EXPRESSIVE ARTS AS A CONTAINER FOR EMBODIED WELL-BEING IN EDUCATION

A Dissertation
by
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Abstract

EXPRESSIVE ARTS AS A CONTAINER FOR EMBODIED WELL-BEING IN EDUCATION

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This qualitative research study followed a university Learning Community interested in expressive arts and social change as a way to observe the balance of time known as chronos (structured time) and kairos (psychological flowing time) within the work environment. The purpose was to explore how phenomenological sense oriented poiesis, or knowing through art-making, benefited and facilitated participants’ imaginations while nurturing a balance between the heavy demands of work and the need for personal, emotional, and mental well-being. Educators became engaged in social change through art-making processes that also lead to improved well-being. This research study combined narrative interviews of nine women, and participatory action research with the arts-based educational research known as a/r/tography. As co-researchers, the Learning Community discussed the patterns of inner change through individual and expressive arts community practices as well as other daily practices. Arts-based, sense-
oriented methods were used within the educational community inspiring a conscious encounter with presence, attention and attunement.

The findings of this study emerged from the themes of doing versus being, energy, and ritual in education. The doing task of creating a labyrinth for the educational community as a service project was discussed alongside the benefits of being through making art. Energy in this study referred to the perspective of time as energy, energy as personal presence, and energy expressed as art forms. Rituals created in individual daily practice and the expressive arts studios within the Learning Community were important aspects of individual well-being and engagement in community.

The study implied that a daily arts-based practice can aid the educator in discovering a more balanced way of navigating a full schedule of daily tasks. Educators can integrate the routine of task-doing with artistic-being though the use of an arts-based daily practice whether in the office or at home. Implications of the study include use of arts-based practices within educational institutions as well as the importance of future a/r/tographic research.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my family and friends, especially Joe Arnold for his steadfast support, and my sons, for encouraging me along this transformative journey.

I acknowledge the many friends in my doctoral Cohort 20 and the cohorts before mine that offered support in conversations of research and rigor. A huge embrace of gratitude is given to my dear friend and writing buddy, Jessica Gilway. Her stamina, tenacity and clarity of vision instilled courage. Thanks to Susan Reed and Emily Miller for sharing their doctoral process in our Core Four meetings and walks in the park.

A special thank you to my committee members: Karen Caldwell for her steadfast presence in my final stages of writing where she embodied a balance of discipline and laughter; Chris Osmond for his inspiring intellect and wisdom; and my mentor Sally Atkins for her exemplary leadership in expressive arts. Thank you, Sally Atkins, for recommending the Appalachian State University doctoral program in Educational Leadership, and especially for introducing me to the innovative faculty members, Dr. Vachel Miller and Dr. Kelly Clark/Keefe, whose compassionate rigorous leadership encouraged my becoming and being while discovering a new language of learning. Sally, thank you for pushing me to excellence.
Dedication

Benjamin, Abraham, Noah Francis, and Samuel, whether by design or synchronicity of events, you have marked the way of my development as a teacher and leader in education. You have been my consultants as I traversed the field of education. Thank you, tribe of four souls, my sons; this dissertation is dedicated to you.

To Paulus Berensohn and Meg Peterson, my mentors in the behavior of art.
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Foreword

Qualitative research studies do not typically fit within the traditional five chapters. With the approval of my committee, this dissertation includes a prologue and epilogue, and divides the findings into three chapters, so that they might be easier to read. Research writer Corrine Glesne (2015) responds to the query of qualitative formatting in her fifth edition of qualitative research stating, “From my perspective, the conventional dissertation format is not congruent with either the openness of qualitative inquiry or the contributions that descriptive, interpretive writing can provide” (2015, p. 239). In Atkins’s (2012) article about mentoring arts-based doctoral researchers, she shares the benefits of students presenting non-linear data: “Realizing the power of the arts to offer multiple perspectives on any given issue recognizes and honors the complexity inherent in studying human phenomena” (p.65). She advocates the expanded utilization of arts-based research while also asking that her students display integrity in meeting the requirements of the traditional chapters. She shares that as a mentor she is open and thus learns from the expanding field of arts-based methods. Dr. Rita Irwin, whose students have been on the cutting edge of arts-based research, shared that at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, the graduate school has expressed waves of acceptance and speculation regarding the new formats of arts-based research (personal conversation, June 2015). It is important that those of us who write in a new format do so with clarity and clear purpose.
And we are always up against the enormous limitations of the mind and of language in attempting to understand the powers that are living us.

James Hillman on *Carl Gustav Jung and the Red Book*,

A Path to Well-Being

I opened my front door one January afternoon to the determined knock of a man wrapped in a tattered gray jacket over a flannel shirt and baggy sweatpants. A nylon red beanie hat was the only thing keeping him warm from the winter rain. He smiled shyly with a half toothed grin. His eyes widened hopefully through smudged glasses as he asked to come inside. His name was Tom. Tom lived very simply in a silver air stream trailer at the new Zen Center just two miles down the road. He wasn’t homeless, as I assumed in that moment. He asked if he could introduce our family to the priest who had just arrived from Sogen-ji, the sister Rinzai Zen monastery in Japan.

A few months earlier I had moved to Whidbey Island north of Seattle, Washington with my husband and four sons who were between one and seven years old. The last twelve years we had lived in community with the homeless. I worked as an art therapist and mother. Driven by a shadowy feeling that I could never do enough, I struggled to find balance and contentment in just being. Our move was the beginning of a personal transformation that affected the core of my being. Realizations emerged over the next several years that reframed my identity and set questions in motion about balance and well-being that I am still living with today.

During the first year we lived on Whidbey Island I hiked early most mornings to Tahoma One Drop Zen Center via a path I blazed through the woods from the farm where we
lived in community with another family. I either sat by the small pond on the property or
joined the priest and monk in the yurt that served as the early Zendo. I became devoted to the
tranquil state I found through my breath, slipping away to the Zen Center more frequently
until the land on Tahoma soon became my second home.

The hikes to Tahoma offered a metaphorical path toward mental health grounded in
walks through nature, mediation practice and artistic exploration. The priest and the
growing community at the Zen center offered a neutral space that nourished my body and
soul. Some afternoons I would hike alone in the healing solitude of the island’s silky powder
clay-lined bluffs.

One sunny morning during the first year at the monastery, the priest, Tom, and I sat
in a meditative state on the kitchen deck of Tahoma looking out over a small clearing.
During the meditation, I took out a small fistful of soft brown clay and took a breath. The
clay rested in my left palm as I sat with crossed legs watching the rising sun’s dappled light
through the trees. The priest might have been quietly curious about my clay ball, but he made
no comment. It was my meditation. I was truly the curious one.

I noticed my breath slowing in the structure of the sitting practice as I pinched a
small hole in the soft clay ball with my thumb. I began pinching the clay in an intentional
gentle circle. My pinching rhythm remained steady with my breath as I moved my fingers
around the ball. With every long breath in, I held the clay between my fingers. And with
every slow breath out I pinched again, opening the ball a bit more. At the end of meditation I
lifted my eyelids to witness a simple bowl. After the meditation, while walking around the
pond, I found a tree stump in a spot of sunlight near a patch of nettles where the clay could
decompose over weeks back into its dust particles. I returned the clay to the earth.
I left the meditation feeling refreshed and cleansed, as if my breath and the clay had pulled out emotional toxins. Hand-built clay vessels along with journaling had been my means of meditative reflection before I found the monastery. When I reflected back upon bringing clay into meditation, I wondered: Why bring clay into a meditative practice? How is an art practice similar to a meditative practice?

Clay became my medium of artistic practice during that first year at the monastery. Through my hands, clay took on images of internal or external experiences of the landscape from my walks. I returned all clay sculptures to the earth except for the most powerful piece, the one that captured my gratitude of the priest. (Figure 1).

Figure 1. “Healing From Within,” Sculpture by Katrina Plato

Within the next couple of years Tahoma grew in mission and became a monastery offering daylong retreats for caregivers once a month. The retreats included simple components I had discovered: a balance of quiet sitting, gentle walking around the monastery’s pond, a hearty fresh made lunch and a light body centered activity in the afternoon. I volunteered to lead a clay meditation practice during the inaugural retreat. I
took people through the very process of relaxing I had experimented with by inviting them to use their breath to center themselves while pinching clay.

Co-facilitating the retreats was very rewarding. Eventually I became a key member of another committee for the monastery that worked toward opening Enso House, a beautiful home for the dying, resting on a sunny slope next to the wooded monastery. The year after Enso House opened my family moved to the Southeast. I left the island, knowing I had contributed toward a great service to the community, and aware that my understanding of balance would continue to be tested as I carried the stillness I had learned out into the world in the palms of my hands.

**Sculpting Linkages between Subjectivity and Research**

We moved to North Carolina to be near two inspiring individuals that would further shape my life, Sally Atkins and Paulus Berensohn. I met Sally Atkins in 2002 at the International Expressive Arts Therapy (IEATA) Conference in Banff, Canada. I remember her walking toward me with a larger than life presence as her cascading silver hair flowed around her whole being. She shared an enthusiasm for the teaching community of Black Mountain College where M.C. Richards taught in the 1950s.

Her interest in community collaboration was evident in her conference presentation, Stories of Stones (Atkins et al., 2002). Participants of the workshop entered a dimly lit room where we followed a winding path defined by tea lights to a stream of silks surrounded by a circle of stones carried to Banff from the oldest river in the Appalachians. A circle of fourteen graduate students and faculty from Appalachian State University (ASU) waited for us on cushions outside the rim of stones. With music, poetry, and story ASU students and faculty led at least twenty of us through a process of building community in art making while
listening to our inner and outer landscapes through the stories of stones. At the end of the ritual I sat in the center of the circle of stones in silent tears. Through Sally’s leadership and weaving of souls, I had met my next collaborative community.

Paulus Berensohn’s book Finding Ones Way with Clay: Pinched Pottery and the Color of Clay (1972) was the inspiration for the clay meditations I practiced and then led in the retreats at the monastery. While attending Whitworth College as an art student, I read his book with M.C. Richard’s book Centering: In Pottery, Poetry and the Person (1966). I remember transcribing whole paragraphs of these texts into my clay journal. The authors’ words marked a spiritual journey that has lasted a lifetime. They wrote in my soul language, presenting art as a behavior and an imaginary process rather than a professional craft product.

One of my college professors told me in a private conversation that Paulus had died. However, I met Deborah [Miller] Grace on Whidbey Island who was close friends of both Paulus and M.C. Richards. She told me Paulus was still very much alive and connected me with him. Paulus and I communicated through letters and phone conversations, and then I visited him in North Carolina.

On an icy February afternoon in 2003, my husband and I met with Paulus in his home. Paulus, wearing a colorful vest, opened the door to greet us. With white hair pulled back into a small curling ponytail, he invited us in with a wide smile and a pipe of cherry tobacco between his lips. His house was radiant with shelves of red clay pinched bowls. Envelopes with hand-drawn doodles and paintings of embroidered doodles were pinned to his walls. My eyes kept wandering to a reading corner where a short bookcase was filled with colorfully bound journals. He pulled some out and showed us his hand-sewn Coptic
journals. They were filled with his ornate handwriting in different colors, doodles of his day, and photographs of people and artwork he witnessed. We talked for several hours in his living room as we sipped grapefruit juice mixed with scotch to keep warm.

![Figure 2. Mandala Made on Whidbey Island 2003](image)

We noticed a series of photos in one journal showing white pebbles and tea lights on a blue cloth surrounded by a circle of bare feet. He told us how he created a ritual with a group of students using simple clay pebbles a couple of years earlier. After his friend M.C. Richards died in 1999, he thought to knead her ashes into a bowl, but instead formed similar seeds of clay.

Through research Paulus came to understand that clay particles radiate light, and that particles of the earth are stardust from nebulae. So humans, made from the earth, are also made of stardust. Inspired, he played with different ways hands can mold pebbles from clay. Inspired by the seeds made for Richards he later played with different ways hands can mold pebbles from clay. The photographs of pebbles in his journal were taken from a ritual he created and led with a group of teenagers forming star constellations from clay pebbles.
Before we left on our journey back to Whidbey Island, Paulus reached into a bowl on an altar for M.C. Richards. He placed a small handful of dry clay pebbles into my hand. Upon our return to the Northwest I gave clay seeds to Deborah Grace, saving two pebbles to place in a mandala I made on the beach with seaweed, rose petals and clay stones for my 40th birthday (Figure 2).

Once my family settled in North Carolina I personally introduced Sally Atkins to Paulus Berensohn. In 2007 Sally chaired an IEATA conference in Boone, North Carolina where Paulus led the opening ritual with clay pebbles for five hundred participants. These two artists and art educators envision healing practices through community rituals using art modalities that reminded me of their connection between the natural world and creativity.

![Image of a mandala made with clay pebbles and a candle](image)

**Figure 3. Pebble Ritual with Undergraduates Spring 2015**

As I continued my journey of spiritual daily practices for personal balance, I developed a vision to lead expressive arts workshops (Figure 3) for faculty and administrators in various educational settings. Through years of offering art therapy in public schools in North Carolina, and then teaching middle school art education in Mitchell County, I became sensitive to the lack of balance within my community of educators. Expressive arts invites new healing practices through an interactive use of the arts, encouraging community and reflection through imaginative play.
Chapter One: Introduction

This research study examined the healing potential of the arts in a rapidly changing world, as mirrored in higher education. The research inquired how the arts, as used in Expressive Arts (EXA), can nurture a balance between the demands of work and emotional and mental well-being. The study began with the research question: How does allowing time for attunement and attention via art-making enhance the well-being of educational communities and those who inhabit them? The inquiry was approached from an understanding of EXA within the context of higher education communities.

Expressive arts therapy emerged as a professional clinical field in the postmodern era of the 1970s. Prior to this time, restorative healing through dance, art, and music began as individual arts modalities. Each modality became a therapeutic profession in hospitals at the end of the modern era in the 1940s and 50s. The arts offered tools to rebuild meaning during the “death of reason” (Levine, 2005, p.58) as a result of two world wars. In the early postmodern era of the 1960s and 70s, these therapies became more defined fields of healing, branching out and expanding to meet the needs of diverse populations from children to adults in a variety of settings from hospitals to schools (Burt, 2011).

In the 1970s, artists, educators, and therapists worked in collaboration at Leslie University to define the emerging field of intermodal expressive arts with affiliated training programs in Europe (Knill, 2005; McNiff, 2009). Rather than focusing only on one artistic mode of therapy such as music therapy, the EXA facilitator was skillfully trained to weave a
thread through different artistic traditions, including music, movement, poetry, or visual arts with the goal of stimulating playful inquiry towards fresh imaginative insights, thus building deeper connections to the self or others. (Knill, Barba, & Fuchs, 1995) In an educational setting, the experience of the arts can renew personal vitality (Dewey, 1934) and inspire communal experiences (Atkins & Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003; Levine & Levine, 2011). Within set frames of time in educational settings, an intermodal expressive arts facilitator offers personal and communal transformation using an interdisciplinary approach to the arts.

Fundamental to EXA is the concept of poiesis. Poiesis is a way of knowing through making. The concept of poiesis bridges the fields of EXA and arts-based research in this study. In arts-based qualitative research, the philosophical themes of time and being frequently surface. These themes were relevant to this research study because any human who experiences poiesis expresses “the capacity to respond to and shape the world” (Levine, 2005, p. 10). This study worked to invite educators to participate in a means to shape their own world through engagement with poiesis through the arts in their daily lives.

**Context: Contemporary Issues of Complexity for Educators**

This study took place within a higher educational community at a public university in western North Carolina. The focus was on the complex experiences of faculty, staff, and administrators who worked long hours in a culture that emphasized practical results (Robson, 2010). With the intention of producing a factory work force, public institutions have been structured like efficient machines (Morgan, 1997). Schools have used scientific time management to keep everyone on task (Matus, 2009; Yu, 2010). Any kind of social change has been challenging because institutions of higher education became mechanistic and
entrepreneurial systems of operation. In designing schools to achieve goals, innovation and engaging in the arts took a back seat to efficiency (Morgan, 1997).

In recent decades, contemporary philosophers of education and the arts, such as Dewey (1934), Greene (1995), and Eisner (2002) write about the need to turn away from Descartes’s separation of mind and body. Knill, Barba, and Fuchs (1995) write about the necessity of a phenomenological approach when facilitating intermodal expressive arts, which integrate the mind and body through exploration of the senses. Phenomenological philosophers like David Abram (1996) speak to the importance of the senses as a way of being fully present and engaged citizens. In order to compete in a global society, traditional liberal arts education is concerned with providing effective employees for today’s world market. Critical theorists like Giroux (2014) and economists like Barbezat (2014) share the concern that rather than raising consciousness, public institutions of higher education follow a business model in which students are commodities and faculty are cogs in an industry of job production.

Working in a structured system of repetition and regularity, like the consistent chiming of clocks dismissing students for their next assigned class, discourages spontaneity or freedom of thought. The mechanistic system that has been fostered globally throughout the last century breeds an educational culture that is aggressively linear and extends beyond the traditional nine-to-five workdays. A common complaint among teachers is that they are overwhelmed with paperwork and after school activities in order to fulfill their assigned responsibilities (Robson, 2010). The expectation to put in extra hours overworks teachers and can contribute to teacher burnout. Educational researchers point out that the human implication of this robotic system does not set a good example for students when faculty, in
their attempt to cope, display patterns of depression and slide into unhealthy lifestyles of poor eating and irregular exercise (Herzig, 2007).

According to Jacobs’ (2004) research, faculty and administrators, even in higher education, feel the weight of work time, work-family conflict, and faculty workload. His research found that educators work more hours than in other occupations. A 50-hour workweek is normal but a 60-hour workweek is just as common. Some faculty at research institutions clock 80-hour workweeks pressured to publish (Herzig, 2007). Though many professors enjoy their research and time with students, Jacobs (2004) concludes that jobs in higher education demand more time than is reasonable. He proposes simple changes in daily routines, such as limits on email and fewer faculty meetings. Furthermore, Jacobs (2004) concludes that the overloaded schedules of educators reflect personal choices that develop into life patterns not just in academia, but also in American society. In a profession that teaches students how to make a living, educators are challenged to reflect social change through the wisdom of how to live.

**Purpose Statement**

Making art that is visual, musical, written or movement-based offers a discourse of hope for education. Making art can transform the experience of time. Organized linear goals, such as class time, meetings, school projects and proposals, create a tension with driven expectations. Artistic processes can offer structures in non-linear rituals, providing experiences that often alter time and allow new inspiration to surface. Within an art-making experience, such as the daily practice of visual journaling (Hieb, 2005; Progoff, 1975; Scott, 2012) or making art in community as in an expressive arts studio (Moon, 2002), the very limitation of time may be generative. Given a limited time within which to create stimulates
an educator’s action with little time to think, thus encouraging authentic creations from the subconscious.

The purpose of this research was to explore a path of well-being during times of complexity within higher education. The study invited higher education faculty and staff at a middle sized public university in western North Carolina to participate in expressive arts studios. Arts-based, sense-oriented methods used within an educational community inspired a conscious encounter with presence, attention and attunement. This research study explored how art-making practices benefited and facilitated participants’ imaginations while nurturing a balance between the heavy demands of work and the need for personal, emotional, and mental well-being. The hope is that the research findings will inspire, inform, and thus incite action towards a new way of being within educational communities. This study explored the possibility of a restoration of well-being for educators through radically “transforming how [they] experience and think about time” (Bastian, 2014, p.8).

Research Questions

Research questions for this study built on the data from a pilot project conducted in the fall of 2013. That project considered the benefits of a daily practice, such as keeping a visual journal, toward an educator’s well-being. Through interviews and observations, the most consistent concern voiced in the interviews and observations was the reoccurring theme of finding time for an art practice that nourished the educator.

The focused question that emerged from the pilot project for this research study was: How does allowing time for attunement and attention via poiesis enhance the well-being of educational communities and those who inhabit them?
In order to research time for well-being in educational leadership, these guiding research questions were formed under the larger question above:

- What inspires educators to engage in *poiesis*?
- How do educators experience the *poiesis* process?
- How do research participants describe the quality of time in *poiesis*?
- How do the participants experience well-being through *poiesis* individually and in community?

**Significance of the Study**

This study encouraged educators to become engaged in social change through art-making processes that also lead to improved well-being. Other dissertations have researched teacher renewal through art processes (Dalton, 2012; Williams, 2001); the power of professional renewal through faculty collaborations (Cornell, 2013); the importance of artistic mindfulness practices (Franklin, 2010); and the significance of craft-making behaviors to well-being (Miller, 2014). Building on these previous inquiries, this study looked at the impact of the phenomenological experiences of time for educators during the EXA process. The research also inquired into how gathering as a community of educators within an art studio impacted new and consistent practices of well-being.

The pilot project conducted in the fall of 2013 confirmed the complex, adverse effects of exhaustive workweeks and late nights after school. When faculty and administrators in the pilot project were asked in the opening interview how they found a way to balance their workload and well-being, several gave tearful, emotional responses. Over the course of the project, participants noted an increased motivation for an art practice at work that spread to creating spaces to continue their practice at home. In coding interviews, a salient theme that
emerged was the space or container to hold the materials for nurturing creative activities, whether a space at home or within a journal at work. Participants referred to space at home or their journals as containers for their practice. Another salient theme in the pilot project was time. Responses in the narratives to the challenge of keeping a journal were phrases about time, whether “carving out the time” from work and family or “finding time for depth.” This dissertation’s research study that followed the pilot project explored how the motivation to continue a practice for well-being was embodied in the participants as a felt sense, and if community engagement inspired sustained practice.

Shortly after the pilot project, in the spring of 2014, an EXA studio for faculty, staff, and graduate students began in the college of education at the university of study, a key project for my doctoral research internship. The EXA studio was offered every Friday afternoon. The goal of the studio was to provide programs that would offer low skill/high sensitivity artistic processes while inspiring nourishing and supportive practices. The vision took root and received funding to continue offering EXA studios for another year. The title of the grant application was *Creative Renewal: A Sustainable Arts Studio for Students, Faculty and Staff*. The studio became a hub where faculty, staff and graduate students shared and experienced programs that nourished and built educational community.

During the academic year 2014-15 that the EXA studio was funded a small group of educators volunteered to join a Learning Community focusing on EXA and social change. Because of their EXA theme the Learning Community met on the first Friday of the month in the space and time provided for the EXA studio. The members of that Learning Community (LC) agreed to contribute to the research for this study.
The research conducted in this study served as an example of the conceptual framework that the college holds, both in “Cultivating Communities of Practice” and in adding arts-based methods for “Developing Expertise in our Fields through Reflection and Inquiry” (RCOE Conceptual Framework, 2013). The studio experience provided a framework intended to promote vehicles for self-care, balance and well-being. This research also addressed the call from emerging policy recommendations, such as the one from the College of Education 2013-14 Sustainability Task Force. “The College can give more attention to the well-being of all its members. Strategies for self-care can be offered to students, as well as faculty/staff, drawing upon the rich strengths of the College in counseling and expressive arts (committee notes February 27, 2014).” The ambition of this dissertation research was that through participation in the Learning Community focused in the expressive arts, patterns of inner change within its members would increase awareness of social justice issues within a college of education.

A qualitative methodology of narrative interviews, observations and arts-based inquiry was employed with the sampling of faculty and staff who were members of a Learning Community situated in an expressive arts studio. The qualitative arts-based inquiry within education lent itself to a research methodology known as “a/r/tography” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005). The communal experience of the arts studio in which faculty and staff inquired and explored themes such as time in education, well-being, and social change invited the use of participatory action research. The research methodologies of a/r/tography and participatory action research will be discussed further in Chapter Three.
Definition of Key Terms

**Time:** The Oxford English Dictionary has over 7,000 definitions of time. For this project two common definitions are used. The first definition of time is a linear scheduled event, measured from one moment to another moment, often marked by a time keeping device, such as a clock. In educational settings, this linear time is often a measurement from the beginning to the end of a workday, and is used to track meetings and class schedules. A second definition of time is that of time made up of singular moments marked by an emotional experience; such a period of time can create a sense of weightlessness in the body (Bastian, 2014) that might give a momentary sense of timelessness (Scharmer, 2009).

The ancient Greek language refers to the linear or quantitative experience of time as *chronos*, and the emotional or psychological experience of time as *kairos* (Crossan, Cunha, Vera, & Cunha, 2005). In this study *chronos* refers to the time in educational institutions to schedule and implement the details that keep the organization in operation. Kairos refers to the psychological quality of time experienced during art making. The study traversed between these two experiences of time.

**Poiesis:** The noun *poiesis* originates from ancient Greek and refers to knowing through making. Originally referring to writing or theatre, *poiesis* means to make art (Levine, 1997). Philosopher and expressive arts therapist Stephen Levine has dedicated much of his professional writing career to introducing this term as a key component in the expressive arts theoretical framework. A significant point he makes for expressive arts, emphasized in this study, was his assertion that humans have the ability to shape their world through artistic expression, and that making art affects the self and the environment simultaneously. This
study examined *poiesis* as an act of social change because “*world building is self building*” (Levine & Levine, 2011, p. 24, italics in original).

*Poiesis* is one of the following three forms of knowing first identified by Aristotle in Greek philosophy (Levine, 2005): 1) One who engages in researching lived experiences through *poiesis* learns through the use of the senses during the act of making; 2) One who experiences *theoria* knows by observing, such as in observing for scientific understanding, but can also absorb in the beauty of nature through observation; and 3) One who experiences *praxis*, engages in a repeated action resulting in practical knowledge that can be used in social realms, such as politics.

**Phenomenology:** In his chapter on the *Philosophy of Expressive Arts Therapy*, Levine (2005) defines phenomenology as the development and foundation of “our conscious awareness as we interact with the world” (p. 23). Phenomenology is a complex philosophy with an extensive language. In this study, phenomenology is referred to as the knowledge that is gained through our experience with that which is in our environment. The philosophy is a return to the understanding that the body and mind are in relationship throughout their inquiry with the senses. David Abram (1996), influenced by phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, writes that as we perceive the world we are also recipients of the world’s perception of us. Abram’s friend, psychologist Per-Espen Stokne, reminds us that we do not observe a thing; we meet it (personal conversation, February, 2012). Berensohn (2001), a clay artist informed by the writings of Abram, echoes in his workshops the understanding that as we touch we are being touched.

**Being:** Martin Heidegger’s (1962) articulation of *Being* and time helps us to understand the phenomenon that transpires when a person creates forms of art. The concept
of Being in this research study referred to a state of experience of being in the world in everyday life during the process of making art. David Abram (1996), referring to the work of phenomenologist Martin Heidegger, describes this process as, “a forgotten sense of time” (p. 205). Both Levine (2005) and Abram (1996) refer to sensing a quality of mystery in this state of Being.

**Becoming:** The concept of becoming is a post-structural term referring to a state of not quite, or almost, or in the middle (personal communication with Kelly Clark/Keefe, 2013; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Faber & Stephenson, 2011). Rather than using a steadfast definition of becoming, this study invites the concept as, “a form of physical therapy for thinking. It is not a concept for explaining things as much as it is a concept that activates, functioning as a provocation, a creative invocation…” (Clark/Keefe, 2014, p.118). Similar to that timeless state of being, becoming is suspended between future and past, between the inner self and outer world (Faber & Stephenson, 2011). In a/r/tographic research, Rita Irwin (2013) gives the analogy of becoming as an artistic line that is not made up of the points of beginning or ending, but is the reverberating space between where the line’s movement starts and finishes.

**Well-being:** The Oxford English dictionary defines well-being as, “With reference to a person or community: the state of being or doing well in life; happy, healthy, or prosperous condition; moral or physical welfare (of a person or community)” (Well-being, n.d.). This study looked at the balance and wholeness of individuals’ well-being within educational communities. Rather than focus on the self in self-care, this study illuminated the term “well-being” because the definition encompassed a relational spectrum of the self and the other. Well-being has an epistemology that dates back to the 17th century, while self-care is a 20th
century idea. The original definition of well-being is interwoven with one’s relationship to a community of people and the natural environment. The contemporary use of well-being often refers to “a state of equilibrium or balance” (Dodge, Kaly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012).

Summary of Introduction

This chapter introduces a research study that explored how knowing through making and time spent in expressive arts rituals might contribute to the well-being of educators. To lay the foundation for this study, the history of the EXA profession was provided, followed by a context for the complexities of educators in relation to time. The context was set for a qualitative interpretive methodology through narrative interviews and arts-based inquiry. The chapter concluded with definitions of relevant terms.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review opens with a review of time as experienced in education and in poiesis. A deeper exploration of the creative process is then examined in relationship with materials and ritual. Finally, the rituals of the art studio and daily practices are reviewed.

