *pattern of organization*, holds the relational themes that have emerged from my data. Throughout all of the observations and interviews in this project, the Collective members most frequently talk about their relationships. Even when they are not directly discussing relationship, it is clearly the foundation of all other work. Their references to relationship are also not limited to the human variety, but reveal an awareness of connections with and within the collaborative process, the arts, the environment, students, the University, curriculum, and pedagogy.

Relationships among Collective members are also multi-layered. As university professors, they are not only workplace colleagues but also have deep personal relationships that often extend to each other's spouses and children. Artemis and Lottie are best friends who say they act, and argue, like sisters. Heyoka and Kara are married. Slammer and Luna's families are longtime friends. Some Collective members vacation together along with their spouses and families, and several of the women go to the beach together every year. I encountered Lottie and Artemis talking about relationships with a student after one of the residential Institute's evening plenary sessions. The conversation, as I documented in my field notes, turned to the Collaborative and their synergy:

> "It's easy to love when you are loved," says Lottie. Artemis adds that they are not
> always kind to each other, especially she and Lottie, who are often mistaken for

sisters. "We are sisters–soul sisters," she corrects herself. Artemis tells the story of a time when Lottie was upset, and Artemis asked how she could help. Lottie told her to "fuck off." Both participate in the telling of this story and laugh as it is told.

Lottie says that having the freedom to step away from the Collective and participate in "some or all or none of the activities" has been essential to the Collective's longevity. Participation and togetherness is not expected at each and every meeting or project.

Seemingly out of the blue, Lottie offers, "I just think of the giant flying pillow." Even Artemis looks at her quizzically: "What??" Lottie explains that the Collective is carried on a metaphorical "flying pillow,"—"like a magic carpet, but softer." She later amended her metaphor to "giant flying duvet" or "comforter."

The student says good night, and Lottie, Artemis, and I begin walking back toward the lodge, still discussing the flying duvet. Artemis suggests that the depth and multiplicity of the relationships have been contributing factors to the success of the group. Even Heyoka and Kara, as a married couple, have been able to participate in the Collective and develop close relationships without letting their own "dual relationship" inhibit their work. Artemis and Lottie agree that [Heyoka and Kara] have navigated these pitfalls with unusual steadiness.

Research on collaboration often identifies relationship as a key factor in the success of academic or other types of working partnerships. In the community of practice model of organizational development, Wenger (1998) identifies a constant process of *mutual engagement*, which leads to the development and deepening of relationships over time, leading to productive collaborative work and also to profoundly meaningful interpersonal

ties. The Collective's long-term, voluntary commitment to working together has helped to maintain their strong bonds across disciplinary and other boundaries. The Collective says these bonds are founded on love. In a sentiment echoed by others, Slammer says, "We really love each other. I mean, it's just so comfortable–so comfortable to be with these folks." Collaborative relationships with the unusual comfort of Lottie's "flying duvet" appear to be scarce, or perhaps hidden, in academia, yet the Expressive Arts Collective serves as a clear example of how relational depth facilitates generative collaboration.

However, despite the love and comfort of their relationships, several Collective members gave examples of instances where dysfunction, defensiveness, or disorganization overtook their interactions. Lottie described a negative collaboration experience as well as times she has behaved badly, but she says she still feels accepted by her colleagues in the Collective: "There's something in really knowing that group, that I could be my crappiest, and sometimes have. And it's like, they know that, and they're ok with it." Because of their strong relationships, even after a difficult or unpleasant experience, they can return to the group without fear of judgment.

The Myth of Lovingkindness

During my observations of the Expressive Arts Institute, I witnessed the synchronistic emergence of a reciprocal teaching and learning experience that illustrated, through a creative exchange, the Collective's attitudes toward relationship, ego, and humor. Over the course of a 24 hour period, "the myth of lovingkindness" was introduced and explored by the Institute community in an unstructured and emergent way. During an evening question and answer session, in which written questions were pulled randomly out of the "burning question box" (decorated with red, orange, and yellow paper "flames"), the following final

question emerged: "Everyone in the Collective radiates love and kindness–how?" Though time ran out before the question could be addressed, I began to notice that the question had struck a nerve with several Collective members.

After the plenary, I ran across Artemis and Lottie outside on the deck, chatting with the student who asked the question. They were explaining that his perception was not quite accurate—the Collective members are not always compassionate and loving towards each other. They are human, and each relationship, including the group's relational dynamic, has its own set of challenges and quirks. Later, in a planning meeting, again the concern was raised by Collective members about being "put on a pedestal," which they agreed felt "inauthentic." They want others to recognize their humanity, and that their relationships are not all as "perfect" as they seem–that "lovingkindness" is not the sole element of their interactions. They discussed parodying themselves at the closing plenary, to make light of their own flaws. Instead, a parody emerges synchronistically: interpretive "joygasms" performed by students at the Bringing Gifts to the Feast ceremony, on the eve of the Institute's final day. By invitation I was part of the performance, but I did not initiate it. Recognizing its significance to my emerging research themes, I recorded details of the event in my field journal:

> The student presentation includes comedic impersonations of each Collective member's unique mannerisms of joy and excitement. The audience responds with raucous laughter and applause to each impersonator. After the skit, the Collective members rise from their seats and gather in a back room, plotting their "rebuttal." A whisper goes through the audience as news of the rebuttal spreads, and we eagerly await their response. Kara, who was not present at the ceremony, is summoned from

elsewhere on campus to participate in the skit. They borrow accessories from an Institute workshop and march onto the stage, wearing oversized hats, bowties, and red clown noses, to parody themselves by behaving rudely, as if they had been overheard grumbling about their students. Lottie complains about excessive rigidity: "The movers don't move!"–while Slammer feigns disgust: "That's not poetry; that's prose in SHORT LINES!" Adrienne, proclaiming herself the "eco-queen," says, "I asked them to be an animal and I got six broooook trouuut." Artemis cautions everyone, "Don't forget, we give the grades!" The crowd roars with laughter and cheers.

This vignette demonstrates a number of principles related to my study, including complex emergence, the importance of deep relationship, and the role of humor in collaboration. Interestingly, the students involved in creating the parody were comfortable in teasing their teachers, and the teachers (the Collective) not only welcomed the humor, but joined in the fun. Through this process, a significant tension–the over-idealized perception of the Collective's work together–was explored through creative expression. The exchanges were unplanned, emergent, and built on relationships of love and trust among the Collective and also their students. Without these elements, this type of "dialogue" might not have been successful or occurred at all. It seems that the Collective, as well as their students, are carried with love on "the flying duvet."

Motivation

In relation to my interest in professional satisfaction, I asked Collective members what they felt they gained by participating in the group. They said, above all, that they continue to collaborate because of "the people." Therefore, as a theme, motivation has been included under the larger category of Pattern of Organization, or Relationship. The

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Collective also identified numerous other advantages of participation–many relationship-oriented as well–including belonging/acceptance, fun, synergy, respite from academic and personal pressures, sustenance, opportunity for risk-taking and interdisciplinary work, and freedom. These benefits, in turn, contribute to their overall satisfaction and prevent burnout, thus increasing the likelihood of retention.

Although I have previously referred to literature situated in the field of "professional" or "job" satisfaction, I am hesitant to continue using these phrases in the context of this study, because the Collective's work is simultaneously as deeply personal as it is professional. Their relationships, interactions, and experiences stretch so broadly across professional and personal lives that they are difficult to separate. When is work not personal? Why can't we talk about our lives in more integrated ways, and acknowledge the blurriness of the lines that attempt to compartmentalize? The work of the Collective is both professional development and self-care. As an example of the group's commitment to their work and each other, Luna, who retired from academia more than two years prior to this writing, still participates as a core member of the Collective, attending retreats and the occasional conference, in addition to her workshop presentation at the 2012 Institute. Heyoka and Slammer are both in phased retirement, and others, including Artemis, will soon follow in the same track. What becomes of the Collective after members' "professional" ties fall away remains to be seen, but if Luna's continued involvement is any indicator of the depth of connection, their collaborative work will go on far beyond the shedding of their workplace identities.

Collective members use the word "freedom," in various contexts when discussing their motivation to participate. For many, the freedom to be oneself and the associated sense

of belonging continue to be motivating factors. Some also appreciate the freedom to create artistically, beyond the limits and expectations of traditional arts modalities. These responses seem to support professional satisfaction literature that identifies autonomy, flexibility, and freedom as desirable faculty benefits (Hill, et al., 2005; Manger & Eikeland, 1990; Marston & Brunetti, 2009). Heyoka talks about the constraints of musical genres and training, and how "playing in the arts," as the Collective does, differs from that:

> What we're doing is more about discovery, and is more about being in the moment. And, I don't like the word creating…like when we played for [a local organization] the other night. We were not creating something, or certainly weren't recreating something, which is mostly what music does. I mean, classical music does. You're just recreating something that's been played a million times and whatever. This [expressive arts] is like discovering something in the moment. And so, it's alive, you know. And that keeps it really fresh. And playful.

In addition to the freedom *to* discover, others say they enjoy freedom *from* institutional rigidity, responsibilities, or expectations, as well as pressure to participate. The Collective's collaborations occur in a space, built on the principles of expressive arts, that relies on flexibility and trust in emergent discovery–which is pleasantly quite different from their typical academic experiences.

Structure and Life Process–Art-making and Ritual

Capra's second and third key elements of a living system are *structure* and *life process*. When imagining the Collective as a living system, these two elements are nearly impossible to distinguish from one another because they are so interdependent. Due to the large amount of thematic overlap, an integrated discussion of the remaining criteria seemed

most appropriate. To that end, the following section will address a combination of themes related to structure and living process.

When asked about the *structure* of the group, Collective members often responded by describing *processes*, which supports my attention to Langer's (1957) "dynamic form" in this project. Throughout the data, the structure of the group is described in process-oriented terms of relationship, experience, and traditional practices. (This is the interactive movement of the dynamic form waterfall metaphor.) Interviewees described nonlinear and flexible arrangements, rather than the hierarchical and linear structures found in many organizations and institutions (water and rocks, without the unpredictable and beautiful motion of the waterfall.) The Collective's structure and process is often fluid, but a number of common "structural" elements can be identified, including shared values, Artemis' role as the "hub," traditional practices, and an awareness of setting. This category of *life process* is where the first two criteria, *pattern of organization* and *structure*, integrate through the energy of motion. When the Collective interacts, they are most often teaching, making art, or engaging in other types of creative activity. The nature and environment of the activity influence both the structure and the process of the group, which are held together by established relationships (*pattern of organization*.) Specific processes of collaboration vary and are guided by the type of project (team-teaching, conference presentation, book writing, performance, etc.) as well as relationships and traditional rituals of the group.

