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The Arts and Aging Well: Professional Artists Working in Long Term Care

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Mary Lou was an art student, but she was no more usual—or unusual—than any other senior. Each individual faced his or her unique challenges. Like many, she was confined to a wheelchair, and was pushed wherever she was supposed to go. Her soft whisper of a voice rarely indicated a preference as to whether she wished to sit in the hallway, go back to her room, or rest in the activity room where an artist came to teach painting once a week. Mary Lou had never painted, to anyone's knowledge. The first time an aide wheeled her into the art class and then left, one of the seniors remarked to the artist, "You'd better watch her! She'll have everything pulled on the floor in a minute."

Under the watchful eye of a recruited aide, Mary Lou began making vertical lines, slowly and cautiously, her mouth open in concentration in the way that young children do when they focus on learning a new skill. Upon completion, the aide wanted to know what the painting was. "What did you paint? Is it that bag over there with the stripes? Is that what you've been painting, Mary Lou?" Mary Lou nodded slowly, aware that she was being addressed.

"Look!" the aide called out to the instructor. "Look what Mary Lou did! Mary Lou painted that bag over there!"

Whether she cognitively recognized the bag across the room and decided to use it as her painting's inspiration was unclear, but the effect of the aide's comments and the subsequent engagement with the painting instructor changed Mary Lou's involvement in the painting class after that.

Yet, not all aides in this large facility knew about Mary Lou's sudden interest in painting. On one occasion, an aide wheeled her out of the room into the hall when the painting session began. The art instructor noticed this, and went out to find her sitting in the hallway, a tear trickling down her cheek. When he bent down beside her to ask what was wrong, Mary Lou whispered, "I want to paint."

Figure 1. Mary Lou's first painting

I begin with this story because it encapsulates the caring and attention of an art instructor as well as illustrating the glimmer of self-direction that surfaced in Mary Lou's quiet resolve to attend class. Mary Lou benefitted from the art teacher's recognition that she had ability that was worth cultivation (Figure 1). In the following section, I explore some of the literature related to senior health and the arts. While the authors cited are not always in the arts, their viewpoints extend our vision of what might happen if the arts had a more substantial foothold in senior care. Following this, I discuss the common characteristics of effective teaching that emerged in two artists I studied, and suggest how similar instruction for the elderly might contribute to a picture of creative aging.

Background

Gene Cohen, Gerontologist and Director of the Center for Aging, Health and Humanities at George Washington University, has studied aging and the human brain for several decades.

After interviewing thousands between the ages of 50-100 (Cohen, 2005), and implementing a large-scale study comparing a control group that pursued occasional leisure time activities with other seniors who attended regular art sessions, he concluded that creative growth was essential for continued physical and psychological health. For example, activities that stimulated the mind such as regularly singing in a choir reduced stress and promoted a physical response that decreased pain associated with chronic infections. He noted a faster recovery response to injury and an increased probability of lifelong learning, as cited in exit questionnaires.

Teaching and Elder-Arts

In community arts education, knowledge about teaching a senior population has been a slowly developing field (Barrett, 1993; Hoffman, Greenberg & Fitzner, 1980; La Porte, 2004). Arts education in the form of community college course work, Elderhostel, crafts, drama, and dance experiences have confirmed that continual creative growth in the latter decades of life is not only possible but desirable (Blandy, 1991; La Porte, Callison, & Walters, 2009; Schmid, 2005; Weisberg & Wilder, 2001). What some arts educators bring to this expanding field of research is their knowledge about how adults learn (Brookfield, 1994; Knowles, 1989; Koch, 1978). In addition, other professionals at elder assisted-care facilities often have very useful program goals embedded in the arts they offer. For example, a greater range of motion might be encouraged through manipulation of materials; cognitive recall could be a goal of an art lesson continued over several sessions, and so on.

The Arts and Aging Organization (2007) provides clear evidence that the upcoming generation of Baby Boomers will live longer and have the potential to lead active, productive lives in their final decades. The current demographics suggest that aging Americans appear to be more educated and diverse than ever before in history. Research is needed, however, that will generate ways of teaching elders, particularly in the arts, so that they can continue to create in the face of challenging life circumstances.

The Research Design for this Study

This inquiry was designed to examine how professional artists teach their content areas within the confines of two facilities for long-term care. Arts courses (salsa and painting) were developed by the artists to meet the challenges of a disabled and older population with health restrictions, a limited range of motion that frequently included wheelchairs, and differing degrees of cognitive impairment. Each of twelve class sessions for salsa and also for painting lasted for

one hour, and occurred over a four-month time period. The artists were selected because of their prior interest and experience working with disabled populations and for their ability to creatively use the materials at hand—qualities that appear essential in artists who teach (Bresler, DeStefano, & Feldman, 2000).[1]

When informed about the courses through posters and the daily activity calendars, residents and family members attended voluntarily. Sometimes the number exceeded 20 participants in salsa, but more frequently the class size was between 10 and 20 in each class session. While originally in the research design I hoped for consistency and commitment from the residents regarding attendance, given their health issues this was not possible. Instead, new attendees joined the groups periodically and the instructors reviewed content and strategies as needed for absentees.

Methods and Analysis

Twice weekly at each location, the data collection included: observational notes and video footage that detailed instruction; still photographs of the residents' artwork and sometimes their dancing; and taped interviews with the two instructors following their teaching sessions. At the end of the courses, exit questionnaires were given to family members, residents, and caregivers to better understand how the artists' instruction had altered the quality of life for the seniors. The analysis of the data noted any changes in teaching throughout the courses, (attitudes toward students, reflective practices, beliefs about their ability to teach) as well as the perceived impact of the classes on the residents' overall quality of life. Findings were coded according to the emerging themes.

While each residency had its own particular flavor, spiced by its caregivers and residents, my research focus was not a site comparison, since their differences varied widely (e.g.: population size, management style, availability of help). Rather, I concentrated instead on the artists' instruction and the effect it had on the residents. In this way, I could clearly attend to how they addressed the uniqueness of each situation with ingenuity and compassion, and sometimes also with frustration and/or fatigue.

Themes Emerging in Instruction

One of the themes that emerged very early in both courses was the clear distinction each professional artist made that their sessions were meant to be learning opportunities rather than entertainment. The salsa instructor stressed participation and encouraged those in wheelchairs to

move "in whatever way is comfortable," even if it was just "in their minds," he wanted them to engage actively with each dance (Figure 2). He emphasized that the residents would learn to differentiate between rhythms, to recognize a few simple steps, and to gain knowledge about Latino culture that he shared with them. Repetition, asking questions for recall, and praise for the effort of participating were all evident in his teaching. In painting, the artist encouraged all participants to create despite their hesitancy about a lack of experience or their qualms about their ability. "Put two colors on the paper—then we have something to talk about," he would say frequently. It was a challenge to change lifelong impressions in some (residents, caregivers, and family members) who expressed their inadequacy in either art form. However, part of effective instruction seemed to involve how the artists engaged the participation of personnel and family members who became a vital part of the effectiveness in the learning environment.

Figure 2. Salsa instructor, Julio Barrenzuela dances with a resident.

As the course progressed, each instructor became aware that goals for the participants needed to change if learning was to occur. In salsa instruction, the challenge became one of modifying delivery to accommodate a big group. His strategy was to teach the personnel to dance so that residents would receive more individual instruction. In painting, the significant goal-changing moment occurred when the instructor realized that he had to “let go” of his expectations regarding outcomes. Each subsequent session became more relaxed as residents experimented with a language of expression that they could master with acrylic paint. Sometimes this meant that an aide worked with the residents and suggested ideas the artist did not (coloring books, painting inside outlines). Over time, this level of comfort with actions outside of his control in the course appeared to encourage residents to apply their growing skills in expansive ways (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Art instructor, Steve Fessler, advises a resident on her painting.