The conceptual framework draws from the following three sources suggested by Maxwell (2013) for qualitative research design: (1) your experiential knowledge, (2) existing theory and research, and (3) your pilot and exploratory research (p.44). Though subjective knowledge is valued in qualitative research, there are few examples of how to incorporate personal process into a research study. Ronai (1995) and Ellis and Bochner (1996) experiment with expressing lived experiences through ethnography. Ronai (1995) makes an argument for a layered ethnography account, reporting that her reflexive voice is, “not forced to artificially create a sterile objective ‘researcher’ self” (p.422). A short vignette from a pilot project observation is layered in this study to foreshadow theory highlighted in the conceptual framework. Further information is also discussed from the initial pilot project.

The benefit of sharing personal process in qualitative research is illustrated best in the example of a student of Maxwell’s who articulated the value and use of subjectivity (2013, pp. 47-48). The student turned her research onto herself, and in doing so discovered a potent question. Her research inquiry went from a fairly broad negative tone to a positive reflective question. This proposal turns the question, “Why don’t people choose a daily art practice for their well-being?” to “Why don’t I choose a daily art practice for my well-being?” to a
positive reflection on “What would encourage me to have a daily art practice for my well-being?” This line of inquiry brings to the surface one of the questions at the heart of this research study, that of a sustaining practice for well-being.

The Concept of Time in Education

A BIG clock (Figure 4) hung over the area of the room where an English teacher had her laptop and small personal work area. The clock was at least two feet in diameter, a huge presence in the classroom. The science teacher had one like it across the hall. When asked, they shared they bought them because time was an issue.

Figure 4. Image of a Clock in a Classroom Pilot project 2013

Timepieces, such as clocks, are an integral aspect of a school building with the purpose of driving production while limiting visual scope. Since the rise of the industrial age and the implementation of the organizational principles outlined by American engineer Frederick Taylor, linear time has driven education (Morgan, 1997). Professor Jie Yu (2010) writes that the effects of Taylor’s management system on the institution, “in some sense becomes about ‘beating’ time. In other words, time becomes a quantifiable index measuring
the extent of educational efficiency” (p. 113). Yu (2010) gives the example that to be efficient, timed tasks are divided into units to be studied and then measured, articulated unconsciously by teachers to their students in task-oriented comments that drive due dates and encourage speed until the next task. Of this unconscious encroachment of time on institutions Yu (2010) writes:

> When man [and woman] is so complacent that everything including time is under his control by advanced modern technology, he ignores the hidden great danger that he is actually controlled by his own will to mastery and the technology. In other words, when man tries to control time and thinks he has successfully tamed time, he is actually controlled by time or specifically the watch time invented by himself. (p. 117)

It is imperative to include in this discussion professor Maxine Greene (1995) who is an innovator in the area of social change in education. She sees how a linear and logical view through time narrows, preoccupies, and focuses educators on test scores, taking their attention away from the social diversity of the students, “it screens out the faces and gestures of individuals, of actual living persons” (p. 11). Like Greene, there have been others that have called for a shift in consciousness and an increased awareness of our use of time in education. There is a danger of becoming unconscious to time and enslaved by those that are in power who dictate the use of our time. Morgan (1997) suggests that the Taylor management style created from within the industrial age is outdated. Yu (2010) calls for a more phenomenological approach to time in education, an experience of life that would resemble a listening to time. This dancing with time from an inner consciousness is in contrast to letting clocks, wrist watches, or schedules control our actions.
The Concept of Time in Poiesis

The concepts of poiesis and time are related to the postmodern language of being and becoming, all of which are central to this proposed study as experiences of balance and well-being. Poiesis, knowing through making art as in making, drawing and writing in journals, provides an awareness and attunement to self and the world. Time in and for poiesis is examined by a variety of scholars: expressive arts therapists and philosopher, Stephen Levine (2002), phenomenologists Martin Heidegger (1962) and David Abram (1996), poststructural philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), and the well-known psychologist who researched Flow, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990).

The popular work of Flow by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) offers a psychological approach to time in making practices. Csikszentmihalyi’s research developed out of a doctoral dissertation studying the “optimal experience” of young artists painting (p. 242). Flow is the term Csikszentmihalyi coined to describe an optimal experience. The experience of flow is a state of mind where all concerns seem to drop away. Time as lost or forgotten is one of nine elements of experience described in the state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). The measurement of time is no longer linear. The gauge of time is felt in terms of what one has been doing rather than how many minutes or hours have passed. This is possible when a person is fully engaged in the present moment. With full attention and attunement of one’s goals on the present moment, that moment has a feeling of expansion.

In Creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) shares the result of 30 years research on how creative people live and work. In the inquiry of how creativity can produce enjoyment, the research revealed nine common elements of flow, or enjoyment, within the creative process. A brief summary of the nine elements that are consistently evident in flow are having: 1)
clear goals, 2) immediate feedback to one’s actions, 3) a balance of challenge and skill, 4) focus on what you are doing, 5) intense concentration on the present, 6) no concerns of failure, 7) a sense of expansion and possibly feeling part of something larger, 8) an experience of time that is distorted, and 9) an enjoyment of the activity for its own sake rather than an end goal.

Figure 5. Paulus Berensohn on His 80th Birthday

Paulus Berensohn (1972; 2001), now in his early 80s (Figure 5), an artist, teacher, and mentor, could have been one of the people in Csikszentmihalyi’s research. Berensohn’s life emulates several elements of flow; however, one he especially writes and speaks about is time. Berensohn is quoted as saying, “I have seven art forms at least: reading, writing, clay-work, stitchery, bookmaking, dancing, doodling. And all of it is to slow me down” (McEwen, 2011, p. 205). Berensohn lives his philosophy of “cultivate slow” and “inhibit haste” (Berensohn, 2001, p.15) as he makes holes through book board with a hand drill. Berensohn intentionally lives slowly. In a biographical film about Berensohn, a friend tells the viewers, “Paulus lives out of time” (Lawrence, 2013). Csikszentmihalyi (1996) found that creative
people who executed an action with a high level of skill, such as Berensohn’s execution of book making or drawing or pinching clay, experienced a slowing of time. Berensohn advocates this attunement for his students. In his book *Finding Ones Way with Clay*, Berensohn states that when teaching, he strives for “an atmosphere of participation that is consciously intimate, slow, meditative and that awakens the sense of touch and the fluid participatory nature of perception…. to slow down into time” (p.157).

It is in this slowing down while in flow or *being* in that present moment of time that a creative person makes or alters meaning. In his dissertation on the contemplative mind in creativity, Michael Franklin (2010), director of art therapy at Naropa University, asserts it is when one is attentive to the present moment in a creative process that time is altered.

The goal is to be with what is emerging in this moment. This view of contemplative presence, combined with imagination, is the foundation of any given moment, because time is an unstoppable creative process whereby anything is possible. Art becomes the way to aestheticize the moment, receive and contain it, so that this unique event can be accessed (Franklin, 2010, p. 58).

It is in that present moment with attention to an activity that art makes meaning and captures an event.

Levine (2005), a writer and philosopher in expressive arts, gives a theoretical framework for making art, *poiesis*, “the classic Greek word for art-making” (2005, p. 16), through his written material in journals and books. Art making, according to Levine, is a central aspect of human existence. His examination of *poiesis* is reflective of the work of the philosopher Aristotle and the phenomenologist Heidegger. Levine (2005) introduces Heidegger (1962), well known for his explorations of *Being* in his 1927 book *Being and
Heidegger’s inquiry into time was within the context of being human, known in German as *Dasein*. The Oxford English Dictionary explains that *da* means “there” and *sein* means “being.” Levine emphasizes the significance of Heidegger’s phenomenological lens, which is suited for the liminal quality of making art, pointing out that Heidegger’s definition of *Being* evolved from a theory about thinking from a state of nothingness to a “receptive attitude of letting-be…” (Levine, 2005, p. 31).

Heidegger’s work returned philosophy from the dualistic thought birthed by French philosopher Descartes (Sinclair, 2006), separating mind from body, to the Aristotelian belief that the mind is not separate from the body and that knowing comes through experiences of the body in creative processes such as making art. This form of knowing as *poiesis* is, “relevant to our experience of being-in-the-world” (Levine, 2005, p. 32). This evolution of thinking leads to *Being* as a state in time. By letting be, one allows *Being* to pass and arrive in an event, a singular moment in time.

*Poiesis* is the creative act of that *Being*, or that moment of arriving and departing. A work of art gives shape and interpretation to a moment. As Levine notes, “Artistic form emerges out of a chaos which seeks its own shape” (p. 39). The artist is the facilitator of meaning that resides in a state of openness to arriving and to surprise. “*Poiesis* happens not in accordance with intellect and will but through the experience of surrender to a process which I can neither understand nor control in advance” (Levine, 2005, p. 41). Levine describes this process as releasing to chaos. In order to let go into chaos one has to let go of linear time. This phase of the art making process is often referred to as liminal, a slowing down (Bastian, 2014). Levine (2005) says of the art making process:
It is a time of confusion and powerlessness, as old identities and roles are abandoned and nothing has yet taken their place; but it is also a time of great creativity, in which one is free to invent new forms of meaning for oneself and for the group to which one belongs. (p. 43)

Similar to the work of Levine, Deleuze’s post-structural look at becoming is a poetic discussion of time and art making. Both Heidegger (1962) and Gilles Deleuze with Guattari (1987) wrote of the importance of Being as a liminal space. Deleuze agreed with Heidegger that, in order to Be, one had to interact and even question the phenomenon (Sholtz & Lawlor, 2013).

The chapter on phenomenology in The Spell of the Sensuous (1996) by David Abram gives another perspective of Heidegger’s theory of Being. The poetic writing style of Abram facilitates a comprehensible understanding of Heidegger’s phenomenological philosophy of Being in the realm of the senses. Abram said Heidegger asks the question, “Where is time? Is time at all and does it have a place?” (Abram, 1996, p. 208). Heidegger, and then Deleuze and Guattari (1987), among others (Braidotti, 2006), play with language to shake definitions of time. Opening to this new language, this altered poetry, may “make possible the sensuous presence of the world around us” (Abram, 1996, p. 212).

Educator John Dewey, like Levine and Heidegger, attempts to bring us back to our senses. In his popular written work Art as Experience, Dewey (1934) also returns to the Greeks and their tradition of art in community and art in daily life. Industrialization has separated art from our daily life because the order implicit in industrial life has distanced us from nature. Art, experienced in community, offers everyone an opportunity to explore the senses and remember our bond with nature. Dewey (1934) states that his purpose is to show
that art is important as a part of society, not separate as in a gallery exhibit, but a process to be enjoyed - a process not just for personal self-expression, but for the ability to understand a language of meaning making. And as an experience of everyday enjoyment in the present moment, “Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is” (Dewey, 1934, p.17).

**Material**

“Every art does something with some physical material” (Dewey, 1934, p. 48). The term “material” will be used in this study rather than the term “medium” to define the substances used to make art. *Material* originally meant *earthly* (Oxford English Dictionary). Art materials are the substances that can be physically and sensorially experienced in *poiesis*.

Through materiality, the arts affect and can unite body and mind (Kossak, 2009). Experiences with materials through the body engage the mind. Questions from the mind can find new meaning through the explorations of and with materials. The body opens from experiencing the materiality of such arts as play (Knill, 2005), movement, touch (Berensohn, 2001; Wood & Latham, 2011), painting (Allen, 1995) and poetry (Whyte, 2002). The arts, in this way, offer the mind and body a doorway to the imagination.

During the course of this research study, individuals experienced a connection with their senses, in their presence to one another. This study embodied engagement with art materials such as painting, poetry, music, and movement through expressive arts practices. Participants experienced more than one material in any one studio.

Berensohn (1972) encourages teachers to define the source of their materials used in an art activity. To know the source or the origin of a material brings an intimacy to the creative process. As a clay artist, Berensohn (2001) writes eloquently of the importance of
materiality through touch in his monograph, *Whatever We Touch is Touching Us: Craft Art and A Deeper Sense of Ecology*. He “asks us to consider creating a world where making is at the heart of who we are and what we do” (p. 1). Berensohn states that it is important to behave artistically *with the senses* (personal communication, September 21, 2014) and maintains a growing list of 80 senses beyond the traditional five or six. In the last dozen years Berensohn has shared with any that will listen about the 90,000 sensory receptors in each fingertip that are “inhaling the being, the energetic pulse of clay, 90,000 antennas exhaling our energies into clay, 90,000 rootlets broadcasting our sensitivities and our intent, grounding us in a living intercourse with the loam of earth” (2001, p.12). Berensohn often refers to one of David Abram’s (1996, 2010) latest books of phenomenology and deep ecology, which he keeps nearby. In lectures about journal making Berensohn shows the pages he drew in response to Abram’s chapter on *The Forgetting and Remembering of the Air* (Abram, 1996, pp.225-260). They share a common understanding of the sensuous world we live in and help us not to forget the importance of sensory relationship with the living world through our stories and our questions. Therefore, Berensohn’s lectures on art making are richly inspired by Abram.

Journaling is one way to document our inquiry through materiality. A common recommendation of Berensohn for journaling is to draw or “list the more than human world you see” or list of “who else is here” (personal communication, August 27, 2011 and September 24, 2012). A phenomenological approach Paulus shares about journaling is to carry questions that don’t require an answer, and then slowly grow into the questions until you become the question. The lived inquiry of my research study became how to find balance in the doing while making with materiality.
Several prominent authors, philosophers and therapists who engage in personal art inquiry through journaling, drawing and painting (Alderman, 2007; Allen, 2005; Atkins, 2012; Bradotti, 2006; Clark/Keefe, 2010) articulate an intuitive knowing and conscious emergence as a result of the art making process. Expressive arts professors Herbert Eberhart and Sally Atkins (2014), in their recent book, *Presence and Process in Expressive Arts Work* write, “Focusing on what is happening in the art-making experience and trusting in whatever will arrive in that relational art-making process, is an exciting and fruitful way to work” (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014, p. 24). In her arts practice arts-based, researcher Kelly Clark/Keefe (2010) refers to “an arts-informed embodied inquiry” and explains that an arts based method provides “… a dynamic set of byways to travel back and forth from sensorial-imbued imagery to the labyrinth of linear academic prose, from affect and affiliation to knowledge that I could live and learn from” (Clark/Keefe, 2010, p.52).

Similarly Miller (2014) examines emergences through making behaviors in her dissertation on the benefit of making crafts to well-being. In her research, Miller (2014) equates well-being with happiness, which she found is often tied to the economic narrative of financial security. Making goods makes people happy; acquiring skills to make goods contributes to their well-being. Miller touches on the spiritual need “to integrate and animate the arts within a living cosmology” (Miller, 2014, p. 48), which is also explored by the writings of educator and artist M.C. Richards (1996). Miller calls for further research in the science-spirit binary. The research study here delved into the well-being through the art-making story that was experienced in what Miller calls a “self transcendent spirituality of awe” (Miller, 2014, p.48).
The desire by several participants in the study was the transformation in the workplace as a result of a material experience in daily practices and the arts studio. In *The Heart Aroused* (2002), poet David Whyte was one of the first artists to suggest imaginative social change to corporations through the artistically material experience of poetic expression. As a poet and author he writes about the importance of imagination in the workplace. Through poetry and story he encourages the return of the soul to compromised corporate employees. Whyte’s reference to corporations is similar to the mechanized academic institution of schools.

Taking a step toward soul life during the full light of the workday we begin a journey…. The prize is an experience of work that can benefit the spirit as much as the pocket, a nourishing approach to work that may make the moment as equally fulfilling as the years of patient sacrifice. (Whyte, 2002, pp. 7-8)

Whyte, a contemporary artist, mirrors the purpose of Dewey’s (1934) prose on aesthetics, that in order to thrive and be happy we must put *artful living* in the workplace. Whyte’s work is to recapture the employer’s heart and soul in a corporate world. This study researched how employees in education regain their balance and well-being. The work of Whyte and the work in this study emerge from a place of parallel ideals and almost identical processes. Whyte offers the opportunity to explore and find and rekindle souls so they have an identity outside of being a cog in the machine. Whyte used one medium, that of poetry, while this study provided a choice of materials.

In EXA participants are invited to experience a variety of materials as inspired by their imagination. This concept of moving from one material to another in a session of creative process is referred to as intermodal (Knill, 2005). The intermodal process is
“grounded in the sensory interrelatedness of all of the arts with each other” (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014, p. 47). The imagination is key to this sensorial process.

Levine and Levine (1999) strongly advocate for a deepening into the therapeutic essence of art-making. They identify the common denominator between all intermodal works as the imagination; therefore, the imagination and the vast territory that it occupies within and beyond itself, is the foundation of research in the expressive therapies. It is through imaginal methods of inquiry that the core theoretical values of the expressive therapies can be articulated (Franklin, 2010, p.57).

Ritual

The ritual process offers a means of transformation from established ideas to a greater understanding. Generally speaking a ritual is a set of activities, often performed in a sequestered place according to a particular sequence. An event that combines medium and art making within time can be called a ritual.

Within the philosophy of expressive arts, Levine (2005) points to ritual studies as he examines how art making processes inspire new meaning. Levine summarizes the research of ritual studies as analyzed by anthropologist Victor Turner (1969). Turner’s work builds on the work of Arnold Van Gennep (1960) who coined the term “rites of passages” in 1908 in reference to rituals in a culture that mark the journey from one state of being to another (e.g., as from childhood to young adulthood).

A ritual, as defined by Van Gennep, has three phases. The first phase is a separation from the known and familiar roles or social groups. A common example of this phase is the separation of a young boy from his tribe as a ritual toward manhood. The second phase of the ritual is where one’s identity and meaning is temporarily set aside. In a tribal sense the boy
initiate is no longer a boy but not yet a man (Turner, 1967). The third phase of the ritual is the integration of the parts experienced in the second phase. Turner defines the altered state of chaos or confusion often experienced in the second phase within the ritual process as “liminality” (Turner, 1969):

It is a time of confusion and powerlessness, as old identities and roles are abandoned and nothing has yet taken their place; but it is also a time of great creativity, in which one is free to invent new forms of meaning for oneself and for the group to which one belongs. (Levine, 2005, p.43)

Victor Turner re-conceives the meaning of ritual from a traditional act to an innovative process, a process of becoming:

In *The Ritual Process* (1969), Turner engages in a radical re-exploration of ritual, conceiving of it as the well-spring of ever new ways of constructing reality. Ritual had hitherto been regarded by anthropologists as the quintessence of the traditional and opposed to change. Conversely, Turner showed how the study of rites disclosed them as events of origination, of innovative construction and reorientation. (Kapferer, 2008, p.2)

By focusing on liminality Turner exceeds the traditional meaning of ritual as an act to preserve a culture and directs attention to a process, “in which the old has been given up and the new is coming into being” (Levine, 2005, p.43). The ritual participant is integrated into a new social group with a new identity. The condition of liminality that Turner speaks of is essential for creative meaning making.

The current research study used two expressive arts events, daily practice and the arts studio, where time and medium could be experienced in a liminal state of consciousness. As
participants engaged in these activities, these events became rituals that invited social change in educational communities through practices of art making.

In these rituals of daily practice and the art studio, task-oriented time was suspended for the participants so they could experience the liminal phase of ritual, allowing them to let go the cares of the work world long enough to drop into emotional or spiritual arts-informed inquiry. Ritual offered a container for the liminal to be felt. As previously discussed, clocks are used to manage time in the container we know as the classroom, and educational institutions. Time also provides a container in art making. Even a small amount of time, when held consciously, can offer a liminal experience for those within the event.

In EXA the arts are offered as “rituals of restoration” (Knill, 2005, p. 111). These rituals are lead by a “change agent” (p. 77) who is professionally trained to be responsible for setting the tone for the ritual and keeping track of the “frames” or “takes” of time (p.115). A change agent is recognized more for their presence rather than what they do.

The quality of presence and the trust needed to work in a process-oriented way are fundamental aspects of the work. In this way we could say that expressive arts practice is more about who you are, how you are and how you think than what you do. (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014, p. 28)

The first frame or phase of the ritual is the opening in which the change agent prepares the participants, giving attention to voice and instruction so participants are guided to leave what is familiar about the day. The arrival of the new within the ritual may feel chaotic; therefore, it is helpful to have a change agent through the creative process.

In EXA the liminal phase of the ritual is where “all familiar structures have been given up and new ones have not yet appeared” (Levine, 2005, p. 43). The change agent
prepares the participants to cross over a threshold into the liminal space through a “decentering” activity. In EXA, decentering refers to facilitating an art activity that moves the participant away from logical thinking around an issue of importance toward the unpredictable (Knill, 2005). Decentering “interrupts” stagnant conversations (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014). This is achieved through play with the imagination using any variety of art materials or performance art. Through imaginative play surprises from this portion of the ritual become fodder for personal meaning.

The art making during this decentering phase of the ritual is rendered with what EXA refers to as “low skill/high sensitivity” (Knill, 2005, p.98). Art making is executed without the participant’s need for professional knowledge of the material, yet is challenging enough to keep the participant curiously engaged. From this in-between space of uncertainty that results from play in art making, something unexpected may show up.

In EXA this surprise is referred to with affection as “the third” (Knill, 2005, p.133). The third has been described as “a sudden new understanding” (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014, p. 150). The experience of the third arises in the liminality of “a moment in and out of time” (Turner, 1969, p. 96). The journey of decentering “opens” the participant to messages and then returns them to the original issue expressed at the beginning.

One way a change agent bridges the end of a ritual is to attentively harvest the insights that came to the participants within in the liminal moments while experiencing poiesis. When Dewey (1934) wrote about the artistic process he eloquently described the transformation that takes place within the artistic ritual of making. Dewey asserted that a transformation simultaneously takes place with the material of stone, or paint as well as with the transformation of the artist. During this transformative process, “Thinking in terms of
colors, tones, images, is a different operation technically from thinking in words” (p.77). The harvesting that takes place in an EXA ritual is a means to delicately return the participant to the world of words. Dewey’s insight was that, “If all meanings could be adequately expressed by words, the arts of painting and music would not exist.” To bridge the emotions that surface through the transformative ritual of an artistic process “harvesting” (Knill, 2005, p.156) occurs through a careful dialogue with the participant as method to integrate the experience of poiesis into daily living (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014).

Following are two articulations of a ritual experience. The first reinforces what has just previously been described. The second articulation written in italics is a ritual with clay that reinforces my personal experience with the stages of art making rituals in community.

Below is a broad articulation of an EXA ritual experience:

The change agent skillfully opens the ritual with attention to the frames within the activity. The first frame eases the participants into the space, sometimes through subtle and simple movements such as stretching. Thus the participants are brought to the threshold, the gate of the experience. Once the space has been open, so that the participants have opened with their body as well as mind, the change agent offers a decentering experience, an activity that welcomes the unpredictable and unexpected. The participants may have been encouraged to name an issue and then let it go, leaving behind the issue and any identity attached to the issue, the participant enters a stage of play through the imagination. In EXA this could be through the weaving of visual arts or performance with music or movement or both. Through play the participant drops into a liminal space of no time where insights may arise as surprises or “the third”, an awareness that seems to come out of nowhere but has significant meaning. A shift of awareness may take place. Sensations in the body may become more
sensitive. Mental thought may become heightened as if one is wearing antennae. Feet may feel more rooted and the body heavy with calm or awake. The change agent may frame the activity so that the participants harvest the insights that arrive from the altered special experience. Harvesting begins with dialogue between the participant and the change agent, and may transition into reflective writing or poetry. Once the words are gleaned, the change agent frames a closure that prepares the participant to return to their daily life with colorful pockets of insights. The following is an example of a ritual experience.

A pebble ritual offered in a grief workshop in the fall of 2013:

As participants arrived I invited them to sit in a circle around a colorful altar of natural objects laid over billowing scarves. I then invited them to choose one of the natural objects that described how they felt in the moment. This was their introduction to the rest of the group and served as a means to gradually let go of the place they had left to come here to be in the circle. Once they introduced themselves, I introduced the main activity. Everyone was there to remember a loved one who had passed. The members shared small pieces of memories of their loved ones. Then, I taught them how to make a clay pinch pot. Some people had no experience making pinch pots. The instruction was slow and clear for those with low skill, and also designed to encourage a higher sensitivity to the sensation of touch, through touching and being touched by the clay. Participants stopped talking as they shifted to a deep calm. I asked them to think of a question or a memory they wanted to share with their deceased loved one. After the pot was formed, they wrote their question on a piece of paper and placed it in the bowl they had just made. They placed the bowl on a dark blue sheet that represented the night sky. I invited each participant to make a dozen simple clay pebbles and then place them on the cloth. These pebbles represent the stars in the heavens as ancestors.
shining down on their family members on earth. Just as the ritual began with words the ritual ended with words as each individual shared a story or memory that surfaced in the making of the bowl or pebbles. This was the harvest of the ritual. I then invited participants to write that story or memory on paper and place it in their bowl. Then, the group toned syllables over the stars and bowls as an offering to the ancestors. Gathering the bowls, the group continued their songs and toning as they walked outside and placed their bowl in nature by a tree or in a rock garden. They carried their bowls and pebbles out into the world for others to witness as a transition from the ritual space to the living world.

Expressive Arts Studio

A common location to experience a ritual of art making is within a studio space with materials accessible to artistic explorations. There are several intentions for studio experiences. There is the personal art studio where an individual might focus on their artist identity (Allen, 1995; Moon, 2002), the community studio, often referred to as an “open studio” where artists invite lay members of the community for a social art making experience (Allen, 1995). Some universities have a community studio identified as a training site for graduate students in art therapy (Franklin, Rothaus, & Schpok, 2007). There is also the case made for a dissertation art studio for the qualitative artist-as-researcher (Baxter, Lopez, Serig, & Sullivan, 2008).

There is precedence for studio art in the art therapy profession. Edith Kramer, a pioneer of art therapy, insisted that art therapists work only part time so they could maintain their own studio practice to stimulate their creative passion (Wix, 1996). To give half your workweek to your own practice offers an example of what a huge commitment it is to value the time it takes to engage in the art making process. The American Journal of Art Therapy
documents a movement in the 1990s when art therapists began to write about the importance of personal studio time as well as the value of studio time for students in higher education (Wix, 1995). Don Jones, one of those founders of art therapy, emphasized the importance of an art practice to art therapists saying, “If you don’t have art in your schedule, then you need to change your schedule” (Wix, 2010, p. 179). Wix (1995, 1996), also wrote about the importance of an art studio for graduate students and interns to balance personal image making with theoretical reading material.

Art therapists Michael Franklin (Franklin, Farrelly-Hansen, Marek, Swan-Foster, & Wallingford, 2000), Randy Vick (2000), Pat Allen (1995), Cathy Moon (2002), and Bruce Moon (2012) have written on the use of studios for clients, communities, faculty and graduate students. Dr. Carole Lark from St. Louis Missouri was one of the first art therapists to create an open studio for hospital patients.

Dr. Pat Allen’s (1995, 2005) personal motivation to pursue art therapy was to share the healing qualities that can emerge through art making. Allen was one of the first art therapists to courageously reclaim the importance of the studio process as a path to this way of knowing through art. Allen’s approach was meditative, focusing on image and reflective writing (personal conversations March 14, 2014), less on the common intermodal EXA tradition of combining the mediums of movement or music in the creative process.

A studio process developed by art therapist Dr. Pat Allen (1995, 2005) was used in the monthly open EXA studio meetings that were originally part of this study. Allen’s work has a strong participatory arts-based and social action orientation to community. Her grounded and visionary methods and writing are respected by fellow art therapists and
expressive arts therapists invested in studio art as well as social change (Franklin et al., 2000; McNiff, 2013; Moon, 2002; Moon, 2012).

Allen outlines a variety of ways of knowing through art making in her seminal book *Art is a Way of Knowing* (1995). She developed a reflexive inquiry process for studio practice in her more recent book, *Art is a Spiritual Path* (2005). Her studio process of inquiry, engagement and celebration fits well with PAR and a/r/tography. She has since adapted her writing through workshops she entitles Collaborative Inquiry Through Art (CIA) (personal conversation March 15, 2014). Process groups gather to explore a concept, place, image, idea, or belief using the art- and writing-based practice. CIA is a form of a/r/tography which inquires in the spaces between word with image through “writing our image.” The process consists of several steps.