Process as form

For the Collective, process is form, and form is process. As mentioned previously, interview questions about group structure mostly brought forth descriptions of process. These collaborative activities can be aligned with Wenger's (1998) community of practice

element, *joint enterprise*, as the group is brought together by interaction and collaboration around a particular task or project. The activity itself can evolve or change, and the content is not as important as the commitment of participants to the project and each other. An image drawn from complexity science that evokes this collective attention is the *strange attractor,* which is a visual representation of the energetic and focal shifts of an organism. Energy and activity circles around a particular stimulus (or project) until another stimulus attracts the organism's attention. The momentum of the organism and its components then shifts to move around the new focal point. Shapes of strange attractors are non-repetitive and unpredictable, yet always similar (Gilstrap, 2005.)
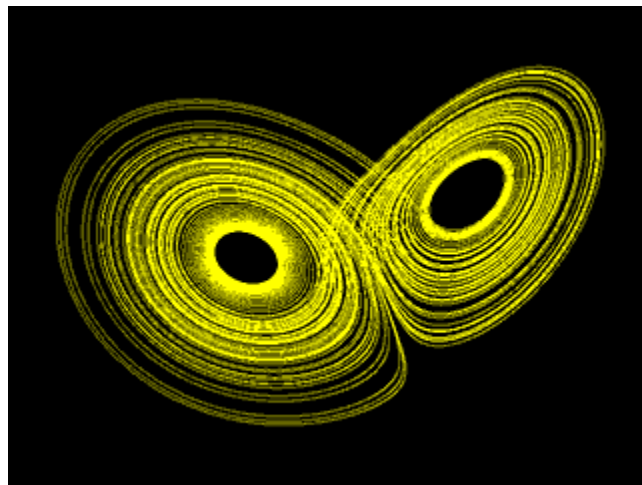
Figure 4: Lorenz Attractor

(*The Chaos Hypertextbook*, http://hypertextbook.com/chaos/21.shtml)

The strange attractor concept is also reminiscent of the expressive arts' emphasis on process over product, attending to the swirling pattern of energy rather than a static and reductionist measure of outcomes. The image of the strange attractor is not a quantification of the organism, but the measurement of a process that sets its own parameters. The field of Education has struggled to develop and use evaluations that successfully measure self-

organizing and emergent processes, such as the activities of the Expressive Arts Collective. Rather than a static measure of productivity, a more open-ended evaluation modeled after the strange attractor's dynamic measurement of process would better reflect the emergent (rather than pre-determined) contributions of collaborative groups like the Collective.

Unlike much of education, the arts-based, collaborative work of Collective members is focused on the experience and process of collaboration, rather than on any products that emerge out of their interactions. As a result, the outcomes of their work together are more innovative and unexpected than could have been created with strict guidelines and expectations for outputs. Despite increasingly grade- and graduation-focused measurements of effectiveness, Slammer observes similarities between process-oriented expressive arts methods and teaching. He says, "Honestly, as a teacher, all I ever do is design processes. That's how we all are: we design processes, and then we see where they go." The Collective's emergent collaborative processes led to the development of an expressive arts curriculum–experiential work based in theory and therapeutic emergence–and an academic program, though many of the Collective members also incorporate elements of process-oriented curriculum into their own departments. Artemis says, "I think our process is more important than any product that comes out of it. And I think some amazing products have come out of it, in terms of presentations and writing and performances–and classes!" The work of the Collective continues to inform the curriculum of the expressive arts program as well as members' home departments, as the knowledge they create and activities developed become part of future curriculum and pedagogy.

Heyoka discusses the fluid process by which new ideas for classes, presentations, or other collaborative projects are typically generated within the Collective. Not, he says, by sitting down at a table and making lists:

> Heyoka: So these things just come up in the midst of our being together, traveling together, working together. It's not like, you know, ok, we need to now do this so we can meet our assessment goals for something.
>
> MC: Mm-hmm. So it sounds like it emerges out of the relationship. And the interaction.
>
> Heyoka: It does, and it emerges out of playing together. Like children play. Traveling together, being together, talking together, eating together, communing together.

The ideas appear in the midst of playful interactions full of curiosity, adventure, humor, and creativity.

The Collective's openness to emergence of both process and product has led to the creation of previously-unknown knowledge and artistic expression, or what Osberg and Biesta (2007) describe as "strong emergence." Gunnlaugson (2011) suggests:

> Strong emergence has the potential to bring forth and open into new structures, ideas, forms of relationship and interaction, in turn becoming part of the history of individuals, groups, their learning processes and the institutional contexts of which they are a part. (p. 3-4)

Strong emergence is transformative for participants, process, and environment–a significant outcome in itself. In terms of traditionally-measured "outputs," Lottie feels that as a group, the Collective has not produced the quantity of academic writing (books, articles, etc.) as it

has artistic products, such as performances and guest lectures. She also notes that specific totals have not been documented, but that the Collective's work might be viewed as a more valuable contribution to the University if it were presented quantitatively.

Art-making as creative play

Adrienne calls it "noodling." Heyoka calls it "playing in the arts." Creative play is an important component of early childhood education; however, once children reach the age of kindergarten, traditional educational systems begin to turn away from the emergent curriculum of creative play in favor of standardized lesson plans, learning objectives, and assessment (Robinson, 2011; Taubman, 2009). The Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective's work underscores the need to establish regular time and space for creative play, even for adults. In adulthood, these "play-focused" activities are often reserved for personal (non-work) time and labeled "hobbies," such as cooking, crafting, or home gardening, yet humans never grow out of the need for life-enriching self-expression and play. Heyoka appreciates the varied opportunities for play in the context of Collaborative gatherings:

> What I like about the group is that they're curious people. And they're open to play. Like some kind of artistic play, you know…we'll often find ourselves in the midst of something that's uh, maybe invited? Like Jack Weller came, and he's all about the contemplative arts, and he involved us in some of that. And then Herbert Eberhart came, and he's very into substitution theory, de-centering–that kind of thing. And then Paolo [Knill] and Margo [Fuchs] came and we created community art with them. It's really adult play. And so when that happens, and when we do these things, it's fertile ground for ideas to come up.

Renowned poet and potter M.C. Richards (1989) says, "All the arts we practice are apprenticeship. The big art is our life" (p.41). Living is knowing, and life is art, if we choose to approach it that way.

Artemis as center

Nearly every interviewee identified an invitation from Artemis as the reason why s/he first became involved in the Expressive Arts Collective. Most had already worked with her at some point, or were interested in her work. Artemis is also the most connected of the Collective to the field of expressive arts, both at the University, where she serves as Director of the Expressive Arts Therapy program, as well as in the international network of expressive arts practitioners and scholars, where she is a core faculty member at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. A number of anecdotes from other students and colleagues of Artemis also provide instances of "hearing Artemis' call."

Artemis' leadership style is not directive, but facilitative, in that she most often allows a project or activity to develop through group interaction. And while she may also have her own vision for the process, which is often realized, she does not dictate her wishes to others but rather allows the process and product to develop naturally. She puts in place a minimal amount of organizational structure (calling the meeting, setting the space and agenda, or intention), before stepping back to let the participants interact organically. Slammer calls her the "hub":

MC: Is there an organizational structure to the group? Or does that change?

Slammer: Artemis is the leader. And that's about it. [laughs]

MC: And why do you say that?

Slammer: Ohhhh, you know Artemis. [laughs] She just is. Everybody sort of, I mean…she's the one who kind of had this idea about expressive arts. And everybody has come in, pretty much, in direct relation to Artemis. So she's sort of–I would say she's the center, the hub. Not the leader in terms of hierarchy, but more just the way the group is grounded, is through her.

Artemis says of her own collaborative style:

Artemis: You know, when I'm doing a presentation, for example, everyone teases me about being so inclusive. It's much simpler to do a presentation all by yourself, but it's so much more exciting, and I think it's so much richer and deeper to bring in a lot of people. And I have a lot of trust in general that everybody brings a different gift, and that you need each of those gifts to make something that is really creative and exciting. And of course I know these colleagues and the gifts they bring very well, so I always try to invite each person's unique gift anytime. I mean, I do that in class, you know, but with the seven [Collective members], especially, I know how rich those gifts are. And I also–because of experience–I generally know how to invite those gifts.

MC: Do you all feel like you all do that for each other? Or is that something that you do more?

Artemis: No, we absolutely do that for each other. I feel like we are always inviting each other to be who we are in the deepest way. And I feel…I mean, I've said it like I'm inviting, but it's not just me–I feel invited, as well.

Shared values

The Collective identifies a number of shared values and attitudes that have helped to facilitate the group's high levels of trust and intimacy. The shared perspectives mentioned most often include reciprocity, ability to withhold judgment, connections between creativity and healing, a sense of humor and fun, and letting go of ego.

Reciprocity. Several interviewees mentioned the concept of reciprocity, or interconnectedness with each other and environment in which there exists a free exchange of ideas, energy, and nourishment. Participation in the Collective's arts-based, interdisciplinary collaborations results in the enrichment of Collective members' academic scholarship, curriculum, and teaching. Adrienne says:

> We give to the institution in reciprocity with that [time away in retreat.] You know, what we take from that experience gets fed into here in seven to nine different ways, depending on how many of us are involved. So it's really beautiful–I see it as a reciprocity that were are fed, and we feed. But we are really fed well.

The Collective's work together also contributes to classroom curriculum development and pedagogy. Both Lottie and Adrienne describe this process as being "fed," which then allows them to "feed" their students more richly as well. Adrienne, again, offers:

> …when we go into really authentic creative space, we become different human beings. And that gets fed to our students! So we have time to play and noodle around, and really noodle, you know? It's messy! It's not a performance. It's just noodling and exploring. And I just love that! And I think we can encourage our students to–I'm a different teacher because of it.

Freedom from judgment and ego. Nearly every interviewee identified the non-judgmental nature of the group as a key element. Almost all are trained therapists, which would suggest an ability to withhold judgment, but perhaps these individuals come by this tendency more naturally? Was the group's atmosphere of non-judgment developed in the context of its deep relationships, or did members bring this skill individually to the group? Perhaps this is a skill that Artemis recognized as she called the group together? Arthur Robbins' (1998) concept of *presence* requires increased sensitivity to the process and environment of an interaction, while Sharmer's (2007) *presencing* involves a step back from pre-conceived knowledge and towards the emergence of new, collective identity. These theories describe what the Collective does for each other in the context of their relationships.