Another observable characteristic in each artist's teaching included the ability to joke with the residents in an easy back-and-forth bantering. Their ability to mentor with empathy and humor often transformed a serious group into one that enjoyed—and richly remarked—on their own foibles. Further analysis of the data revealed several common qualities in both instructors: respect for the individuals and their innate capacity to learn; flexible goal setting that was site specific; a consistency in the artistic ideas they presented in the course; and the ability to learn from their own reflections. Wilcox (2009) shared that learning about how to teach only develops through a critical blend of questioning one's self as a teacher, the values and beliefs that become exposed, and the expectations in the teaching situation. This leads to a shift in perception about teaching and interacting with students. Sarason (1999) explored the role of the teacher as a messy one: a performer who must coach, manage the environment, and cope with the unprecedented, unexpected outcomes. The teacher, as the performing artist, attempts to " instruct and move an audience" (p. 48)—and this includes the mysterious way that a professional has of uniting the student's sense of self with subject matter. In this case, both artists found that by adapting what they set out as instructional goals, the art form became the vehicle for strong, positive relationships. In Wilcox's (2009) analysis, she describes the transformative process as "cognitive and rational, but it may also incorporate imagination, intuition, affect and soul-work." It is accomplished in dialogue, but is also "self-directed and voluntary" (p. 124).

Affective Gains as Indicated by Seniors and their Caregivers

Survey results among residents were favorable for both arts courses. When asked if the experiences were beneficial, 80% responded yes, and indicated that they would apply what they had learned in future exercise classes or other crafts courses that used similar skills. The fact that the seniors were already envisioning future applications of their skills, either painting or moving, was extremely encouraging. Perceiving the salsa dancing as an art form was challenging for many. The seniors recorded that they valued salsa for the exercise and the entertainment, whether they felt able to do the dances or not. The key ideas expressed about painting were the delight in self-expression and learning how to mix color.

Among caregivers and family members, the responses indicated that they valued this opportunity for the residents because it offered the chance to improve their range of motion, brought joy and creativity into everyone's lives, relaxation, physical therapy, personal exploration and other health benefits. When asked to comment on the potential that this kind of

programming can have for long term care centers, the caregivers indicated that the residents seemed to come out more and participate for these courses, and that the classes enticed them to move, even use their upper extremities with a greater range of motion. More courses like these would encourage greater mind-body health. One individual commented that the “reaction of the participants made her feel great that such positive programs could be offered in rehab.” She also noted that residents discussed the courses throughout the week. A family member commented happily that “it made the residents feel important—that they can still do things they enjoy,” which is a vital part of aging well.

Several caregivers responded that future funding was critical to keep new programs going. The benefits they saw in having funding specific for long term care were that something could be tailored that was “age appropriate for the setting” and would be “something very special to look forward to weekly.” One caregiver cited the *New England Journal of Medicine*, eloquently stating that a NEJM study found that “dancing can reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia in the elderly, dancing can also increase the blood flow to the brain, and the social aspect of activity leads to less stress, depression, and loneliness,” all factors confirmed in Cohen’s (2000, 2005) research on the arts and healthy aging. The same caregiver also commented that painting has the capacity “to change your life by giving you confidence you didn’t know you possessed, as well as a greater awareness of the world around you.”

The Future of Research for Arts and Aging

Even though the exit surveys were indicative of some successes, modifications for future inquiries with artists and long-term care residents are implied. First, course designs seem more effective when there is a limit on group size. The interpersonal nature of teaching and learning is greatly aided when instructors can recall names and personal stories of their students. Second, caregivers—who are a vital part of the success of an educational endeavor—would benefit from a brief introduction to the courses, the potential gains of learning an art form, and knowledge about what the artist will do. The fact that neither of the artists considered the courses as entertainment was a viewpoint that caregivers and families did not always notice, or share. An introduction regarding the benefits of arts inclusion in long-term settings could create greater advocacy within the long-term care setting. When artists are able to contribute their time to developing strong courses, their programs seem to engender a sense of vibrancy and anticipation, one that is healing and empowering. In rehabilitation settings, it is essential to be cognizant that

the effects of mental and physical illness that may prohibit or slow the ability for the elders to be proactive about their health needs. Caregivers, families, and arts instructors therefore need to advocate for the inclusion of mentally and physically interesting challenges for elders in all stages of long-term care. Elders can have the resiliency to bounce back and become engaged in life through the arts. There is a growing segment of the population who expects and anticipates that life is—and will be—rewarding.

Wexler (2009) states in *Art and Disability* that we are fragile beings, and the arts help create a survival program so that all individuals can make sense of their experiences. Isolation and social marginalization do not readily create opportunities to explore the sensory or community dimensions of our lives. When a person's world is limited in choices, or by a disability, the things that unfold in experience seem out of one's control—they just happen. When the ability to rely on one's body diminishes, so does balance, physically and psychically. Making art or participating in an art form such as dance can restore one's relationship to the world.

Wexler (2009) says:

> When art is made under compelling conditions, it strengthens the structure of self and creates a world, if only for a moment, outside the reach of external forces that thwart personal development. Self and environment are interdependent and each must be recognized as intrinsic and holistically dealt with in art making (p. 17).

If an arts program is to be sustainable in long-term care facilities for seniors, the individual feeling of accomplishment, supportive social relationships, and creative opportunities with option that each person can control need to be part of education in the arts.

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Enhanced Teacher Preparation Through Intergenerational-Based Service-Learning

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In 2007, a high school art teacher developed an intergenerational experience for students in her Photography II course. The idea to have her students spend time with residents in a retirement home came from her experiences as an undergraduate art education student at James Madison University. In the photography course, her students spend time getting to know the residents they are paired with, before taking their portraits. Finished portraits are displayed in the retirement community and given to the residents as gifts. The portrait project is more than just a photography assignment, it is an opportunity for students to move beyond the classroom and interact with the community. The teacher stated:

> This project with the residents always reminds me that photography means something special to people. I look at hundreds of photographs a week and they just stare back at me and become work and things-to-grade. Seeing the residents get their photographs of themselves, they feel honored and beautiful. It reminds everyone that art is greater than us.

Like most teacher licensure programs, our students at James Madison University are required to participate in practicum experiences in public school settings. Initiated by a faculty member's commitment to lifelong learning, we began to ask; how can art education programs make the experience of learning how to teach meaningful, and reach beyond observations of classroom management, lesson plan writing, and discussions of art education literature? The answer came in expanding practicum experiences to include intergenerational service learning through collaboration with a local retirement community.

Changing Demographics

The reality of a growing aged population for U.S. and global demographics has never been more apparent. According to the Department of Health and Human Services,

Administration on Aging (2010), "persons 65 years or older numbered 39.6 million in 2009…. They represented 12.9% of the U.S. population, about one in every eight Americans. By 2030, there will be about 72.1 million older persons, more than twice their number in 2000" (p. 1). Based on the projected growth of older persons, the need for lifelong learning opportunities can impact educational initiatives at all levels. We should consider this significant change in demographics as a call to the field of art education to continue examining the ways in which we can reach out to older persons through meaningful art instruction to enhance both their quality of life and ours.

Intergenerational Art Making

In 2001, a need for art education students to work with the elderly at a local retirement home was established. The retirement community already had opportunities for residents to participate in make-and-take arts and crafts sessions. In contrast to typical pre-designed crafts, a program was designed to provide a service learning experience where art education students and residents collaborated through art making in meaningful ways. Our goal was to promote the idea and practice of lifelong learning thorough an intergenerational arts-based program. This goal aligns with calls for universities to broaden their outreach to outside communities (Seedsman, 2007).

Intergenerational is a term that can be used to describe two groups of people from different generations interacting together. In this case, our use of the term, intergenerational, refers to young adults working with senior citizens. Although the majority of intergenerational research is conducted in the fields of gerontology and sociology, research in intergenerational experiences or programs exists in art education (La Porte, 2003). Structured intergenerational arts-based experiences have been recognized as a valued component for learning and growth

(Alexenberg & Benjamin, 2004; La Porte, 2002; Sickler-Voigt, 2010; Stokrocki, 1988; Streitfield, 1976).