The first step in Allen’s *Open Studio Process* workshop is to set an intention in writing. Intention is meant to be a marker, a point of beginning, and a place to return after the art-making journey. This intention is written in first person and present tense. The second step is to receive inner guidance through the bodily sensation while making visual art, or moving in dance, or sitting in nature. The researcher is an author of his or her own experience. One of the most generative prompts Allen gives is to “follow pleasure” (personal conversation, March 15, 2014). Stephen Levine might call this a Dionysian aspect of *poiesis* (Levine, 2005, p. 44). This process involves stepping out of linear time and into the state referred to as *becoming*, where one is noticing any surprises, the concept a/r/tography calls *excess* and EXA refers to at the *third*. The third step in Allen’s *Open Studio Process* is called Witness Writing. The artist witnesses what he or she received through the body and then writes without censoring or editing. One could write a description of the artwork or ask
the image a question. The writing process gradually returns the participant to linear time. The final step is to read the writing out loud. Speaking the writing is a way to have the personal reflection witnessed by the community in the studio. Rules apply to this part of the process. Participants simply read their reflection without further comment in order to discourage spoken judgments about their work. Also, no one speaks or gives comment while another person is reading. These rules keep the reflection process focused and non-judgmental.

**Daily Practice**

Daily practice refers to repetitive activities that help the participant find a center as well as nourishment for their work (Atkins & Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, 2003, p. 29). In this study, daily practice refers to individual practices that offer nourishment for the work of education. In their new book, *Presence and Process in Expressive Arts Work* (2014) therapists Eberhart and Atkins state, “Even a small amount of time spent in rituals of daily practice in the arts can support trust in the arts to nourish the soul” (p. 84). In *Expressive Arts Therapy* (Atkins et al., 2002), Adams, a faculty member of the Appalachian Expressive Arts Collective, articulated daily practice as the foundation of any creative lifestyle. Adams wrote, “Daily practice is the beginning that becomes the ongoing participation in soul work. The ability to become and remain centered grows out of daily practice; the two are inseparable” (p.29).

The participants in this study had a variety of daily practices in the office and at home. In order to support the creative process, McNiff (1998) encourages people to look at where they are already creative in their daily commitments to exercise, cooking, how they keep their desk, and to acknowledge where in those areas we have a special knowledge and even expertise. “If I can make something creative from my ordinariness, there are few limits to
creation” (p. 142). And later on that page he writes, “Creation is a process that makes use of everything that we experience. There is an unseen creative intelligence at work within each of us that gathers from the broad spectrum of our experience and that does extraordinary things with our most mundane activities.”

The participants of this study were also encouraged to keep a practice of drawing and writing within a visual journal as a means of collecting arts-based memos and reflections that offered alternative perspectives of well-being and social change. The journal held space for the questions that were shared within or shortly after their monthly meetings. A visual journal can be a powerful container for educators to use for reflection (Proff, 1975; Scott, 2012). Slowing down to draw or write in a journal is an exercise in attuning to a moment in time that then develops awareness to other subtle moments. Like any practice, journaling is a choice to nourish the muscle of attention. One practices not just for that moment but in order to live all the other moments more fully present. Journal workshop leaders Ganim and Fox (1999) discovered through their participants that “daily” usually meant three times a week. A rhythm can be encouraged to work in the journal about every other day. “Art-journaling invites each of us to be with our moment-to-moment becoming” (Hieb, 2005, p.19).

Summary of Literature Review

Time as experienced in education (Morgan, 1997; Yu, 2010) can be altered when experienced though phenomenological encounters with materials in rituals (Turner, 1969) of art making. The phenomenological quality of time from linear task measurements to conscious art making inquiries can create a sense of slow time (Berensohn, 2001) from which a new state of being (Levine, 2005) might be experienced. Thus creating events or rituals of
making within studios or journals used by educational communities might foster new relational patterns of *being* in educational institutions.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodological approach of this qualitative interpretive study combined participatory action research (PAR) (McTaggart, 1997) with a/r/tography (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008). PAR and a/r/tography are qualitative research methodologies popularly used for collaborative research within community settings. These methods connect the discourse of Arts-Based Education Research (ABER) with Expressive Arts (EXA) as they interact in this research project.

Participatory Action Research

PAR is an applied social research method (Whyte, 1991) that differs from the popular action research often used in education in that PAR considers participants to be co-researchers. Participants are present in the research from the design stage to data collection and analysis. The research conclusions are made with rather than about or for the subjects of the study. “Authentic participation in research means sharing in the way research is conceptualized, practiced, and brought to bear on the life-world. It means ownership, that is responsible agency in the production of knowledge and improvement of practice” (McTaggart, 1997, p.28).

PAR developed out of action research (Glesne, 2015). Action research was originally grounded in the positivist paradigm that separated the researcher from that which was researched, and as such, was used to analyze industries as a means to identify better
efficiency. In the late 20th century, action research adapted into a popular interpretive methodology as a means to improve educational practices. The purpose of this evolved form of action research is to gather, reflect, and act on the data to help communities and organizations define problems and implement change. Traditionally, action researchers communicate the results of data to those requesting the research.

As early as the 1940’s (Whyte, 1991), PAR was utilized by researchers, but was not coined as such until it became popular in the 1970’s with activist and educator Paolo Freire’s work in South America (Glesne, 2011). The word participatory clarifies that those who are part of the organization or community studied participate in the research of transformation through their actions. PAR is an emerging research paradigm in which the methodology is redefined according to the participants and the nature of their inquiry. PAR traditionally has been connected to critical theory and social transformation of populations of marginalized people, and, since the 1970’s, has been used in a variety of settings including education. PAR is connected to critical theory “in that it is action research committed to social transformation through active involvement of marginalized or disfranchised groups” (Glesne, 2011, p.23). Are educators marginalized? Faculty of public schools and higher learning institution in the United States are often underpaid (Genzlinger, 2011), and are overworked men and women who often feel powerless to change their situation in the current context with restricted budgets and program cuts.

A community of educators can become researchers who collaborate and reflect together toward social change within their own institution. Participatory action researchers in education use a spiral model (McKenzie, 2008) depicting a circular movement from observations, reflections and actions. One version of a spiral model (Figure 6) serves as an
outline of what participants in this study cycled through over the nine months of this study in community meetings and individual interviews:

1. Shared and discussed their experience and knowledge
2. Identified patterns they noticed in their experiences
3. Prepared plans of action
4. Applied what they learned in their educational community and work lives
5. (And then started the inquiry process all over again.)

The strength of PAR in a community study is its emphasis on collaborative inquiry toward social change. In this study, those in the educational system were invited to examine the patterns of stress and well-being within the community of educators. Ideas for organizational change came from a communal reflexive process, such as a shared reading and journal practice that included arts-based reflections. The educational community in this study,
through collaborative reflection, generated an idea and a plan with the means to help others and themselves.

PAR is an example of applying knowledge of the arts into social action (Greene, 1995; Levine & Levine, 2011) through practices that will enable educational communities to address issues that arise from working in a demanding work environment. Individuals in all kinds of institutions can undertake participatory action research.

Popular Theatre (Conrad, 2009) is an example of PAR used with arts-based research. Inspired by Paulo Freire’s popular education approach using PAR, Augusto Boal developed Popular Theatre he called Theater of the Oppressed. Popular Theatre was created in an effort to deconstruct passive theatre from an act to be observed to full participation so that there was no division between actor and audience. The wall came down between spectator and actor. Audience members became a ‘spect-actors.’ Oppressed people were given voice through theatre to create their own reality. In the 1990’s Boal used a form of Popular Theatre called Legislative Theatre as a method to allow the public to give voice on government issues through theatre. Arts-based researchers use the method of Popular Theatre to enact performative texts, perform their research, and then use participants’ response, or dialogue, as data.

Validation of results through PAR involves dialogue, not following a fixed procedure (McTaggart, 1997). The spiral model provides a suggested outline for communication of reflection through art experiences. It begins with an inquiry that fosters dialogue of emerging patterns and ends in collaborative action. Validation involves having in place appropriate communicative structures throughout the research to allow participants continued
identification with and input into the work of the project of change. PAR with a/r/tography empowered educators in this study by giving them a voice through poiesis.

A/r/tography

A/r/tography (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008) is an Arts-Based Education Research (ABER) methodology that developed out of education action research. Dr. Rita Irwin, professor and Associate Dean of Teacher Education at the University of British Columbia, inspired the arts-based methodology known as a/r/tography out of a personal desire for action research with an arts-based inquiry (Springgay, De Cosson, & Irwin, 2008). Although she lacked the support to use action research for her doctoral work, she was undeterred and valiantly introduced action research to her graduate students when she became assistant professor at her alma mater. Graduate students, and later doctoral students and faculty at the University of British Columbia, read, wrote, and practiced arts-based research in action research in the late 1990s, eventually coining the term a/r/tography. This preference for the method has grown to such an extent that a Web site exists that includes nearly 100 published and unpublished doctoral dissertations using this methodology (Irwin, 2013).

A/r/tography (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004) as an ABER method is a post-structural phenomenological inquiry process that explores the intersection of and in-between artist, researcher and teacher. The forward slash marks represent these intersections. As researchers, a/r/tographers are those who inquire through the domains of art and education (Springgay, Irwin et al., 2008.) These researchers are artists, not always in the professional sense, in the commitment to engage their questions through the action of creating and making. They are not always teaching in public schools or institutions of higher education, but are individuals
teaching and reflecting with a community of others who are learning. They are researchers with a commitment to see data differently through both writing and art making that combines explorations of text, images, and even movement.

A/r/tography folds together the understandings from poiesis (making through the senses), theoria (scientific knowing by observing), and praxis (engaging in the doing of social action). Knowledge comes through somatic experiences in between each of these ways of knowing as the researcher traverses the territory between artist and educator. The combination and layers of understanding interwoven in these various ways of inquiry yield new knowledge that rarely fits into neat categories.

Art-based research has been articulated in expressive arts (McNiff, 2013), but originated and became popular through Eisner’s (1998, 2002) exploration of alternative qualitative inquiry in education. Eisner writes about the significance of the senses with the arts as a process of research. At the Eighth Annual Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, Siegesmund (2013) specifically linked John Dewey’s (1934) aesthetics to a/r/tography. Dewey’s relational aesthetics focus on the everyday and communal relationship with art. Relational aesthetics mirror a/r/tography’s emphasis that the researcher be the maker, embodying the material as a means of inquiry. A/r/tography builds on the shift Dewey (1934) encourages when he asks us to engage in art with the senses, as in the ancient daily and communal practices with art. Siegesmund (2012) suggests that just as Dewey’s Art as Experience must be sensed to be understood, a/r/tography is an inquiry that asks the researcher to make connections between what is felt before it is said.

Rather than explaining phenomena or finding answers, a/r/tography strives to create questions as a means to inspire engagement and new thought processes. The post-structural
inquiries *in-between* that of artist, teacher, and researcher in this method often lead to further questions that surface through rituals of art making (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004). The very nature of *a/r/t*ography is to explore questions through imagination and somatic experimentation in order to deepen what it even means to inquire. “It seeks to provoke, to generate, and to un/do meaning” (Springgay, Irwin et al., 2008, p.161).

As a research methodology, *a/r/t*ography fits well with the concepts explored in the literature of this study, such as *poiesis* and ritual within expressive arts and education, as well as the lived inquiry that artists like Berensohn (1972) practice. To remain open to the surprises that occur through *poiesis* in expressive arts, this research methodology similarly encourages a letting go of what may be comfortable through the making process in order to be open to new information.

Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springgay, along with their student collaborators, articulate six “renderings” (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005, p. 899) used to identify *a/r/t*ography within arts-based research. Rather than define the method with fixed ideas, *a/r/t*ography uses renderings; a rendering is fluid. In art, a rendering is a sketch or gesture that captures an essence of what is perceived (Siegesmund, 2013). The renderings are titled: contiguity, living inquiry, metaphor and metonymy, openings, reverberations, and excess. They are not required, but are often evident in this arts-based research methodology where artist, researcher, and teacher identities overlap. “Renderings are not methods. They are not lists of verbs initiated to create an arts-based or *a/r/t*ographical study. Renderings are theoretical spaces through which to explore artistic ways of knowing and being research” (Springgay, et al., 2005, p.899). These renderings are layered beside and between each other and can occur
simultaneously as “possibilities for engagement” (Springgay, Irwin et al., 2008, p. xxviii). One or all of the renderings will take place within an a/r/tographic study.

Contiguity refers to ideas, or identities, that not only exist next to one another, but are in activity with one another. They are not viewed as separate, but as engaged, interactive, and interwoven (Springgay et al., 2005). The term a/r/tography symbolizes the interwoven identities of artist, researcher, and teacher. And the word also contains the ideas of art and graphy (meaning art and writing) beside and within each other. The concept also speaks to the possibility of something having two experiences, such as art, which simultaneously can be both a product as well as an activity.

I submit that Dewey’s idea of “aesthetic experience,” articulated for the domain of art education (Siegesmund, 2013), is an idea in contiguity, or alongside, Knill’s “aesthetic responsibility,” articulated for the expressive arts community (Levine & Levine, 2011). Both men speak of congruent theories similar to the layered artist/researcher/teacher identity. Both visions incite social change through community engagement of the senses. Dewey encourages opening inquiry fully through the senses which can mean leaving familiar ways of perceiving and knowing in the past (Siegesmund, 2012). Knill’s community art encourages sensitivity to the group setting, while also encouraging a letting go of the unknown and trusting what might become through play and possibility. In both the arts and education, a/r/tography research calls for vulnerability and openness.

Living inquiry is frequently mentioned because, in a/r/tography, this concept emphasizes the heart of this research, which is to move toward an ever-evolving nature of embodied understanding through reflexive engagement and analysis. The researcher will
produce an article of writing, but the writing is likely to share the artistic process of engagement, which inspires further questions to be lived through the body.

*Metaphor and metonymy* emphasize the possibilities and tension in meaning making. Metonymy refers to splitting open, or rupturing a meaning. For example, using the forward slash marks in a/r/tography “suggests movement or shifts between the terms” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 904). They reach beyond literal words. These are somatic experiences first grounded in the body and then translated into language, like poetry (Siegesmund, 2013).

*Opening* refers to a/r/tographers’ discovery of new understandings while resisting the predictable. These discoveries are often found under the surface of things. Refusing the comfort or safety of a previously held perspective, openings invite the a/r/tographers to engage in a responsive way. While remaining open to the possible meanings of data when meaning is ruptured, they also stay vulnerable to the contiguity of being both an artist and a teacher, or teacher and researcher.

*Reverberations* are the movements of transformation when an idea changes into or takes shape as something deeper. Reverberations are the tensions and impulses and responses to new meaning. While meeting with Rita Irwin in the summer of 2015, I asked for her definition of reverberations. She explained:

It’s like taking the theory and the practice of *poiesis* and understanding the energy between them. It’s the between-ness and it’s the dynamic between them. So, sometimes it’s a shiver; sometimes a quiver; and sometimes it’s agitated. For me, that's how I like to think about it, that dynamic between them. Things aren't static. There is always some kind of movement between these ideas. There has to be
movement otherwise they’re not alive. So reverberations remind us that movement is central to a lot of things. (R. Irwin, personal conversation, June 17, 2015)

*Excess* is the undefined elements that occur in an art experience. In EXA, the concept can be compared to “the third” (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014, p.48), which alludes to a sensual experience from the art making that is difficult to define; excess is also often unnamable. It is the surprise that occurs in the moment of transformation when a new idea comes to the surface after just letting go of all previous ideas; it is a joyous moment of fullness after completely emptying.

As observed in the definition of the concepts, a/r/tography is a process very similar to EXA (Cornell, 2013). A/r/tography is a method conducive to both the ritual of a daily practice and of community process.

The a/r/tographic renderings utilized most in the study were Openings and Reverberations. In meeting with Irwin (personal conversation, June 2015), she emphasized that a/r/tographic concepts articulated at length (Springgay et al., 2005) were meant as a starting point. When she taught, she invited students to take all the concepts ‘off the table’ and bring back maybe one, or two, or none if they had their own concept. The a/r/tography in this study used the renderings of Openings and Reverberations. Others that emerged were the concepts of “energy” and “gift.”

A/r/tography is a participatory action research that is reflexive and dynamic. The methodology is an embodied practice of engaging questions in processes that are reflective, responsive, and relational (Springgay, Irwin et al., 2008). Journaling is used to reflect on inquiries and learning. Visual journals that combine images and texts are especially popular with researchers of a/r/tography (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004). An action researcher in
a/r/tography is participatory in their commitment to the relational aspect of the methodology that emphasizes sharing of ideas in a spirit of collaboration rather than isolation. Thus, art making was an excellent choice for research in an expressive arts community inquiring about social action.

The qualitative methods of PAR and a/r/tography were the foundation for this study’s inquiry into arts-based practices as a source for well-being within educational communities. Through active participation in arts-based practices, participants explored what might benefit and facilitate their imagination while nurturing a balance between the demands of work and their emotional and mental well-being.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this research was to explore a path of well-being in times of complexity within higher education. The proposed study invited higher education faculty and staff to engage in arts-based inquiry together. Using the combined methodologies of participatory action based research and a/r/tography as methods, participants explored the impact of allowing time for attunement and attention via art making on their well-being, and thus the well-being of their educational community. Arts-based research methods within an educational community inspired a conscious phenomenological encounter with presence, attention, and attunement. The research project explored how art-making practices might benefit and facilitate the imagination of the participant while nurturing a balance between the heavy demands at work and the need for personal emotional and mental well-being. The research inspired, informed, and thus incited action in an educational community toward a way of being together.
This research question for this study emerged from a pilot project conducted in the fall of 2013 on well-being for faculty and staff in higher education:

*How does allowing time for attunement and attention via poiesis enhance the well-being of educational communities and those who inhabit them?*

In order to research time for well-being in educational leadership, these guiding research questions were formed under the larger question above:

- What inspires educators to engage in *poiesis*?
- How do educators experience the *poiesis* process?
- How do research participants describe the quality of time in *poiesis*?
- How do the participants experience well-being through *poiesis* individually and in community?

**Site and Participant Selection**

The research study was conducted at New River State University, located in the rolling hills of the Southeast in the town of Favor. New River State University began as a teacher’s academy in 1899. Now a public university, it enrolls nearly 18,000 students in over 150 degrees. New River State University employs 918 full-time faculty with 99% having terminal degrees, and 1,734 full-time and part-time faculty and staff, with a total of nearly 3,000 employees.

Following the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method, I gathered my data with an educational Learning Community (LC) formed at New River State University. The LC had an Expressive Arts (EXA) studio practice (Baxter et al., 2008). Originally, this research study intended to follow any faculty and staff that utilized the EXA studio held at the university. The letter of consent (Appendix C) reads: “You are being asked to participate in
this research study because you are a faculty member, staff or administrator in an educational setting who has agreed to participate in the Expressive Arts Studio.” Once formed, the closed LC utilized the EXA studio space once a month. The LC membership of a closed community of seven to nine women proved consistent and manageable for this qualitative study.

The expressive arts studio was founded the previous year under the supervision of an EXA faculty member as my doctoral internship. After a successful year of studios the faculty member wrote a grant to fund materials for an additional year. Every first Friday, the LC met as a group of faculty and staff within the EXA studio space.

The LC, including me, became a closed group of eight faculty, administrators, and staff in higher education who agreed to be collaborative researchers. The book, *Art in Action: Expressive Arts Therapy and Social Change* (Levine & Levine, 2011) was the primary text for the LC. The LC facilitator enthusiastically agreed that this LC would be an ideal selection of participants for my research study.

The grant that funded the materials for the EXA studio was titled, *Creative Renewal: A Sustainable Arts Studio for Students, Faculty and Staff.* The written grant articulated themes of art-making, time, and well-being to:

- By creating a series of community art workshops on campus, the “Creative Renewal” Project will invite participants to engage in unique art-making experiences that provide time and space to explore the following aspects of sustainability:
  - Cultivating well-being, interdependence and community through creative expression
• Reflective and contemplative inquiry into the nature of our shared challenges, resources, and opportunities to shape positive and lasting change in our lived environments.

• Raising awareness of the role of the arts in promoting compassionate engagement in daily life, work and community while addressing issues of social justice and environmental crisis

Similarly, the Learning Community purpose to meet was:

… to explore the field of expressive arts and how it impacts the health of local and global communities through a focus on social justice and sustainability. Participants will study current theory and practice in expressive arts and integrative medicine, building community through the arts and the use of the arts in experiential learning. The learning community members will also participate in experiential learning activities to explore social justice, sustainability, and healing through the arts. We will explore how to use arts for social change through community engagement and community art.

The proposal for the LC included the argument for the value of the expressive arts toward building sustainable communities:

Arts have been used throughout history to build, sustain and enrich communities. In exploring issues that impact communities, multiple approaches are needed. The health of individuals, families and communities is often based on resources available to these entities. To strive for sustainability, there must be equity of resources. The arts can contribute to exploration of inequities and promote personal and community health and sustainability.
The LC group met on the first Friday of each month from September of 2014 to May of 2015, one full academic year. A typical LC studio met for two hours in the afternoon. Chairs were often set up to form a circle around a colorful altar placed in the center of the circle. After individuals introduced themselves, any business or announcements were addressed. In most studios an arts-based activity was introduced. A group sharing followed the activity. A journal-writing prompt was given during or after the session. An opening and closing ritual occurred back in the circle.

The LC participants stated their reasons and motivation for gathering within the first few months of meeting. During this refined articulation, membership fluctuated remaining open to new members until January, when the LC closed at eight members, including myself. (Two women who decided not to participate in the LC remained in the research study as outliers.) In the winter months the LC implemented an EXA social action project which was shared with the university in May. In February and March the LC met to design the project, a 24’ canvas labyrinth. Participants of the LC met throughout all the weeks of April to paint the labyrinth, culminating in a labyrinth blessing on April 29th. The last LC studio on May 1st was mostly a planning for the sharing of the labyrinth with New River State University students and educators for Reading Day, which was also World Labyrinth Day on the evening of May 2nd.

Participants

The participants thoughtfully created their own pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Referring to the participant demographics, (Table 1) their professional position is listed as well as tenure status with degrees reflecting their commitment to higher education. Most of the participants were not new to the exploration of social change or expressive arts. Several
had included expressive arts in their professions. Three of the participants were social workers; all but one participant in the study had taken classes in expressive arts; six held certificates in expressive arts therapy, and three (including me) taught classes in expressive arts. Most in the study were seasoned faculty and staff with careers in higher education that spanned beyond 20 years. At the time of the study, two women were in their mid-30s, six women in their 50s and two in their 60s. Participants chose a metaphor during the second and final interview to describe her role or place within their experience of the LC. Also listed are the participants’ preferred daily practice and any arts-based practices they participated in on a regular basis at home or in the office before or after work.
### Table 1. Participant Profiles and Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age, Race</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Tenure Status</th>
<th>Type of Position</th>
<th>Daily Practice</th>
<th>Arts-Based Inquiry</th>
<th>Daily Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>36, Caucasian</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Time outside</td>
<td>- Weekly EXA practice before work.</td>
<td>- Reflective journal writing before/after work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>52, Caucasian</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Non-tenure</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Lunch dates with friends and Affirmation cards.</td>
<td>- Soul Collage® Reflective writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>34, Caucasian</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Tenure track</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Being in nature</td>
<td>- Reflective writing 20-30 minutes in the morning</td>
<td>- Reading crafts/Watercolor painting in a journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beryl</td>
<td>60, Caucasian</td>
<td>Ed.D.</td>
<td>Tenure track</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Reading a novel Home Riding Devotion to land</td>
<td>- Stone sculptures and Multiple Crafts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sapata</td>
<td>61, Caucasian</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Non-tenure</td>
<td>Administration/ Faculty</td>
<td>Memorizing freethinking caring traveler</td>
<td>- Body based practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn</td>
<td>59, Caucasian</td>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>Administration/ Faculty</td>
<td>A red cord within the LC tapestry</td>
<td>- Journaling, Collage and Beading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophia</td>
<td>52, Asian</td>
<td>MAT</td>
<td>Non-tenure</td>
<td>Staff Employee</td>
<td>Whirling Energy</td>
<td>- Meditation and Journaling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosita</td>
<td>55, Caucasian</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>Non-tenure</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Living Basket</td>
<td>- Body based exercises.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>57, Caucasian</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>Full professor</td>
<td>Qigong and yoga</td>
<td>- Meditation with dream work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrina</td>
<td>52, Caucasian</td>
<td>MAT</td>
<td>Non-tenure</td>
<td>Adjunct Faculty</td>
<td>Knowledge Taskmaster</td>
<td>- Dream Journal and Visual Journal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The attendance of the LC was inconstant (Table 2) but all of the participants were held within the community through emails and follow-up conversations throughout the study. The reasons members chose to attend, or were unable to participate became part of the data.

Table 2. Learning Community Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Dorothy</th>
<th>Tina</th>
<th>Hannah</th>
<th>Beryl</th>
<th>Sapata</th>
<th>Carolyn</th>
<th>Sophia</th>
<th>Rosita</th>
<th>Lee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview One</td>
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<td>LC 9.12.14 Studio</td>
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<td>LC 10.3.14 Studio</td>
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<td>LC 11.7.14 Studio</td>
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<td>LC 12.5.14 Studio</td>
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<td>LC 1.16.15 Studio</td>
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<td>LC 2.6.15 Studio</td>
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<td>LC 3.6.15 Studio</td>
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<td>LC 4.3.15 Labyrinth</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC 4.10.15 Labyrinth</td>
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<td>LC 4.4.15 Labyrinth</td>
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<td>LC 4.12.15 Labyrinth</td>
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<td>LC 4.17.15 Labyrinth</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC 4.21.15 Care Mtg.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC 4.24.15 Labyrinth</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC 4.29.15 Blessing</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC 5.1.15 Studio</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC 5.2.15 Labyrinth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview Two</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Interview Protocol

Each participant in this research study was interviewed twice. The interviews were not longer than one hour. The first interview took place shortly after the member joined the LC and was usually held in the participant’s office. Two of the first interviews were held at a faculty EXA retreat in September of the academic year, and one was held in the empty EXA studio after I gave instruction on how to make a journal. The second interview was after the last LC studio in May 2015. Participants and I met in a location that was convenient for them, usually their office, but a few interviews were held in their homes.

The interview questions changed over the course of the interviewing process (Appendix D). In November 2014, during the first interview with the founder of the LC, I added an interview question asking about the difference between self-care and well-being in order to receive the research participants’ perspective of these important terms. During the second interview I added a follow-up question related to the LC, asking feedback on the challenges and benefits in the arts-based practices they experienced, not only in their personal practices, but also while in the community setting. Inspired by the use of metaphor in a dissertation (McNeal, 2013), I included two questions about metaphors; one about themselves and one about the LC. These provided insightful feedback about participants’ experience within the LC which are included in Chapter Four.

IRB Procedures

The study was determined to be exempt from further IRB review (#15-0028) by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at New River State University. Before proceeding with data collection, participants were asked to sign an informed consent (Appendix C) describing the study, 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, 2011). Permission for audio, video recording and photographic documentation was also obtained. Data sources included observation of group activities, interviews of individual participants, journal entries, writing prompts exchanged in emails, and arts-based responses to activities.

**Research Design**

This study is unique in nature because all participants of the LC were active researchers. The LC members were in agreement with this research study. Individuals signed consent forms, indicating that they agreed to participate in a study using participatory action research with a/r/tography. The inquiry of this research study on well-being in higher education went alongside the inquiry of the LC in EXA and social justice. Faculty and staff collectively created and envisioned together the process of inquiry.

To facilitate the inquiry process of the study’s questions through *poiesis*, the participants were asked to experiment with an individual daily visual journaling practice and a communal studio practice. Through a/r/tography, researchers created art and then wrote reflectively toward new understanding (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004). Journaling processes were a natural aspect of the “living inquiry” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 897) or embodiment of artistic experiences. The patterns, values, and beliefs of the individual researchers collected in the journals or expressed in monthly studios were then discussed in the community of educators. After reflection, the community discerned the next course of action following the spiral of PAR.

Writing prompts were similar to the personal a/r/tographic process illustrated in Alderman’s (2007) arts-based research method. Alderman explored the feminine archetypes while studying for her degree in arts education (personal communication April 24, 2014).
First, Alderman read texts assigned by her school mentor. Second, she developed a research question that arose from her reading. She then created art as a response to her question, allowing the material to speak through her hands with clay or drawing circular designs known as mandalas on 8”x8” paper. Finally, Alderman kept a journal where she placed a photograph of each of her art pieces or drawings on one side of the page, and then wrote about the art piece and the art making process on the other page. She published the result of her inquiry in the book *Moon Time: Receiving images of feminine consciousness through clay, drawing and word* (2007).

Similar to Alderman’s rich example, LC participants were encouraged to engage in artistic inquiry around the text *Art in Action* (Levine & Levine, 2011). LC members were encouraged to document an arts-based journaling practice throughout the month in-between studio meetings.