A number of interviewees also brought up the idea that the Collective members are able to collaborate without attaching ego to their shared thoughts or activities. Unlike compartmentalized academia, in truly interdisciplinary environments "expert status" must be let go in order to open the door to productive collaboration. People who are immersed daily in the same area of knowledge, particularly in a rigorous academic setting, are bound to have an increased level of understanding with one another.   To a collaborator with a different specialization, this unfamiliarity might be perceived as a lack of kinship. Luna says:

> Well, my experience with other groups, and other people who have come together to work together, is that sometimes overlaps can be a little anxious if people don't settle out as to exactly how they want to do that. Sometimes people get a lot of ownership going about what it is *they* do and what other people do, and who's the poet and who's the musician and who's the dancer. And that has merged in a lovely way with this group. Because Artemis and Slammer and Lottie all write poetry, and Kara and

Adrienne and Heyoka are all musicians, and you know, it doesn't seem to have

inhibited the group at all to have overlap.

The Collective members overcome the challenges of interdisciplinarity by determinedly

continuing to teach and learn from each other, without possessiveness over any one subject

or skill. Lottie says this is a relief–to be released from ownership of or responsibility for

ideas, and from having to lead. The Collective offers a respite from her departmental work,

where she serves as Chair and has numerous administrative duties. Artemis, echoing Luna's

observations of academia and Lottie's feelings of relief, says:

I think one of the things that really makes it work for us is, I don't think any of us

have big ego needs. Nobody's really got to be the one in charge. And I mean, I often

am, but I don't have to be, and it's a relief not to be, often. I don't think we look to

each other to have our egos fed. We look to each other to really feel the comfort and

community of each other's presence. I never feel like we're fighting for airspace–you

know that kind of thing that happens in academia a lot, where people are so full of

themselves and you have to talk about *their* ideas? I mean, any one of us could do

that, but we don't do that. We just don't do that.

Luna speaks of feeling initial intimidation due to a lack of confidence in her own

skills in relation to others in the group. "I've had to get over not feeling like I was qualified.

Partly because I've never been trained in expressive arts. Partly because, even in my own

work with dreams, I never really thought of myself as an expert." A study by Karlsson et al.

(2008) suggests that participants in interdisciplinary collaboration often find they can

contribute to the workgroup in unexpected ways. Luna exemplified this principle, when she

discovered that, in spite of her own uncertainty, her experience and knowledge in drama and

dreamwork were valued and appreciated by the group. After a Collective retreat in which

she re-connected with her previous training in theatre and psychodrama, she recalls thinking,

"Well, okay, maybe there's another little niche – another little spot I have that would be

valuable to the group." Collaboration with interdisciplinary colleagues offers a fresh

viewpoint and appreciation for knowledge and abilities that one might have personally taken

for granted. In other words, collaboration enhances not only the competence of the group in

total, but of the individuals as well.

Creativity and healing. Even though not all Collective members are professional

artists, all place a high value on the arts in their personal lives. I have heard Artemis say that

poetry saved her life. Slammer writes poetry as well. Luna says she has always been

interested and involved in the dramatic arts. Others are professional artists and teachers of

fine arts. A key premise of expressive arts, however, is that artistic skill is not necessary for

creative expression–that the creative process is more important than the creative product.

The meaning-making of the experience imparts value into the product for the art-maker,

regardless of how aesthetically-pleasing it is.

Apart from their professional training (in therapy, arts, or otherwise), all of the

Collective members recognize the therapeutic value of the arts and have experienced it in a

personal way. Kara says:

> …what we share on a more surface level is all of us know personally as well as
>
> professionally the power of arts in healing. And in diverse ways. What the arts have
>
> done in our personal lives, and what we've witnessed the arts be able to do for others.

Many Collective members also use the arts in therapeutic practice, such as music

therapy or expressive arts therapy, with clients. But even for Heyoka, the only non-therapist

in the group, there is an acknowledgement of personal healing through the arts. For him, the question is whether personal arts-based healing processes–the "gooey-ness" of it–should be shared in public performance. He says, "The work gets a little gooey to me. It gets a little self-indulgent. A little bit…I don't know what the word is… Gooey."

Because expressive arts work is so personally meaningful, I cannot elaborate on the personal experiences of my participants; however, I can share, as examples of multimodal arts experiences, my own artistic expressions that emerged during participation in the Institute activities. I had intended to spend most of my research time as an observer, but in attempting to avoid disruption I often ended up as a participant in the workshops, which resulted in several meaningful experiences that were not only personally significant, but also enriched my research process. In "Exploring the Inner Landscape," a Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) workshop led by Kara and Lottie, we were encouraged to let our minds wander through internal imagery as we listened, with eyes closed, to several pieces of instrumental music. We then created visual representations of significant images in a mandala (circle) form, using oil pastels on paper. My own imagery surprised me and made sense in a way I had not expected. The resulting visual representation (below) confirmed my readiness for a personal and professional transition of identities (partially related to my doctoral journey), and the mandala's circular-shaping of the imagery felt true and meaningful.
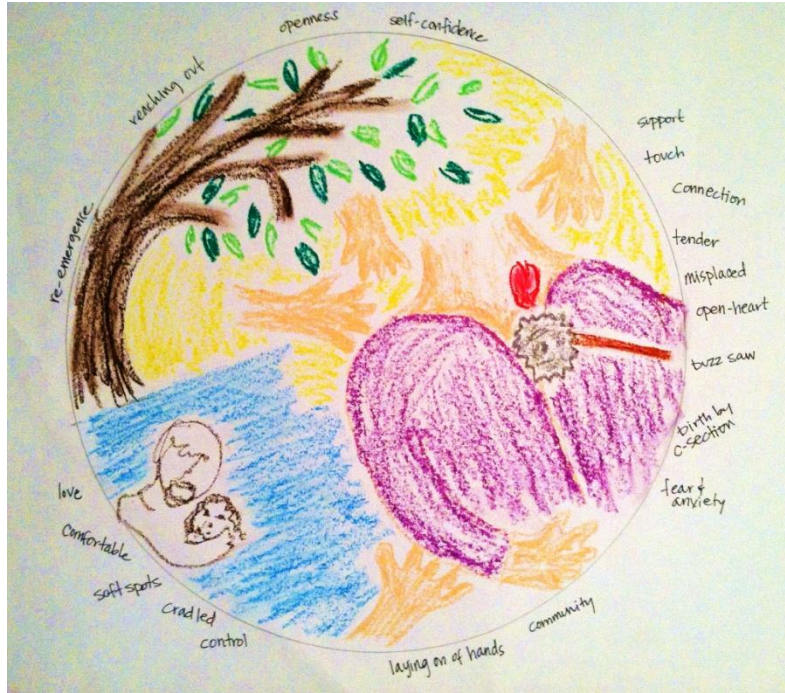
Figure 5: *Surgical Rearrangement*

In "Poetry in the Community of Nature," a workshop co-led by Slammer and a colleague, attendees participated in movement, discussed metaphor, and were sent outside to engage with the natural world with a mission to articulate imagery through poetry. After spending a few moments sitting in the Wild Acres amphitheatre, admiring the masonry and noticing various items hidden between the stones, I returned with these verses:

Stonework crevices

are guestbooks of passing communities.

Broken beer bottles,

dandelion sprouts,

a dusty, dewy, spider's web –

all signatures of welcomed guests.

How will you sign your name?

Figure 6: *Signatures*

Performance art eventually emerged through group collaboration around the poems and aesthetic responses. The last line of my poem: "How will you sign your name?" became a refrain during my group's presentation. Though this experience did not touch my emotional consciousness as deeply as the GIM experience did, I enjoyed the process of creative expression and collaboration, and felt freshly confident in taking note of the nuances of the Collective's collaborative work in action. With these brief descriptions of my participatory experiences, I hope to offer additional snapshots of creative process and collaboration in the style of expressive arts. (There are many additional layers of "gooey-ness" to each of these experiences, but like Heyoka, I also prefer to avoid very public discussions of deeply personal work.) In both examples, the arts-based activities facilitated the emergence of previously-unexpressed thoughts and emotions in individual and collective ways, and my participation in these processes contributed to my understanding of the nature of expressive arts collaboration.

Humor and fun. The Collective, as a group, seems always to be open to adventure, playfulness, spontaneity, and fun. Luna describes this inclination as a balance:

> A combination of work and play–that is always there. And the playfulness is really important to our group. So there's always…I mean, there can be a whole range of emotions expressed–sometimes people have events in their lives that make them feel sad or upset, but as a group, there's always the initiative toward letting our hair down and being playful.

I observed the Collective's humor throughout my research experience. In many cases, the wit is intertwined with creativity and innovation, as demonstrated by this observation from the Institute:

> The group begins to pull out packed lunches, while the musicians set up their collections of instruments. Heyoka brings out a bundt pan and plays a few resonant, chiming sounds. A colleague of the Collective, sitting next to me, tells me that the pan is one of Heyoka's favorite instruments, and that he also likes to play the garden hose.

The Collective frequently manages to impart deep knowledge while being playful and silly. In an interaction that occurred during an Institute presentation, several members of the Collective skillfully used a spontaneous moment of humor to demonstrate the expressive arts concept of *de-centering* (Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2005):

> Artemis is speaking about the field of mental health and the role of expressive arts therapy: "This is a time of 'cookbook' treatment planning; we are a paradigm shift out of this mentality." She mentions a favorite Rumi quote: "Where there is ruin, there is hope for treasure."

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Slammer, standing next to Artemis, pulls a single strand of hair off Artemis' clothing and with great excitement, exclaims, "Treasure!" He then places it on his bald head, grinning.

The audience laughs uproariously.

Adrienne steps in to observe, "That's called de-centering!"

The Collective's light-heartedness and desire to play (in the service of knowledge creation, of course) is evident. In another experience from the Institute, Artemis and I came upon Heyoka hula-hooping in the Wild Acres courtyard, and Artemis decided to hula hoop with Heyoka. She persuaded me to join in. Heyoka was determined to be successful at hula-hooping with his non-dominant hula hip, so we all made attempts to master the skill. I'm not sure any of us were successful, but we did succeed in releasing some extra energy before bedtime, and we likely provided some late-night entertainment for any onlookers. By this point it was close to 10:30 pm, so we left the hula hoops propped against the flagstone entryway of the lodge and headed to our rooms. Although we never had occasion to discuss it again, this, too could be framed as an instance of de-centering – an embodied experience of play, after an evening of intellectual discussion. The Expressive Arts Collective is constantly inviting others into spaces of improvisation and play.