For both students and the elderly, intergenerational programs build social relationships and break down stereotypes of the young and the old (Cohen, 2006; Hopkins, 2000). Sherman (2006) describes the benefits of the arts for the elderly: “For older adults, the arts are often a language for communicating new ideas and acquiring new technical and interpretive skills. They help develop new ways of seeing, knowing, and experiencing…the arts can help express the complex essential issues of aging” (p. 43). Heydon (2007) suggested positive outcomes stemming from intergenerational arts-based programs, including language and literacy learning. Literature on intergenerational experiences (Heydon, 2007; Stokrocki, 1988) and service learning in the arts (Russell & Hutzel, 2007; Taylor & Ballengee-Morris, 2004; Taylor, 2002, 2005) are present independently, and rarely within the same context. Studies that combine intergenerational arts-based experiences feature children and the elderly (Sickler-Voigt, 2010) or studio art students and the elderly (Alexenberg & Benjamin, 2004). This program is unique in that it brings together pre-service teachers and the elderly through art making, a topic that is limited within art education literature.

Service Learning and Teacher Preparation

For years institutions of higher education have been pursuing ways to extend their institutional mission, enhance student achievement, and increase student involvement in the community (Bringle and Hatcher, 2009; Felten and Clayton, 2011). Service learning is viewed as an innovative component in many areas of higher education including teacher preparation. The outcomes of service learning are in line with teacher training designed around the needs of 21st century schooling (Milbrandt, 2006). Research studies of service learning experiences in an

arts education context have encouraged changes in curriculum and associated practices (Buffington, 2007; Hutzel, K., Russell, R., & Gross, J., 2010; Innella, 2010; Krensky & Steffen, 2008; Russell & Hutzel, 2007; Taylor, 2002, 2005; Taylor & Ballengee-Morris, 2004).

We agree with the definition of service learning based on guidelines developed by the Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform, in which, Kraft (2000) explained that service learning is a recognized method of learning that results in students actively engaging with their community through collaborative processes. As an embedded part of the curriculum, service learning significantly builds upon the following student-centered experiences: meeting specific needs of the community, authentic processes of self-reflection, experiencing real-world situations, and, developing a caring sense for others. Similarly, Bringle and Hatcher (1995) define service learning as:

> a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 112)

Our intergenerational program fulfills the definition of service learning in the following ways. First, a need for art experiences in the retirement community was identified through contact with the activities coordinator of the retirement community. The retirement community includes a thriving group of residents who desire to spend time expanding their art experiences. The budget for activities in the visual arts does not allow hiring artists to teach in the retirement community on a regular basis. The need for free art instruction from persons skilled in studio practice made the collaboration an ideal match. Second, the program is collaborative. Each

semester begins with a social gathering in which students and residents negotiate what they will work on together. Third, students participate in teaching at the retirement community through the secondary methods of art education practicum, which is a credit-bearing course that all art education students are required to fulfill.

Reflection on the experience builds throughout the entire course. Students begin by identifying and recording their preconceptions and biases of the elderly, before ever entering the retirement community. Class discussions and written journals occur frequently during the semester. The course culminates with a final reflection documenting what students learned through the experience of teaching at the retirement community. Final reflections direct students to comment on what they learned that is applicable to all teaching settings as well as the greatest achievements and challenges they experienced. Through these questions students connect their reflections to the discipline of art education, course content, and civic responsibility.

The Retirement Communities and Classes

The setting selected in 2001 is a large, residential retirement community. The retirement community provides living space and a range of care options for over 800 residents. Residents live unassisted, in need of some assistance, or under full-time care. Some residents are designated as memory-care, which means they suffer from Alzheimer's and/or Dementia. The retirement community has two spaces dedicated to art activities. Class sizes vary each week due to residents' personal commitments and activity choices. A stable core of six women, who have participated in every art class we have offered for eleven years, provides a needed sense of dedication and consistency.

There is an average of 12 art education students each semester, who are divided into pairs. Each student pair teaches four consecutive classes. The retirement community consists of 12-18

residents participating each week in two activity rooms. Every semester the program is carried out over fifteen weeks. For the art sessions, art education students are required to organize and maintain the supplies, dedicate themselves to all processes of instruction, including set up and clean up, and demonstrate the sort of professional behavior expected of all students in the art education program. The retirement community or the university art education center purchases all of the supplies.

Components of the Intergenerational Program

The first day of class for the art education students begins with the usual student introductions and syllabi. It is during this time that students learn they will be working with the elderly as part of the course. After explaining to the class that they will be teaching art activities to senior citizens, we collect the students' first impressions of the program and record any biases they have before they learn more about the elderly. The students write responses to several questions addressing their preconceived ideas of the elderly and how they imagine the experience of teaching art to senior citizens will be, such as;

- Describe what you imagine the residents will be like?
- How do you think they will respond to your artwork?
- What stereotypes of the elderly do you have?
- What experiences have you had with the elderly?
- Have you spent time in a retirement community or nursing home? What was it like?

The following responses to the initial reflection, taken from twelve students enrolled in secondary methods, spring semester, 2010, are typical of the comments we have read from students repeatedly over the past 11 years.

Students responded to the question concerning what stereotypes they had of the elderly or retirement communities in different ways. One student suggested that the elderly were "disabled, slow, and not fun." A second expressed that "they are old, dependant, rich, and have poor memory." A third student responded that "they are either old and accept it and are happy, or, they are unhappy and make it known." Another student anticipated that retirement homes "are always hot and there is usually a strict schedule."

When asking students how they imagined the residents would be, one student thought that "they will appreciate our time and help, but some won't want to do the activities." A second student believed that "they will be very excited to try new things and become involved in art." A third student predicted that the residents "might not like being told what to do." A fourth student thought that the residents would probably "not connect well with the art or will not be interested in its deeper significance. They may even be offended by some of my work."

After collecting the written responses and conducting informal discussions about their experiences with the elderly, but before the students are introduced to the elderly population with whom they will be working, a multiple-choice quiz addressing stereotypes of the elderly is administered to the students. *The Facts on Aging Quiz* (Palmore, 1977) enabled students to formally address previously held beliefs and misperceptions about the elderly. In this particular semester, it was interesting to observe students realizing such facts as "elderly people do not tend to become more religious as they age," that "the majority of elderly people say they are seldom irritated or angry," or "that aged drivers actually have fewer accidents per driver than those under age 65." Taking the quiz often results in raising students' awareness of the concept of ageism. Finally, students read *Conceptualising Practice with Older People: Friendship and Conversation* (Carter & Everitt, 1998). Carter and Everitt stressed that a "conversational" method of

implementation of program offerings resulted in programs being experienced as neither "therapy" nor "activity" in contrast to lessons implementing "make and take" (p. 95) type projects.

The first time the students enter the community, they see the facilities and meet the residents at a meet-and-greet social event the second week of the semester. The students and residents bring examples of their own artwork and ideas of materials or processes they are interested in teaching and learning. Introductions of all participants are made, and the students and residents have time to share their artwork and discuss what they will work on together during the subsequent twelve weeks.

The program then shifts to teaching art skills, images, and materials to the residents. The twelve weeks of studio production are divided into three, four-week sessions. Each session is lead by two students, one in each activity room, with all residents who wish to participate. In addition to demonstrating artistic processes and skills the students assist residents and share art images. Students are asked to bring at least one artwork or image to each session they teach. The images serve as a way to start conversations with the residents and build social relationships, as well as to increase the resident's visual literacy. At the end of the twelve weeks of studio production the semester concludes with an art exhibition of all work that was made by the elderly with the student teachers. The retirement community hosts the exhibition for the artists, students and any other residents who wish to come. The students and residents share moments of reflection on what was created in the sessions and bring closure to the social relationships that were forged through art making. In total, for the fifteen weeks of the program each student will have spent a minimum of six hours with the residents. Some students have volunteered their own time to return to the retirement community to visit residents they have bonded with, to help

residents work on projects outside of the organized sessions, or to volunteer in other capacities after the art education program has ended.