Facilitation of the studio fell to the creator of the LC whose process-oriented methodology was effective for collaborative and interdisciplinary work within the community (Cornell, 2013). As Glesne notes:

In collaborative inquiry, the issue of power shifts, and power is often shared more equitably or sometimes lies more in the hands of the community that is the focus of study. Research purposes and questions are identified by and focused to assist, in some way, those participating in the research. As people work together toward a common goal or purpose,…co-researchers…become partners in a research struggle that can take their relationship beyond that of insider/outsider. (Glesne, 2011, p. 149)

Expressive arts and a/r/tography are very similar in theory and action. There is a reflective and reflexive nature of a/r/tography that is conducive to rigorous exploration of
findings through any modality of art such as music, dance, or visual art, as well as writing. The LC encouraged questions that were explored in collaboration as members contemplated how arts-based practices might lead to social change (Springgay, Irwin et al., 2008).

The LC facilitator employed a similar reflexive pattern as those in other art therapy studios (Allen, 1995, 2005; Franklin et al., 2000; McNiff, 2013; Moon, 2002; Moon, 2012). In the art-making sections of our meetings together, writing prompts were given following movement or painting expressions. LC studios concluded with a reflective sharing about the artistic and written expressions.

This research study introduced new methodologies, such as the use of a/r/tography, with the intention of personal and collective engagement of the research questions. Sentiments shared each month reflected Rita Irwin’s experience, “Starting out in a small community … committed to change, we collaboratively gathered strength, ideas, and creativity from one another. We were stronger together than we were apart” (Springgay, De Cosson, et al., 2008, p. 340). A variety of topics were discussed in a consensus format where kindness, openness, vulnerability and humor were encouraged in the journey of creative “un/knowingness” (p. 338).

The Role of the Researcher

The inclusion of a subjective lens (Glesne, 2011) through reflexive text and images was employed to document the inquiry of the study on the self as well as the evolution of the learning community from the experience of the researcher. The subjective voice of the researcher was included to illustrate the progression of the study. To include the memos, notes or stories, and artistic renderings from the eye of the researcher is a recent inclusion in qualitative studies. These are not meant to take away from traditional data sources. In playing
Data Sources and Collection Methods

Through the participatory action research process, written and recorded data were collected from LC discussions following the self-reflective spiral model toward a “plan of action” (McTaggart, 1997, p. 34). It was important to collect data about the experiences of the complexity of education as well as the ideas and beliefs around well-being in the workplace. Photographs were taken of artistic expressions from the journals and studios described in the research design above, as sources of inquiry as well as expression. Very brief videos were taken of some LC participants’ artistic responses. Their movements were then transcribed. All remaining data collected through notes, short voice recordings of studios, painting sessions, and interviews were transcribed.

There were four separate sources of data for this research. The data generated from the self-reflective PAR spiral was one source of data. The process of the learning community was documented with IRB approval over the course of nine months, from September 2014 to May 2015. The learning community met once a month for an academic year, generating notes and photographs from nine LC studios. Notes, audio recordings of conversations, and photos were also taken during the six labyrinth painting sessions in April 2015, the labyrinth caretaking meeting, and the public event in May 2015 when the LC shared the labyrinth with the university.

Individual interviews with seven research participants were a second source of data that was audio taped and transcribed. Interviews took place outside of the studio time at the
convenience of the participant, usually in her office or home. Interviews engendered insights and themes. The questions elicited transformative research. Several participants mentioned the interviews were also personally generative.

A third source of data was the artwork from the participants’ journals and community studio artist responses. The methodology of a/r/tography invited the making of art as part of the research process. Participants created a paper-bound journal as a container for emergent questions and writing prompts given within the learning community. As artists, researchers, and teachers, the arts-based research method of a/r/tography (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004) complemented the data collecting in this study’s participatory action research.

My arts-based reflexive journaling, reflexive memos, and a/r/tographic responses to each LC member in the form of Touch Drawings and Soul Collage® were the final sources of data. Submissions were made to a reflexive visual journal practice (Ganim & Fox, 1999; Scott, 2012) following an a/r/tographic method (Irwin & De Cosson, 2004). I articulated the intrinsic and extrinsic forces at work in my emerging questions (personal communication with Kelly Clark/Keefe April 2014) as I read literature and processed my own art making practice. My process was to ask a question, make a container for my question within an image on one side of my journal, and then write beside the image as I listened to its story and meaning for me (Alderman, 2007.) My goal was to use this art therapy process to make conscious the unconscious through a spiritual path of knowing as I processed the images (Allen, 2005.)

Data of interviews, photographs of artwork, and audio recordings were stored on my password-protected computer in my office at home. The names of the participants were
protected. Each participant chose a pseudonym, which was used in all transcripts to protect their identity.

**Data Coding and Analysis**

Coding of narrative interviews and the notes from LCs occurred in stages. Copies of 60 transcripts were typed and placed in a three ring binder for coding.

**Interview Matrix.** The interviews and observations were placed into a table with columns. The interview questions were placed in the far left column. Analytical memos, preliminary codes and notes were placed in the column on the right. In the first stage of coding, transcribed interviews were read through paragraph by paragraph (Creswell, 2012). Using a matrix (Table 3) of interview questions, relevant quotes from participants were placed to the right of the questions (Maxwell, 2013). Words or phrases that referenced the question were placed in bold or highlighted. The first question about the nature of participants’ work is not included below to preserve confidentiality.

**Table 3. Interview Matrixes of Questions for Coding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matrix of Answered Questions</th>
<th>“Dorothy”</th>
<th>“Tina”</th>
<th>“Hannah”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2- If I were to visit you over the course of a week, what are some of the ways I would witness you finding balance from work?</td>
<td>Starting my day or ending my day in my office with (EXA) makes the office itself feel more relaxing and more of an environment that I want to work in… I'm being more intentional about it. I like to spend time outside.</td>
<td>Lunch with a friend. My physical space is important … Watered my plants; pull one of these cards every day; a mini tiny altar; …. I have little shells and little stones that I will incorporate.</td>
<td>Personal reflective writing. Being in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- What artistic practices do you have? How much time to you dedicate to those practices?</td>
<td>Reflective writing before work and after work. Weekly EXA practice with a book structure such as Healing Through the Arts.</td>
<td>Journal; Soul collage* .... that is my daily practice right now. Almost every day I'm doing something related to the Soul Collage*.</td>
<td>Writing Probably 20-30 minutes a day, mornings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4- What challenges do you anticipate in keeping an arts-based practice for several months?

If somebody knew that I was spending X amount of time a day in my office working on expressive Arts they might not be too excited about that.

I'm exhausted at the end of the day. Me: Tina agreed, “the challenge is, seeing those small things as okay, as enough.”

To be intentional with the time and to hold it sacred and to not allow distractions or to-dos or tasks to intrude on that time. Making it a priority.

**Research Question Matrix.** A similar matrix was also created using the research questions (Table 4). After coding interviews into the matrix, transcriptions from the nine months of LC studios and meetings were coded into the matrix. Seeking diversity during the search for salient codes, reading alternated between one of the nine participant’s interviews with one of the nine monthly LC studios (Saldana, 2013). Comments that struck me as important were bolded as they emerged in the preliminary matrices (MacLure, 2013).

**Table 4. Research Question Matrix for Coding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matrix of Research Questions</th>
<th>Dorothy</th>
<th>Tina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *How does allowing time for attunement and attention via poiesis enhance the well-being of educational communities and those who inhabit them?* | (Intv1_Pg. 7) …paying attention to my needs and … how to address what those needs are through ART and creativity and it's really making the space and taking the time to do that and just to listen and I feel like we don't do that enough in our fast-paced society so we lose something of ourselves and our voices and our needs so yeah I think it for me it's not only taking care of myself but giving myself space to become what I don't know but just become you know that sense of becoming and growing. | (Interv1) It feels like what I am really working towards is building creative community. … teaching other people other people to do the cards, is so we can get together as creative community and make this, this deck of cards, that we use with ourselves but that we use in community with each other.

I mean for me, art and spirituality are combined. So to me, helping people create to play, that's what I really say. Creative community and spiritual community… |

| 1-What inspires educators to engage in poiesis? | (Intv1_pg. 8) it’s (expressive arts) the words combined with something that's non-verbal as a way to express myself and so I've always been drawn to it | (Interv1) **Balance:** I have to have a certain amount of that (EXA), which I'm doing to balance what I'm doing here at work. Because if I don't do that, than I feel really out of balance, if I don't have some arts-based stuff kind of cookin' and going on. |
Soon after collecting data, a code-book (Glesne, 2011) mapped the emerging reoccurring themes, with major codes along the top of the pages and sub codes listed underneath the major codes. Definitions of the codes were kept during the research process so there was no confusion in interpretation as new codes emerged. The study’s research questions were printed on a piece of paper and hung on the bookshelf above the computer where I worked so they could be reviewed frequently as codes were categorized and then placed into themes in preparation for writing (Saldana, 2013). Rather than utilize a software program I manually placed quotes from the matrices onto index cards with sub-themes written on the top, and then moved the cards around as a method of sorting out the order of writing. Quotes that embodied the passion of the theme or sub-theme were chosen to open a section of writing. These were what Maggie MacClure (2013, p. 173) refers to as “hot-spots” in the coding process; this was done by hand rather than with computer software in order to have a felt sense of the data as it was spread out over tables.

**Art in Action Matrix.** A series of matrices were created to review artistic responses for a second cycle of coding (Saldana, 2013). Images are increasingly valued as data for research (Leavy, 2009). Below is a portion of a matrix (Table 5) of written responses from the LC’s month of May’s prompt using *Art in Action* (Levine & Levine, 2011).

**Table 5. Sample “Art in Action” Matrix of Participant Response**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art in Action Chapter</th>
<th>Art in Action Quote</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy Chapter 7: Inside-Out Outside In: Found Objects and Portable Studio</td>
<td>Third page Second paragraph First sentence: pg. 106 “While we worked with the group of children in the quarry, the volunteer supervised the play of three little girls in the woods behind the camp as they constructed little ‘shrines’</td>
<td>I love the imagery that comes from this passage, especially of shrines made of objects from the woods. It reminds me of the Institute opening/group selection process we decided on for this year. What this passage says to me is that connecting with the earth and with nature and honoring those connections are important. What it says to me is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Soul Collage® Artistic Response.** After carefully listening to each LC participant’s first interview I offered an aesthetic response (Knill, 2005) in the form of Touch Drawings (Koff-Chapin, 1996) that were photographed and then cut and pasted into a Soul Collage® (Frost, 2010). The Touch Drawings were a felt sense of the initial interview (Knill et al., 1995). Touch Drawings are formed by first spreading water soluble oil paint on a treated Masonite board with a small roller known as a brayer, and then gently placing a piece of tissue paper on the surface of the paint. An image is formed as ink comes through the paper when drawing with fingers and shading with all parts of the hand. A Soul Collage® is a 5” X 7 “ mat board covered with collage images. The images are usually from magazine cut-outs, but in this aesthetic response the images were self-made Touch Drawings and photographs.

Irwin shared that all a/r/tographic renderings are figuratively laid on the table at the outset of a research project, and then only one or two may be chosen for a study, with the possibility of new ones being added (personal conversation, 2015). The renderings are meant to be a conceptual starting place. *Reverberations* and *openings* were the two concepts that remained on the table for this study. The Touch Drawings were a/r/tographic *reverberations* of the interviews as energetic movement. In turn, some of the research participants gave poetic a/r/tographic *reverberations* to the Touch Drawings through their poetic responses. The Soul Collage® were *openings* that led to new understandings as participants responded to the images.
There was also valuable movement of information in the gifting of the Soul Collage®. Participants were gifted their card just after answering their second and final series of interview questions. Most participants used the opportunity to share any frustrations or tensions they had experienced in the LC studio journey together. Some had flushed faces; others were quiet or animated. At the moment of receiving the card a bodily shift occurred. Many participants noticeably relaxed their bodies as they opened to receive. Emotionally the conversation transitioned from a serious tone to levity, surprise and even joy.

As the researcher, I was overcome that the gift could bring healing and a deepened reflection to what had been a tense ending to our community process. Gifting artistic responses became a new rendering, a new source of data. In my conversation with Irwin in the summer of 2015 she stressed several times that a/r/tography and action research is not about doing inquiry, but about living inquiry. The Soul Collage® process felt like an embodied, lived inquiry as the giver, and in through the embodied responses of the receivers.

All renderings were meant to validate and interpret the themes that emerged throughout the study, and the first cycle coding (Saldana, 2013). As the arts-based material reflected in the matrices, the “inquiries of a/r/tographers are highly interpretive …with novel approaches to interpretation, assessment, and validity” (Springgay, Irwin et al., 2008, p. 231).

I chose to use Touch Drawings because of my familiarity with the medium and Soul Collage® because of the consistent use of cards by Tina for the openings of the LC studios as well as the use of affirmation cards in the work offices of several LC participants. The Soul Collage® was also inspired because Tina became a facilitator of the Soul Collage® process over the course of the academic year. I realized the importance of a personal arts-based practice. Creating my own Touch Drawings and Soul Collage® was an important inquiry.
Personal inquiry gave me the experience and familiarity with the material tools necessary to follow the same process for the intention of offering an authentic response of wisdom, truth, or affirmation to the study’s participants.

The artistic response process for each participant went as follows:

1. As I listened to the first interview, I wrote words and phrases down onto pages in my Coptic journal. It was helpful to re-listen to the interview after having experienced the year of our studio time together. In truth, I was responding to the whole experience of being together. The interview and the studios.

2. Before drawing I cleared all thoughts except for the participant, focusing my intention to draw for the participant.

3. I created a series of three to ten Touch Drawings for each participant. Much like the visual journaling process from Ganim & Fox (1999), I focused on an emotional response to the participant trusting the image that emerged. I gradually placed lines onto the board from visions that formed through a felt sense.

4. Each Touch Drawing was labeled with a date and title. A photo was taken of each drawing.

5. The photos of the Touch Drawings were inserted into a word document so they could be formatted into smaller images for collages.

6. Printed photos capturing the LC studios, labyrinth paintings, ceremonies we had shared together, as well as photos of participants’ artwork, and office spaces were placed into stacks.
7. A Soul Collage® was created using the drawings and stacks of photos as I listened to the felt sense of the salient themes for each person. I trusted the emergent process (McNiff, 1998).

A series of matrices mapped out the Soul Collage® process as a card was created for each participant. Below is are examples from the Touch Drawing and Soul Collage® matrices.

**Touch Drawing Matrix.** The first matrix below (Table 6) from the Soul Collage® gave a visual progression of the Touch Drawings created for each LC participant, some of which were used in her Soul Collage®.

**Table 6. Touch Drawing Matrixes for Coding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Touch Drawings</th>
<th>Drawing One</th>
<th>Drawing Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K: what came to me (in this first one) was this movement with my hand. It's a <strong>movement of nurturing</strong> and then from that nurturing came these buds that wanted to come up and through. C: A very soothing image, and I felt as if a <strong>chrysalis,</strong> I'm not sure if that's the right word, but it's like both are coming together and opening out.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K: the last one I was focusing on your transition…nurturing an opening… what's blooming forward… C: … some piece of our conversation yesterday that was really resonant with me … in aspects we were talking about time, or limited time or this or that, also what we choose to focus on … And it's almost as if <strong>this is the magnifying glass.</strong> We choose to focus on beauty and growth and blooming forward.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Soul Collage® Matrix.** Another matrix sample below (Table 7) mapped all the images utilized within their Soul Collage® including photographs from members of the LC’s personal artwork, the labyrinth blessing ceremony, and the Touch Drawings. The first column shows the photographs used in the collage. The second column shows the Touch Drawings made for the participant that were chosen for the collage. The third column shows the completed collage for the participant. Beryl’s Soul Collage® Matrixes for Coding
includes a photo of Beryl’s journal used in the LC (a) and a photo of her owl feather staff placed in the labyrinth center (b). The Touch Drawings for Beryl used in the Soul Collage® are featured (c) in the center column. The completed collage is on the right (d).

Table 7. Beryl’s Soul Collage® Matrixes for Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photographs from the LC</th>
<th>Touch Drawings</th>
<th>Soul Collage®</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>c.</td>
<td>d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Soul Collage® Responses.** A final matrix (Table 8) mapped the written artistic response from participants to their Soul Collage®. Participants were given the option to share sound and movement, which was captured on video. Moving spontaneously, they shared a brief non-verbal heart-felt response to the collage. The movements and sounds were then transcribed as one of their responses. All of their written responses were reflected back to them in the participant “portraits” noted in Chapter Four.
Table 8. Soul Collage® Matrix of Participant Responses for Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soul Collage® Answers</th>
<th>Sapata</th>
<th>Carolyn</th>
<th>Sophia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Name of the card”</td>
<td>Soul Mirror</td>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Inner light journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am the one who…”</td>
<td>Speaks to you clearly</td>
<td>Holds what is needed, but also stays soft</td>
<td>Steps into my inner power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My gift to you is…”</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Offering juxtaposition, multi-faceted perspectives and wisdom and balance in the collage of body mind and spirit</td>
<td>Own all parts of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“What I want you to remember is…”</td>
<td>Dance more</td>
<td>Like the shape-shifting form of wax, (liquid or solidified) we can choose what we attend to.</td>
<td>You are a powerful divine spark sent to light a fire the same spark in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Intermodal Response</td>
<td>She patted her chest.</td>
<td>She taps her right foot while giving a ticking sound/ makes a movement from right to left with her left arm. As she moves her arm she makes a ‘shoo’ sound. …Every time her hands move apart she makes a ‘who’ sound. Her hands get farther and farther apart as she moves them up above her head.</td>
<td>She pauses with eyes closed, then brings her wrists together, then raises her arms up. Then flowing waves of her arms as they are raised up as if she is flying. … She turns two full times around, turning then stops, bringing her hands to her heart with her eyes closed, then opening and closing her hands over her heart three times, then pausing, with her hands there on her heart. Then bowing in Namaste.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Risks and Benefits**

Through participation in this study, participants experienced several benefits. The interview about their well-being offered an opportunity to reflect on their own practices. They may not experience personal benefit from their participation; however, the information
from this research may help others in the future by indicating how an artistic practice serves or does not serve educational leaders. A risk in getting involved with this research study was the amount of time they dedicated to the LC studio and projects designed as a community. Agreeing to be a participant of the research went beyond the time they committed to the LC, thus sometimes doubling their time involved. Though they were willing to help, this extra time in addition to participants other commitments was a challenge for some.

**Trustworthiness**

As a participant researcher in this study I held the bias of completing the research for the benefit of my dissertation while being a full member of the LC. Members of the LC kept me conscious of the reality that my investment and actions in the LC was heavily weighted by my research study. There are at least as many ways to tell the story of what emerged in the LC, as there are participants. This study is just one perspective of the findings.

Member checking was utilized throughout the research study. During the second interview participants were asked to share their perspective about emerging themes. The first drafts of the findings chapters were sent to all of the research participants. Many shared their curiosity and commented they appreciated the opportunity to read the perspective of the LC events shared in the dissertation. Research participants were sent the portrait description that was written about them. Only a few minor adjustments to their biographies were requested. One adjustment led to the use of a poem for each participant.

**Summary of Methodology**

The qualitative methods of PAR and a/r/tography were introduced for this study. The participants of the study and the research were members of a university Learning Community
that met in an expressive arts studio. The LC was committed to the action research set forth in this proposal. The researcher kept a reflexive journal of observations and added a subjective voice within the final findings. The chapter outlined data collection and storage. Interview data and artwork were coded.

Expressive Arts, with intermodal art practices, offers experiences of making meaning. EXA was offered as a container in this study, a vessel that was a sacred space in the form of a studio for holding others as a community of makers. The making of art was embodied, in sensorial, somatic experiences that were first received and then set forth from the body as knowing. The hope is that which was offered facilitated well-being, that is flowed and brought enjoyment in life for the faculty and staff that held positions in the institution of education where this study took place.
Chapter 4: Introduction to Results

Introduction

The results for this research study were gathered from the interviews of nine women who volunteered at the beginning of the study to be a member of a Learning Community exploring the Expressive Arts and social action. Two women chose not continue the LC by the end of October 2014. Reflections and arts-based explorations during the LC studios was gathered from the remaining seven women participants in the LC. The LC participants contributed their insights in using a Participation Action Research (PAR) method alongside a/r/tographic responses. The women met monthly in an LC studio. In the section that follows, each participant of the study is introduced through a written summary referred to as a portrait of her contribution and gifts to the study. A brief outline of each LC studio is described giving context for the data that emerged. In conclusion, themes of research results will be presented to prepare the reader for the chapters following this introduction.

Participants

Members of the LC held different roles and displayed different levels of activity. Tina, was the founder of the LC; Dorothy was Tina’s close colleague. Both of these women were the most active participants in this study. Beryl and Hannah were members at the next level of commitment, attending most of the LC studios and helping with the emerging labyrinth project. Though Carolyn was not able to attend many studios, her reflections and writings on daily practice were a considerable contribution to the study. Sapata did not attend many of
the LC studios, but helped paint the labyrinth. Sophia attended the least of either the LC or the labyrinth paintings; however, Sophia’s interviews were rich with personal reflections about her daily practice, and she had more visual arts-based and written responses than most any member of the LC. Lee and Rosita are the women who did not continue the LC, but added to the findings through their interviews. The two outliers maintained daily and arts-based practices while employed in higher education.

**Portraits.** Following are brief sketches of each participant in the LC. Any three of these women in the community brought enough data for an impressive research study. The LC membership shifted as individuals left or joined in the fall months, then eventually the LC closed its membership at eight participants (including myself) in January 2015. The study includes two of the women who left the LC, but chose to practice an arts-based inquiry separately. Though they separated from the community, their data was included in this research because of their commitment to daily and arts-based practices while working in higher education.

Within each portrait I chose to set them first within the LC by sharing when they joined the LC, and then their role within the university community. I chose their own descriptive words from their interviews, about themselves and their experiences. Their presence within the LC is described after a reflection on their explorations in daily practices and arts-based practices are discussed. Most members of the LC brought their practices into the EXA studio. The presence the member took within the LC is shared in a metaphor. Finally, the portrait is made complete using their artistic response to a Soul Collage® that they received during their final interview. (The Soul Collage® was described in more detail within Data Collection Methods.) Before their final interview I created a Soul Collage® for
each participant out of drawings and photographs from our studios. LC participants wrote an artistic response to their card. Their responses are reflected back in the portraits below as a powerful description of each individual. Participants were each sent their portraits to check for accuracy.

Portraits

Dorothy. In my data collection, Dorothy, a busy graduate program director, was the only member of the Learning Community (LC) who attended every studio, every meeting, and every event related to our LC. Having received the Graduate Certificate in Expressive Arts Therapy at New River State University, Dorothy shared a committed desire to continue the experience of expressive arts (EXA) within a creative community rather than alone. Dorothy also executed social justice research as a faculty member and made the point that she wanted to be in a community to explore social justice with EXA.

Dorothy had a practice of spending time in nature on her own and practiced meditation and/or journaling before and after her workdays. She wrote sometimes, but more often she simply meditated on her intentions for the day. During the course of the study, Dorothy experimented with maintaining an arts-based practice at her office before work, but concluded that creating a space at home was less distracting. She used a book with prescribed weekly arts-based prompts which proved a helpful container for her creative process.
In her artistic response to the Soul Collage® (Figure 7) I presented her at the end of the LC, Dorothy shared how She was the One who:

- Breaths out peace like a river, flowing in waves of blue to those around me.
- The One who cries against injustice.
- The One who seeks inner wisdom.
- The One who finds beauty in unexpected places.

Her gift was giving peace, wisdom and community. She remembered that sharing her gift, “means being open, vulnerable, and authentic… that change can begin with a quiet ripple.”

Within the LC, Dorothy quietly held a solid presence of peace and inner wisdom that effortlessly rippled forth like soothing water flowing over smooth river rocks. The metaphor for her participation within the LC was the dove and peacekeeper. Dorothy proved able to listen to all sides of an issue when members of the LC sought consensus on decisions. Her
steady listening presence and commitment to our process facilitated compassion within the community.

**Tina.** In July 2014 Tina invited me to lunch at a local café to discuss her ideas about an Expressive Arts (EXA) Learning Community (LC) she was organizing. It was important to her story that she was a trailing spouse. Tina was encouraged by her spouse to take a job at the university after they moved to Favor for her spouse’s position. Tina was in her sixth year at New River University as a senior lecturer. Tina’s job responsibilities included arranging internships for about 125 undergraduate and graduate students for her department each year. In summer of 2014 she attended a workshop on Learning Communities and decided she wanted to create one on campus as a way to more fully claim her own presence in the university after her spouse died. She also expressed that, personally, she was saying, “yes” to opportunities in her life that incorporated expressive arts. She viewed the LC as an opportunity to integrate her identity as an expressive arts therapist with her solid social justice values.

I experienced Tina as bubbly and enthusiastic as she shared her ideas about the LC with me over lunch. I was immediately struck by how the EXA theme of the LC included a focus on social action and sustainability which complemented the inquiry of my dissertation. In August we met again to discuss my interest in the LC being part of my research. I had deadlines for the IRB approval and was anxious to meet with the LC participants. I persuaded Tina to have the first LC meeting in early September. I later learned that Tina had hoped to have a more organic beginning.

Tina preferred a shared leadership role, rotating the facilitation of the LC. However, after the first couple of studios, the LC asked Tina to facilitate all the following community
meetings. Everyone welcomed her nurturing leadership and the opportunity for her to hold space for our process. Tina shared this in her interview; leading the EXA rituals for the LC was one of her arts-based practices, saying, “That’s something I really get a lot from, even though I’m giving.” I observed her nurture us with a sense of belonging, such as the time she dimmed the lights, invited us to lie down for a nap, and then sang a lullaby as she draped us with scarves.

Figure 8. Tina’s Office Artwork

During both interviews Tina and I met in her office, richly decorated with her creations of colorful collages and journals, plants, and small altars (Figure 8). Tina’s office was a mirror of her arts-based practices. Her love for collage was reflected in her pursuit of Soul Collage® (Frost, 2010). Over the course of the year she became a certified facilitator of Soul Collage® and led several local workshops. Decks of cards lay on her tables with encouraging words. Tina’s practice of reflective writing and interest in cards as tools for affirmation was shared during the opening and closing rituals of the LC. Her office held small altars in nooks on shelves and tables. Before we arrived for a LC studio, Tina set up similar assemblages of playful magic in the center of our circle of women. She led us from what she needed: beauty, color and play.
Tina aptly chose the metaphor for her role in the LC as Mother/Goddess/Hathor.

In her artistic response to the Soul Collage® (Figure 9) I presented her at the end of the LC, Tina shared how She was the One who:

- Holds space for others to do their creative work.
- The one who longs for spirit and magic.
- The one who strives to create circles of women.
- The one who brings beauty and color to light up the darkness of inner spaces.
- Her gift was giving “a sense of belonging”
- She remembered that “we are all on a journey,” and “that like the journey on the labyrinth we journey separate yet together… it is all unfolding just as it is meant to.”

At the end of the 2014-15 academic year, before the last LC studio on May 1st, she gathered us together for a closing ritual, a blessing of the labyrinth we created as a community.
Hannah. As a new faculty member at the university, Hannah was careful to hold space for herself, protective of her commitments. In order to sustain herself as she bloomed forth in her new work, Hannah joined the Learning Community to receive a nurturing experience making art with others while in an expressive arts community. When alone, Hannah sustained herself with solo walks or hikes in nature. She followed a daily arts-based practice of writing up to 20-30 minutes each morning before going into work. Her writing practice was evident when she shared.

Hannah had an easy, reserved presence in the LC. Her personal writing practice filtered into the community when she shared her flowing poetry reflections after the LC writing prompts. She participated in the early studios, but when the LC began painting the canvas labyrinth on nights and weekends Hannah pulled away, discriminating in what she perceived as more doing than being. The metaphor of Hannah’s participation in the LC was a deeply rooted tree growing and blooming through the seasons. As she bloomed she was careful not to overextend her limited personal time. She spoke in her final interview:

I know in every cell of my body that what sustains me is being rather than doing. Although I am blessed with beautiful work that cultivates human beings rather than human doings, there is much to “do” as a professor—advising, grading, meetings, admissions, endless emails, institutes, scholarship products, conferences, presentations etc.. At the end of the day and at the end of the week, I want to breathe, like the forest. I don’t want more planning, more doing, more writing assignments, or more meetings.
In her artistic response to the Soul Collage® (Figure 10) I presented her at the end of the LC, Hannah shared how **She was the One who:**

- Asks you to listen for the rhythm that is yours.
- Sends forth seeds you want to see grow.
- Is both soft and strong.
- Is discerning regarding boundaries and energy
- **Her gift** was, “peace in the flow.”
- **She remembered** a Mary Oliver quote, "You, too, have come into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine.”