Slammer values the group's sense of adventure–they are always excited to try new things. During their retreats, unplanned activities have often become important experiences. Adrienne gives an example of an impromptu hike on a beautiful day at Wild Acres. Invited facilitators, such as a visual artist who led them in a painting activity, have also called on the group to stretch beyond their comfort zones. (None of the Collective members specialize specifically in visual art, so the experience was an enjoyable challenge.) Luna says she has

always worked to resist excessive attachments to timetables, and she found kindred spirits among the Collective:

> We trust that process in ourselves to not feel the need to write out every move. So when I've done workshops with other people outside the group who have a strong need to write down everything in sequence–five minutes here, ten minutes there–I do what I can to sabotage that. [laughs]

Flexibility in tasks, timing, and process is key to the Collective's collaboration. Risk-taking, in the way that the Collective challenges itself, is an important element in the path to *strong emergence*. As a counterpoint to their many commonalities, this intentional risk-taking includes acknowledging and welcoming dissimilar opinions and approaches. Collective members note that diversity among the group's talents, personalities, and approaches provides a necessary balance and promotes continued curiosity and engagement in their work together. Adrienne feels strongly that differences among the group are important elements of collaboration: "I think if we were all alike, it wouldn't work. It absolutely would not work. I mean, it's that diversity piece–that receptivity to our differences that really makes it interesting."

Traditions/Ritual

Corresponding with the *shared repertoire* of a community of practice, the Collective's traditions and rituals are the processes and experiences of the group that they have developed and are committed to, such as retreats, check-in (personal connection), gathering in a circle (or "casting the circle," as Artemis has called it), setting a centerpiece/focal point, openings/closings, traditional roles (without expectation.) I also observed many instances of "inside jokes" or humorous moments during group meetings or

rehearsals that seemed to require some previous knowledge or experience in order to fully understand. Over so many years of being together, the Collective has developed diverse and deep ways of communicating.

When asked about typical collaborative practices, Luna identified opening and closing rituals as particularly significant. "And a lot of that is Artemis, but even when she's not there, we do it. I think that kind of makes a special space for us all to work together." Throughout my involvement with the expressive arts community, I have experienced many of the traditional practices that Luna mentioned. The ritual that took place during the closing of the Expressive Arts Institute serves as an illustrative example of these collective, connective experiences:

> Artemis passes around woven baskets of decorative paper and asks us each to choose three. She directs us to write three blessings, one on each card: "one to keep, one to leave behind, and one to give away." The Institute participants are scattered around the room as we all write in silence, and after a few minutes, Artemis calls for a circle to be formed. She leads us in a series of symbolic movement. "Reach up and bend over, gathering energy from air and earth."
>
> In a unified movement, the circle stretches upwards, toward the wooden, domed ceiling of the auditorium, and again as a group, we bend forward to touch the carpeted floor. Following further instructions, we slowly roll our backs to an upright position, and turn, facing out from the circle to reach outward, "opening our hearts to the world" and pulling arms back in, to "bring the world back to our hearts." We turn again and "open our hearts to each other," stretching our arms toward the center of the circle. We follow Artemis' lead and fold our hands across our chests, "bringing

others into heart," then join hands, neighbor by neighbor, until the circle is complete.

We stand, holding hands, and listen intently as we each speak into the circle one word

that reflects an immediate feeling:

"Gratitude."

"Joyful."

"Blessed."

"Content."

"Energized."

Artemis closes with a poem, "Fire," by Native American poet Joy Harjo.

Fire

a woman can't survive
by her own breath
alone
she must know
the voices of mountains
she must recognize
the foreverness of blue sky
she must flow
with the elusive
bodies
of night winds
who will take her
into herself

look at me
i am not a separate woman
i am the continuance
of blue sky
i am the throat
of the mountains
a night wind
who burns
with every breath
she takes

[from *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems 1975-2001*]

The cadence of her voice as she speaks the poem puts the room into a quiet trance. When the poem is finished, she looks around the circle in silence, her clear, blue eyes deep with a gentle intensity. The Institute's circle of creative space, sealed with open arms and intention, inevitably expands as we release our clasped hands in anticipation of a final farewell. Artemis declares, "It's my privilege to say: This circle is open but unbroken."

Although each ritual experience is unique to the community and facilitator, the Institute's closing was typical of an expressive arts-type ceremony, involving symbolism, connection, and presence. Artemis' acknowledgment and "holding" of the energetic spaces, sources, and flow also exemplify expressive arts practices. In this instance, Artemis "cast the circle," creating and holding the space with a brief and focused writing activity, guided movement and breathwork, and spoken poetry, as well as her gentle tone of voice, direct eye contact, and invitations to participate. The physical embodiment of the community space, hands joined in a circle, allowed the group to join together, and also to part ways, with intention.

Setting

Environmental and immediate physical spaces of collaboration can directly affect the energetic and psychic space. Robbins' (1998) description of therapeutic space, requiring sensitivity to the frame, container, and energy of the experience, aligns closely with Artemis' approach to "holding the space" for creative collaboration. As described in the previous section and throughout this chapter, among the Collective, Artemis most often oversees the energetic space of gatherings by setting centerpieces as energetic focal points (bringing in an object from nature–such as the vase of rhododendrons–or a creating a visually-stimulating display) and leading opening and closing rituals, such as inviting the elements or four

directions (north, south, east west), breathwork and grounding, or seeking intentions, wishes, or observations from the group.

Adrienne most clearly articulated the significance of setting in the context of the Collective's work, and I was prompted to give more attention to the idea as I went forward with research. Other interviewees also mentioned the role of setting, even if in the context of simply describing retreats at Wild Acres.

So significant has the role of Wild Acres been in the development of the Collective, Adrienne describes the setting almost as an additional collaborator. She says:

> I am very aware of my environment and how it speaks. So, driving up to the University is a very different experience for me than driving into Wild Acres. And every cell of mine resonates differently in different spaces. I'm acutely aware of that sensitivity of my surroundings. So even the space, in getting physically away from square buildings, sets a whole different atmosphere and a way of thinking opens up for me–it always does in different spaces.

As a result of our conversation, I put focused effort into getting to know the Wild Acres environment while attending the Institute, inspired by a book recommended to me by Adrienne: *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot and Jessica Hoffman Davis (1997). The book's third chapter, "Illumination: Framing the Terrain," by Lawrence-Lightfoot, encourages attention to context–"physical, geographic, temporal, historical, cultural, aesthetic–within which the action takes place" (p. 41). This orientation not only heightened my physical senses, it also enhanced my awareness of the influence of the wilderness setting on workshops, presentations, and ceremonies. I collected small stones, took photographs, and explored walking paths and trails throughout the grounds, noticing

how the stone walkways changed color under rain and sun, and where newly-blooming foxglove was making a springtime debut among hardier, winter-worn bushes and trees. Several gathered items later became part of my own artful centerpiece that provided me with visual inspiration through the remainder of my writing process.

Connection with and respect for the natural world, important aspects of the Appalachian approach to expressive arts therapy, are valued parts of the Collective's process. Along with Adrienne's eco-consciousness, Artemis co-teaches an Ecotherapy course at the University and often invokes the natural world through ritual and poetry. Luna has a background in the field of eco-psychology, and others in the Collective are nature-lovers as well. Several of the Expressive Art Institute's workshop themes, such as "Wild Communion" or "Poetry in the Community of Nature," reflected this connection between expressive arts and the natural world, taking full advantage of the beautiful and naturally therapeutic surroundings of the Wild Acres Retreat Center. Beyond the tangible and intangible constrictions of University walls, opportunities to collaborate in alternative and especially natural settings, such as Wild Acres, often effect shifts in the Collective's mental and emotional states, leading to increased creativity and free thinking.

Mentoring

An interesting component of the Collective's development that I identified as a result of this research is the process in which they were mentored by the larger expressive arts community. Though several others had given similar accounts of the group's retreat-setting engagement with guest facilitators, it was during Adrienne's interview that the concept of mentoring first came up.

Adrienne: Well, if we had got together and noodled around as a group without Paolo [Knill] and Mady [Ventre] and Herbert [Eberhart] and Paulus [Berensohn]–I look at the great folks who have been here–we would definitely be a different group. So yes, I think we were young, we didn't know what the field of expressive arts therapy really was, and we had these masters come in and work with us. And I think, actually, looking back, that was a critical part of it.

MC: That's interesting – that hadn't been brought up before – that you all were mentored in your development.

Adrienne: We were mentored. We were loved and mentored. And that's that open system! ….and it changed who we were, who I am.

In another example of reciprocity, this same kind of teaching and mentorship, now with the Collective serving as mentors, occurs with students involved in the Expressive Arts Therapy program. The Expressive Arts Institutes held at Wild Acres, such as the one I attended and observed, are in a way a re-creation of the meaningful retreats that have been fueling the Collective's collaborations for so many years.

Emergence–Tensions

While much of my data clearly seemed to fit within the theoretical framework I constructed in my literature review, I encountered a particular theme that caused me some initial discomfort. Despite my intimate knowledge of the field of expressive arts and my familiarity with the Expressive Arts Collective–or perhaps because of it–the tensions and contradictions I saw and felt in some of my interviews took me slightly by surprise.

Anger and apprehension

On one occasion, an individual spoke with undertones of anger, as he criticized the attitudes of administrators and the dismantling of University interdisciplinary structures. Anger was not among the emotions I expected to draw out by my line of questioning, nor is it an emotion that I *perceive* to be typical of these individuals. My perception is important to this observation, because, intellectually, I know that, like the student who asked the question about "love and kindness," I am vulnerable to the admiration-clouded illusions that can develop in personally meaningful experiences and relationships, such as those that are often facilitated by expressive arts experiences. I am also aware, as I have described earlier in this chapter, of Collective members' desire to dispel misperceptions of their "extraordinary" talents, which I have jokingly referred to as "superpowers." However, despite my intellectual comprehension, on an emotional level I felt myself responding with unexpected uneasiness, at times, to the process of analyzing data that did not mesh well with my idealism. I found that this occurred most often as I reviewed my interactions with participants with whom I was less familiar, which likely played a role in my personal response when their perspectives and styles of communication didn't match up with my expectations. The anger and frustration with institutional administrators was not the only time I heard the topic mentioned; in fact, minutes from recent University faculty senate meetings indicate that these frustrations are widespread (http://facsen.appstate.edu/minutes). However, in other discussions, either the subject matter was introduced with less emotion, or the individual's demeanor fit more comfortably into my own schematic constructs.

In another interview, a Collective member and I discussed academic writing. She expressed a resistance to institutional research, suggesting that an objective (rather than

relational) approach often inhibited full representation of the subject matter: "…people have been creating for a long time, in amazing ways. Yet, when we try to study it, what happens to it?" I responded somewhat defensively by describing my committee's confidence in my work, and my (very necessary) confidence in myself. Immediately afterwards, I wrote that I felt "enlightened by the conversation. She said a number of things that validated my framework and also brought up exciting perspectives that I hadn't considered." Overall, I felt very positive toward the experience; yet, as I listened to and re-read the interview through the process of transcription and analysis, my emotional discomfort with these few minutes of dialogue grew stronger, especially as I came to recognize the dissonance as a significant theme that would become part of my write-up. This experience ran contrary to the "flying duvet" that I had come to expect. After some contemplation, I realized that my discomfort also stemmed from a fear that my research might hurt or disappoint my participants, whom I deeply respect and admire. Towards the end of my writing process, we met again and discussed my interpretation of the conversation. She offered clarification of several responses and suggested that the dismissiveness I perceived may have come from fear–both hers and mine. Her fear, she explained, stemmed from the risk of objectification associated with traditional research, when the "subject" becomes an "it," rather than a participant in a relationship. My own fears, I recognized, were based on feelings of inadequacy, as well as the desire to create a research project and written representation that exceeded the expectations of all those with vested interests, including the Collective.