Reflective Journals

Use of self-reflective journals by pre-service students during their practicum fieldwork is an effective assessment tool, and a means for actively addressing the complex issues which pre-service students face as they progress through art education coursework (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995; Molee, Henry, Sessa, & McKinney-Prupis, 2010; Ross, 2012; Taylor & Ballengee-Morris, 2004; Zimmerman, 1994). In, *Assessing Learning in Service-Learning Courses Through Critical Reflection*, Molee et al. (2010) describe the DEAL model of critical reflection. The acronym DEAL comes from the three steps of the reflection process, which are Describe, Examine, and Articulate Learning. The three-step reflection process of the DEAL model moves students from describing their experience to explaining its relationship to course objectives and finally to articulating what has been learned. DEAL model reflections should include reflections on academic advancement, personal growth and civic engagement. In the art education classroom at the university, students are engaged in discussions about the art sessions at the retirement home at least every other week. Beyond the informal class discussions, students complete a minimum of three formal journal activities. The first journal entry is recorded before going to the retirement community, followed by a reflection at mid-term. Final reflections are submitted at the end of the experience. The journals and discussions cover all three areas of the DEAL model of critical reflection.

Program Effectiveness

To determine the meaning and value of the program in the minds of the participants after eleven years of collaborating with the retirement community, we analyzed student reflective

journals, interviewed residents who had participated for more than one year, and interviewed staff at the retirement community. Common themes in what students documented they learned from the experience, what residents appreciated about the art classes, and staff member's views of the program provide evidence that the program has positive impacts on both students and residents.

The service learning experience with the elderly residents resulted in many students speaking positively about their forming teacher identity. Common themes in student journals responses related to teaching include:

- Increased level of patience when working with others
- Learner motivation and encouragement
- Recognizing individual needs
- Lesson presentation

When asked how working with the residents informed their actual art teaching practice, one student responded, "its helped me retain an open mind and to not forget that no matter the age group, everyone in that group is different and will approach art individually and with different personalities." Another remarked, "now I want to be more involved with my students and speak to them about what their making." A third student realized that "it reminded me that everyone is at a different level in terms of visualizing, planning, and creating. It reminded me that some people need extra attention and motivation in order to get started." Students also found that their work with the residents taught them "not to be quick to judge student ability" and enabled them to recognize that "they may have to reiterate processes multiple times before its understood" or that "different students have different needs."

One question we asked the art education students was, what did you feel was the most valuable aspect of making art with senior citizens? Many students responded about learning practical teaching skills like the comments quoted above. Because they are art education students their thinking was focused mainly on the practical applications of their learning. A few students responded with thoughts about what they and the residents gained from the experience, such as pride. For example, "[the residents] got to create things they could be proud of and enjoy making." Another student valued the changes in the residents through the sessions: "It was great showing them that they could still make art at an older age. Many times some of them would say 'I am too old to make that' but once they finished they were proud of themselves."

The most common student response related to social aspects of the experience is that they enjoyed the companionship more than the art making. The most valuable aspect of the experience for one student was "learning the background stories of the senior citizens, and interacting with them as they created art pieces." Students also commented on the residents enjoying the personal relationships. For example, one student responded:

> The most valuable thing I learned from [the retirement center] was that learning is a lifelong process and art is a great way to reconnect to memories and to form new friendships. I was impressed with the openness to new ideas. The art making was not the most important part, but instead the stories that the residents told and our friendship through art making. I also learned that anyone, at any age, can learn from someone else.

Staff and Residents' Perspectives

Residents who have participated in the art classes for more than one year were asked to participate in an interview about their experiences in the classes. From the ten residents in the class in 2010, only three consented to participate in an interview. All ten residents continued to

participate in the classes for the semester. The three residents who participated in the survey were asked how long they had participated in the university art classes, what types of art making experiences they had in their lifetime, and what the feel is most valuable about the art classes with university students.

We learned that residents had limited access to art instruction as children but had many personal art making experiences including traditional crafts such as quilting as well as fine art practice, like painting. All three residents who were surveyed had participated in the classes for at least four years. When asked what she valued about working with the university students, one resident talked about different projects and liking to try new things. As she talked she clarified what she likes about the program. She said, “I enjoy trying to make new things and doing a little bit of our own thinking, what we are going to do with it and making them different.” The resident went on to talk about enjoying having the freedom to make decisions about her own artwork as opposed to having to complete tasks similar to the way art activities are presented in the retirement center when the university students are not teaching.

A second resident spoke about appreciating learning new skills and spending time with the students. She commented, “I sort of feel like they are my granddaughters…. I mean it is just the little things they say that is [*sic*] wonderful.” While the number of residents willing to be interviewed was low, we view the fact that the rest continue to come the art classes every year as an indication that the classes have a positive impact.

In addition to the opinions of the students and residents participating in the classes, we wanted to know how the activities staff members at the retirement community perceived the program. Two retirement center staff members were interviewed to gain a better perspective on how the intergenerational arts-based program impacted both themselves and the residents. The

activities coordinator stated that the program's direct effect on building the residents' self esteem, combined with an opportunity for them to connect with our students, is beneficial. She also suggested that the program breaks down the negative stereotypes often associated with retirement communities, such as, residents exhibiting general apathy or a resistance towards new experiences.

When asked if the residents' concept of art has changed due to their involvement in the program, both staff members stressed that many residents have grown to think of themselves as artists. Also, the results of the program have enabled both residents and staff members to better understand differing types of art and ways to think about the arts in their lives. A question regarding the benefits of the art program on memory-care residents revealed that several family members of memory-care residents have expressed support of the arts program. For example, it was shared that during a printmaking experience, a memory-care resident created a linocut image of a house. When asked about the image, the resident expressed that it was of her childhood home. One of the resident's family members researched the shape of the home and discovered that the printed image was accurately depicted. For this particular family, having their parent involved in an experience that allowed them to tap into their memories was significant. Working with memory care residents can be considered therapeutic. But because our institution does not offer degrees in art therapy, and none of the art education faculty have art therapy certification, art experiences are viewed and discussed as art making and not in terms of therapy.

When asked to describe areas of growth seen in our students as a result of their work with the residents, both staff members observed that some students come into the experience with trepidation and end up blossoming as instructors. One of the staff members was particularly impressed with those students who committed additional time with residents outside of the

scheduled practicum. Overall, both staff members observed our students working well together, and being successful in encouraging more growth out of the residents. In terms of growth, the interview with staff members brought to light the need to continually consider the parallel experiences that occur between our students and the residents. In other words, as instructors we should avoid the mindset that the students are the only ones making adjustments in their work with the residents.

Conclusions

The integration of service learning, as promoting necessary skill-sets for new teachers, is valuable for our art education program at James Madison University. While working in the retirement community, university students are challenged to learn how to teach to a wide range of abilities. Creating accommodations, building rapport, establishing trust, encouraging resistant learners, and flexibility are all qualities that the university students practice when working with the residents that will be directly applicable to their future teaching. By acquiring these skills through service learning. students also experience the benefits that make service learning unique. Engaging in the larger community beyond the university campus is an opportunity presented by service learning. Working on a project that requires collaboration with diverse groups of people reduces stereotypes for all parties involved. Working together toward a common goal fosters the creation of social relationships between people who may not have interacted without the service project.

In addition to increasing practical skills related to teaching students formed social connections with the residents. The students and residents enjoyed spending time together and talking about making art and getting to know each other. Students noticed that residents gained confidence in their art skills and were proud of their accomplishments. Perceptions of the elderly

were changed for students as a result of working together. One university student was so moved by her first classes working on a mural with the residents that she devoted more than twenty hours to the mural and visiting the residents. In her final journal, she recounted the most memorable experience she had at the retirement community:

> On my way to work on the mural I noticed one woman sitting in the hall near the room where we were working on the mural. I said hello and she instantly started smiling. As I continued to talk to her she reached up and grabbed both of my hands and just held them in hers without saying a word. I wheeled her in to see the mural and as she looked up at it she said, ‘I remember’ and smiled.