Hannah observed herself becoming disconnected from the LC but valued the observation as a lesson in how she sustained herself. Her observations were invaluable insights on the LC’s process.

**Beryl.** Ritual is important to Beryl, and it was for the creation of a ritual event that she joined the LC in December 2014. Beryl brought her three-circuit rainbow-painted
labyrinth, which we walked ceremoniously in candlelight followed by written artistic responses and sharing. In this way, her presence invited a liminal experience. At the end of April 2015, Beryl again opened a gate to a liminal experience during the LC’s ritual of blessing the seven-circuit labyrinth we had just finished painting. Walking in a ceremonial dress, she invited us to assist her in placing four gifts on equidistant points around the labyrinth. After other members of the LC contributed their ritual practices for the blessing, we were ready to walk the labyrinth. Beryl then offered to sweep the wing of a great horned owl over each of us before we entered the labyrinth. The wing had an ornate beaded handle, a signature of Beryl’s artistic practice.

Bead weaving and bead embroidery are ways Beryl relaxes after her intense workdays. She mentioned in her first interview:

My true rest is to do artistic repetitive things so beading is really relaxing even if I am reading a bead pattern and doing some really complicated stuff. It is the colors, and it is the needle, and the thread, and making sure I have counted right. I like really tight beading, and you know, managing tension!

Other practices that offer her balance to her work life were taking walks and hikes with her community of dogs, or communing in nature with her horse.

In her university position, Beryl is responsible for “baby” professionals, teaching introductory and advanced undergraduate students on the front and then back end of their bachelor’s experience.

Beryl had a steadfast presence in the LC as one of the leaders who organized the purchase of the LC’s labyrinth and negotiating its use. She chose the metaphor of a Centaur for her role in the LC. She stood back, a watchful observer participant.
In her artistic response to the Soul Collage® I presented her at the end of the LC,

Beryl shared how She was the One who:

Hears actions and sees whispers.
Her gift was seeing the ‘others’
She remembered, “appropriation is not a form of flattery; it is a form of violence.”
Sapata. Sapata felt she had found her “tribe” in the expressive arts community with people who thought, “…in some of the strange ways that I do about the arts, artful experiences and artful living.”

New River State University had a fine reputation as a teacher’s college. Sapata held an administrative role in which she was responsible for contact with the larger community. With her the demands at work Sapata struggled to find a daily balance, but found moments in the evenings or on the weekends. Favorite arts-based practices for Sapata included painting and forming rock sculptures in her garden. She also created stations of ongoing projects in her home where she would, “…walk up, sit down and work on it a little bit.” Sapata purchased art pencils, pens, Cray-Pas, paints, waxes, acrylics, paintbrushes, paper, and enough books to open a library. Sapata said of her library, “I'm constantly teaching myself and that's a way of relaxing.”

The metaphor for Sapata’s presence in the LC was a freethinking individual with one foot in and one foot out of the Learning Community. She considered herself an attentive friend, “…open, and communicative;” much like the empathic therapist Carl Rogers. But she didn’t like to be in closed groups of any kind. She tended to be a traveler who meandered in and out of the LC.

In her artistic response to the Soul Collage®, I presented to her at the end of the LC, Sapata shared she was:

The One who speaks to you clearly
Her gift was Reflection
She remembers to dance more. (Sapata means dancing bear.)
Carolyn. Carolyn joined the LC in October 2014, a month after we began. Carolyn joined the LC. Carolyn had been the chair and administrator of a department for the last eight years. Attending the LC was an experiment with saying “yes” to the invitation of an activity outside of her responsibilities of writing reports, dealing with faculty issues, budgets, hiring, maintaining an academic program, supervising, and attending sedentary meetings.
To balance her day job of sitting, Carolyn played with a series of body based movement practices. Several times a week Carolyn took long walks in the woods, participated in a Pilates studio, took part in authentic movement, or GYROKINESIS® and/or GYROTONIC®. The LC seemed like a good idea and she was excited to see how it might fit in with her other arts-based practices.

Though she was only able to make two out of eight of the LC studios, Carolyn shared that her “little mini-experiment” was empowering. Having been a member of the EXA faculty that began the graduate program at New River State University, attending the LC was a way for her to act as a bridge between an old and new way of experiencing EXA at the university.

Carolyn was in the process of writing two academic articles about daily practice within the academic year when we met as an LC. She sought out the LC as a place to be in supportive like-minded community interested in daily practice. Carolyn expressed that the LC offered a community to hold different conversations, and attempt new modalities within the arts. Her wisdom added to the data in this study.

When Carolyn attended an LC studio she brought joy and enthusiasm. She graced the labyrinth with its first spill of hot wax, and danced her way out during our Blessing ceremony at the end of the year. The metaphor I gave Carolyn was the “Dancing Bridge,” but she chose “the red cord within the tapestry” that was the LC.
Figure 13. Carolyn's Soul Collage®

In her artistic response to the Soul Collage® I presented her at the end of the LC,

Carolyn shared how She was the One who:

Holds what is needed, but also stays soft.  
**Her gift** was offering juxtaposition, multi-faceted perspectives and wisdom and balance in the collage of body, mind and spirit. **She remembered** that like the shape-shifting form of wax, (liquid or solidified) we can choose what we attend to.
**Sophia.** Sophia also brought a strong sense of ritual and ceremony to the LC studio: however, she was only able to attend three of the LC studios in the academic year. During our second interview Sophia commented on how she created a barrier against attending the LC by disconnecting from her needs to attend because of her sense of duty to her job.

Sophia was an advisor for first generation low-income students with academic need. “I'm here to make sure these amazing students who were the first in their family to go to college succeed in earning that degree,” she said. Sophia roots for the students and helps them stay on track.

In her heartfelt desire to be of service she found it challenging to balance time away from her work. Sophia expressed that attending the LC was “a deep spiritual experience that really sustains me.” She struggled with how to justify her time in the LC when faced with her work load even though attending an expressive arts community experience, “validates who I am and what I want to do in the world.” At the end of the year, after missing many of the studios, she had the awareness that it wasn’t her job that was preventing her from attending the studios, but her personal choice to put work first.
Sophia had a rich daily practice of morning meditation and yoga at home, and journaling in the evenings. In the morning at work, she opened up her office space with an inspiring quote that she often found grounding and helped her to focus and be present to her students. She had plants, stones, and cards of affirmation in her office as reminders of life and growth (Figure 13). In her role of advising students, she believed it important to be an example of that ideal of life and growth by creating a welcoming space for her students with the items that sustained her. Sophia had photos of family members in her office about which students would inquire. She felt it important to share about herself with honesty and authenticity as a model for how she hoped students would share with her.

At home, Sophia had an arts-based practice where she collaged about vision and purpose as well as utilized the Soul Collage® technique she learned from Tina. Sophia also enjoyed creating items with beads and the ceremonial practice of creating bead boards. Bead boards are gifts created by members of a community for special occasions, such as a newborn child. Strands of beads are placed on a board in such a way as to honor the occasion or person for whom they are created.

The metaphor of Sophia in the LC was whirling energy, similar to a whirling dervish. Spinning heartfelt compassion from a center point, she allowed her energy to expand out in a kind loving way while holding center.
In her artistic response to the Soul Collage® I presented to her at the end of the LC,

Sophia shared how She was the One who:

Steps into her inner power.
Her gift was to own all parts of self.
She remembered she was a powerful divine spark sent to light a fire, the same spark in others.

Rosita. Rosita was drawn, “to be in a social setting with like-minded individuals that could value the sacred quality of the process of creating expressive arts.” But after attending
the first LC, Rosita chose not to continue the studios. She had started a new role as a health care professional within the university in a, “high pressure work environment” that was particularly busy on Friday afternoons, when the LC met. Her department saw approximately 180 to 250 students a day. Rosita decided it was unprofessional to leave her new team of employees in her first year with them on one of their busiest days of the week.

To balance her busy days, Rosita chose several rich personal and communal practices. She had a full practice of physical activities such as swimming, bicycle spinning, walking, running, lifting weights, and yoga. At least twice a month she attended a meditation group for its sense of community and examples of a mindful way of approaching life, and the, “calm, content feeling” she had when she was done. In the fall months she took craft enrichment classes in paper and reed basket making. But given her choice of arts practices, “if the sky were the limit I would like to paint on great big canvases with big broad brushstrokes!” Rosita’s most consistent expressive arts practice was a writing group that met twice a month. Interestingly, Tina also founded this expressive arts writing community. So, though Rosita was unable to attend the LC, she chose to maintain a practice in another expressive arts community.

The metaphor for Rosita was her own reference, a sponge. She was a sponge for knowledge that drew in and absorbed mindful and meaningful social experiences.

Lee. Tina approached Lee about joining the LC, but after strongly considering the invitation, Lee opted to find her arts-based rhythm from her home. In her resistance to join the LC she recognized herself pulling away from university community groups. Lee was a seasoned tenured full time professor at New River State University teaching in education, therapy, and general education.
She had a daily practice of gardening for a minimum of one hour per day. Her garden practice offered a repetitive task that brought her, “into a relationship with something that is easy” and calming. She also did Qigong, and yoga stretches every day. Her arts-based practices were basketry and a morning dream journal. She loved to weave alone or in a group of women. When she began basketry it was, “the icing on the cake,” a joyful and creative time intentionally carved out of her busy life. She had kept a dream journal for 25 years as a, “way of saying yes to that wonderful dream time which is the most honest place I go every day.” Occasionally she added simple images that illustrated or reflected aspects of her dreams in a journal she created the previous year in an EXA studio for faculty and students. “This is a new way of working with images that came straight out of our time together in the studio.” Without her daily practices her sensitive inner system would become overloaded. They were anchors in a full schedule or teaching and meetings.

In February, Lee announced her decision to retire at the end of the following academic year. Her decision will give her the opportunity to be present to the practice of biodynamic gardening. Within her garden practice, she looked forward to the natural rhythms of the plant’s life rather than what has felt like the confined schedule of her academic life.

Though Lee was not a member of the LC studios, her presence was never far. On one April afternoon, the LC held a meeting in plush chairs outside a gallery in the student union to discuss the care taking of the labyrinth. Lee walked by, leaning down for a short squeeze of my shoulders. The moment was significant for me. A year earlier Lee had been an active member of the committee that gifted another doctoral candidate and me the grant that enabled the LC to purchase the canvas labyrinth that became the focal point of our social action.
The metaphor for Lee was one she described for her own arts-based practice. I saw Lee as a strong and joyfully woven container that was, using her own words about her work, “a lifetime of a basket.”

**Learning Community Studios**

The LC facilitator employed a similar reflexive pattern as those in other art therapy studios (Allen, 1995, 2005; Franklin et al., 2000; McNiff, 2013; Moon, 2002; Moon, 2012). In the art-making sections of our studio time together, writing prompts were given following an artistic movement or painting expression. The LC studio concluded with dialoguing, or harvesting, or shared reflections about the artwork as well as reading our prompts. The writing prompts given by the facilitator and LC members reveal the journey we were on together:

- **September 12th**: What sustains you? What sustains you in-between our meetings?
- **October 3rd**: And what I mean by Creative Community is _______.
- **November 7th**: How do we sustain ourselves during so many transitions within our individual and work lives?
- **December 5th**: How is a labyrinth subversive?
- **January 16th**: Journal themes and personal questions:
  - Dorothy- Theme: Hope. Being without apologizing. What and who is that?
  - Tina- Theme: Balance.
  - Hannah- Theme: Lost. How to engage with the dominant paradigm of fear in a way that opens rather than causes defenses?
  - Beryl- Theme: Labyrinths. How do you hide in plain sight?
  - Sapata- Theme: none
Carolyn- Theme: Presents- wrapping for myself. What is the place of business? I am drawn to the business vs. the pleasure. What do these questions have to do with social action?

Sophia- Theme: Transformation. How to have an artful life?

Katrina- Theme: Imperfection. How do we alter the system by taking care of ourselves?

February 6th: Writing prompt: “Social Justice, and by that I mean ______.”

March 6th: After being given an owl feather, we were invited to sit reflect about the significance of OWL in the journal, and its possible connection to the labyrinth. We were also invited to: (1) read a small portion of Art in Action; (2) listen for a question that emerged from the reading; and (3) create an artistic response to the question.

April 28th: Blessing of the Labyrinth: What image or poem emerged from your walk, or the overall experience of the Blessing?

May 1st: Each member of the LC chose a chapter from Art in Action (Levine & Levine, 2011). They read the sentence from the third page of that chapter; the second paragraph on that page; and the first line of that paragraph. The sentence they found was the writing/artistic prompt for their journal.

A brief description of the activities held in each LC studio offers a glimpse of the arts-based studio methodology. My observations during the September and December studios are written in italics. The observations are samples of what I wrote each month in my journal. The notes offer a subtle picture of the group experience.

September 12, 2014 LC:
• Five participants were present.
• All present agreed to participate in this research study and signed consent forms.
• A member reminded the group the importance of confidentiality.
• Opening: Each participant was invited to answer, “What drew you to the LC?”
• BOOK: Art in Action was chosen for the LC reading as “a way to meet the world.”
• Writing prompt: What sustains you?
• EXA activity: Decorated a container that sustained us in our place of work.

An altar in the center of the room greeted us with a deck of Soul Cards over billowing scarves which surrounded a live plant in a blue pot. The cards were face up. As a studio opening, Tina had us walk around the altar and “in EXA tradition” have the cards choose us. I asked if we could pick up two. She laughed and said we could get as many as we wanted. I choose three. We then sat down and going around the circle shared what we saw in our cards as a reflection of where we were in that moment. Also on the altar were small dishes with a purple piece of paper. At the closing we each chose one of the papers and simply shared what word was written on the paper, then took that paper with us. My word was, “calm.”

Opening the discussion, Tina shared that she saw the LC as an opportunity to practice more expressive arts. She asked the members present that first meeting the following two questions: “What would you like the group to be?” and “What drew you here?”

Dorothy shared her opinion that EXA is not just for individuals, but also for social justice. This was not taught or offered in her EXA courses. She also wanted to make art. Sophia said she wanted to be part of an especially creative community where she would bring her inner creativity. She asked, “How do we create that community that serves our soul, that is sacred?”
Rosita, shared she simply wanted to get out of her ‘silo’. Tina shared she wanted to find her purpose in the career she was encouraged to pursue. I shared of my dissertation inquiry, and formerly asked those present if they would like to participate as members of the LC in an EXA studio.

October 3, 2014 LC:

- Six participants were present.
- The LC founder shared her joy in leading the studios. LC participants encouraged and agreed that the founder of the LC continue to create and hold space for all further studios.
- Lullaby: LC members were treated to a lullaby. “Is it okay to rest?”
- Writing prompt: proprioceptive writing on the theme of creative community.
- EXA Activity: members acted out a “laid” back theater rather than playback theatre about a challenge from work.

November 7, 2014 LC:

- Six participants were present.
- The LC confirmed the decision that the first part of the meeting would be business and sharing, and the second part, art making.
- LC structure: “Is the group open or closed?” Absent members were welcome whenever they could attend. Starting time changed from 3:00pm to 3:30pm. Two hours once a month.
- The idea to create a labyrinth was introduced: “nurtures ourselves and social action.”
- EXA Activity: Movement followed by writing “a message you need.”
December 5, 2014 LC:

- Six participants were present.
- Review of the history of the LC for a new member.
- Discussion: shared experiences of labyrinths and ideas for obtaining one.
- EXA Activity: walking a canvas labyrinth brought by the new LC member.
- Writing prompt: wrote about a question we walked within the labyrinth.
- Excitement for my suggestion that we make a dust jacket journal in January as a place for questions to be processed in between our sessions.

  What is in the Highest Good as I step forward? To Rest. To Be. To Pause. Taking a few steps, then closing my eyes, attuning to my body, my breath, and my position on the labyrinth, the position or location of other warm bodies as they stand or walk in silence. I hear, “Go slow.” I hear, “Be gentle with yourself.”

January 16, 2015 LC:

- Six participants were present.
- EXA Activity: after the opening I taught the group how to make a dust jacket journal. People handwrote a poem that found them into their journal, decorated the front of the journal, and chose a theme. Questions were discussed to reflect on within the journal. The journal themes were already shared in the section on LC writing prompts.

February 6, 2015 LC:

- Five participants were present.
- Discussion: purchasing and making different types of labyrinths. Question as to whether we would complete a labyrinth by World Labyrinth Day on May 2\textsuperscript{nd}. 
• Writing prompt: EXA and Social Change. Prompt: “Social Justice, and by that I mean…”

• EXA Activity: A social justice graffiti mural.

March 6, 2015 LC:

• Six participants were present.

• Discussion: Beginning plans for purchasing a canvas labyrinth, and outreach with the labyrinth, including location, time, and campus announcements, and painting the labyrinth.

• Closing: discussion on art making and service. What nurtures us?

• Statement: remind ourselves, when we do meet we continue to create together.

April 2015 LC: Participants met over several sessions to prepare and paint the labyrinth. The room was only available for the 24-foot labyrinth to be painted Friday nights through Sunday.

April 29th LC: All eight participants were present for the first time, for an evening Blessing of the Labyrinth.

May 1, 2015 LC:

• Five participants were present.

• Reflections: about the Labyrinth Blessing.

• Preparations: for World Labyrinth Day.

• Writing prompt for Art in Action.

May 2, 2015 World Labyrinth Day:

• Five LC participants were present from 6:00pm to 9:00pm.

• The canvas labyrinth was shared with students and faculty in the student union with art tables surrounding the labyrinth for artistic responses.
The canvas labyrinth the LC painted was shared in the student union (Figure 16) to walk on Reading Day May 2, 2015 which was the last day of the semester, and also happened to coincide with World Labyrinth Day. Unfortunately the university had lost nine students to sudden deaths and suicide during the academic year. The labyrinth walk was offered as a healing meditation for those students, faculty, and staff. At 4:30am that morning I had a dream/vision to set up art tables around the labyrinth. We had tables set up so that afterwards participants could draw or paint a response to the walk. Some students chose not to walk, but drew for as long as half an hour while their friends walked. Undergraduate students in a studio created the murals that hung above the labyrinth my expressive arts graduate students held weekly. That studio was formed as a service to undergraduate and graduate students to process their loss, and other stresses of school.

Figure 16. World Labyrinth Day, May 2, 2015

**Summary of the Introduction to Results**

The main themes that emerged from the interviews of these nine women and the LC studios are presented in three chapters following the introductory chapter. The next chapter
shares the emergent theme of **doing versus being** as articulated through the tension of
loosing the state of being or becoming to the resulting tasks in the LC’s exploration of social
action. The subsequent chapter of results looks at the findings of *energy* as it relates to
making time, the presence of an educational leader, and within the felt sense of *poiesis*. The
final chapter of results follows the manner in which the LC practiced **ritual in education**, as
exercised in daily practices and through the LC studios. The themes circle around, weaving
under, through and over each other.
Chapter 5: Doing versus Being

Becoming while Being rather than Doing

Becoming was defined as a post-structural state of almost, or not quite, a state of suspension between things. It is not standing still and it is not finishing; it is in the middle. A favorite quote by Higgins states: “What would it mean to begin always from the middle? To experiment with renouncing that lure of mastery with which definitive beginnings and endings seduce thought?” (2011, p.142) The term “becoming” as used by Deleuze is meant to trouble our thinking from fixed points in our living to the states of active change between events (Parr, 2005). In the January LC studio, Dorothy spoke of becoming and being as potential themes for her journal. For her, the state of becoming represented a striving to improve. Dorothy set the intention of experiencing herself as, “just being,” or “being without apologizing.” Being was defined in this study as the state of experience while making art in everyday life. As one participant, Sapata, expressed, that “…[an] arts-based practice is a sort of living in the world.”

Doing, in this research, referred to the task of working, but the term was also used in reference to making art. Research participants often spoke about wanting to experience a state of being through art making rather than doing a task to meet a deadline, which was reflective of their professional responsibilities. The desire for this state of being through
creating art was often referenced when they shared their reason for their membership in the LC along with references to their arts-based practices in their office, or in their home.

The LC members met not only to experience a state of being through expressive arts but to enact social action as well. The seeds of one particular social action project were spoken at the third LC studio, in November. It was suggested that creating a labyrinth would be personally nourishing as an arts-based experience and also filled their need to create a social action project. However, what resulted was a pull from being in the arts and became a doing task of making the labyrinth. This chapter maps the findings around that tension that emerged through the LC discussions during studios and individual interviews. The sub-themes that became evident were: Being through Poiesis; Doing through Poiesis; Labyrinth as Task, which coincided with Poiesis Lost or Hijacked; ending with Forgiveness and Flexibility.

This quote from Beryl reflects the story that emerged:

All of a sudden it became all about the Labyrinth, and then the conflict about who owned it and who was going to use it. And it was like, so what happened to this community that we were getting together to feed ourselves and talk about social justice? We couldn't handle our own piece of social justice. So to me that was why it was hijacked. It's interesting that the Labyrinth was a part of it, and the peace Labyrinth was the main part of it.

**Being through Poiesis**

To comprehend the significance of the nurturing and well-being within the LC that some felt was lost, or hijacked, it is helpful to review the nature of *being* that was sought by the members of the LC. Several articulated, in the first studios, the desire to experience a
place of nourishment outside of the day-to-day work life. Nourishment was a term discussed by LC members in relation to creating community where one could experience contemplative practices, “to slow down and just be,” Dorothy said, “And to experience artistic ways of being with people.” As Dorothy expressed in October, the group would be “sustaining [for me] just in our meeting together.” Sophia shared she hoped to deepen ritual and ceremonial practices through the LC’s time together. She also felt sustained or nourished by creating with others.

Tina stressed community as an important theme of being through art making. In her first interview she shared that the, “LC felt like another way to find people to play, people to create community with, within the University.” Later in the year Tina reflected that everyone but Beryl was already in community with each other through the expressive arts community before we started the LC.

In her first interview, Beryl voiced that her decision to join the LC was to experience the everyday nature of art making. Rather than make art as an elite or gifted person for others to just look at, she wanted to experience everyday art skills that she could then share with her students.

**Doing through Poiesis**

By October, the LC came to the decision that the first part of the studio meetings would be talking and the second part, art making. The making of the art, the doing of poiesis, was a different kind of process with one another that nourished our state of being.

In November 2014 Tina brought up the idea of making a labyrinth during the LC’s discussion portion of that studio. The Labyrinth Society has a comprehensive definition of a labyrinth, “A labyrinth is a single path or universal tool for personal, psychological and
spiritual transformation. Labyrinths are thought to enhance right brain activity’’ (https://labyrinth society.org). A note from the November LC studio conversation said that we concluded that the labyrinth “nurtures ourselves and also offers social action.”

Visions of designing rituals with the labyrinth emerged. Hannah suggested having a focal point in the labyrinth, an art piece where everybody puts something in the center. I shared the idea of a tree at the center where notes of inquiries could hang from its branches.

The idea of a tree with a labyrinth was one that a fellow doctoral candidate and I had envisioned. We proposed and received a grant from the university to make a seven-circuit labyrinth made of river rocks surrounding a tree, but there was no remaining green space on campus, so the money sat in holding. We envisioned people walking to the tree, and then sitting on one of three benches we had made to place next to the tree. We wrote in our proposal:

Like shrines, labyrinths are found all around the world in many cultures and civilizations, going back 3,000 years. Labyrinths have been undergoing a renaissance in recent times. Once found exclusively in sacred spaces, they increasingly appear in secular places, such as hospitals and schools, and are used to help achieve a contemplative state, or mindfulness. Some hospitals recognize their therapeutic potential. They can be used, for example, to process grief, fear or anger; or for problem solving or conflict resolution.

In the November LC studio, the rest of the community members excitedly shared their individual experiences with labyrinths. Hannah had used a labyrinth for students who were experiencing violence. Carolyn and Hannah wondered if the labyrinth offered a means for a, “…rebirthing of the EXA program,” and connecting the program to the larger
community. Carolyn reflected, “There is a way to weave the old, the new, and in-between in the labyrinth.” Inspired by these comments, the LC members began to conceive ideas of how to make a labyrinth, and whether to, “Stitch or paint.” The LC discussed the location for a labyrinth with great enthusiasm. Tina and Dorothy spoke of the desire for such a labyrinth to be an accessible gift for the larger community, “Get out of our ivory tower and into the community.”

Hearing this enthusiasm for creating a labyrinth, Tina invited her colleague, Beryl, who had experienced labyrinths in the past and the rituals surrounding them. So in December, Beryl brought her three-circuit labyrinth. Each of the circuit pathways was painted with a different light pastel colored wash.

Tina’s intent was to have the LC experience the labyrinth as a nurturing EXA ritual in the studio. In the discussion portion of the December studio, further interest in having a labyrinth at the university was explored. LC members discussed rumors of labyrinths being added to new building sites in the near future. Again, there was discussion about the LC making a labyrinth to rent or loan as a way of building community outside of the university. Someone mentioned, “…planting the ideas for growth,” for a labyrinth on May Day.

After the discussion, Beryl and Tina invited us into the EXA studio room where we found Beryl’s small labyrinth on the floor surrounded by lit paper luminaries. We each walked the labyrinth holding a paper luminary. Each woman placed the luminary somewhere on the path. We walked the labyrinth with a personal question that we set before stepping onto the path. After the walk, we wrote about our inquiry on a printed image of the Chartres labyrinth design (Figure 17). The closing reflections, like Dorothy’s writing below reflects the theme of doing versus being:
Doing, doing, doing. That is what society focuses on. ‘How efficient are you? How productive were you today? What output and products do you have to show for your work?’ The labyrinth is not about doing. It is about being. It is actually about NOT doing for a while. It's funny what happens when you take time to just be - be present with whatever appears. In doing this one thing, we open ourselves up to creative, unique, and progressive possibilities. If we did not take this time to walk and ponder and pause and be, then the possibilities might not arrive. The labyrinth also provides a unique opportunity to both be alone and be in community. To be in creative community, honoring one another, may not be subversive but it is certainly rare in a society that is a race to the top, often trampling over and stepping on others to get there.

Dorothy said the labyrinth was about being, “to just be-be present.” Other personal reflections after this first labyrinth walk with the LC was Hannah feeling like a, “Flickering
light of support,” symbolized by her standing at the entrance of the labyrinth with her luminary. Beryl felt quiet and calm. I saw new possibilities, inspired by the colors and simple lines of Beryl’s labyrinth. Tina expressed, “Renewal.”

I suggested we make a dust jacket journal in January as a place for such reflections as the labyrinth walk and arts-based responses made up the space between our sessions. There was excitement for the idea. In January, after the check-in during our studio, the LC engaged in creating their journal by hand. Tina reflected that I taught the craft of making the journal, but she thought the January session lacked the element of ritual, which might have given the journal special meaning for her. After the January studio, I did not hold space for members to complete their pages. After our February studio, I did not send the photos of our arts-based activity for participants to place in their journal, nor did I send the writing prompts. My “not doing” left me with a feeling that I was responsible for the participants’ low response level in their journals. It is important to mention that only two members of the LC out of the eight actually wrote and drew consistently in their journals.

Beryl was one of the two community members who did write and draw in her LC journal. She offered the critique indicating that it would have been best to set the objective to utilize the journals for arts-based reflections strictly inside the studios, rather than as the assignments in-between sessions. If the journals had been kept or stored in the studio space, everyone would have had them for their arts-based reflections in the studio. As it was, most people consistently misplaced or forgot to bring their journals to the LC studios.

Tina felt the LC was not addressing the question of social action or social justice, so in the February LC Tina facilitated an arts-based response to social justice through a collaborative mural graffiti project (Figure 18). She encouraged members to work
collaboratively, so that individuals wove in and out of each other’s images. We engaged silently as we did the doing of poiesis while being together.

Figure 18. LC Members Paint on the Social Justice Graffiti Mural

After painting, everyone sat on yoga cushions and wrote from the prompt, “Social Justice, and by that I mean…” One at a time, LC members read their writing, followed by reflections about what painting the mural meant to them. Dorothy shared how grateful she was that Beryl knew how to draw a labyrinth, “I wanted the labyrinth to make it into our mural! And I thought, I don't want to just write the word 'labyrinth'. So, thank you.” The labyrinth image fit perfectly next to “All Living Beings Count” and “Building Community” (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Beryl's Labyrinth Drawing Inside the Mural
In my reflection I spoke that, “It was nice to get out of our headspace from the earlier discussion of the labyrinth,” and rather, “To embody the issue of social justice through a painting experience. It was nice to get back into our hands and our bodies and put those two together, and put the labyrinth in the painting.” There were nods and sighs of agreement.