Setting aside my personal responses to these situations, it seems that I had hit upon sensitivities in my interviewees that led to passionate expressions of opposition to institutional restrictions of creative collaboration – a shared value that played a role in the

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formation of the Collective so many years ago. In the moment of the interviews, as we were engaged in an institutionally-required and -supervised research process, I felt this negativity unexpectedly swerve toward me. My purpose in relating these interactions is simply to point out that these expressions are quite different from the eternal "love and kindness" idealistically perceived by many observers outside of the Collective, and even some "inside observers," like myself. Authentic relationships, as the Collective has determinedly pointed out, leave space for the uncomfortable, unpleasant, and negative expressions of human nature, as much as for the positive traits. Additionally, these conversations have revealed an unforeseen detrimental aspect of my role as a doctoral student researcher: my association with "the institution" that perpetually inhibits the type of collaborative work I seek to study and support. That we are all (the Collective and I) associated with this institution and yet the Collective is still able to engage in its collaborative work (and I to write about it) is significant; however, the fact remains that many institutional structures and traditional academic research practices commonly produce conditions that are unfavorable to the establishment and study of authentic and emergent collaboration.

Despite my personally surprising emotional response to the tensions in my data, this turbulence is accounted for by the concepts of complexity science that are part of this project's foundation. Complexity science tells us that in practice, creatively productive collaboration does not require flawless functionality, but instead must include a realistic degree of *dis*functionality as well. According to Gunnlaugson (2011), the space for Osberg and Biesta's (2007) "strong emergence" is created by deep relationship, described as "presencing" by Scharmer (2001, 2007.) Emergence – an increase in an organism's complexity – occurs when a living system approaches not equilibrium, but *disequilibrium*.

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Capra (2007) summarizes the development of a theory of complex systems in regards to dis/equilibrium:

> As Bertalanffy had already emphasized, a living organism is an open system that
> maintains itself in a state far from equilibrium, and yet is stable: the same overall
> structure is maintained in spite of an ongoing flow and change of components.
> Prigogine called such a system a dissipative structure to emphasize the close interplay
> between structure on the one hand and flow and change (or dissipation) on the other.
> The farther a dissipative structure is from equilibrium, the greater is its complexity
> and the higher the degree of nonlinearity in the mathematical equations describing it.
> The dynamics of these dissipative structures specifically includes the spontaneous
> emergence of new forms of order (p. 476).

This "same overall structure" despite "ongoing flow and change" also echoes Langer's (1957) "dynamic form" imagery, in which the waterfall's shape is created by the constant motion of the water. Capra (2007) goes on to note that "spontaneous emergence" is "one of the hallmarks of life" (p.476). He says,

> It is the dynamic origin of development, learning, and evolution. In other words,
> creativity – the generation of new forms – is a key property of all living systems and
> since emergence is an integral part of the dynamics of open systems, this means that
> open systems develop and evolve. Life constantly reaches out into novelty. (p. 476)

Perhaps the Collective's comfort with disequilibrium and commitment to risk-taking, founded on deep and trusting relationships, facilitates their non-linearity and therefore creates the space for emergence? By this thinking, freedom from dictatorial, linear structures and guidelines increases the potential for novel information, patterns, and processes to emerge.

Kara describes the collaborative process of the Collective: "It's like riding the crest of a wave. I mean, I've never surfed, but that, to me, is that thing of sitting right at the edge of, 'yeah, you can crash,' or there's this exhilarating ride."

It is also possible that the Collective's openness to the ambiguity and unsettledness that develops when tensions arise and are wrestled with across the artificial lines of personal and professional boundaries is the very reason that they have been able to maintain their space for emergence for so long. No system is free of conflict or tension; however, the Collective's use of arts-based activities has formed a process of creatively playing, problem-solving, and meaning-making, through the tensions, that then becomes generative and productive, rather than pre-determined or linearly finite. The Collective has created a space and a process where they can ride to edge of disequilibrium without crashing under the weight of the chaos. In authentic and creative ways, they immerse themselves in life, together.

Dissension and diversity

Several other, less emotionally-charged tensions were also brought up during the course of my research, such as the use of differing approaches to expressive arts, which include dissension as to whether the field should be called "expressive arts," or "expressive arts therapy" and whether training should be more made more available to practitioners outside of psychotherapy-related fields (e.g., medicine, education.) There is also somewhat of a divide among branches of expressive arts about whether the arts are better used to delve deeply into emotional issues or to de-center away from an issue in order to emerge with a fresh perspective. Expressive arts approaches differ even among the Collective members, which at first glance seems surprising. However, their values reflect an appreciation of

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diversity that not only accommodates but welcomes the various perspectives. Adrienne: "I'd say a lot of 'allowing' goes on. We all are different in our approaches to work. Very, very different! And sometimes painfully different. But there is a sort of unconditional receptivity of our unique approaches to our artistry."

The "Appalachian approach" to expressive arts developed, along with the University's expressive arts program, out of the Collective's work as a group; however, it most closely resembles Artemis' inclinations and interests. Although students interact with other Collective members through coursework and program-related activities, Artemis directs the program and teaches many of the courses. The expressive arts program is also housed by a larger counseling-focused department, and while students from other departments can take the expressive arts courses as electives, a majority of expressive arts students are pursuing degrees in counseling or are professional counselors pursuing a post-graduate certificate. As a graduate of this program, I am most familiar with Artemis' teachings of expressive arts. Hearing the differences in approaches among the Collective during our brief interview discussions was unexpected and revealed an additional layer of diversity in this close-knit group.

As a result of Artemis' academic focus on expressive arts, other Collective members observe that she enjoys more overlap among her various academic roles and responsibilities than those whose academic responsibilities are entirely separate from their collaborative activities or interests. This position allows, and also requires, Artemis to spend more of her time on events such as the annual Institute, regardless of whether other Collective members are able or willing to participate. (Fortunately for this study, all seven core members of the Collective participated in the 2012 Institute for the first time in many years.) While some in

the Collective see these overlaps as an advantage for Artemis, she consequently does not often benefit from the "respite from responsibility" that others enjoy. Despite efforts to minimize role expectations in the group, Artemis most often leads by "holding the space" – because of her skill at doing so, and also because she is the only one who works exclusively in the expressive arts academic program.

Wavicles in a particle-based society

During the interviews, several Collective members brought up the large-scale conflict between societal and institutional norms and true collaborative interactions–a struggle with which the Collective is all-too familiar. Artemis, as a program director, recently battled a new administrator over re-assignment of classroom space that had been designed specifically for expressive arts program use. Slammer, part of the only interdisciplinary entity on campus, has seen the re-structuring of his organization, with key sections relocated to other colleges. In his view, these administrative actions demonstrate a fundamental lack of understanding and respect for process-based programs, such as expressive arts. On an even larger scale, Western societies tend to think in terms of the individual, rather than the collective. The act of creation, particularly through artistic means, is also undervalued by Western ways of thinking. Adrienne says:

> It's the big cultural pieces. I mean, the cultural pieces say, 'Don't play.' They really say, 'Beauty can't be controlled, so you better be careful.' If you are really involved and engaged in a truly illuminating artistic process, you illuminate the truth.

Perhaps the arts and collaboration evoke fear in those who appear to be in control–that they might in some way be revealed as powerless or lacking? Returning to the idea of "ego removed," the Collective's work demonstrates that, in actuality, relinquishing perceptions of

"expert" power or dominance through true collaboration reveal the boundaries of knowledge to be infinite, even for non-experts and the seemingly powerless. In attempting to control structures and practices in a linear way, administrators in higher education often place limits on the possibilities that emergent processes of knowledge-creation can offer.

Slammer offers a metaphorical description of the dynamics of the Collective's group process:

> We're all particles, but every particle is also a wave. And in our group, the waves amplify each other. Because you can get interference patterns from waves, and there are places where there are interference patterns. But in general, the waves tend to amplify each other. Even the interference patterns tend to start something new, some new wave form that we embrace. And so, you know, while we're individuals, this wave form is what makes the group. And it's amplified waves—it doesn't wipe each other out or that sort of thing. It's not noise. It's resonential. There's resonance for the waves that we are. That would be a way of thinking about it.

Later in the interview, he discussed the challenges of operating as waves, or wavicles, in a particle-based society:

> It's hard when the assumption of the whole institution is disciplines. And for [University administration], a department is defined by a discipline, as though these are separate, completely identifiable things. So if the entire structure is particle-based, that's not the atmosphere in which we work. We work in a wave-based atmosphere, not a particle-based. We recognize each other's individuality, quirks, contributions, etc.–so it's wavicles. Because perspectives are respected and important. And if you didn't bring any perspective, then what would be the point?

But there has to be this wave way of thinking, too, across the University–that's the

part that I see missing. And how do you promote it in a practical way?

Slammer asks an important question: how can the "wave way of thinking" realistically be

maintained in higher education, when disciplinary divisions create an adversarial rather than

collaborative environment? Universities primarily recognize and reward the

accomplishments of individuals rather than groups, giving value and incentive to continue

engaging in solo work. Kara discusses the difficulties of measuring collaborative activities:

There's a creativity to it that's very hard…to put on a spreadsheet. And universities,

at least this university, work so heavily off a spreadsheet. In many ways, there's a

barrier–the standards of the university–which do not value anything that's an

emergent property. You can't anticipate and put it into a measure.

Limited resources pit faculty, departments, and institutions against each other in a battle for

funding and support. Most Collective members expressed disappointment in the current state

of affairs at the University, though the musicians seemed to be less bothered by changes and

cut-backs over the years, identifying the support of their college's dean as key to their ability

to participate in collaborative work. Others appreciated the help of a few individual

administrators but were frustrated by perceptions of institution-wide reductions in support for

faculty development coupled with increases in teaching loads. Several interviewees felt that

in the current University environment, the Collective might never have been formed. The

campus entity that first supported the Collective with materials and grants no longer offers

the specific resources that the Collective found to be advantageous. This same entity, a

faculty development center, formerly offered a wide variety of professional and personal

enrichment programs, until employee counseling services were removed from the center and

relocated to an off-campus (and less accessible) location several years ago, creating deeper divisions between professional development resources and self-care. Faculty are overloaded with expectations of teaching, research, and service, yet due to diminishing financial resources and strategic program realignments, limited support is available for collaborative work or emotional wellness (which essential to personal *and* professional life.) Artemis says,

> I think the faculty workload is the most it's ever been in the years I've been here. I can't imagine creating something like this now. Most people I know are just trying to survive and do what they have to do.