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Accessibility for the Older Population: Seniors and Arts Participation

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Nowadays, people are living much longer; the senior population is increasing at a rapid rate (Saxon & Spitznagel, 1991). In the United States, since 2010, people aged over 65 were as many as the population under age 20 (Hanna & Perlstein, 2008). Although the number of older people in all states has risen, there is a notable percentage of the elderly in Florida (Esri, 2012; Holt, Colburn, & Leverty, n.d.; Larsen, 2012; Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 2012). The fast growing number of the retired who move to the sunshine state has important implications for recreation facilities, especially arts-oriented facilities, such as senior centers and art museums, provided in the state.

Issues of time and money dominate leisure activities, which include visiting arts museums (Falk & Dierking, 2000) and other arts facilities. The good news is "older people are currently, and projected to be, more educated and wealthier than previous generations of Americans" (Hanna & Perlstein, 2008, p. 2). However, when visiting art museums and other arts-oriented facilities, the retired who have both time and spending power might encounter accessibility problems such as *physical*, *communicational*, and *attitudinal* barriers (Korza, Brown, & Dreeszen, 2007). Accordingly, understanding how seniors engage in visual arts, from passive observation to active participation, will help art museums in Florida address inclusion of the aging population (Thongnopnua, 2013).

Statement of Problem

Given the rapidly increasing elderly population (Hanna & Perlstein, 2008), and the corollary notion that their well-being would be a benchmark for civilized living (Kinsella and Phillips, 2005), Cohen (2000) introduced the arts and creativity as a new paradigm for aging. Twenty-five years after the major federal research programs on aging were launched in the mid-1970s, the idea of understanding older people for their great potential rather than their problems was pronounced (Cohen, 2000, 2006; Thongnopnua, 2013), and since the pivotal articulation of

potential is creativity, the elderly have been encouraged to engage in art activities (Cohen, Perlstein, Chapline, Kelly, Firth, & Simmens, 2006; Hanna & Perlstein, 2008). Arts participation is not only fast becoming accepted for its benefits to seniors' health and morale, but it also paves the way for social well-being by building meaningful connection among individual seniors, their families, and our communities (Thongnopnua, 2013) and has earned a place in transforming the experience of being old into healthier, productive, meaningful, and purposeful aging (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2010; Cohen, 2000; Cohen, Perlstein, Chapline, Kelly, Firth, & Simmens, 2006; Cutler, 2009; Hanna & Perlstein, 2008; Sherman, 1996). Furthermore, funding institutions started to realize and recognize the significance of making artistic and creative services accessible to senior citizens (Hanna & Perlstein, 2008). As a result, resources have shifted to support arts and creativity programs provided by and for the aging population. Therefore, senior centers and nursing homes, as well as museums have expanded their embrace of arts and crafts (Butler, 2002) into professionally conducted arts programs (Hanna & Perlstein, 2008). Through eliminating physical, communication, and attitudinal barriers (Korza, Brown, & Dreeszen, 2007; Salmen, 1998; Thongnopnua, 2013), art museums have committed to making the arts, facilities, and programs accessible in every phase of people's lives (National Age Discrimination and National Bureau for Accessibility, 2000) including for senior citizens (Heffernan & Schnee, 1981; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Sharpe, 1992).

But there has been a critical gap between the desire to provide arts to seniors and the actual provision of arts services (Hanna & Perlstein, 2008; Thongnopnua, 2013). There are insufficient arts organizations that offer practical professional arts engagement to the aging population (Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 2010; Cohen, Perlstein, Chapline, Kelly, Firth, & Simmens, 2006; Cutler, 2009; Hanna & Perlstein, 2008; Korza, Brown, & Dreeszen, 2007; National Age Discrimination, 2000; Sherman, 1996; Thongnopnua, 2013). In addition, little

empirical evidence about how seniors experience and make sense of the arts participation is available. This study seeks to address that issue.

Focus and Methodology

Understanding how the aging population engages in art, from passive observation to active participation, in particular settings may help art museums and other arts-centered senior facilities become more aware of contextual influences on seniors' physical, communicational, and attitudinal access in art museums (Thongnopnua, 2013). Accordingly, I have conducted a field-based study on the experience of a selected senior group focused on older people's attitudes about arts participation that also explored issues of accessibility for the aging population in art museums.

I conducted this study to understand how seniors experience and make sense of arts participation. Specifically, I wanted to explore the meaning of seniors' experiences of a watercolor workshop at the Tallahassee Senior Center and how they articulate those experiences. My research procedures included building connections with the Tallahassee, Florida, Senior Center and doing fieldwork at the Senior Center's art workshops (observation, interview, document review, and questionnaire survey).

Research Model and Data Collection

For the purpose of illuminating a societal concern, I chose to use an *applied research model* (Patton, 2002) to direct my methods decisions. My goal was to contribute knowledge that will help everyone understand a context-bound nature and essence of seniors' experiences of arts participation and the potential value of that participation.

Figure 1. Watercolor workshop at Tallahassee Senior Center.

My focus was on seniors who were participating in a watercolor workshop at the Tallahassee Senior Center. Thus, the primary focus of data collection was on what was happening to individual seniors in that setting and how they were affected by the setting. Since this research was context-bound, sampling methodology played a big role in giving me strategic information. The first strategy I started off with was *criterion sampling* (Patton, 2002). I picked all cases that meet the following criteria: all seniors who were participating in the watercolor workshop, taught by Rosemary Ferguson, at the Tallahassee Senior Center every Friday, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m., from September 7 to October 26, 2012. Later, *opportunistic or emerging sampling* (Patton, 2002) came up when I was in the field. This sampling strategy gave me opportunities to discover some unexpected issues about seniors and arts participation. As for interviews, I also used *criterion sampling* strategy to obtain two interviewees. Both interviewees are seniors who showed continued engagement in the watercolor workshop. I spent six sessions

at the Senior Center as recorded in my field notes including three observation periods, two interviews, and a document review.

It also is important to determine the role of the researcher before beginning the fieldwork. For my observer's role, I determined not to participate in making art because such participation could distract me from my study. But due to the nature of the observation I could not be removed or anonymous. I kept in mind that the seniors in the watercolor workshop that I observed also observed me. Some of the 12 seniors came to talk to me and asked some questions about my background. During observations, I made notes and took photos. In my field notes I used descriptive language, trying to use participants' words where I could and addressing tensions in my role as a researcher, recorded chronology of events, used direct quotes, and included the length of time for each of my fieldworks.

I applied the phenomenological interviewing method to the study of participants' lived experiences and worldviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) that served my purposes for developing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of seniors' engaging in a watercolor workshop at the senior center. In addition, I used the interviews as a vehicle to develop a colloquial connection with my interviewees about the implications of their experience (Van Manen, 1990). A *standardized interview* was used in my data collecting process focused on the "life history, specific details of their experiences of the topic, and their reflection on the meaning" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Questions asked were developed from reviewing the purpose statement of my study and what I learned from the site visit. As a result, I came up with seven questions, which can be categorized into three groups: (a) motivation for taking the watercolor workshop, (b) experience of the workshop, and (c) reflection on their arts participation experience. After I thought about types of questions to ask, I also sequenced the questions from simple to complex, from broad to narrow.

Data Analysis

The methods that I used to analyze the data are an integration of my theoretical approach (phenomenological construction of meaning) and a conceptual framework, Falk and Dierking's (2000) *Contextual Model of Learning*. The Falk and Dierking model involves three overlapping contexts: *the personal*, *the sociocultural*, and *the physical*. Learning is the process and also the product of interactions between these three contexts. Basically, the Contextual Model is used to describe and analyze how people learn in a museum, which I adapted to analyze how seniors engage in arts participation at the Senior Center.

The personal context includes interest, motivation, affect, and flow experience. Learning is facilitated by personal interest. When people are in a supporting environment, they are motivated to do free-choice learning and feel satisfied. During free-choice learning, people can select challenges that meet their skills to be most personally rewarding. And then, people have flow experiences and learn more about themselves.