The writing responses to “Social Justice, and by that I mean …”:

Hannah: where the self meets the world…. also those invisible and internal shifts we make in ourselves, and our thinking and our way of being in our relationships. The changes we make on the inside ripple out into the world, and by ripple I mean our circles of connection and influence. We are all connected and your well-being and mine are interconnected. By interconnected I mean, that we are all in this together. We are not separate.

About the mural Hannah said: The earth is creating space(s) for whatever the issue is to be seen or heard (Figure 20).

![Figure 20. The Earth is Creating Space(s)](image)

Beryl: realizing and enacting a stance that allows other living beings the privilege of social rights (Figure 21). By that I mean that other living forms, animals, plants,
insects, the planet itself, have rights to exist in ways that enhance, support, [and] inform their being-ness from their own perspective.

Dorothy: and by that I mean the quality of - of fairness. Social Justice can mean big things like equal pay and equal access to schools and jobs. It can mean everyday things like our assumptions and views about people based on their group memberships. To be in a socially just society would mean that people contribute what they can and are guaranteed certain rights, like housing, health care, the ability to get married, and to have a family. Social justice is something we are always working towards.

Dorothy commented she liked how everyone worked throughout the mural, and, “how it all connected.”

**Labyrinth as Task**

Dorothy: “I can't talk about the learning community without talking about the labyrinth.” The labyrinth shifted from an idealistic vision to a responsibility through the months of February to April. In February the conversation and planning about a labyrinth
project continued during the discussion portion of the LC studio, as well as through emails between members up to the March LC studio. During the February studio Beryl educated the members on the various designs of labyrinths. We discussed our preferences of designs, and continued to explore ideas on how or when the LC would offer a labyrinth to the university community.

A philosophical approach to the questions of getting the project done versus being in the moment was evident in the earlier discussion about the labyrinth between Tina and me in the February LC studio. These contrasting views became a foundation of a tension that rippled throughout the project. Tina was content to allow the project to emerge slowly, and naturally with what we knew in the moment. The vision I held of sharing a painted labyrinth propelled my energy into a task mode as illustrated in this brief exchange in February’s LC studio:

**Tina:** I think it is May 2nd, that is World Labyrinth Day. So, I thought that would be a lovely day, as far along as we are (in that we didn’t have a labyrinth created), just to do something about it. And whether that is just our group and we go down and walk the (local) one...

**Katrina:** NO! [I talked over Tina] We're going to have it (the labyrinth) done!

**Tina:** That will be a lot of work to do by May 2nd!

**Beryl:** We could invite people to lie out a string on a lawn. It takes an hour and a half, and then let people walk it.

**Tina:** I think that would be fabulous.

**Katrina:** Why can't we have it done by May 2\textsuperscript{nd}?

[Silence]
Tina burst out in laughter!

**Beryl:** "Dead silence..."

**Tina** (to Katrina): You're like me, you're like "Oh bring it on!" But I'm just like, "Wowwww!"

Tina expressed a need to hear a consensus commitment on a labyrinth design and activity before setting a date, allowing the labyrinth ritual to be the motivation, rather than the date informing our choice. I saw the potential of making a labyrinth, and voiced concern that if we didn’t push to the date of May 2\(^{nd}\), the labyrinth project might remain unfinished once the LC disbanded for the year. By the end of the discussion, it was decided that we would engage in a labyrinth activity on World Labyrinth Day, even if it were a string labyrinth. We decided on a design, but Beryl would not have time to order it, so I volunteered. Everyone was thankful in the moment. My energy became overwhelmingly enthusiastic. The final comment before switching to the EXA activity in the February studio was mine, “It's going to be done, one way or the other!”

Dorothy, Tina, Beryl, and I agreed to explore labyrinth-making options before the March LC gathered. In a series of emails we wrote back and forth about the question of bridging the LC with the university’s meditation and yoga groups as a means to combine social justice with contemplative practice and fostering community building. Dorothy passed on an email from the president of the meditation group with references and photos of labyrinths at other universities. I saw a vision of using the labyrinth the LC created for the “15 mindful minutes” which is the meditation group facilitated once a week for faculty, staff and students. Beryl shared professional articles on the labyrinth. Tina recommended the LC
discuss stewardship of the labyrinth in preparation for community building that could extend off campus.

Adding to the ‘doing’ and deadlines was the inspiration to present the connection of EXA and the use of a labyrinth in a professional conference. The main learning objective written for the interactive workshop was to, “Explain how expressive arts activities in general, and the labyrinth in particular, can be used to facilitate individual discovery, promote social justice, and build community.” The proposal was not accepted because the conference sought strictly academic papers and presentations for the profession’s field of research. However, writing the proposal proved to be participatory action research within the LC.

The proposal for the October 2015 conference was due by mid-February. It was written by Dorothy and Beryl, and edited by Tina and me. The title was: *Walking the labyrinth: Promoting social justice and community well-being through expressive arts.*

Dorothy’s first draft captured the LC’s intent on being together: “Once per month experiential gatherings have the dual function of providing personal sustenance to learning community members and exploring ways to promote social justice and well-being in the larger university community.” Dorothy’s writing also articulated the LC’s experience and decisions up to that point:

During learning community gatherings, members have walked a cloth labyrinth, utilized the shape of the labyrinth when journaling, and discussed their experiences with labyrinths. With the focus on personal and community well-being, the group decided to utilize two small grants to purchase supplies to create their own canvas labyrinth. With a goal to complete the project by World Labyrinth Day (May 2, 2015), the group envisions sharing the labyrinth with others to foster well-being.
Beryl’s edits articulated her gift of knowledge on the labyrinth to the LC, as well as a fine articulation of the purpose of our labyrinth for the university:

Early on in the learning community’s development, the theme of using a labyrinth as a vehicle to bring expressive arts and social justice together emerged. A labyrinth is an ancient circular pattern, found universally, across time, culture and religion (Bloos & O’Connor, 2002; Densford, 2007). In its classical form, the labyrinth consists of one concentric circular path with no possibility of going astray - unlike a maze, there are no dead-ends or false trails in a labyrinth. Labyrinth walking is among the simplest forms of focused walking meditation and is becoming increasingly popular in contemporary times for calming and releasing distractions, guiding, healing, deepening self-knowledge, and personal and spiritual growth (Decker, 2002; Hong & Jacinto, 2012).

Of particular interest to this university-based learning community has been the ways in which the labyrinth can be used in higher education as a means of providing nonthreatening and accessible preventive and developmental interventions that minimize students' resistance (Bigard, 2009). Because the labyrinth engages the body, mind and spirit through the focused attention needed to walk its twists and turns, it is both kinesthetic and introspective (Peel, 2004). Given its kinesthetic focus, the labyrinth provides a tool by which to blend together the right brain activity (creative, intuitive, imaginative) of expressive arts, and serves to enhance problem-solving skills to facilitate healthy change. The learning community utilized two small grants to purchase supplies to create a cloth labyrinth. With a goal to complete the project by
World Labyrinth Day (May 2, 2015), the group envisions sharing the labyrinth within the university community as well as the local community to foster social justice.

The concluding collaborative remarks of the proposed workshop for the conference shared the long-term of arts-based activities the LC would be doing with the labyrinth:

The workshop will use experiential methods to lead participants in their own exploration of an intermodal labyrinth walking practice. The workshop will use expressive arts activities that combine group building and a multi modal expressive arts activity such as writing plus movement, or visual arts plus movement plus writing. The workshop will share samples of some of the expressive arts activities used by the learning community and provide attendees with an opportunity to experience several different labyrinth-focused experiences with the goal of generating new ways to think about and inspire social justice in higher education communities.

The act of creating the document over the two weeks in February clarified our growing vision and set us in a purposeful motion. After the proposal was submitted, Beryl sent a lengthy email with details about labyrinth options. Beryl, through her contacts, discovered Lisa Gidlow Moriarty in Minnesota, a labyrinth artist who sewed, drew, and painted several designs of labyrinths (www.pathsofpeace.com). Her website read, “Each canvas labyrinth is custom made to order, not mass produced or machine printed. A Paths of Peace labyrinth is an investment in walkable art.”
In our March LC studio everyone but Sapata was able to attend and vote by consensus on a labyrinth design. The monies from the sustainability arts grant received for creating a labyrinth matched Moriarty’s prices for a sewn and pre-drawn labyrinth, plus shipping. The grant for the learning community covered the price for painting materials. Both Tina’s and my concerns were addressed. The Circle of Peace™ design was enthusiastically chosen (Figure 22). It is a seven-circuit contemporary pattern combining contemporary and medieval elements and most familiar to a form drawn around the year 1000 in Oxfordshire, England (http://www.pathsofpeace.com/cirofpeace.html). Since the labyrinth would be sent complete except for painting, it was realistic that we could finish the project by May 2nd.

With Beryl’s new information, and the reality that we could move forward on the labyrinth, the entire March LC studio was dedicated toward making decisions regarding the labyrinth’s design, payment, and painting. There was no art-making that month, however Hannah’s reflection summed up the feeling of the group, “I like having a bigger project, like a shared vision that we are collectively working toward.” And Dorothy’s comment that, “We haven't done any art making today, but just being in this group, and like even just being in
this room, is nurturing for me.” Sophia added, “It is just knowing there is a community to be a part of that can sustain me when I am here and when I can be here. That is important just to know that. That is really powerful for me.”

The labyrinth arrived on April 2nd. The task of painting the labyrinth began. Moriarty, the labyrinth artist, said it took four to five hours to paint the labyrinth with half a dozen people. We had intended to gather together on two Saturdays or Sundays in April. We ultimately gathered on Friday evenings after classes on April 10th, 17th, and 24th, and on Sunday, April 12th. We had a labyrinth caretaking meeting on Tuesday afternoon, April 21st.

Figure 23. April 3rd the Labyrinth is Unrolled for the First Time

Everyone initially committed to meet on April 3rd while in our January LC studio, even though it was to be the eve of Spring Break, but when the weekend finally approached, all but four of us stated they had other plans in place. I cleared the studio to make room for the labyrinth. When Hannah arrived, she enthusiastically exclaimed that we unfold the labyrinth and have it greet the others as they arrived. I was thrilled as we unfolded the canvas to its full length, 24 feet in diameter (Figure 23). The labyrinth felt immense in size and presence. Hannah and I had to move away more tables and chairs. As we unfolded the canvas
cloth I was overcome with a sense of sacredness. The room felt altered as the cloth filled the space. When Dorothy entered the room she gasped with a large smile as she viewed the labyrinth. She also mentioned the word “Sacred” to describe the cloth laid out in the studio. We waited several minutes for Beryl, but she didn’t arrive. After a brief verbal check-in I laid my palm on the labyrinth and spoke that this project felt grounding. Hannah had to leave early to meet a friend for dinner. Dorothy and I explored the materials Moriarty sent with the labyrinth. Using the sample canvas scrap Moriarty had included with the labyrinth, we tested the paintbrushes and the darker of the purple paints Tina and Sophia had chosen earlier that week.

On Friday, April 10th Tina, Dorothy and I met in the studio. The labyrinth painting started at 6:00 pm. We found that painting was surprisingly relaxing after a full day of work. The time was late and we wanted to paint longer, but our bodies told us when it was time to go home. We finally stopped painting at 9:30 pm (Figure 24).

![Figure 24. April 10th Tina and Dorothy Painting](image)

Sunday afternoon, April 12th, Beryl, Sapata, Dorothy, and I met to continue painting the labyrinth (Figure 25). After unfolding the labyrinth we gathered the painting tool of our
choice, poured a portion of purple paint into plastic containers, and claimed a spot to paint. We literally sat with the task of painting. Our conversation became both philosophical and ethereal as we discussed playing with time between physical and non-physical realms. We didn't make art while we painted, but the sound of methodical brush strokes paired well with the depth of conversation.

![Labyrinth Painting](image)

**Figure 25. April 12th Labyrinth Painting.**

On Friday, April 17th, Tina, Sophia, Hannah, Beryl, and I finished the labyrinth (Figure 26) with the help of a guest, leaving touch-up drips and rough edges for another day. Our guest, Susan volunteered to paint after work on Friday. Susan was a friend who was also part of the EXA community. She contributed insights around the task and motivation of creating the labyrinth and shared in the motivation of wanting to be part of something bigger than her. Tina said she was motivated because she started the LC, and thus felt an ownership to see the labyrinth completed. Beryl compared her motivation to the task of completing the labyrinth with The Little Red Hen. She noted that groups often have great ideas, then tend not to show up to finish. The LC planted some wheat; it was tempting to find other things to do, and then show up to eat the bread. Beryl was motivated to help with the planting.
Figure 26. April 17th Labyrinth Painting.

During this painting session a growing tension was mounting and impressions of me as the taskmaster of the labyrinth were articulated through kind digs and considerable laughter:

Susan: I know you like this (painted line) very concisely, as would I, and I want to do the best job possible…Actually it would be good if everybody did the middles and you did all the edges and that way we can say, “Hey…”

Katrina: [cutting in] Am I that much of a control freak? Do I come across that controlling?

Beryl: No, we know you're that rigid.

(Everyone erupts into laughter!)

Susan: But we love you in spite of it. I always thought I was in control until I met you. And I adore you because...

(More laughter)
Susan: But you know what? If you really look at the world, nothing is just right. And it is just right exactly how it is regardless of whether it's...

Tina: It’s like a quilting bee, where everybody’s stitch is a little bit different.

Susan: … this whole conversation is about balance more than anything else. It’s like, there’s a night, there’s a day … there's a hot, there's a cold, and so on and so forth. And the fact is that somewhere in the middle there's this beautiful space and where they meet there is no clean line. And therefore when you try to do things and try so hard to do them more “perfectly” then you don't allow for the other stuff to surface. But for you, Katrina, I get down on my knees looking at this line for you (Hannah laughs). I just want you to know that I am doing my very best work for you, because I know how important this is and how invested you are in it. And while I might not be perfect, I appreciate your acceptance... (More laughter!)

A different form of tension rose when a second visitor arrived toward the end of the painting session. I had neglected to share with the LC that I invited the doctoral candidate who co-authored the labyrinth grant to use it for her dissertation. In coming to visit the labyrinth the person brought a teaching opportunity to our learning community. She came to look at the labyrinth as we finished painting and shared the idea of speaking from its center during her dissertation defense May 1st, the day the LC planned to meet to bless the labyrinth. The request was taken seriously, because of the person’s part in obtaining the labyrinth.

However, the date requested pushed the already stretched community members to a snapping point. And, the fact that the candidate was invited without their knowledge gave them an ill feeling. They sensed a level of arrogance as the candidate told them how she wanted to use the labyrinth. The candidate helped with the funding, but several would have
liked to see this person sit down beside them with purple paint under their fingernails. Following the metaphor of the Little Red Hen, they witnessed this chick eating the bread without grinding the wheat.

Everyone had been polite, but several concerns fired through the air after the candidate left the studio. Susan suggested the candidate’s defense on the labyrinth would be a “christening.” However, would the candidate honor the labyrinth in the ceremonial manner others in the LC did? Most important, how would we keep our commitment to be the first to walk and bless the labyrinth as a community before the defense?

The request inspired a much-needed meeting about caretaking the labyrinth. The meeting was scheduled for April 21st where most of the LC met to discuss the question of sharing the labyrinth. When I arrived (late) everyone looked very serious, even dour. I asked for a check-in and then promptly shared my guilt and tension around our meeting having to take place because I offered the labyrinth for the candidate’s dissertation.

Dorothy’s expression lifted. As her eyes met mine she invited me to take off the guilt I had bought in. I felt relieved. Dorothy and Tina brought up that we needed to discuss these issues of labyrinth care and timing months ago. The candidate’s request was forcing us to make decisions that bridged the task of making the labyrinth with the question of ownership and outreach to the larger community. Tina was clear that her immediate concern was for the LC; she wanted to know if and when the LC could bless the labyrinth.

We left the meeting with the agreement that Tina would send out an email requesting dates on when to meet for a group blessing. If we could meet before May 1st the doctoral candidate could use the labyrinth. Tina learned that every member of the LC could meet for the very first time on the same evening of April 29th. We completed the paint touch ups to the
labyrinth on the April 24th, our ritual blessing was on the 29th, and our closing LC studio meeting was on May 1st. We concluded this chapter of the LC by sharing the labyrinth with the university community for World Labyrinth Day on May 2nd.

Before we were able to reach the clarity of the date of our blessing for the labyrinth, our struggle was seeing the bigger picture. Sapata was opposed to someone using the labyrinth so soon because we hadn’t blessed it, until she realized who the candidate was that was making the request. Tina spoke the obvious, that the doctoral candidate was able to use the labyrinth because of her tie with the grant that paid for the labyrinth. At that moment in the discussion, Lee, who was originally going to be in the LC, came up to us and touched me on the right shoulder while whispering a hello, and then greeted everyone. She had just left the very grants committee from which the money had come for the labyrinth two years earlier. Lee’s presence and the synchronicity of meeting on the same day as the grant ceremony inspired me to share the reflection with the LC to trust the purpose of the labyrinth for healing and well-being that was bigger than all of us.

During our touch-up session April 24th Dorothy shared her summary of events:

Before the labyrinth we had this learning community where we came together, we got nourishment, we did art, and we had discussions. And that’s, that's it. The labyrinth facilitated questions and we all had connections to it, and we all had a piece in it. And so we all had different opinions, and I feel like that is the richness of being in community. It’s not all “let's come together and do art and it's great.” It's being in a community! What a rich part of being in a community, in a learning community, to answer those questions as a community, each with our own voice, but also together.
What the labyrinth has added is complexity and richness and, just a new dimension that we didn't have before. Even though what we were doing before was wonderful.

Figure 27. April 29\textsuperscript{th}, Sophia’s Artistic Response to the Labyrinth.

On April 29\textsuperscript{th} the LC returned to doing through \textit{poiesis}, or knowing through the action of making art. It was the only date where every member of the LC came together. As Tina wrote that night, “We blessed the labyrinth and honored all who created it and all who will walk it.” After we blessed the labyrinth with our poems, songs, and mindful walking we gathered around its edges to offer a visual artistic response (Figure 27). These responses were placed in a handmade Coptic journal that traveled with the labyrinth.

Figure 28. World Labyrinth Day Art Tables.
On the morning of World Labyrinth Day, a dream came to me at 4:30am to set tables around the labyrinth for *poiesis*. The LC set tables around the edges of the labyrinth (Figure 28) where students and staff were invited to make artistic responses inspired by their walk. Some left their artistic and verbal response in the Coptic journal placed on a table at the entrance of the labyrinth (Figure 29). One student created a sunny drawing after her walk and wrote on it, “It will be okay! Ace, Excel, Focus.” Another participant that night wrote in the journal:

Sometimes we can’t tell who we are, or what we need until we are put to the test. We have all been tested this year, and I think even though we wish they were easier tests, we know now who we are as a part of a family, or community of sorts.

![Figure 29. Guest Book for Artistic Responses After a Labyrinth Walk.](image)

In this way, once the task of making the labyrinth was complete, it became a vessel for well-being and art making. In her closing interview, Hannah gave the metaphor of an oyster for her experience of the LC, and I find it applies for several of us. Like an oyster, the community experienced calm and story waters, and eventually attached itself to something, the labyrinth. But inside was a pearl, a pearl that was formed by a tiny piece of sand that
annoyed, and grated upon the oyster. Following Hannah’s metaphor I defined the labyrinth as the pearl of being that came from the grit of doing.

**Poiesis Hijacked and Lost**

Upon reflection, as the months progressed, the discussion about the labyrinth in the LC advanced, and the embodied art making sessions declined or were “Lost” (Wagner, 1976). Though all the doing of making the labyrinth was celebrated in the end, the final interviews revealed a lamentation that there had not been more art making throughout our process together. In Beryl’s second interview she shared the evolution of events:

I think the challenge was, as we've already talked about, was that the process of the labyrinth took over, and I don't know how that might have been done differently…. and here's …the trick, I think people were having trouble with linking social justice to Expressive Arts. The Labyrinth seemed a good way to do that, but we did not follow through to really clarify how that worked. So that's where [the] hijack started.

Tina reflected that when people, “attached to the labyrinth…we lost something to gain that.” When I asked her to name what we lost she added, “I think we lost some of the more creative pieces, and were into more the task. Getting a task done.” Tina had shared in her first interview that for her, well-being through art making, such as creating a Soul Collage® didn’t happen through doing anything. A space was held for making, and the steps of the activity in a collage allowed the pieces to emerge, “I didn't really DO anything. It is kind of like a holding of space. You helped make it happen, but I didn't MAKE it happen.”

The labyrinth was made to happen.

In her last interview, Beryl further analyzed that:
From an organizational perspective if you have a task group then people don't do things well by consensus. And then you have to have hierarchy to schedule, and to be in charge of, and then, and that's what happened. So in terms of evolution in transition there wasn't someone to pull back and say, ‘Wait a minute.’ … I think people said, ‘I want to create art.’ But see, they weren’t creating art. It became task, because the labyrinth was no longer creative, it was a task to complete.

Hannah’s articulation of why she did not make a journal for the LC elucidated the point that the art making was lost in the LC studio. Hannah wrote every morning as a daily practice. However, she didn’t write in the paper dust-jacket journal she made in the January LC studio. During that studio I had invited each community member to randomly pick a poem handwritten by Paulus Berensohn from a stack of cards. I spread them out, face down, for members to choose a poem. I suggested they transcribe that poem into their journal’s first page as a way to enter the journal. Hannah had received the poem “Lost,” a Native American poem attributed to David Wagoner (1976) because he did the translation and transcription. Instead of showing me her journal during our final interview she offered a poignant reflection on why she didn’t fill the pages, “I don’t want more planning, more doing, more writing assignments or more meetings… I think we got lost somewhere along the way.” Her full reflection touched on the patterns of doing we developed, as the labyrinth became a project to complete. Hannah explained how the poem facilitated a realization:

I drew this poem, and though it is one of my favorites I want to put it back.

Lost

Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,
Must ask permission to know it and be known.

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The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,
I have made this place around you.
If you leave it, you may come back again, saying Here.
No two trees are the same to Raven.
No two branches are the same to Wren.
If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows
Where you are. You must let it find you.

Hannah continued, sharing the reflection below:
I don’t want to be lost. The poem, handwritten, is obscured under a veil of green string, as if I’m looking at it through the forest. I don’t want to write in this journal. I have two others, a personal one that I write in daily and a professional one, which I use as a reflective practice for my teaching. These feed and sustain me. This feels like “something else,” and I don’t feel “in it.” And perhaps, that’s the question this poem offers: How do I lose myself, and what can these patterns teach me about crafting a sustainable work-life balance?

The poem offers an answer in its first words: Stand still. I lose myself by becoming too busy, by saying “yes” when I should say “no” or “let me think about that.” I am easy to get excited about things and over commit or to feel pressure and a sense of obligation, and take on too much. I know in every cell of my body that what sustains me is being rather than doing. Although I am blessed with beautiful work that cultivates human beings rather than human doings, there is much to “do” as a professor—advising, grading, meetings, admissions, endless emails, institutes, scholarship products, conferences, presentations, etc. At the end of the day and at the end of the week, I want to breathe, like the forest. I don’t want more planning, more doing, more writing assignments or more meetings, more time in the same spaces I’m in all week. Holding space for myself is crucial for my sustainability, and it is my
responsibility—no one else’s. Perhaps we can hold a space for one another in community moving forward. I felt this when we first met, but I think we got lost somewhere along the way.

And so, I suppose the poem “Lost” was one that called me to consider the question most central to my wellbeing. … My sustainability, and I would venture to say that that of any community begins with deep and ongoing listening and with paying attention. Right now, I need to stand still. There is much swirl and busy-ness in this life.

Hannah’s act of inaction with her journal emphasized the theme of her journal to be still. She explained, “‘Lost’ was the poem that I really didn’t want to be my theme … and it's not the question that I wanted, but it was the question that I needed.”

**Forgiveness and Flexibility**

There was no a/r/t/ographic research alongside the task of painting the labyrinth. Rather, we fell into the familiar pattern of *doing* rather than the *being* we sought at the start. However, rather than see the result as a failure, I turned to Carolyn who spoke and wrote eloquently on daily practice. She suggested allowing a pattern of forgiveness and flexibility in the effort to break the cycle of doing and opening to being through embodied practices. In her first interview about her daily practice she suggested a moment to center with five breaths, and forgiving yourself for not doing what you set out to do. She then suggested becoming flexible and showing some compassion and then going back to the beginning of the practice. “Being flexible allows you to hold your own emptiness and have some compassion.” Reflect, forgive ourselves, and start again.
Chapter 6: Energy

Figure 30. Rippling Circuits of a Labyrinth on a Beach

An unexpected theme in the study was the concept of energy that rippled throughout the research like the circuits of a labyrinth (Figure 30). Energy, according to the Oxford English Dictionary is an aspect of something physical. Words move through force, as well as objects. Even mental energy is defined as a form of physics, described as psychic movement. The themes of energy in this study are moving, felt, and kinetic. This chapter will follow data from three sub-themes of energy as spoken by the participants. First, adding to the theme of time, this chapter explores Beryl’s poignant definition of time as energy. Next, the chapter explores how the LC referred to energy as presence in our studio’s poiesis rituals. Finally, the chapter explores the data of art expressing energy. Energy was captured in the materiality of artistic renderings known as Touch Drawings. As drawings, energy is an a/r/tographic reverberation.
Time as Energy

When asked for a member check about time as a theme in our research, Beryl responded that to her the more important focus was what gives or takes away energy:

I think time isn't as important to me as energy. So if something is an energy sap versus an energy enhancement, that's more important to me than time. Because in my life, time is just something I can't worry about. And as I said, in the spiritual practice, time is the first thing you control. And it's the simple things to control. So it becomes less important. And what I pay attention to, is whether something is energy filling or energy sapping; because that's the real issue. I think we call it time, but I think its energy. So, if I have time it means I'm getting an energy kick from this, rather than coming out drained.

When it was brought up that Beryl was often late to the LC’s she reflected that she was not motivated to arrive on time because we were not including poiesis. The energy sap of attending a conversation about the labyrinth rather than create art together translated into her late arrival. When the activity of painting the labyrinth became pressed by time, the experience developed into, as Beryl put it, “an energy suck, because you have to get this done by …” In other words, Beryl described the use of time in relationship to whether it was, “… a good energy feel.”

Referring back to the Participation Matrix (Table 1), a quality of personal energy might have translated into linear time as illustrated in Table 1 in the form of attendance of the LCs. Participation was illustrated as more spotty during the months of planning or painting the labyrinth, which did not include art making. As Beryl suggested, the translation of the theme of time was in how much energy one received or gave. Even in reference to the
labyrinth project, time was translated to energy. As early as February, Tina warned about the labyrinth project, “To me, it doesn’t mean we have to choose a labyrinth (design to paint) based on the date, we just have to recognize how much energy we have.” There was a stronger attendance when the LCs included poiesis, which participants reflected as a benefit. The ritual of making was energetically supportive. Journaling, for Beryl, was “…something to support my energy,” and “gives me an energy kick.” Sapata said she received energy from her late night art making at home and making her stone gardens. When the poiesis dropped out of the studio, members reflected, as Tina, that the LC “didn’t feel as relaxing and nurturing… It wasn’t feeling like I was getting back from it.” At the end of the study, every member of the LC attended the blessing of the labyrinth, which included a ritual ceremony with an aesthetic response (Knill, 2005). In that moment poiesis was regained in the LC.

To illustrate further the attendance time as a reflection of energy, Sophia, who missed most of the LC studios, spoke of this form of personal energy as time when she was torn between whether to put her personal energy toward work or the community; “How or where I choose to put my energy in relation to time is important to me.” Carolyn attended at first, but had to leave when other projects conflicted with her “little mini experiment” of giving her “limited energy” toward attending the LC. Lee’s decision not to attend any of the LC studios was a matter of choosing to put her energy into her garden, rather than investing her energy into a university group, because her garden fed her on many personal levels.

**Presence as Energy**

Participants of this study mention energy as the individual presence within the LC members, such as reference to Tina holding space for the LC as a mother presence, or Dorothy sitting with a listening presence. The women consistently referred to this presence as
an energy that is offered or shared by individuals. My journal entry about the April 29th labyrinth blessing reads:

Next, Sapata mentioned that since this was the very first time we had all been together, that we hold hands and feel each other’s energy. I put out my hands, ‘if it were left up to me, I’d get right down to it,’ and our hands zipped together. We closed our eyes and breathed the circle through our hands. It was a nice ‘touch.’ Thank you, Sapata!