Amid the pressures of academic life and without sufficient institutional support, faculty are struggling to find the time and space to work with others in a process-guided way.

While the Collective clearly flourished *in spite of* external barriers, I wondered if it were also possible that the Collective grew stronger *because of* the barriers they faced, then and now–if, perhaps, pervasive institutional restrictions made the creative freedoms of the Collective all the more significant? Most of the interviewees did not feel that the restrictions strengthened their work. Several suggested that in an environment more favorable to interdisciplinary collaboration, their group might have grown more quickly and been established as a stand-alone program, or become a University-wide program that fostered interdisciplinarity across the entire campus. Slammer agreed that barriers played a role in the Collective's development as a counterpoint to academic disciplinarity, but he feels that the University's individualistic leanings have simply become too extreme:

> MC: So do you think that the Expressive Arts Collective, in a different setting, would have stayed as tightly knit? I mean, have you been brought together by the barriers?

Slammer: Sure. Of course we have. And barriers and dissonance are really

important. Demarcations are important. There's important stuff about particles. And

that has to be recognized, honored, and promoted. But if it's the whole thing, then

it's wrong–then there's imbalance…. And what's happened…in this University is

that the balance has gone completely over to the particle way of thinking.

The resonance of the Collective, as well as its dissonance, demonstrates how Slammer's

preferred "wave" way of thinking can facilitate collaborative knowledge creation and

meaning-making across disciplinary structures and expectations. Their responsiveness to

each other, both professionally and personally, acknowledges the individuality of each

Collective member, while also, as Artemis described, "inviting each other's gifts." The

challenge, it seems, lies in convincing institutions, administrators, and evaluators to embrace

a systems-oriented viewpoint–working as "wavicles," rather than as particles–or at least to

recognize and reward the accomplishments of those who do.

The Collective's experiences suggest that alternative settings, institutional supports,

and arts-based perspectives and practices help to create physical, energetic, and psychic

spaces conducive to productive interdisciplinary collaboration. The descriptive research

contained in this chapter illustrates the contours of deep collaboration as the Collective

practices it. Functioning as a "living system," group members' relationships form the

foundation upon which all of their interactions are built, and arts-based perspectives offer

alternative ways of thinking, interacting, and problem-solving. As a community of practice,

Wenger's (1998) key elements of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire

are evident in their accounts of community values, traditions, and process-oriented structures.

The relational and ideological tensions presented suggest that despite widespread admiration

of the Collective's kindness for and commitment to one another, they are human beings engaged in a sometimes tumultuous process of experiencing life together. "*Listen: In the silence between there is music; in the spaces between there is story. Pay attention: We are listening each other into being.*"

CHAPTER FIVE: ASSEMBLAGE–A SYNTHESIS

Assemblage: artwork made by composing diverse materials into a new whole

As I set out to explore the mysteries of interdisciplinary collaboration, and particularly the expressive arts-based processes of the Expressive Arts Collective, I hoped to gather vivid moments that would illustrate the "magic" that occurs during these complex and emergent experiences. The challenge of conveying the power of experiential learning is that the "shift"–intellectual, emotional, physical, and psychic–that occurs during these experiences is a whole-body experience, while reading this dissertation is likely not. Langer's (1957) image of a waterfall's "dynamic form" honors the aesthetic way of thinking that this study employs. The waterfall image is also helpful in understanding that the research data–mediated by theory, subjective interpretation, and qualitative analysis–is not a definitive representation, but rather a collection of snapshot perspectives of the shifting processes of relationship, structure, and activity (also Capra's three criteria of a living system) involved in collaborative work. Given the many theoretical and methodological considerations involved in this project, I recognize that the holistic nature of the study exchanges deep exploration of a single specific angle in favor of a representation of dynamic form that utilizes what Perkins (1994) describes as the "broad and adventurous" thinking encouraged by artistic experience (p. 34). While dialogue between interdisciplinary collaboration and each of the incorporated content areas is certainly rich and enlightening, this study is meant to shed light on the valuable (and challenging to capture) synergy of the *collective conversation*. My hopes are that the spaces and processes created by the

Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective–the dynamic form of the waterfall–may serve as

encouragement for other would-be collectives who aspire to build deep relationships and

claim their own unique spaces for emergence.

Theoretical Framework and Research Questions, Revisited

The theoretical framework for this study is based on three primary areas of literature:

expressive arts, organizational development, and professional satisfaction. Like the

theoretical framework, this study's research goals were manifold, intending to draw

connections, in a variety of ways, among interdisciplinary collaboration, expressive arts,

curriculum development, complexity science, faculty development, and a/r/tography. These

six questions shaped the study's scope:

- How do academic partnerships emerge "organically" across disciplines, despite

  structural barriers?

- What role do the arts play in interdisciplinary collaboration?

- How does the Collective's collaborative work inform curriculum development?

- What role does professional satisfaction play in sustaining the work of the Collective?

- How does the inclusion of complexity theory augment more traditional perspectives

  of institutional collaboration?

- How does this exploration support alignments between expressive arts and

  a/r/tography?

While these six questions were explored in an integrated way, I acknowledge the practical

academic preference for a linear presentation of specific findings. I have addressed in

previous chapters the ways in which the integrated nature and content of this project resist

overly-divisive organization of content areas; however for ease of reference, I will discuss

the research questions in six separate (but interrelated) sections (Emergent Collaboration; Collaboration and the Arts; Collaboration and Curriculum Development; Collaboration and Satisfaction; Complexity and Organizational Development; and Inquiry and the Arts), before offering implications for stakeholders, suggestions for future research, and final thoughts.

Emergent Collaboration

Research question: How do academic partnerships emerge "organically" across disciplines, despite structural barriers?

As demonstrated by the academic landscapes introduced in Chapter One, interdisciplinary collaboration is a highly desirable yet difficult to accomplish practice in higher education. Due to the divisiveness of academic disciplinary structures, creating professional connections beyond departments is often challenging, while institutional measures of productivity fail to recognize or reward collaborative or creative work. The overarching purpose of this study–framed by process-oriented expressive arts approaches, Wenger's (1998) community of practice model of organizational development, and the living system metaphor borrowed from complexity science–was to explore the collaborative processes of the Expressive Arts Collective as a heuristic for creating spaces that facilitate organically developing, or emergent, collaborations. To that end, and in response to the research question referenced by this section, the following conclusions are offered as potential "minimum critical specifications" (Morgan, 2006), for those who would like to establish or support a collective of their own.

Participants in emergent collaboration must be, as Luna says, "process people." Artists and therapists, like the Collective, tend to be process-oriented, but even those fields can get bogged down in rules and expectations. Of the shared values articulated by the

Collective, commitment to process may be the most important. The ability and desire of

Collective members to "trust the process" created an atmosphere where the collaborative

work could become emergent, rather than outcome-driven.

Collaborative groups must plan to spend significant time together in order to establish

a relational space. Developing and maintaining relationships on which to build collaboration

takes time. The Collective's work relies on regular, loosely-organized periods of time

together, whether in informal meetings, retreats, or travel. Adrienne says, "Collaboration

involves time. It involves play. It involves space that's very different than these efficient

models and meetings that we're so used to." As faculty responsibilities increase and

educational offerings move increasingly to online and hybrid formats, face-to-face contact in

many settings will likely decrease, and deep collaboration will require even greater

commitments of time and effort.

Collaborative groups hoping to generate innovation and new knowledge should

schedule meetings in physical spaces that differ from their typical environments. Expressive

arts theorist McNiff (2009) says, "The physical space is too often the unseen and

acknowledged partner in our expression" (p. 174). Leaving whatever the typical location is–

classroom, office, boardroom, laboratory–and gathering in a new space helpfully disrupts

"stuck" patterns of thinking and acting to open more creative pathways. In the case of the

Collective, leaving the physical grounds of the University and traveling to a wilderness

retreat setting played an influential role in sustaining their creative, collaborative work.

Collaborative groups should purposefully include participants who represent a variety

of approaches and processes. While the "interdisciplinarity" of interdisciplinary

collaboration implies a range of differing perspectives, the Collective further emphasizes the

benefits of accepting diverse viewpoints and ways of knowing. Though the group members have many personal values in common, they also cherish their dissimilarities, and even the "juicy" tensions that sometimes arise. This acceptance of diversity and dissonance is part of their process-orientation, and it also relates, perhaps, to their ego-removed approach to working together.

Collaborative academic groups may benefit from working with teachers and mentors who will help the group develop its own identity. The Expressive Arts Collective has been mentored by leaders in the field throughout their existence, but most significantly during their early stages of development. The group first solidified at an intensive training retreat, and regular retreats have become a key component of their collaborations.

Collaboration and the Arts

Research question: What role do the arts play in interdisciplinary collaboration?

Whether artistically-inclined (like the Collective) or not, interdisciplinary groups may benefit from using arts-based processes to inspire creativity and innovation, strengthen communication and relationships, and to build relational awareness. The Collective believes that "art-making and creative expression are healing, growth-producing processes in and of themselves" (Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003, p. 12).

"Making images is a way of breaking boundaries, loosening out-worn ideas, and making way for the new" (Allen, 1995, p. x). For the Collective, creative expression of all sorts can accomplish these effects, encouraging unexpected connections and new knowledge creation akin to Osberg and Biesta's (2007) *strong emergence*. The arts teach us that a single question can have many answers (Eisner, 2002), a realization that may help to broaden thinking patterns and awaken creativity. For brains that are often stuck in the multiple-

choice format of standardized testing and evaluation, the reminder of such a simple notion may be a welcome gift.

The arts also enhance interpersonal communication and facilitate understanding of others' ways of knowing. Artistic expression, particularly in the realm of criticism-free expressive arts work, helps individuals and groups to develop unique "voices" with which to articulate ideas and emotions. The practice of *aesthetic responding*–non-critical "witnessing" of artwork, expressed in personal, appreciative, and sometimes artistic or non-verbal ways (Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003; McNiff, 1992)–can bring about an authentic dialogue between artist and audience that leaves behind accomplishment-reliant egos and fosters reciprocal relationships (both of which are part of the Collective's set of shared values.) Artistic expression and aesthetic responding are valuable in the process of "casting the circle:" creating open, relational spaces where trust can be established and creativity can flourish (also key elements of the Collective's work.) Lottie's "flying duvet" is powered by relationships established through the arts.