The sociocultural context views people as individuals but also as members of a larger group or society (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Therefore, learning is an individual and also a group experience. In other words, people share the same experiences and meanings in the delimited communities. The collection of shared beliefs and customs is cultural. Through the process of social cognition, people learn to conceptualize themselves, interact with others, and imagine another's thoughts and feelings and develop a shared understanding of the group.

The physical context is what visitors see, what they do, and how they physically feel in museums. For the purpose of survival, people have the need to find patterns in a state of chaos and make sense of the environment. Therefore, the physical context plays an important role in learning.

Coding schemes. The phenomenological perspective helped me develop the super categories (L. Schrader, personal communication, October 25, 2012): *motivation*, *experience*, and *reflection*—to find the essence of the seniors' experiences of a watercolor workshop at Tallahassee Senior Center and how they articulate those experiences. Under each super category, I used *the Contextual Model of Learning* to conceptualize the categories: *personal context*, *sociocultural context*, and *physical context*. Under each category there are sub-categories; and each sub-category has codes (see Figure 2).

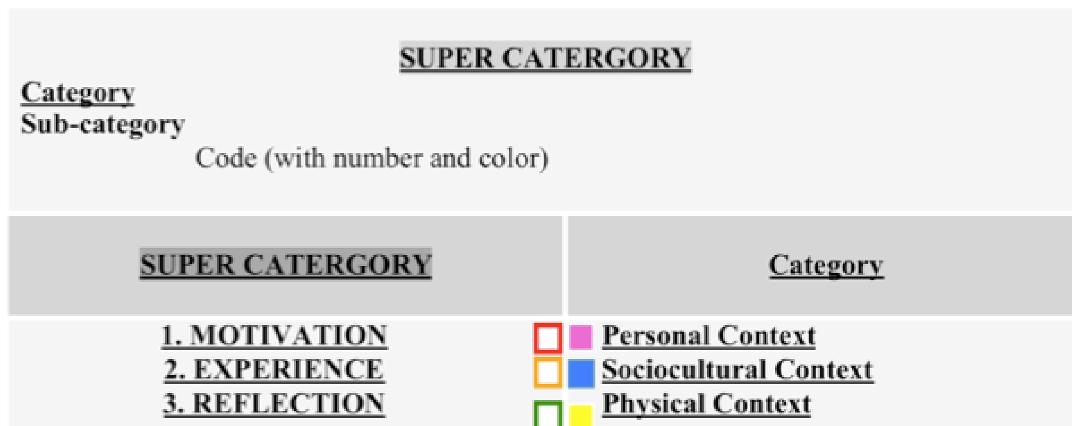

Figure 2. Coding Schemes.

My coding strategies included using colored outlined squares to represent super categories and shaded colored squares to represent categories. Therefore, the representation of each sub-category is comprised of both frame and square. For example, motivation from personal context is represented by red frame enclosing pink square; motivation from sociocultural context is represented by red frame enclosing blue square; and motivation from physical context is represented by red frame enclosing yellow square.

After a long and intense immersion process, sub-categories and codes started to emerge focusing on utility, clarity, relevance, and applicability. *Inductive analysis* is the strategy I used to help myself identify salient sub-categories within my data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Furthermore, I identified *sensitizing concepts* (Patton, 2002), which is the concepts I, as an artist

and arts administrator, brought to setting, which was the watercolor workshop. First, I generated sub-categories and codes by hand-drawn mapping. Afterwards, I re-organized them again and again until I came up with the more digestible coding system. Coding is the way I linked my data to a conceptual issue. Accordingly, I used different letter(s) and numbers to represent each code. The letter(s) used in each code is/are the same as the letter(s) that represent(s) the sub-category that the code is under.

Generating themes. According to my heightened awareness of the data, I tried to find patterns of actions that signal something more subtle and complex than categories. This required that I review my coded data again and again. To find some emerging patterns, I decided to tally my codes. After I gained some sense and started to discern patterns of meaning, I began to create a concept map (Figure 3). My concept mapping helped me visualize the connection between the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that I used to analyze my data: phenomenology and the Contextual Model of Learning by Falk and Dierking (2000). Thus, the emerging patterns to generate themes are range-bound to: *Motivation* from *personal* context; *Motivation* from *sociocultural* context; *Motivation* from *physical* context; *Experience* in *personal* context; *Experience* in *sociocultural* context; *Experience* in *physical* context; *Reflection* of *personal* context; *Reflection* of *sociocultural* context; and *Reflection* of *physical* context.

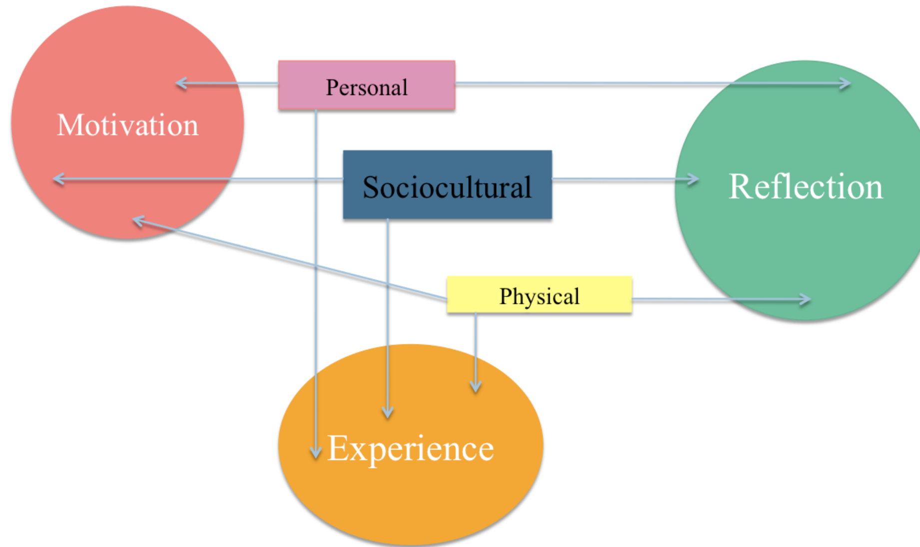

Figure 3. Concept mapping.

Findings and Emergent Themes

As a result of the findings of this study certain themes emerged:

Theme 1: ***The sociocultural context is an important factor in motivating seniors to participate in the art workshop at the Tallahassee Senior Center.***

The data confirms that *family*, *friends*, and *the teacher* play a big role in encouraging the seniors to participate in this watercolor workshop. From analyzing my coded data, I found emerging patterns that support this theme. I used not only multiple methods, but also source triangulation to support this theme. For example, in both interviews, the seniors said that their families and friends encouraged their painting and supported them. Furthermore, both senior interviewees said that they started to participate in the watercolor workshop because their teacher at their church taught at the senior center. From this, I could see the pattern that the seniors see the teacher as an important motivator. Moreover, from my observation field notes, I could see the pattern that arts participation is not only an individual but also a group experience. The seniors appeared to enjoy sharing the collective experiences in the art workshop. Through the

process of social cognition, the seniors seemed to conceptualize themselves, take pleasure in interacting with one another, and imagining another's thoughts and feelings. On top of that, when they interacted and discussed with others, they appeared to provide opportunities to reinforce their experiences and develop a shared understanding of the group. And my document review about the senior center offering variety of classes also supports this theme: "TSC offers the basic foundation to meet new and intriguing people. Through classes, active adults are able not only to branch out into new activities and explore their own originality, but also have the opportunity to learn about others while sharing the experience" (Santoro, 2012, para. 4).

Theme 2: ***Participating in the art workshop at Tallahassee Senior Center helps seniors to enhance their perception of things around them and their interpretation of the arts.***

From analyzing my coded data, I found the emerging patterns that support this theme. I used source triangulation to support this theme. In both interviews, the seniors said that participating in the art workshop gave them a new way of looking at art. For example, one participant said: "I think this class, in particular, has given me a new way of looking at my art. I think sometimes I always want to hold myself to some standard, like something I saw in the museum or show. And I think this class is certainly helping me to break away from that seeing that all of us using the same technique, but with pouring our color in different ways that we come up with different patterns. And they are all unique and they are all nice."