In Carolyn’s reflection of the LC she, “was particularly touched with Tina’s energy to lead.” Another reference to energetic presence of individuals was given while we discussed the labyrinth in the March LC studio Sophia expressed a reflection about the woman who drew the labyrinth, saying, “I thought about her energy, and what she represents. It’s pretty powerful.”

The presence of group energy was also described. Hannah asked the LC to hold space for her department’s transition as professors departed, and other “new energy” came in. In the LC’s presence, she requested that the participants of the LC offer their group energy for the transition.

Energy was referenced as a presence of the divine in ritual. During the labyrinth blessing Sophia called upon a divine feminine source of energy to balance and support us. She offered a Sanskrit chant and then invited us to walk counter clockwise around the labyrinth three times together, and then back, “bringing this energy to support us and creating our path together.”
Art Expressing Energy

In this research study reverberations, or movement of energy, whether as presence or personal essence, became a/r/tographic renderings in the form of Touch Drawings done by myself as artistic responses for the research participants. “A/r/tography formally acknowledges the researcher as maker. Making is necessary to translate sensory experience into visual data” (Siegesmund, 2013, p.140). Tension between the artist and the energetic vibration of the words participants spoke became material through poiesis. Knill (1995) calls this material dialogue between two people crystallization theory. In The Spell of the Sensuous (1996), David Abram tells the Navajo story of how language is the wind, an unseen spiritual presence that moves through a person as evidenced by the whirls in our fingers, the tops of our toes and the hair colic at the top of our heads. Such whirls were prominent and diverse in the drawings that represented the wind, the vibration, and the unique energy of each participant. After listening to their recorded words, I engaged in a practice of aesthetic responding as arts-based researcher. I translated the energy of their words into a physical gesture onto fine tissue paper. The lines reflected the themes I felt the participants speak. A new drawing was created for each theme I heard spoken. Three to ten drawings were created for each participant. The weight and direction of the line, inspired by the vibration of the words, was saturated with ink underneath the paper, spread on the board beforehand. The amount of tension on the paper dictated the darkness of the markings. The drawings were a felt sense of individual participants’ energetic essence through lines, textures, and forms. This drawing for Tina (Figure 31) is an example, depicting the waves of inspiring whispers Tina said she heard coming through her crown as instructions as guidance for holding space.
The reverberations in this drawing reflect her song to the LC during the blessing of the labyrinth.

Figure 31. Touch Drawing for Tina of Her Singing.

The following are a series of drawings created for participants that illustrate the materiality of energy through line, texture and form. Often a drawing for a participant began as a simple string of energy. In Figure 32 lines, on the left, captures my felt impression of Tina’s flowing energy, made with a single whishing movement of the hand. A different gesture, on the right, captures the metaphorical meandering energy of Sapata.

Figure 32. Touch Drawing Lines: Tina on the left and Sapata on the right
In contrast to these fluid lines, the first drawing for Hannah (Figure 33) combined strong straight lines to form a core of energy I felt for her. Hannah flipped the drawing over and said it looked to her like a tree. The tree was her personal metaphor for being within the LC, reflecting her desire for standing still and being deeply rooted. The core energy of boundaries I sensed might be similar to that of a tree standing still in order not to be lost in the duties of a professor. Hannah shared:

I want to be able to hold the boundaries that I have, and not hold them on an ongoing basis in a semipermeable way. Because what happens for me is that if I don't do that, and I say yes to too much stuff, and I let too much stuff in, or I let too much stuff out, then it's like self-preservation time. Then the walls get thicker, and I don't like how that feels. I don't like the energy that puts off. So it's something I'm aware of.

Figure 33. Touch Drawing for Hannah

Boundaries softened in the second drawing (Figure 34) for Hannah, where the energy lines are more permeable. I was meditating on how Hannah held space for her students, and the supportive holding for the transitions in her professional department. Light seems to be pouring through the drawing. Hannah commented upon viewing the drawing, “that's also
how I would like to hold space for myself, and like the boundaries would also like room for the coming in and going out.”

Figure 34. Second Touch Drawing for Hannah

The energy of Hannah’s third drawing becomes a solid form (Figure 35). In this simple drawing I saw a tadpole, but Hannah saw a seed or, “a bulb that holds a lot of life and energy. And it's conscious of needing a good soil and sunlight and watering in order to grow.”

Figure 35. Third Touch Drawing for Hannah

The final drawing (Figure 36) for Hannah was a bulb that had blossomed. I drew with my palm first, which made the flower. Then sprays came out of my fingertips. To me those reflected the networking that I thought Hannah had with students and faculty. Seeds then
popped out of the sprays and felt representative of her students or the other staff and faculty that she inspired.

Figure 36. Final Touch Drawing for Hannah

Figure 37. Touch Drawing for Dorothy

Reverberations of energy appeared throughout the Touch Drawings. A vivid illustration of a reverberation of energy was in a drawing for Dorothy (Figure 37). As I showed her the drawing, I fumbled for words to explain, “the energy that came forth.” She responded with what she saw, “To me this is like a little ball of sky or a ball of energy that's sharing itself.”
A similar drawing depicting energy flow was a drawing for Carolyn of a chrysalis, mirroring her budding transformation within her profession (Figure 38) that was, in her words, “both coming together and moving out.”

Occasionally a phenomenon occurred where the participants described an aspect about themselves in their second interview that I had captured the night before in their Touch Drawing. For example, during her second interview, Sophia responded to the inquiry about her metaphor with a description that closely matched a drawing I had not shown her yet. Sophia’s description of her metaphor had begun:
I'm whirling. I see myself in that sort of movement, in a whirling sort of shape… So for me that means, if you are whirling, there’s a center place within you that you hold, and you also allow your energy to expand out in a kind loving way. You still hold on to your center, but that kind of spirals out. So that is what came up, some kind of whirling energy in the space.

Ten minutes later, when I showed the Touch Drawing I made for her (Figure 39), I explained, “The title that came to me was, Leading from Within. It’s very small, but this heart that is coming up has wings. It is this reverberation of energy that starts from the center and expands out.” Sophia responded, “It feels very grounded and strong…It feel like something that I want to work towards in my life, and that is the freedom of fully being who I am at all times.”

Her inquiry transitioned then from the energy of the individual to the group. Sophia’s metaphor of the LC was of group energy holding space for community. Sophia reflected:

I see each one of us as circles of energy within that space. That’s like, wow! So powerful! All of their energy is coming into holding that whole big center space. Like each one is holding that [space], yet each one is powerful, and each one is that container as well. It’s like a spoke of a wheel. Each of them balances the whole thing. You can’t have one without the other. It’s moving, in motion. The energies are powerful that connect the spokes to the center.
Figure 40. Touch Drawing Three for Sapata

Drawing Three for Sapata (Figure 40) depicts energy coming from and going to a center point:

Sapata: I don't know if that is me in the middle or what. It doesn't resonate with me except maybe when there is too much energy going out and not much energy coming in.

Katrina: The word inertia comes to mind. There is this sense of standing still, and yet not. There is so much energy. There is definitely an energy, a being of energy, and yet kind of stuck; because there is so much coming and so much going at the same time.

Sapata: That's a pretty good observation.

Katrina: Does that resonate?

Sapata: Yes.
Drawing Six (Figure 41) for Sapata is an example of the texture that appeared in drawings that gave a sense of motion. The spiral lines in this drawing captured a material sense of Sapata’s creative essence. The spirals inspired the comment from Sapata that, “There is always energy going out so I'm just trying to pull in.”

A drawing of energy depicting an essence of space and time came out when I was listening to Beryl’s first interview in which she discussed the winter solstice (Figure 42). When Beryl saw the drawing she immediately indicated that it reminded her of the winter
solstice. Beryl saw in this image a “Winter solstice when the light comes through the portal then hits the wall and the Sun is coming back.”

Figure 43. Touch Drawing for Sophia of Divine Feminine

I conclude this chapter with a vision of a drawing that I gave to Sophia (Figure 43). While reflecting on Sophia, I saw a vision of feet. I took off my shoes and stood on the board. Then a vision of shining energy came to me that had to be drawn between the feet. It was very important that the light be placed between the feet. I sensed this to be a significant drawing. Indeed, for Sophia, this was a “huge honoring symbol of owning your own divine feminine energy and power that you are a part of, and stepping into and owning it fully.”

Time in the conceptual framework was introduced as linear and liminal. A participant in the study also described time as energy that informs what motivates our attention to time. The conceptual framework discussed a state of being as something felt through the senses (Abram, 1996; Heidegger, 1962). The term energy used by participants occasionally referred to a presence they observed moving within a participant, or felt as it extended out from that person. The concept of Being by phenomenologists has been referred to in the conceptual
framework as a state of awareness during the process of making art. The expression of art in this chapter was a discussion of how energy is translated into the materiality of an artistic product, such as an illustration of a person’s voice or essence in the form of Touch Drawings made by the placement of fingers as they moved across paper.
This chapter will discuss the rituals experienced within the LC members’ personal daily practices, LC studios, and with the labyrinth. Rituals were a strong element of the LC experience, both in personal lives as well as in the LC studio. As stated earlier, for the purpose of this research study, ritual is defined as a set of activities that often combines art mediums and art making within an event. The events in this research study were rituals included within daily practice and rituals within the LC’s studios. Within these events, time and medium shifted from a linear to a liminal state of consciousness. These events became rituals that invited social change in the participants’ personal lives and within the educational community.

Community is a concept in which individuals learn alongside others to be nourished for the work in the office and with students. In the interdisciplinary LC of faculty and staff who committed to a collaborative yearlong program, peers shared the experience of learning together through rituals that nurtured their work. Tina reflected on the importance of nurturing ritual in community in her response to the interview question about the benefits of an arts-based practice:

I think the benefits are multiple; I think part of it is creating and being part of creative community, and part of it is spiritual practice, a sense of sacredness. I think all of that and self-care. Self-care is always a big piece. I'm not feeling so isolated with ideas, and I just seem to do more when I'm in a group of people.
Dorothy developed a metaphor for the LC. She said it was a large tree that was “grounding, like as a touchstone and it's been this thing that sort of helps us grow, or develop, and share our gifts with other people.”

Many participants referred to the importance of making linear, or chronos, time and space for the ritual of gathering. Tina mirrored a concern in the first LC studio, “It is challenging to carve out the time. Are we allowed to do this? There are so many other things we could be doing, but these are essential.” Carolyn said in the same studio, “To claim time and space to be with other like-minded peers to explore EXA. This is on my calendar!” In her final interview, Carolyn, an administrator, shared that mentally and emotionally she understood she had the ability to be in charge of how she allotted time, but “then in the hubbub of life I’m not quite able to hold that as much as I would like.” In the end, she was not able to attend the LC as often as she had hoped.

Sophia expanded on the importance of her desire for ritual time when sharing her reason for joining the LC:

I like to practice ritual and ceremony, and to me it feels like that in community we're doing this together and creating this whole time together. There’s a deepening of the experience that just is so powerful and so genuine. It's such a deep spiritual experience that really sustains me on other levels, too, to create with others. How important this is when we all give the time to this, and create a space for it. And it validates who I am and what I want to do in the world.

Even with those comments Sophia, as well as Rosita, struggled to justify their presence in the community based on time. Could members justify the LC as professional development? Rosita voiced just that question at her first meeting, but then decided not to
return because she was not able to justify her time to attend because of her work situation. She would have been required to work extra hours to make up the hours she might have dedicated to the LC. And Lee resisted joining altogether because she was withdrawing from her involvement with the university as she prepared to retire, “I wanted to make my art base at home, and I feel like there's a rhythm here that's calling, and it's not about being at the University.”

There was frustration expressed in having no time to create or experience ritual in community when there was not enough time to complete a day’s work. Staff members in the LC often had to take work home on the weekends, further cutting into time for community ritual. The LC was seen as a place where participants benefited personally, professionally, and spiritually within a community where ritual was present. Yet, other participants discussed the place of ritual in education with some reservation. When Tina discussed her plans to further her career in education she shared this:

Sometimes I think, oh, but what I really love to do is rituals! Am I going in the wrong direction? I try not to have too much doubt about anything with this because I just need to move forward in the direction I'm going.

Rituals as Daily Practices

Rituals in Daily Practice at Home. Daily practices for self-care and well-being are a form of ritual: a set of activities, performed in a sequestered place, following a particular sequence. All of the LC participants were devoted to starting or ending their day with at least one daily practice such as hiking in nature or reading for pleasure as their rituals. Everyone in the study also had a regular EXA practice. Beryl said of her beading practice, “So my true play, my true rest is to do artistic repetitive things.” Sapata shared the benefits of an EXA
practice: “Expressive arts has me more focused on finding space and time and balance.”

Creating spaces was one of her daily arts-based practices and was clearly a ritual for her.

Sapata shared one of her daily rituals:

Like, I've been working in my yard developing a spiral out of rocks. Just sort of a Zen garden kind of space… What I realized was my whole trip out there was a time set-aside for some self-reflection and creating the space around me.

Body-based practices were common in this LC. Carolyn shared that her body-based EXA practices gave her, “a blissful sense of flow … losing self and realizing I’m just a part of other.” In another embodied ritual as a daily practice, Lee shared that through her gardening she found herself deeply satisfied, stepping out of linear academic demands when listening and then responding to the garden plants’ needs of watering, “on their time, but not necessarily mine. And having that become more of a ritual, and not feeling so confined to the schedule of my life.”

**Rituals in Daily Practice at Work.** A few LC participants had a daily practice ritual in the office before work or after work as a means to prepare for their academic life with students or organizational meetings. Dorothy shared the benefits of her EXA practice in her office:

We have a little storage room next door, so I try to keep things close by and I try to spend time every day, or more days than not, doing expressive arts. There's something about either starting my day or ending my day in my office with EXA that makes the office itself feel more relaxing and more of an environment that I want to work in.
As mentioned in the participant portraits, Tina and Sophia set up small altars in their offices with boxes of cards that held affirmations offering various sayings they could pull before they started their day, as well as share with students. They lived their ritual practice, leading by example.

**Altars in the Learning Community**

An altar is a focal point for a religious ritual according to the Oxford English Dictionary, but for the purpose of this study, an altar was an artistic expression set up as a focal point in the LC studio and in the labyrinth. It was an expression of imagination that inspired communication through shared experience within a community. Books and essays have been written to connect the indigenous cultures, folklore, and religious traditions of altars to therapeutic aspects of altar-making (Bermudez & Bermudez, 2002; Magliocco, 2002; Strong, 2012). One book of interest for this study focuses specifically on altars made by women (Turner, 1999). In an eloquent essay, Knill (1999) wrote about the importance of acknowledging soul nourishment in expressive arts therapy. His discussion defining the field of expressive arts therapy plainly states:

> We recognized the role of imagination and ritual that is shared between contemporary psychotherapies and all ancient traditions. It was also evident that the arts are bridging existential phenomena that unite ritual, imagination and dream-world in a way that no other activity can do. (p.50)

Knill ends by stating, “This continuity is closely related to our well-being” (p. 52).

Tina, inspired by the joy of making altars, created a beautiful altar in the center of the room to greet the LC participants as they gathered for each of the studios. The altars often connected to an opening ritual.
During the September LC, she created an altar and placed cards with colorful Touch Drawings on them surrounding a potted plant with scarves. The cards, known as Soul Cards, were face up. As an opener, she had us walk around the altar and in EXA tradition said to, “Have the cards choose you.” After picking up the cards, we sat down and went around the circle sharing what we saw in the images on our cards as a reflection of where we were in that moment. There were small dishes placed on the altar with a purple piece of paper set inside. At the closing we each chose one of the papers and simply shared what word was written on the paper, then kept the paper. She often had a plant or flower in the center of the altar as a gift to the community, acknowledging the spiritual and living elements that brought us together. Sometimes the altars carried a symbolic connection to the LC activity that Tina had planned. In October Tina placed dolls around the altar to represent our inner child and acknowledge our youth (Figure 44). During this studio we discussed the importance of resting as if children taking a nap.

![October Altar in the LC Studio](image)

Figure 44. October Altar in the LC Studio

The LC chose the labyrinth design based, in part, because it had the option of a circle inside the path greeting the walker. This circle could be an altar centerpiece that could be
placed intentionally by whoever set up the labyrinth. As we painted on April 17th, Tina brought a vase of flowers for the space as an example of what could be placed in the center in the future (Figure 45). During the blessing of the labyrinth, Tina placed a small basket with bundles of flowers for participants to take as they exited the labyrinth (Figure 46). During the World Labyrinth Day, a vase of fresh lilacs was placed in the circle, and a lilac tree was placed at the entrance where individuals could tie a message or prayer to its branches, much as we had envisioned in an early LC meeting (Figure 47 & 50).

Figure 45. Vase of Yellow Flowers in the Circle of the Labyrinth

Figure 46. Bundle of Flowers in the Circle of the Labyrinth
The center of the labyrinth also proved to be a focal point for altars that offered soul nourishment and community sharing. During the blessing of the labyrinth on April 29th, the LC chose offerings of rose buds, shells, and scarves. Participants then walked with the symbols and placed them in the center of the labyrinth. The completed altar was a work of collaborative art, a gift of combined energy (Figure 48). On World Labyrinth Day, May 2,
2015, Tina placed a pink silk scarf that she carried during her walk into the center as seen in Figure 49 forming a circle within the circle. Participants were invited to gather a stone at the entrance to carry and then place in the center of the labyrinth of the pink circle (Figure 50).

![Pink Scarf and Stones in the Center of the Labyrinth](image)

Figure 49. Pink Scarf and Stones in the Center of the Labyrinth

![Lilacs in the Circle and Pink Circle in the Center of the Labyrinth](image)

Figure 50. Lilacs in the Circle and Pink Circle in the Center of the Labyrinth

**Rituals in the Learning Community**

Utilizing expressive arts, Tina led rituals in the LC studio. The LC sought rituals in art making that offered liminal spaces from which participants gained new insights. When she prepared to hold space for the LC, Tina said she experienced ideas for the rituals as if
they were coming through her all at once. She often taught activities that she would want to experience herself. During the first LC, we decorated a container that could sustain us in our place of work that was similar to the small boxes of affirmations Tina used in her office. Tina laid out a variety of containers over a table. After choosing a box, she laid out old cards, calendars, and scraps of paper for us to decorate our boxes. The studio fell silent as each of the women entered a liminal space, absorbed in the making of our boxes. She gathered us into a circle to close the session encouraging us to fully return to the moment. Here we sat with the question: what sustains us?

In October 2014, Tina introduced us to the theme of rest by asking, “Is it okay to rest?” This ritual was after the discussion on whether it was okay to meet at all. Some members could not attend the LC because, as staff, their supervisors did not view the LC as work. There was a discussion about calling the LC a “committee” in order to justify the time away from work. After much verbal processing, Tina gradually led us into a liminal space of rest. She invited us to lie on mats with the lights turned out. Tina covered each of us with a blanket or allowed us to cover ourselves with a shawl she brought with her. Tina then sang us a lullaby. She caressed our backs or tucked us in as if performing the ritual of tucking a child in to bed. The lullaby was one Tina’s mother sang to her:

[to Carolyn] …. Go to sleep Carolyn…close your eyes and go to sleep while I sing to you. Go to sleep my Dorothy… close your eyes and go to sleep while I sing to you. Pause…. (I can hear myself sighing deeply, almost crying. And Tina is humming in the background.) Silence… Tina very softly speaks, “Just rest. It is okay to rest.”…Pause… “Nothing to do but rest.” Silence… Tina, very softly, “Take a couple of minutes and when you feel ready to come back to this space, be gentle, be slow,
come back into this circle in your own time. Open your eyes, going as slow as you need to go.

Tina eased us back out of our liminal space again, as she invited us to gradually sit up from our nap and move into a circle for about 15 minutes of Proprioceptive Writing® (Metcalf & Simon, 2002) which aids in synthesize ones experience through a repetitive question such as, “What I mean by…” The prompt Tina gave us was on “creative community”. Each participant began their writing with, “What I mean by creative community is…” As the writing progresses new themes may emerge in which the writer responds to the theme with, “What I mean by…” The process often generates new insights. Harvesting our experience through a dialogue that included our writing and reflections brought us fully to the present moment.

**Rituals with the Labyrinth**

Two rituals marked the use of the labyrinth by the LC: the blessing of the labyrinth on April 29th, and the offering of the labyrinth to the university on May 2nd.

**The labyrinth blessing.** A powerful experience of ritual occurred the evening of April 29, 2015 during the LC’s blessing of the labyrinth. Care was taken in preparing the space. Tina suggested we bring whatever we wanted to offer for the evening. I arrived to find the labyrinth had been rolled open. As other LC members arrived, they placed their offerings around the room. Tina asked for scissors to cut miniature vases of flowers for the altar in the labyrinth. Beryl arrived wearing a blue coat with Celtic knots. Taking off her coat, Beryl doused the room, holding out her arms with the dousing rods, while Dorothy and Tina continued to gather art materials. Beryl wore a ceremonial dress made of long stiff brown material that dragged on the floor.
I brought six large white bags full of paper luminaries. There were just enough luminaries to fit around the labyrinth (Figure 51). Tina and I illuminated each one with electric and wax tea lights. I also offered a Coptic journal as a guest book for written and visual artistic responses for our walk this evening, and walks in the future. After an hour of gathering and preparing we began promptly on the hour. Beryl initiated the ceremony by blessing four corners of the labyrinth with the four elements. Sophia laid an orange cloth at the entrance of the labyrinth. She sang a mantra three times then asked us to walk around the labyrinth counterclockwise three times. We were each given a yellow rose from a basket. Tina requested we offer a spoken blessing. Voices spoke “communion,” “opening,” “remember our connection to the Earth.” It was a beautiful way to deepen into the ritual. Then Tina offered a song.

Before we entered the labyrinth, Tina and Dorothy decided to offer one more opening ritual. Dorothy reached for a cloth. Tina said they had a gift for me. Tears of shock and surprise came to the surface as Tina called everyone to a circle. Each person, beginning with Tina, blessed a scarf meant for me. I was completely overcome. All the tension of doing and
not doing it the way they wanted, and communication gaps, all came to this; they were blessing my work as a ritual of honoring.

Figure 52. Hannah’s Rose Next to My Shell in the Center of the Labyrinth

They encouraged me to go into the labyrinth first. Beryl blessed everyone with the air of her owl wing. We walked the labyrinth in silence. A magic of the labyrinth was the shared space of the path as we passed one another. There was a swishing sound of people walking on the canvas, and the blurred images of bodies, sometimes making contact and sometimes not. Hannah and I stood in the center for a moment. In a state of altered consciousness, I placed a shell I had been carrying as the first token of an altar. Hannah placed her rose next to my shell (Figure 52). Beryl was the last to go in to the labyrinth, and the last to exit.

After we finished walking, Tina called us into a circle around the edge of the labyrinth where we were invited to create an artistic response or walk and then share our reflections on the experience. Sapata shared that when she walked she thought of her grandmother and others who had passed and thinking of them made her feel happy. Carolyn shared that every time she walks a labyrinth she wants to run at the end. A few people
created an artistic response and pasted it into the Coptic journal such as Dorothy’s tears (Figure 53). Dorothy’s written response with her artwork maintained the theme of the LC’s inquiry for social justice:

Our tears pool together.
Our hurts and our anger join forces.
Swirling together as super-sized raindrops.
Forming a pool that feeds a lone flower.
What is this? What is the meaning here?
Together, we can promote social justice.
We can speak out against injustice.
We can create a community that heals,
that grows and encourages,
that regenerates, that changes and makes anew.

Figure 53. Dorothy's Tears
Tina created an artistic response of a colorful labyrinth that now greets guests on the first page of the Coptic journal (Figure 54). Tina closed the evening, after everyone had shared, with the same song with which she blessed the opening. As the liminal bubble of Kairos burst, we returned to the linear reality of calendars. We all chatted about who would be at the last LC studio on Friday, May 1st and who would be at the labyrinth meditation on Saturday, May 2nd.

As we picked up the space, Carolyn accidentally spilled wax from one of the candle tea lights in a luminary onto the labyrinth. We laughed; remembering the artist of the labyrinth had told us that a labyrinth was truly blessed when wax from a ritual had been spilled on it (Figure 55).
Reading Day/World Labyrinth Day. The ritual of the labyrinth transformed the space in the student union (Figure 56 and 57):

Figure 56. The Student Union Before the Labyrinth Ritual

Figure 57. The Student Union during the Labyrinth Ritual
A dozen students and three or four faculty members, in addition to those of us from the LC who were present, walked the labyrinth to de-stress after the end of the academic year. It was a small number for a large university. We sent out campus notices and fliers, but Reading Day was traditionally quiet in the student union, and we were not allowed to set up the labyrinth until 6:00 pm, when many students, and it seemed the entire faculty, had left for the evening. But of those that did visit, most lingered 20 to 30 minutes at the art tables drawing. A few students didn’t walk the labyrinth, but did sit at the tables making artistic responses in the night while their friends walked. A few wrote comments in the Coptic journal provided as a guest book. More left images inspired from the quiet inner spaces that the labyrinth ritual of walking inward offered the participants who entered that evening.

Figure 58 reads, “The labyrinth is an opening to possibilities.” And the poem in Figure 59 begins with:

This is the imperfection of perfection.
This the broken open and undone.
This this rounding about.
Summary of Ritual in Education

The rituals experienced by the LC, and especially the blessing and sharing of the labyrinth, left us with the embodied knowing that expressive arts and sacredness might best experienced together. Mirroring what Tina said in the last LC studio, “I feel the liminal spaces in expressive arts. I feel like this is how I want to feel all the time, and because I have a lived body experience of what that feels like, I really want to keep feeling that.”
Chapter 8: Discussion and Implications

In this chapter I analyze the results of the data from the participants of a Learning Community (LC) and make connections to the research questions and conceptual framework. The participants’ insights weave a tapestry of wisdom gathered through this study. First, I review the purpose of the study and my research questions. In this qualitative research, I used the methods of interviews, observations, and arts-based methodology to understand the benefits of expressive arts for the well-being of educators. My analysis of the participants’ insight connects findings to these research questions with key concepts in the literature reviewed as well as addressing gaps within the research study. Following the analysis, I will discuss several limitations and purposeful ideas for future research.

Research Questions and the Links to the Literature

In this research study, I explored time that was experienced in education and in the liminal moments of poiesis to better understand how expressive arts might have inspired a state of well-being for educators in a university setting. The literature review of the quality of time in education and time as liminal during art-making through materials and ritual laid the groundwork for the analysis of the LC studios and the personal daily practices experienced by research participants. The research questions guided my coding process as I reviewed interviews and observations. My leading question and further questions were:
How does allowing time for attunement and attention via poiesis enhance the well-being of educational communities and those who inhabit them?

- What inspires educators to engage in poiesis?
- How do educators experience the poiesis process?
- How do research participants describe the quality of time in poiesis?
- How do the participants experience well-being through poiesis individually and in community?

The initial analysis of these questions took the form of a matrix in which I coded interview responses and studio observation by placing participants’ comments by the questions (Maxwell, 2013). In the following section I discuss the research questions as they intertwine with one another through five sections that are labeled with phrases that capture the nature of the question as it is answered. These titles are: ‘Establishing Time,’ ‘Bringing Art to the Everyday,’ ‘True Play and True Rest,’ ‘Liminality,’ and ‘Nourishment within Community’.

**Establishing Time**

Research question: How did allowing time for attunement and attention via poiesis enhance the well-being of educational communities and those who inhabited them?

This research study took place in an educational LC of eight women. The facilitator of the LC described one of her artistic practices as ‘building a creative community.’ Another shared that, within a community of educators, self-care directly involved specific things you did toward having well-being. Like the conceptual framework, her experience of well-being was relational. Unlike self-care, well-being was in conjunction with the relationships of other people. Several of the participants expressed a well-being within a community that held
similar ideals of *poiesis* that involved learning as it applied to making art with each other. Participants experienced a ‘witnessing-self’ in the presence of other ‘like-minded’ peers who were interested in exploring expressive arts. Carolyn, a professional dancer, had come to the point in her life where *poiesis* was about grounding in the artistic process, rather than the physical making of art. In a community of learners, participants witnessed the process of paying attention and the process of ‘becoming’ alongside each other.