The arts' awareness and expression of relationships (Eisner, 2002)–not only among individuals, but also among ideas, images, cultures, etc.–expands linearly constricted thinking patterns by "enlarging the space of the possible" (Osberg, 2009, p. vii) and widening the view. The Collective's focus on art-making supports the interconnectedness of style and substance that is demonstrated by holistic, process-oriented descriptions of the structure of their work. In the arts, "form and content interpenetrate" (Eisner, 2002, p. 197), offering an integrated expression of these two, often divided, elements of collaboration.

Collaboration and Curriculum Development

Research question: How does the Collective's collaborative work inform curriculum

development?

The Collective's work led to a connection with an emerging theoretical- and practice-based field: expressive arts therapy. Their collaborations developed a body of knowledge known as the "Appalachian approach" to expressive arts work, which was incorporated into existing psychological counseling coursework and eventually established as an academic program consisting of a post-graduate certificate program and a concentration track for the Master's degree in counseling. The Collective's ongoing collaborations continue to influence the curricular content and teaching approaches of the expressive arts program. Collective members still team-teach, revise existing classes and materials, develop new coursework, and participate in program-related events, such as community art shows and performances. Similar to the arts' ability to increase relational attentiveness (Eisner, 2002), collaboration around curriculum development encourages awareness of relationships among courses, content areas, and teaching styles. The Collective's curriculum development process, as a product of the group's work together, uses these relational sensitivities (cultivated through arts-based collaboration) to facilitate an academic program that provides an unusually meaningful experience for students. Consequently, the program has produced a dedicated following of expressive arts-oriented therapists, educators, and consultants, who continue to "grow the field" and collaborate in their own arts-based ways. Facing the retirement of the majority of its original members, the Collective is undecided as to whether it will select and transition its own successors, or follow the emergent path of the group's life cycle. Regardless of the outcome, the Collective's Appalachian approach to expressive arts

is carried forward by decades of students–now practicing professionals–who witnessed, experienced, and participated in its collaborative development.

Collaboration and Satisfaction

Research question: What role does professional satisfaction play in sustaining the work of the Collective?

Studies show that satisfaction increases when faculty have ample opportunity and support for collaborative, and especially interdisciplinary, work with their colleagues (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005; Boice, 2000; COACHE, 2010; Trower, 2011; Hill, Leinbaugh, Bradley, & Hazler, 2005). The Collective's work together has fostered the deep professional (and personal) satisfaction among members that sustains their long-standing collaborations (academic or otherwise), despite institutional barriers, reductions in resources, and lack of holistic faculty support. Collective members' engagement with the group is motivated not by academic incentive or obligation, but by love, enjoyment, and appreciation.

The Collective's responses also demonstrate that collegial relationships are built not only in the time and space of professional work, but also in the spaces between activities and events: "traveling together, being together, talking together, eating together, communing together," as Heyoka says. For example, interpersonal relationships (necessary for successful collaboration) among faculty may be strengthened as much by the experiences associated with traveling together to a conference as by attending the conference itself. It is in these in-between spaces where relationships grow and take shape. As seen in the close ties of the Collective, deep and supportive collegial relationships not only bring about stronger academic partnerships, they also enhance the individuals' quality of life and personal/professional satisfaction.

The connectivity of the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective's experiences supports the professional satisfaction literature that suggests the personal and professional lives of faculty in higher education are deeply intertwined, pointing toward a need for more holistic faculty development. Several Collective members perceive shrinking support for faculty development and call for more integrated faculty assistance programs that acknowledge these overlapping roles, rather than prioritizing or separating roles and identities of faculty. In order to satisfy their own (often arts-related) personal and professional thirsts, Collective members actively worked to organize professional development and mentoring activities for their group, often attached to a visiting presenter's scheduled attendance at a University-sponsored event or speaking engagement. Due to a lack of funding, the expenses associated with many retreats and meetings were covered by Collective members themselves. In an environment more favorable to collaborative work such as the Collective's, support programs might acknowledge the overlapping (personal and professional) benefits of group retreats and other faculty development by allocating additional resources and services.

Complexity and Organizational Development

Research question: How does the inclusion of complexity theory augment more traditional perspectives of institutional collaboration?

Institutional thinking can so often lead to linear, mechanistic structures based on either/or decision-making; complexity science offers a systemic, both/and approach, which more closely relates to the complex and sometimes chaotic realities of organizational culture. Viewing the Collective as a living system is helpful in understanding its creative and synergistic collaborative work. The Collective's descriptions of its relationships, form, and

activity align closely with Capra's (1996) three key criteria of living systems (*pattern of organization*, *structure*, and *life process*), which supports my use of the metaphor to illustrate the group's dynamics.

In addition to Capra's key criteria, the scientific concept of emergence also became a key thematic component of this study, providing an interpretive lens for the tensions that surfaced in the data, as well as offering a metaphorical explanation for the creative productivity of the Collective's process-oriented collaborations. The Collective's appreciation of diversity and tolerance of conflict may be factors conducive to the group's generativity, given that complexity increases and emergence occurs in living systems when the organism is tending toward *dis*equilibrium (Capra, 2007).

Scientific concepts and imagery, such as the strange attractor, can help us understand experiential processes in deeper ways, with simultaneous attention to focal point, energy, and space. Complexity science may also help to improve institutional evaluation methods of groups and processes with emergent properties, which standardized assessments often fail to measure due to the unpredictability of outcomes. Strange attractors, for example, typically adhere to a similar shape or structure, but the activity is non-repetitive, unpredictable, and capable of producing the "radically novel" outcomes of strong emergence (Gilstrap, 2005; Osberg & Biesta, 2007). Likewise, the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective is shaped by established relationships, traditions, and shared values, but its creative process yields new and often surprising results each time the group collaborates. Perhaps the strange attractor's combination of consistent form with emergent activity could inspire an evaluation that recognizes and measures predictable outcomes, while also leaving space for the development of complex and original processes and products.

Inquiry and the Arts

Research question: How does this exploration support alignments between expressive arts and a/r/tography?

This project's combination of expressive arts theory and a/r/tographic methodology reveals the similarities and connections between these two bodies of knowledge. My research approach combined traditional ethnographic techniques with rigorous reflexivity and arts-related approaches pulled from the emerging field of a/r/tography. Reflective of the study's theoretical content, the participants' processes, and my own training, this project was designed to leave room for creative emergence, in collaboration with gathered data and ongoing analysis. A/r/tography–a methodology that values intersubjectivity, intermodality, and "attention to the *in-between*" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xix)–allows for the intuitive emergence of knowledge through engagement with a variety of ways of knowing. The theory and practice of expressive arts also demonstrate a similar multiplicity of perspectives and modalities. Despite the growing prominence of arts-based approaches to research, the pool of academic research specific to expressive arts does not currently reflect the scope of the work that is being done across the globe. Expressive arts practitioners who feel out of place in objectivist paradigms will find familiar ideological ground among a/r/tographic methodologies, and may be inspired to embrace a/r/tography's simultaneous identities of artist, researcher, and teacher. Stronger alignments and increased collaboration between these two very similar approaches would promote theoretical growth and expansion in both fields and allow practitioners of the arts to document their working processes from perspectives situated in the experiential spaces of art-making, therapy, community collaboration, and personal growth.

Because my chosen methods did not specifically include art-making as part of data collection or analysis, the a/r/tographic influence on the shape and scope of this study may not be immediately clear. However, it is the aesthetic orientation of a/r/tography, combined with the theory and practice of expressive arts, which allowed me to approach my research with a relational and creative eye. Instead of feeling pressed to draw linear conclusions, I could instead visualize Langer's waterfall and explore the many points of contact among water, rocks, and the energy of flow. My own artistic expressions–products of my research and personal experiences–serve as visual examples of expressive arts outcomes, but they are not interpretive of any data collected, except in the relating of my subjective experiences. The addition of complexity science theory and metaphor further underscore the necessity of an emergent and relational approach to this type of research. A/r/tography offered me the ability to be simultaneously attentive to intellectual and theoretical concepts underlying my inquiry as well as to subjective and emotional elements. The loss of any of these components would greatly devalue the others and limit the creative power of these interactions.

Like the strange attractor, the a/r/tographic process of "living inquiry" continually sets its own boundaries. For example, during her interview Adrienne introduced me to the book *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, which offers guidance in maintaining the "difficult (sometimes paradoxical) vigilance to empirical description *and* aesthetic expression" associated with descriptive research (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p. 12). Though portraiture had not been specifically incorporated into this project's methodology, its tenets fit well with the a/r/tographic methodology, expressive arts theory, and aesthetic ways of thinking that I had set out for myself, and the perspective moved me to be more attentive to setting and context during my observational research at Wild Acres. A/r/tography's

flexibility of approach encouraged connections and interaction with theoretical foundations and emergent data, even as the research was underway, thus enriching the process of data collection and analysis.

Implications

The benefits and challenges associated with promoting and participating in interdisciplinary collaboration have been reviewed throughout this paper. Over the Collective's life span, shrinking support systems for faculty who want to engage in innovative collaborative work have become barriers, rather than the strengths they once were. In addition to a movement away from holistic perspectives of faculty development, University administrators and structures do not consistently or effectively facilitate, evaluate, or reward academic collaboration. Slammer feels that Collective members are challenged to work as a group of "wavicles" in a "particle-based" setting. He says, "There has to be this wave way of thinking, too, across the University–that's the part that I see missing. And how do you promote it in a practical way?"

A 2005 report on interdisciplinary research published by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), with the National Academy of Engineering (NAE), and the National Institute of Medicine (NIM), encourages institutional policy-makers to promote interdisciplinary work by eliminating barriers and increasing incentives for collaboration, providing financial backing, and supporting "risky" projects (p. 19). Participation in innovative, interdisciplinary collaboration (and the process of emergence) requires openness to risk-taking. Facilitators and supporters of collaboration (including educational leaders such as department chairs, program directors, deans, provosts, faculty developers, etc.) should be willing to take similar risks by refraining from over-structuring groups and instead

allowing the process to develop on its own. By encouraging this intuitive interaction of diverse ideas and perspectives–again, "enlarging the space of the possible" (Osberg, 2009, p. vii)–collaborative processes and partnerships can generate integrative, innovative knowledge.

Institutions who desire to create fertile ground for emergent collaboration may consider seeking out administrators with the characteristics Morgan (2006) describes as essential:

> Managing change with regard to chaos and complexity theory involves a faith and trust in the natural order of the Universe. Natural organisms follow these instincts without question, but the human brain tends to overthink its options. Acceptance of the ideas of chaos and complexity requires the transformation facilitator to trust the natural process and have faith in the idea that all developments will unfold as they are meant to. Open-mindedness, intuition, and the ability to relinquish control are key qualities of this type of manager. (p. 255)

Again, references to natural processes and complexity science support further inclusion of these ideas in exploring, facilitating, and evaluating collaboration in higher education. Attachments to power, ego, and control—characteristics that are not uncommon in university settings, according to the Collective—are detrimental to emergent processes. However, the Collective exemplifies the ways in which natural tensions that arise in the context of human relationship can be productive and creative elements in the process of collaboration, also how the arts can create safe spaces in which interpersonal and ideological conflict can be explored and resolved.