Another interviewee said: "Another benefit is increased observation skills, I see nature, scenes, buildings, ocean, etc. so differently now. One of the main benefits I think of taking art classes is it gives me the opportunity to look at things differently to see things with an artist's eye. To see shapes and textures and colors, to look at nature and see flower, or buildings, or the ocean….I can see them differently now because I'm looking through the eye of an artist."

My document review about the variety of classes offered by the senior center also supports this theme. Seniors' sharing of experiences in the art workshop not only encourages their free thinking and creativity, but also promotes the exchange of the ways they perceive and interpret art and other things in their daily lives (Santoro, 2012).

In addition, from my observation field notes, the seniors appeared to feel more and more comfortable about talking about and discussing their own and others' artworks. Their perspective about art seemed to change; most seniors appeared to become more open-minded and excited to discover a variety of styles. At the same time, their skill in interpretation of the arts increased. On top of that, the seniors appeared to enjoy discussing about how they look at things around them differently; everything seemed to give them great aesthetic pleasure.

Theme 3: ***The seniors get more out of the arts participation because of the non-threatening and noncompetitive environment.***

The data triangulation confirms that seniors' experience in the art workshop is meaningful to them in part because of the friendly, non-threatening, and noncompetitive atmosphere. For example one participant said, "I think classes like this at the senior center are also different because students support each other. Not only do we become friends, but I think there are a tendency when you are younger to be more competitive in everything that you do, in your job, and you know in the sports you participate in, and just everything. That would probably have carried over for me in art if I had started at an early age. But now, I do it because I want to learn and I want to see, you know, what I can produce. But my friends, you know, they are not threatening anymore because they're doing that because they want to do it, you know, and see what they can learn too. So we are able to support each other in a very non-threatening way. And, I think we get so much more out of it now as a class because we don't worry about the competitiveness of each other." Another interviewee said: "It is such a positive experience to

be here. While I don't feel my art is 'good' I can see so much improvement in my work and get excited about my progress. Everyone, teacher and fellow students are so positive and supportive."

Also from my observation field notes, I could see the pattern that the class's atmosphere was very friendly and students appeared to be positive and supportive. For example, after the teacher finished the demonstration of how to use gesso to make an effect in watercolor painting, one student went first to try it with her painting. The other students gathered around and cheered her on: "Yay yay yay!." At the same time, some students were clapping their hands and kept saying, "Nice! You can do it! You did a good job!"

Furthermore, my document review suggests that it is actually a goal of the Center to offer a variety of classes that support this theme: "Conversations while working on the next artful masterpiece, stretching to the music, playing a game or learning a language can lead to new and lasting friendships. Members not only find a creative outlet, but also a social one" (Santoro, 2012, para. 4).

Figure 5. High ceiling with square glass windows and good lighting.

Additionally, the physical environment provided by Tallahassee Senior Center in the art workshop facilitates seniors to focus not only on art participation, but on feeling safe and

enjoying their experience. The classroom is well organized physically but also helps orient seniors to the site through that organization. From my observations, I could see that the site accommodates seniors' experience in art participation by being wheelchair accessible, for example, through which seniors' mobility is promoted throughout the site. Moreover, to aid seniors' eyesight, a very high ceiling and with large square window glass in the walls and good lighting allows a lot of light to come into the room (see Figure 4). The temperature was always moderate and comfortable when I was there.

Figure 5. The counter at the back of the room.

Last but not least, to maximize seniors' ability to participate, not only physical but also communicational and attitudinal access are provided in the art workshop. Promoting communications access, a bulletin board, which has some news posted, such as exhibiting opportunities at the senior center, helps seniors create their sense of belonging to the community. A coffee maker, a computer, and other office supplies provided on the counter on the back of the room (see Figure 5) not only help create the non-threatening environment, but also make seniors feel at home. For example, one participant said, "I thoroughly enjoy this experience and look forward to the excitement and learning in an environment that has never been a part of my life

before. In this environment, there is no pressure. In this environment, there's no 'great'…there's no marks of success, except the success that I feel myself."

Conclusion

Conducting this field study on the experience of seniors, who participate in the art workshops at the Tallahassee Senior Center, helps me understand the essences that form seniors' reflection on the meaning of engaging with visual arts. Allowing the participants to speak for themselves instead of generalizing the participants' experiences, supported my observations and document analysis seems to confirm that the personal, social and physical aspects of the experience are all important to seniors who are participating in the art experience at the Senior Center. Particularly important to the seniors is a physically safe and facilitating environment and a non-competitive and emotionally supportive social and psychological context. Although the themes from the study are context-bound, I hope that my findings can serve as the springboard for making arts administrators in Florida and elsewhere to be more aware of how *personal context*, *sociocultural context*, and *physical context* make an impression on seniors' motivation of, experience in, and reflection on arts participation.

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A Visual Communication Intervention for Caregivers of Spouses with Alzheimer's Disease

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Recently, my grandmother died after living with Alzheimer's Disease (AD) for nearly a decade. My grandfather died two months later from health complications precipitated by, most likely, a broken heart. My grandparent's relationship provided an impetus for my formulation of an art therapy intervention for caregivers and spouses with AD. When formulating the intervention, I viewed my grandparent's tumultuous relationship quality as hindering the care received by my grandmother with AD. As the disease progressed, my grandfather visibly mourned the loss of his fully functioning wife and often spoke of losing a sense of connectedness with her prior identity. No longer able to take care of himself and his wife, he employed full-time caregivers.

The death of my grandmother resulted in a second, stronger wave of grief that was too much for my elderly grandfather to withstand. Although my grandfather grieved my grandmother's link to her prior identity, it was clear that my grandmother's presence was in part keeping him alive. If the pure presence of a loved one could influence the life or death of a spouse, what would be the effect of increasing the quality of the relationship of a couple dealing with AD in terms of caregiver wellbeing?

Based upon my grandparent's relationship and struggle with AD, I formulated an art therapy intervention for use with caregivers and spouses with AD. The intervention was based on the visual communication, in which couples were encouraged to communicate visually. The intervention was created to increase relationship quality in caregivers and spouses with AD by creating increased positive interaction through the creation of art by the couple. The

effectiveness of the intervention was studied by conducting two single case studies on the use of the intervention with couples dealing with AD.

Justification for Intervention

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is a progressive illness that results in memory impairment, cognitive disturbances, and difficulties with social and occupational functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Providing care for a loved one with AD is a challenging undertaking. Caregivers were found to frequently experience a decrease in wellbeing due to the demanding nature of the task (Ott, Sanders, & Kelber, 2007). Caregivers were found to have an increase in depression as a result of the emotional and physical stress of providing full-time care (Williamson & Schulz, 1993). It was found that caregivers of individuals with AD were six times more likely to have an onset of dementia than the general population (Norton, Smith, Østbye, Tschanz, Corcoran, Schwartz, Piercy, Rabins, Steffens, Skoog, Breitner, Welsh-Bohmer, & The Cache County Investigators, 2010). However, relationship quality between caregiver and spouse was found to mitigate negative outcomes (Williamson & Shaffer, 2001).

Caregivers were found frequently to experience a change in perceived quality of the relationship with their spouse with AD progression (Chesla, Martinson, & Muwaswes, 1994). The degree to which a caregiver could connect to their spouse's prior identity, before disease progression, determined the quality of the relationship throughout the disease. As caregivers lost a sense of their spouse's identity, they became increasingly emotionally detached. As a result, relationship quality decreased. Caregivers who were able to view their spouse as continuous with their prior identity were found to enjoy a higher quality relationship.