In the literature review, the difference between time in education and time in *poiesis* was reviewed. The findings from the participants in this research study mirrored the literature in the conceptual framework on time in education, stating that it was often challenging to allow, find, or create time to step away from work for any form of personal care. Two staff members were challenged with leaving work to attend the studio since the LC was held on a Friday afternoon during work hours. It was a struggle for the few staff in my study to get away from their positions. Staff members voiced the need to seek supervisor approval and asked if they could justify the LC as ‘professional development.’ Faculty and administrators, unlike staff members, had their list of tasks to which they needed to attend but had more freedom to choose their hours. Staff members brought up the need to work extra hours to make up for the hours in the LC due to the divided classifications of faculty and administrators and staff members.

One interesting finding in the research study was the connection between time and energy. In looking at time constraints, one of my research participants eloquently spoke about time ‘as energy.’ For example, how they made time for studios depended on how the event of *poiesis* gave them a burst of energy or depleted their energy. At one point the studios became more task oriented, and several LC members communicated that the studio was no
longer nurturing. As a result, the attendance dropped. This had less to do with allowing time for the event than the energy required to complete the task. The research then moved to the next question, how does poiesis fuel energy?

**Bringing Art to the Everyday**

*Research question: What inspires educators to engage in poiesis?*

All of the research participants in this study engaged in a personal arts-based practice and explored poiesis as a community together in the LC or other communities inside or outside of the university. The interview question asked the participants why they joined the LC and provided abundant data that revealed the reasons they were inspired by the engagement of poiesis. Their comments mirrored the opinion of the conceptual framework, “…that in an educational setting, the experience of the arts can renew personal vitality (Dewey, 1934)” “… and inspire communal experiences” (Atkins et al., 2003; Levine & Levine, 2011).

Beryl’s inspiration for poiesis in community linked Dewey’s well known expression to the experience of art which is not limited to galleries (Dewey, 1934). She chose to engage in poiesis as a way to, “…push for artists’ survival, not art as elite, or art for those who are gifted, or for the rest of us to come look at.” Sapata also spoke of her inspiration for engaging in poiesis as a form of “artful living.”

While Beryl wanted to bring her art-making experiences back to the classroom, other participants spoke of their motivation to use their experience of poiesis as a way of bringing a grounded and centered sense of being back to their work environment. These two ideals linked to and aligned with the literature of phenomenology that an intentional and creative exploration of our senses leads to being fully present and engaged citizens. The study
participants confirmed that *poiesis*, or the purpose of the arts, when experienced as part of everyday living, enhances our well-being.

Turning this inquiry upon myself, as Maxwell (2013) suggests in qualitative research, “What would encourage me to have a daily art practice for my well-being?” This line of inquiry brings to the surface one of the questions at the heart of this research study, that of a sustaining practice for well-being. Participants reflected back to me my tendency to overwork endeavoring to reach perfection. Along with their example of presence because of living daily practices, I have more of a sense of balancing my doing with being.

**True Play and True Rest**

*Research question: How do educators experience the poiesis process?*

Lee, a university professor, expressed how she found the schedule of the university life confining. In contrast to the intensity of her university schedule, her daily living practices (McNiff, 1998) provided ease and calm that grounded her for her work. Hannah acknowledged that holding a space for *poiesis* prevented a feeling of being lost. *Poiesis* for Beryl was “true play and true rest,” a managing of tension through decentering from work life into an arts-based activity. Others mentioned the importance of play and the desire to focus on the process of the task rather than the product. Dorothy made the point that *poiesis* for her was a welcome non-verbal expression of herself as a respite from her teaching. Sapata shared that her painting nourished her through colors, and it embodied the pleasure of experiencing rich materials. Sapata found that teaching herself new artistic skills or, as Carolyn put it, learning new gifts through body-based practices, helped relax her.

Knill describes play as circular rather than linear (1995). Play through art-making has a cognitive and physical effect on the emotion of the participant (Knill, 2005) that can
nourish the soul and thus motivate participants to move beyond patterns of fear or resistance. Knill also described “arts as rituals of restoration” (2005, p. 111). The LC sought these rituals to nourish their well-being in the workplace.

The expressive arts rituals prescribed by the LC in this study played on the edges of Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) idea of “flow” and Lacan’s (1999) jouissance, the unpredictable that comes from losing oneself in a creative process.

**Liminality**

*Research question: How do research participants describe the quality of time in poiesis?*

The quality of time was referred to most often in the context of having experienced a ritual that included poiesis. “Poiesis happens not in accordance with intellect and will but through the experience of surrender to a process which I can neither understand nor control in advance” (Levine, 2005, p. 41). Levine describes this process as releasing to chaos. In order to let go into chaos one has to let go of linear time. There were several opportunities to experience this quality of time throughout the study. In interviews, research participants discussed how they took part in a daily practice. A daily practice that utilizes a repetitive pattern is a specific form of ritual leading to a liminal experience that has the felt sense of chaos (Turner, 1967). A daily art practice was one method the participants used to enter into the poiesis experience and then returned with a knowing that often centered them for their workday. The opening and closing ceremony of each LC was another example of how the participants of the study entered and exited liminal space. The community check-ins at the beginning of each LC studio began with a short ritual that invited the participants to enter into a period of poiesis.
In the LC studio Tina facilitated several arts-based rituals. The most powerful ritual during the course of the study was the blessing of the labyrinth that the LC made and shared with the community at large. Other arts-based rituals included painting a mural and play back theatre. Two days after the blessing of the labyrinth the LC met for their final studio and shared reflections about the quality of time as it applied to ritual. There was an experience of a slowing of time. Tina expressed a longing for more expressive arts liminal spaces or a sensation of how her body seemed to be ‘transported’ to another location altogether. The sacredness of the occasion and the holding of space for artistic response provided an embodied experience that was much slower than the normal quality of a rushed work life. Sophia spoke specifically of an embodied liminal experience that felt “spacious”, and “quiet”, with the permission “just to be” in a practice where words were shared from a non-cognitive or non-intellectual place in the mind during artistic reflections.

**Nourishment within Community**

*Research question: How do the participants experience well-being through poiesis individually and in community?*

Dorothy articulated her sense of well-being when she described how the LC allowed her to, “slow down, pause, and just be.” To just be and to just breathe were common descriptions about the state of well-being expressed during the *poiesis* process. But the state of well-being was most pronounced within a community setting. *Poiesis* offered a nurturing state through the play and magic of the creative process that Knill (2005) describes in expressive arts. Community was expressed within one of these early LC studios. Hannah captured the essence of well-being in community when she stated, “What we *did* was less important to me than the *being together.*” This was a spoken phenomenological element of
the state of being linked to presence and process (Eberhart & Atkins, 2014) in which being with and alongside one another were elements of well-being, and the process of art-making another element of well-being.

The importance of poiesis as nurturing to the state of well-being was noticed most profoundly in the absence of poiesis. When the LC decided to create a labyrinth, the artistic practices within the LC studios were ‘hijacked,’ as Beryl stated. Rather than continue to create art together, the nature of the LC studios shifted from poiesis to task managing, exemplified by the task of doing and making of the labyrinth. In the final interview almost every research participant spoke to the task of creating, and then completing, the labyrinth as the greatest challenge of the LC.

As the researcher, I created and offered an artistic response to each participant after the final interview. I was emotionally overcome through witnessing how the gift of giving a Soul Collage® could bring healing and a depth of reflection to what had been a tense ending to our community process. Gifting artistic responses became a new rendering, a new source of data. In my conversation with Irwin in the summer of 2015 she stressed several times that a/r/tography and action research are not about doing inquiry, but about living inquiry. The Soul Collage® process was a felt, embodied, and lived inquiry as the giver, and an observable embodied response from the receivers through their artistic responses to the cards as poetry and movement.

In connection to community nourishment, I learned that I hijacked the nourishing artistic practices that provided well-being for the Learning Community through my focus on the management of tasks. However, I can and did bring the poiesis back through awareness
of time as energy and ritual in community when we celebrated the offering of the labyrinth to the wider community.

**Limitations**

The results of this study were affected by several factors. The most obvious potential weakness (Creswell, 2012) was the fact that all participants were women and all but one were Caucasian. There was also a bias in the research of *poiesis* as all participants possessed a strong background in daily artistic practices and were intimately familiar with the expressive arts. The limitation of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) spiral within the LC structure will also be addressed in this section.

The original proposal of this research study was to observe an expressive arts studio for faculty and staff in a university setting, and interview faculty and staff, both male and female, who visited the studio. However, when I was invited to a Learning Community already using an expressive arts theme, I chose the benefit of a focused research group with the ability of participating in action research. The facilitator of the LC selected specific participants who she felt would both benefit from the LC and lend themselves well to the community experience.

The majority of women who were invited had previous experience within the expressive arts format. Several had included expressive arts in their professions. All but one participant in the study had taken classes in expressive arts; six held certificates in expressive arts therapy; and three (including myself) taught classes in expressive arts. Also, most of the participants were familiar with the exploration of social change. Three of the participants were social workers. It would be helpful to run another research study with participants who
are less familiar with the expressive arts in order to assess how *poiesis* can meet the needs of a broad range of faculty and staff.

As a participant of the LC I didn’t formally introduce the Participatory Action Research (PAR) spiral of dialogue as planned in my methodology. The leader of the LC facilitated this process. My role, as a researcher, was to observe and participate. The studio naturally followed the PAR spiral, but processed as a collaborative community on a set of questions that did not lead to immediate external changes of our institution. Rather, the majority of reflections were personal that may eventually lead to social change within the institution through the transformation of each individual. We shared, reflected, acknowledged patterns, discovered our mistakes, and then suggested continuing the LC. Further research is needed to continue the spiral.

**Implications**

Two implications of the study for educators are 1) finding that while hierarchy gets the task done, *poiesis* through expressive arts offers a sustainable way of being in the educational institution; and 2) finding that these exceptional women of the educational system in this study placed their attention toward balancing work and life while maintaining a career in education.

Though the research study, as well as the intention of the LC, was to focus on well-being through *poiesis*, the LC deviated from the arts-based focus when members agreed to create a labyrinth. The LC studio was displaced when I strongly encouraged the goal to complete a labyrinth by a certain date. The *poiesis* was put on hold. A hierarchy was put in place similar to an institutional structure that took over the regular arts-based practice LC studio in order to complete the project. In her final interview, Beryl, a social work professor,
analyzed the LC’s process over the year and determined that a committee was necessary to complete the task of creating the labyrinth which became the focus of the LC. The focus on finishing the labyrinth became an attachment, similar to how product equals accomplishment that satisfies bureaucratic goals. The importance of this study is the reminder to return to the creative process. Carolyn reminded me that in the creative process, similar to living a daily practice, one fails and then forgives, and starts again.

The labyrinth, and practices that are aesthetic and embodied experience, are subversive acts in a patriarchal educational institution that separates the body senses from the mind. Practitioners of expressive arts must look for cracks, invitations to show the institution an embodied experience. To educate that play through carefully crafted rituals offers forgiving non-verbal communication skills that invites clarity through non-verbal knowing processes. We can talk but it's not the same as holding a piece of clay. Embodied rituals bring tensions safely to the surface to be discussed anew. So now I look for cracks. I look for invitations.

Future research could be focused on retaining and allowing the moments of artistic practice that offer states of well-being alongside the task of completing set goals.

I became the taskmaster. Tina, the LC facilitator, followed the momentum of the community to complete the project. None of us thought to create art alongside the labyrinth project until after it was completed. Tension mounted as the LC deviated from its original arts-based format. However, upon reflection, all members were grateful for the pearl that resulted from the grit of our doing the task of making the labyrinth despite the hijacking of the arts-based process along the journey. When the task of making the labyrinth was complete, the rhythm of poiesis and ritual returned to the LC. The implication would seem to be that there is a
place for structure within educational organizations, as well as a place for liminal ritual that lends itself to a state of well-being.

Another implication of the LC process is significance of this community of women and the gifts these members have to contribute. This study offers educational institutions the example of these participants as models for living daily practices for their well-being. Even now within the New River State University, the chancellor has set the priority to support faculty and staff. For example, the Wellness Center on the University campus offers a workshop on work-life balance. This study clearly demonstrates the real struggle to make choices to practice alternative forms of care to sustain work life. The study also implies it is important to look at the nature of time as energy, encouraging educators’ personal reflection of where they are motivated to place their energy. This study implies that educators find nourishment from poiesis that fuels their work and their very being when given an opportunity. The actions and reflections of this study’s participants can be shared with administrators to ensure that the examples and opportunities become available.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The study may be especially helpful to educators in the field of expressive arts who want to further cultivate well-being and promote creative renewal through art making as a part of their daily routine. This study articulates a variety of daily arts-based practices for students and colleagues that can become a centering point for their daily work lives.

A conversation within a university between the educational leaders of sustainability, wellness tracks, and expressive arts might lead to further articulation of creative arts-based workshops that can be put in place to support faculty and staff while in the workplace. The
educational institution can be a harsh place to work, a place that hardens our being. A thriving daily practice can offer tools of sustainability that soften our being in a rigid system.

While interviewing participants, I was struck with how their offices reflected pieces of their identity at work. That may very well be another research study.

There is a place and a suggestion for an outdoor labyrinth at New River State University. It may yet become a reality.

There remains a need to examine strategies to overcome the barriers of time. The connection between time as energy can be explored further for the intention of becoming conscious of how we live our time versus what we do with our time in the work place. Time is elusive, but the use of energy matters. Educational leaders can become more conscious of how to manage their own energy through participation in a similar learning community.

Further discussion is needed about gender within expressive arts. Similar research with a learning community of males is needed in order to gain further insights and implications for well-being through poiesis in education from a masculine perspective. The majority of authors on poiesis, expressive arts and the phenomenon of learning through the body are male. I propose that women educators fill the predominately masculine structures of education and the arts. How is the masculine institution transformed by the presence of the feminine? How does the feminine not conform to the system? Rather than become more quantifiably productive, the feminine offers the perspective of becoming more sustainable through nurturing practices. The feminine can be subversive with respect to the masculine structure, and then suggest a dialogue exploring the purpose of the structure and how to maintain balance needed for well-being. There are a growing number of males in education
who are interested in expressive arts. I recommend articulation of the daily arts-based practices that support both male and female educators.

A most compelling research question leading from this study would be: What would happen if the participants of the research chose to not complete the labyrinth (or given project), not to be driven by a date, but rather, to allow the process to be left incomplete?

Finally, it is my strong recommendation and desire to continue this research of cultivating creative expression for well-being through poiesis alongside a labyrinth. I want to explore the theme of being hijacked by doing the necessary tasks of building the labyrinth, and would like to follow the research participants’ recommendation and create art alongside the creation of the labyrinth to further map the benefits of the liminal spaces within institutional places.
Epilogue

When I moved to Whidbey Island, WA I found respite in a Zen monastery after serving the homeless for 12 years. I became conscious of the desire for personal balance. I discovered two important people while I lived on Whidbey, Paulus Berensohn and Sally Atkins, which compelled me to move to North Carolina where they live. I gained knowledge from their teaching on how to implement rituals and how to share those practices with students and educators for the purpose of nurturing their well-being. During the summer, and 12 years after being in North Carolina, I returned to Whidbey Island to retreat while writing my dissertation.

Figure 60. Visiting Rita Irwin, on the left, in Vancouver, BC

While writing on Whidbey Island, I drove north to Canada a couple of hours and met with a/r/tographic researcher and writer Rita Irwin, who works at the University of British
Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada. Rita agreed to meet days before she left on her year and a half sabbatical (Figure 60). Rita told me that she planned to use her sabbatical to travel around the world in order to observe and document how different cultures articulate a/r/tography in their universities. Her comment inspired me to share how I would like to contribute to the articulation of a/r/tography in the field of expressive arts globally.

After our two-hour conversation, about a/r/tography and my dissertation, Rita suggested that I should meet an arts-based researcher, Barbara Bickel, whose dissertation also researched the participation of a group of women working in education. The following week, Barbara arrived at UBC after completing her own 6-month sabbatical in which she shared her “Nomadic Inquiry” from Illinois where she presently teaches, ending on the Spanish Banks Beach with the participants of her arts-based dissertation from 2009 (http://barbarabickelart.tumblr.com/). To close her journey they re-created a 7-circuit labyrinth on the beach similar to one they had made at the end of Barbara’s dissertation in 2009. Barbara used the momentum of the occasion to begin a new research proposal.

When we met, Barbara greeted me with friendly, sparkling blue eyes. We immediately began sharing as if we were friends picking up a conversation. I related in the same fashion with the other women present that day. The spoken consensus that day was that researchers on similar paths could meet anywhere and immediately feel a bond of community.

Barbara set up a camera on the beach to film the making and walking of the labyrinth for data to submit with a proposal for an international research project on walking (http://walkinglab.org/). I watched her document the labyrinth, and I recognized a familiar sensation of myself being deeply observant of a ritual while also participating. I immediately became a collaborative researcher, taking photos of the event. Barbara later submitted a
photo I took of her making the labyrinth with her heel along with participants from her dissertation research on Spanish Banks Beach, Vancouver, Canada (Figure 61). The photos taken that day were a reminder of the parts of us that are soothed when we step into ritual.

Figure 61. Barbara Bickel (in Blue) Drawing a Labyrinth

As my foot pulled the cool sand a shallow trench was created to form the labyrinth. My body took note of the ease and play of making this labyrinth in the medium of clay and sand compared to the tension related to the task of painting the Learning Community’s stiff canvas labyrinth in my recent research (Figure 62).

Figure 62. My Foot Marking the Lines of the Spanish Banks Beach Labyrinth
At a potluck lunch following the labyrinth walk that day, I spoke with participants of Barbara’s dissertation, many who continue to collaborate on arts-based research presentations. Since 2011 they have co-lead workshops in Rome, Puerto Rico; St. Catherines, Ontario; and Winnipeg, Manitoba. Discussion of their collaborative arts-based research connecting labyrinths and art making inspired me to continue future research on labyrinths for my own inquiry. They had created a workshop titled “Nap-Ins” that paralleled Tina’s lullaby in the October 2014 Learning Community studio (http://www.gestareartcollective.com/nap-ins.php):

Combining napping and walking the labyrinth with the reflective creative process of drawing, writing and sewing in this interactive art experience is intended to bring to light the collective awareness(es) of community. The different aspects of the artworking hold the potential to assist participants to dream and witness themselves co-poetically with/as the Other. In these processes, participants have the opportunity to step beyond personal boundaries, to re-attune with themselves and others. This work is part of a socially engaged art practice that integrates aesthetics with the ethical and the political.
The next morning, back on Whidbey, my friend Lisa Fladager, an authentic movement therapist, and I created two labyrinths on Double Bluff Beach for the purpose of practicing creating 7-circuit labyrinths using our feet (Figure 63). Double Bluff beach was a special place for me, immersed in spiritual ritual.

Making the labyrinths with my friend brought back memories of the mandala I had made on the same beach 12 years earlier in the presence of my children. I compared the photos and was struck by the similarity of these experiences. How I felt inspired me to stand in my creation as the tide came to wash it away. I reflected on how the water played with impermanence. (Figures 64). I returned to Whidbey Island to write and met a new set of teachers and a global community of arts-based researchers. Inspired, I look forward to further arts-based research exploring the materiality of play and spirituality.
Figure 64. Double Bluff 2003 and 2015
References


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doi:10.1080/07421656.2012.730954


Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval

To: Katrina Plato CAMPUS MAIL

From: Stan Aeschleman, Institutional Review Board Chairperson Date: 8/18/2014 RE:
Notice of IRB Exemption Study #: 15-0028

Study Title: Expressive Arts as a Container for Embodied Well-Being In Education
Exemption Category: (2) Anonymous Educational Tests; Surveys, Interviews or Observations

This study involves minimal risk and meets the exemption category cited above. In accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b) and University policy and procedures, the research activities described in the study materials are exempt from further IRB review.

Study Change: Proposed changes to the study require further IRB review when the change involves:
an external funding source, the potential for a conflict of interest, a change in location of the research (i.e., country, school system, off site location), the contact information for the Principal Investigator, the addition of non-Appalachian State University faculty, staff, or students to the research team, or the basis for the determination of exemption. Standard Operating Procedure #9 cites examples of changes which affect the basis of the determination of exemption on page 3.

Investigator Responsibilities: All individuals engaged in research with human participants are responsible for compliance with University policies and procedures, and IRB determinations. The Principal Investigator (PI), or Faculty Advisor if the PI is a student, is ultimately responsible for ensuring the protection of research participants; conducting sound ethical research that complies with federal regulations, University policy and procedures; and maintaining study records. The PI should review the IRB's list of PI responsibilities.

To Close the Study: When research procedures with human participants are completed, please send the Request for Closure of IRB Review form to irb@appstate.edu.
If you have any questions, please contact the Research Protections Office at (828) 262-2692 (Robin).
Best wishes with your research.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Office of Research Protections ASU Box 32068 Boone, NC 28608 828.262.2130
Appendix B: Research Lay Summary

You are being invited to participate in a qualitative study for my dissertation. The study is with educational leaders, specifically administrators, faculty members, and staff exploring how daily practices and expressive arts studio practices, such as drawing, painting, music, or movement benefit and facilitate the imagination while nurturing a sense of well-being. This study continues my inquiry in a reflective artistic process that offers the potential to awaken the imagination and change the way we feel and think, facilitating a balance between demands at work and emotional and mental health.

I am asking you to participate because you are a faculty member, staff, or administrator in an educational setting who has agreed to participate in the learning community: *Expressive Arts toward Self and Community Well-Being*. I hope to interview each participant once, for no more than an hour. I also welcome any visual art or other documented art material that you are comfortable sharing for this study.

Through your participation in this study, I hope you experience several benefits. Our interviews about your well-being will offer you opportunity to reflect on your own practices. There may be no personal benefit from your participation, however the information from this research may help others in the future by indicating how an artistic practice serves or does not serve educational leaders. A risk in getting involved with this research study is that you may find the expressive arts process challenging. You may struggle with self-judgments about visually or musically representing your inner thoughts or ideas. While recognizing our human tendencies for self-criticism we will attempt to minimize these critical voices in order to open spaces for our imaginative playful voices.

Your agreement to be part of this study is held in confidence. The information you share will be kept confidential by replacing your name with a pseudonym that you choose in the learning community. My dissertation committee and I will be the only ones who have access to the data collected for this study. The interviews are voluntary and you can end the study at any time without consequence.

I will take extensive notes and audio record our interview session and the learning community meetings. I will take photos for documentation of any artwork you are comfortable putting in my study report. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When I write up the study to share with others, I will write about the combined information.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me at 828-385-2536 or email me at platok@appstate.edu if you have questions or concerns. You may also contact Dr. Karen Caldwell, my dissertation committee chair, at caldwellkaren@appstate.edu or 828 262 6045.

*Katrina Plato*
Appendix C: Consent to Participate in Research

Study #: 15-0028

Title of Research Study:
Expressive Arts as a Container for Embodied Well-Being In Education
Principal Investigator: Katrina Plato
Department: Educational Leadership
Contact Information: Principal Investigator-Katrina Plato
200 Councill Street
Boone, NC 28607
828-385-2536
platok@appstate.edu

Faculty Advisor- Karen Caldwell
RCOE- Boone, NC
828-262-6045
caldwellkaren@appstate.edu

Consent to Participate in Research: Information to Consider About this Research

You are being invited to participate in a qualitative study for my dissertation about daily practices and expressive arts studio practices, such as drawing, painting, music, or movement. I am interested in how these practices might benefit and facilitate the imagination of educational leaders, specifically administrators, faculty members, and staff.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are a faculty member, staff or administrator in an educational setting who has agreed to participate in the Expressive Arts Studio. The studio will be open in the College of Education in the 2014-15 academic year every Friday afternoon for three hours. You will be interviewed twice, for no more than one hour each interview. We will set an alternate place convenient to you for one interview at the beginning of your involvement in the studio and one toward the end of your involvement.
I will take notes of informal conversations within the expressive arts studio. You will be invited to participate in a daily artistic practice between studio visits.

There may be no personal benefit from participation in this research, however the information from this research may help others in the future by describing how an artistic practice helps or does not help educational leaders. Our interviews about your well-being
may offer you opportunity to reflect on your own practices. Also, this study may contribute to the well-being of yourself and the educational community where you work. To the best of our knowledge, there are no foreseeable risks from participating in the research.

Your agreement to be part of this study is held in confidence. The information you share will be kept confidential by replacing your name with a pseudonym that you choose.

Your interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. Some of your artistic expressions created in the studio or through your daily practice may be captured through a photograph or video recording (such as for a movement piece). Recordings, transcripts, and photographs will be kept safely on password-protected computer files. I will destroy the recordings after the research is compiled, within three years of the studies closure.

You will receive no compensation for the interviews.

I will be available to answer questions concerning the research now or in the future. You can contact me, the Principal Investigator, at 828-385-2536 or email me at platok@appstate.edu, or my advisor, Dr. Karen Caldwell at 828-262-6045 or email at caldwellkaren@appstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, contact Appalachian State University’s Office of Research Protections at (828) 262-2692 or irb@appstate.edu.

It is important you understand that the interviews and sharing of artwork are voluntary and you can end your participation at any time without consequence. You may withdraw from the research procedures with no consequence or effect on your ongoing participation in the expressive arts studio.

Appalachian State University's Institutional Review Board has determined this study to be exempt from IRB oversight.

If you agree to this research please show your consent by checking the boxes below and then print and sign your name.

. You have read (or had read to you) all of the above information.
. You have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research you did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
. You are willing to participate in conversations within the expressive arts studio.
. You are willing to participate in interviews.
. You are willing to have photos of your artwork included in the research.
[If applicable] Photography and Video Recording Authorization

With your permission, still pictures (photos) and/or video recordings taken during the study may be used in research presentations of the research findings. Please indicate whether or not you agree to having photos or videos used in research presentations by reviewing the authorization below and signing if you agree.

Authorization

I hereby release, discharge and agree to save harmless Appalachian State University, its successors, assigns, officers, employees or agents, any person(s) or corporation(s) for whom it might be acting, and any firm publishing and/or distributing any photograph or video footage produced as part of this research, in whole or in part, as a finished product, from and against any liability as a result of any distortion, blurring, alteration, visual or auditory illusion, or use in composite form, either intentionally or otherwise, that may occur or be produced in the recording, processing, reproduction, publication or distribution of any photograph, videotape, or interview, even should the same subject me to ridicule, scandal, reproach, scorn or indignity. I hereby agree that the photographs and video footage may be used under the conditions stated herein without blurring my identifying characteristics.

____________________________________
Participant's Name (PRINT)  Participant Signature  Date

____________________________________
Name of Interviewee (PRINT)  Interviewee Signature  Date
Appendix D: Interview Questions

5/1/15

1. I would like to understand the nature of your work in education. Please describe your responsibilities at your place of work.

2. If I were to visit you over the course of a week, what are some of the ways I would witness you finding a balance from work in your days? Please list practices you do outside of work.

3. If you were to begin a reflective artistic practice what would it be? How much time do you intend to give to your daily practice? (At the end of the study the question was asked): How much time did you give to your artistic practice?

4. What challenges or benefits do you anticipate in keeping an arts-based practice for several months? (At the end of the study the question was asked again): What challenges or benefits did you experience in keeping an arts-based practice for several months?

5. In this study you are a participant of an expressive arts studio. What drew you to participate in this expressive arts studio? (At the end of the study the question was asked): What challenges or benefits did you experience in the arts-based practices within our Learning Community throughout your time in the studio?

6. How do you define self-care? And, how do you define well-being?

7. At the end of the study I asked as a member check: What themes did you witness emerging over our time together? Please give honest feedback on the themes of: Quality of time/ time as precious/ time for task oriented duties/ making art/ social action

8. At the end of the study the question was asked: What metaphor would you give for the expressive arts learning community? And, what metaphor would you give for yourself within the experience of being in the expressive arts learning community?
Vita

Katrina Plato has lived a life of service through the arts in education and therapy. Katrina graduated, Magna Cum Laude, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art from Whitworth University in 1985. Katrina began teaching art in a center for troubled children and a shelter for homeless women and children after graduation. In 1986, Katrina was employed as an art teacher for emotionally disturbed children while earning a certificate in Art Psychotherapy, which she received in 1991. Katrina received her Art Therapy registration in 1992. From 1986 to 1998, Katrina worked and lived in community with homeless families within the Catholic Worker movement serving at a shelter in St. Louis, MO and long term housing on a farm in Chehalis, WA.

In 2003, Katrina began teaching art in the public schools of Mitchell County, North Carolina. Katrina developed an art therapy program for public school children and taught Middle School art while earning a Master of Arts in Teaching, Suma Cum Laude, from Western Carolina University in 2010. Katrina earned her certificate in Expressive Arts Therapy and her Ed.D in Educational Leadership, Suma Cum Laude, from Appalachian State University in 2015.