Morgan's (2006) concept of minimum critical specifications, or "minimum specs," suggests that collaborative groups will flourish in an environment that is uniquely suited to

their minimum needs. Luna's metaphor of a classroom for children, with just enough structure to allow educational freedom, is very similar to the idea of minimum specs:

> There is a lot of organization behind the scenes, and more subtle, that goes into this, especially the stuff that [Artemis] does. It's kind of like a Montessori classroom, where, when things are in order, there's a lot more freedom. And so I think that reminds me of how our group works. There are a lot of things that are in order that allow us, then, to respond to the mood of the moment. However, that underlying structure is not set in stone. So being flexible and able to respond in the moment, improvise…is important.

Institutional administrators are tasked with discovering the ideal conditions for collaborative work, relative to each academic setting and group. In order to "create spaces" for emergent collaboration, minimum specs must include opportunities for intuitive community-building across departmental and agency lines. Balancing a flexible structure with participants' freedom to connect creatively is crucial to maintaining minimum specs.

Increasingly in higher education, academic productivity and success are measured quantitatively, rather than qualitatively, using "digital measures" that limit reporting of collaborative work, such as papers or presentations by multiple authors. Educator and philosopher Parker Palmer (1993) has said, "Great thinking in all fields at its deepest and best is a connective activity, a community-building activity, and not an activity which is meant to distance and alienate us" (lecture). How can we accurately document, evaluate, and improve upon teaching and learning processes when the "deepest and best" types of thinking are under-recognized and under-reported? In order to document the contributions

of collaborative and aesthetic work, qualitative measures of such work must be developed and included in institutional evaluations.

Limitations

Eisner (2002) says, "Although frames of reference provide an aperture through which we can secure a focus, every frame excludes as well as includes" (p. 85). The scope of this study is clearly very narrow by design, as it consists of a single case. While the findings are specific to the participant group and environment, I am hopeful that future populations may discover points of connection with the data obtained and analysis presented, in order to inspire or improve future collaborative work in academia and beyond.

Also, although my personal connections with the Collective and expressive arts therapy offered a more thorough foundational understanding of the group's dynamics than an outside observer might have enjoyed, the Collective members and I each have a stake in the Appalachian State University (ASU) community, which seemed, at times, to be more influential than I expected. Although I did not initially anticipate any risks associated with participation in this study, I observed that the limitations of confidentiality carried with it some concern (on both my own part and the part of some of my participants) about the consequences of any negative representation. The consequence I most feared was causing harm to my participants and damaging my relationships with them. Ultimately, I feel that my descriptions and analysis remain true to the data collected, while also respecting the apprehension (my own and others) that I encountered and requesting clarification when needed.

Future Research

Like Langer's waterfall, collaboration is an experiential and emergent process that reductionist types of research fail to capture with any authenticity. Further research should include continued efforts towards descriptive, holistic studies of interdisciplinary collaboration in action, as well as exploration of specific angles in relation to the whole. Each additional description of the dynamics of collaboration brings a new perspective and greater depth to the concept. Diverse, descriptive studies of interdisciplinary collaboration in action will be essential to expanding support for and accessibility to interdiscipinarity in higher education. Despite the panoramic nature of my study, it still presents a single image, while the waterfall continues to change. "Yet the water does not really ever stand before us. Scarcely a drop stays there for the length of one glance" (Langer, 1957, p. 48). This exploration is meant to contribute a framed perspective, examine elements of interest, and perhaps to identify productive vantage points for future photographers.

As a complement to the holistic vision that I have chosen to explore in this study, future research could investigate each content area, or specific relationships between content areas, more thoroughly. In relation to the bodies of literature represented in this paper, conversations between interdisciplinarity and professional satisfaction, and between expressive arts and interdisciplinarity, could be especially productive. Also, concepts drawn from complexity science have added particular communicative and analytical richness to this study. These ideas have only recently been applied to the field of education, and further connectivity between the two fields could be extremely valuable in offering new insight and guidance for educators and administrators, as well as helping to explore, understand, and evaluate creative endeavors. The ongoing discussion regarding the prevalence of specialized

(therapist-specific) versus integrative (open to many academic fields) expressive arts education (McNiff, 2009) would be greatly enhanced by additional exploration of unique cases, like the Collective, where expressive arts principles and practices are used to facilitate relationships and group process outside of therapy.

The Collective identified several administrators, including deans and department chairs, who have served as essential supporters of their collaborative work. Future studies might also consider gathering data from effective administrators of interdisciplinary collaboration, who could offer additional insight into the maintenance of minimum specifications for collaborative spaces, or even from administrators who are challenged to remain open to emergent processes.

Internal facilitation of emergent collaborative groups could also be a valuable research focus. In the present case, Artemis most often facilitates the activities of the Collective and has done so since the early stages of the group's development. Is it possible that the minimum specs for emergent collaboration include a facilitator (like Artemis) with naturally process- and people-oriented leadership skills, or might a group develop its own leadership through the process of collaboration? An exploration of this question would be especially significant for aspiring collectives that have yet to establish leadership or structural frameworks.

Final Thoughts

The Collective's descriptions of their arts-based, interdisciplinary collaborations highlight the importance of continued engagement in creative play–"like children play," says Heyoka–throughout the lifespan. In the Reggio Emilia approach, a style of schooling similar to the Montessori method, knowledge is co-created among students and teachers, and the

educational environment is referred to as the "third teacher" (Cadwell, 1997). While the physical environment is clearly a significant contributor to collaborative processes, metaphorically, these concepts of early childhood educational environments are also particularly applicable to intangible "spaces" and settings of collaboration. Reggio Emilia practitioner Cadwell's (1997) observations of school environments are reminiscent of expressive arts processes when she says, "…environment is the best educator when it promotes complex, varied, sustained, and changing relationships between people, the world of experience, ideas, and the many ways of expressing ideas. The best environment encourages this layered web of relationships to grow" (p. 93). Reggio communities claim spaces of learning with intentional and meaningful décor, filling the walls with ongoing documentation of the children's creative and emergent learning processes. Cadwell (1997) suggests, "…an environment that educates holds the presence of all those who live, work, and play within it, even when they are not there" (p. 93). Perhaps the most inspiring collaborative learning spaces cannot be labeled or pre-determined; they must be claimed through a meaningful process of co-creation among participants and setting, thus preserving "the presence...even when they are not there." The Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective has certainly been pushed to claim its own collaborative spaces, stretching across the excessively-structured academic disciplines and the blurred lines between personal and professional life. The group's dynamic and creative circles integrate ways of knowing, being, and doing within the context of deep relationship and presence. When we enter the circle's shared space, we join a dynamic, living system formed by the complex and collaborative processes of art and life. Once inside the system, we are always present, collectively, in these relational and aesthetic spaces–even when we are not there. By way of

arts-based inquiry and exploration, this project has cast its own circle of relationships and processes, and it invites readers into future aesthetic conversations and collaborations of their own. Now that our circle has been cast, it's my privilege to say*: This circle is open but unbroken.*

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Consent to Participate in Research

Creating spaces for self-organizing systems in academia:

The Expressive Arts Collective as a heuristic for exploring interdisciplinary collaboration

Principal Investigator: Marisa Cornell   **Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Chris Osmond
Department: Educational Leadership   **Department:** Leadership & Educ. Studies

You have been invited to take part in a research study about arts-based, interdisciplinary collaboration. If you take part in this study, you will be one of about seven (7) people to do so. The research procedures will be conducted on or around the campus of Appalachian State University, in Boone, NC, and at Wild Acres Retreat in Marion, NC.

Methods

You will be asked to participate in an individual interview, lasting at least one hour in length, with the potential for follow-up interviews and/or discussion requesting clarification. I will also be observing collaborative activities of the group, including planning meetings, team-teaching, performances, and rehearsals, and will conduct a review of archival documents and artifacts. Your permission is requested to allow audio recording and photographic documentation of interviews and observations, some of which may be used in the context of research analysis, presentation, and publication.

Risks/Benefits

To the best of our knowledge, there are no risks associated with your participation in this study. The project offers an opportunity to explore your own views on collaboration and possibly to enhance the collaborative work that you are already doing, and you may also gain an expanded scholarly perspective by serving in the role of a participant in arts-based qualitative research.

Study participants will not be compensated.

Confidentiality

Because you are part of the publicly-recognized collaborative group being studied, your identity cannot be kept completely confidential. However, in order to preserve a measure of anonymity and to encourage openness, pseudonyms will be used to classify any information provided in the context of individual interviews. Your data will be protected under the full extent of the law.

Consent

The researchers will be available to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the principal investigator at (828) 260-XXXX. If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, contact the Appalachian Institutional Review Board Administrator at (828) 262-2130, through email at irb@appstate.edu, or at Appalachian State University -- Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, IRB Administrator, Boone, NC 28608.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you choose not to volunteer, there will be no penalty and you will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have. If you decide to take part in the study, you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. There will be no penalty and no loss of benefits or rights if you decide at any time to stop participating in the study. A copy of this consent form is yours to keep.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Appalachian State University has determined this research project (#12-0243) to be exempt from further review.

_____

Participant's Name (PRINT)   Signature   Date

APPENDIX B

Project title: *Creating spaces for self-organizing systems in academia: The Expressive Arts Collective as a heuristic for exploring interdisciplinary collaboration*

Reseachers: Marisa Cornell (PI), Dr. Chris Osmond (Faculty Supervisor)

Interview Guide:

1. How did you become a part of the Expressive Arts Collective? Why?

2. Tell me about some of the collaborative work of the EAC.

    a. when/where does the work take place?

    b. what kinds of projects do you work on?

    c. share a specific example?

5. How does the group work together?

    a. how is the group organized?

    b. describe some typical collaborative processes.

3. Tell me about your working relationships:

    a. with individuals?

    b. with the group as a whole?

4. What do you think you bring to the group? What do you get out of your participation?

6. Can you identify any supports or barriers to your work?

7. Keeping in mind everything we've discussed, describe a metaphor that relates to the collaborative process.

Biography

       Marisa Cornell holds a B.S. in Psychology from the University of Florida, as well as an M.A. in Community Counseling, a post-graduate certificate in Expressive Arts Therapy, and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Appalachian State University. She subscribes to a broad definition of education and uses her aesthetic ways of thinking to facilitate experiential learning opportunities in a variety of settings. She lives in the mountains of Boone, NC, with her husband, daughter, and various animal friends.