Caregivers with a higher quality relationship were found to have better outcomes emotionally and physically than those in emotionally disengaged relationships (Archbold, Stewart, Greenlick,

& Harvath, 1990). Caregivers in high quality relationships reported more rewards in their relationship, lower levels of depression, lower caregiver strain, and lower feelings of burden (Archbold et al., 1990; Williamson & Schaffer, 2001). As a result, caregivers in higher quality relationships were able to provide higher quality care (Norton, M.C., Piercy, W., Rabins, P., Green, R., Breitner, J., Ostbye, T., Corcoran, C., Welsh-Bohmer, K., Lyketsos, C., & Tschanz, T., 2009). Individuals with AD who were being cared for in high quality relationships were found to have slower cognitive decline than those being cared for in lower quality relationships.

Alzheimer's disease results in difficulties with memory and verbal communication, both of which create a challenge for caregivers in maintaining a meaningful relationship with their spouse (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Lack of meaningful interaction was found to be a major barrier to spousal caregivers trying to maintain their relationship (Williamson & Schulz, 1993). This limited positive interaction was found to negatively affect the spouse's feelings about their relationship.

Art therapy intervention was found to be effective in increasing memory and verbal communication in interactions between caregivers and spouses with AD (Bloomgarden & Sezaki, 2000; Witucki & Twibell, 1997). Individuals with AD were found to maintain the ability to communicate nonverbally longer than by communicating through words. Additionally, sensory stimulation with individuals with AD was found to increase "memory and cognitive ability, and increase verbalization" (Witucki & Twibell, 1997, p. 10). The literature suggests that by increasing the quality of the relationship through art therapy intervention, the progression of AD could be slowed, the quality of care increased, and caregiver strain decreased (Archbold et al., 2009).

Formulation of the Intervention

I designed an art therapy to meet the needs of spousal caregivers and individuals with AD. The context is that caregivers were found to struggle as a result of increases in isolation and lack of connection with their spouses. Individuals with AD were found to struggle with recalling and asserting their identity in their relationships (Chesla, Martinson, & Muwaswes, 1994; Williamson & Schulz, 1993). Visual communication was found to improve areas in which caregivers and spouses with AD had challenges. Improvement through visual communication included increased shared experience, communication, and equality in interaction (Winnicott, 1974).

Winnicott (1974) created an intervention to encourage visual communication of couples. The intervention involved one individual drawing a mark, and the other individual responding to that mark on a sheet of paper. Couples often worked to make an image with their marks (Eisdell, 2005). The directive was created to allow both individuals participating to assert their identity equally through mark-making (Winnicott, 1974). Visual communication was also utilized by Bloomgarden and Sezaki (2000) in providing art therapy for a spousal caregiver and spouse with AD. Visual communication was found to be effective in increasing positive interactions for the couple.

Considering the work of Winnicott (1974) and Bloomgarden and Sezaki (2000), I developed an art therapy intervention focusing on visual communication. Three distinct art directives were established for the intervention, with each requiring couples to create artwork in a back-and-forth manner mirroring the back-and-forth nature of a verbal conversation. It was hypothesized that an art intervention based on visual communication would provide an increased relationship quality by increasing positive interactions between caregiver and spouse.

Methodology

Two case studies were conducted to investigate the use of this art therapy intervention, based on visual communication. Each case study was conducted over a five-week period, with interventions lasting thirty minutes and spaced a week apart. The intervention was conducted in the homes of the couples. The intervention based on visual communication involved three directives.

The first directive was a scribble chase, performed using scented markers. In the scribble chase, one individual created scribbles on a sheet of paper as the leader, while the other individual worked to follow the marks. After the first scribble chase, the couple switched the roles of leader and follower. The couple then worked together to create an image from the scribbles.

The second directive involved the creation of salt dough by the couple. The couple alternated adding and mixing ingredients to make salt dough. The couple then passed the dough back and forth, taking turns to create new forms from the dough each time the dough was passed.

The final art directive involved the use of a series of art cards with fine art images. One individual was asked to hold up cards, while their spouse chose cards that were preferred. The couple then alternated, so that both individuals had chosen preferred cards. The caregiver and spouse then selected from the preferred cards of their partner, creating a single set of cards that were preferred by both individuals. The couple then worked together to create a collage from the preferred cards.

Case One

Case one was composed of a Caucasian couple identifying as lesbian. The caregiver in the couple is referred to as “M,” and the individual with AD referred to as “L.” The individual

with AD was officially diagnosed with AD at 72 years of age and was in the moderate stage of the disease during the study at age 74. L exhibited language disturbances, in which it was difficult for her to find the words she needed to communicate. Issues with communication were a growing source of difficulty for the couple, with each often becoming frustrated from an inability to effectively communicate about a wide variety of topics. The spousal caregiver M was 71 years old. M shared that the activities she engaged in with her spouse were limited by disease progression that led to feelings of isolation.

Scribble Chase Directive

In the scribble chase directive, caregiver M chose an orange marker. L, the individual with AD, decided she would like to use the orange marker as well. After repeating the prompt for the couple to choose individual colors, M chose the color brown. L had difficulty deciding which to choose and as a result decided to smell each marker. L finally chose the color blue.

M took the role of leader in the first scribble chase. L followed slowly and had difficulty following the lines of M. In the second scribble chase, L decided to change her marker to orange and then scribbled quickly with M struggling to keep up with the fast pace. L noted drawing quickly was revenge after having to follow M, and the couple laughed. The couple then worked together to create an image from the scribble. The couple worked together to create an image of a rainbow flag, garden, and octopus from one of their scribble drawings (Figure 1).

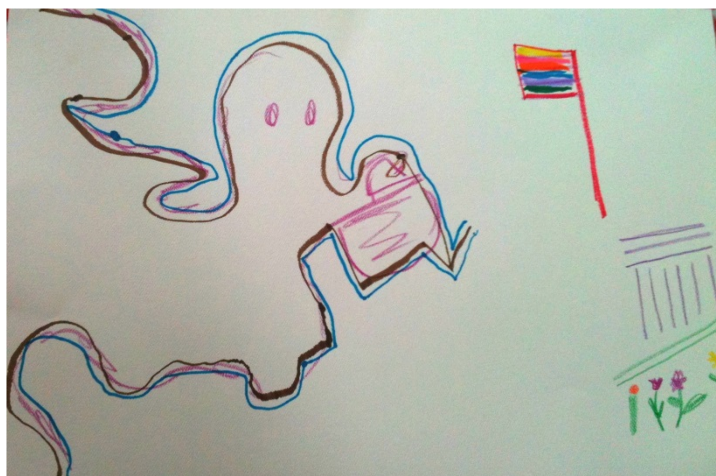

Figure 1. M and L collaborative drawing.

L decided to draw the outline of the flag, fence, and flower forms beside the scribble. M worked to fill in the outlines created by L. M noted she was glad L was getting the chance to take a leadership role for a change. She said prior to disease progression, L often took more of a leadership role in the relationship.

Salt Dough Directive

In the second directive, the couple worked together to make salt dough. Both L and M noted that creating the dough reminded them of memories making bread. The couple passed the dough back and forth, with M first making the shape of a turtle. On being handed the dough, L pounded the dough over and over.

The couple jokingly discussed L's need for a punching bag. M pointed out that the couple had been in disagreement earlier in the day, and L was voicing her anger through pounding the dough. L continued to pound shapes formed by M including a stingray and phallus shaped form. After pounding the stingray, L took the dough and made a coil and a circle. M then created a phallic shape, and L added a hole to make a volcano (Figure 2). The couple then created a rabbit collaboratively from the volcano form.

Figure 2. L and M’s volcano using salt dough.

Art Card Directive

At the beginning of the third meeting, the couple was in disagreement. However, they were able cooperate to make art. In the final directive, the couple used art cards to create a collaborative collage. The couple chose images that they preferred. L had difficulty asserting which cards she liked, but M noted she had no difficulty vocalizing the cards she disliked. M chose images by Van Gogh because she said knew L previously liked his work.

M and L each picked images they liked from the other’s pile. L picked the Van Gogh from M’s pile. The couple used the preferred images to create a collage (Figure 3). The couple worked together to decide where to place the cards.

Figure 3. L and M’s final art card piece.

Interpretation

M initially took a leadership role in the scribble chase directive by being the first to choose a colored marker and leading in the first scribble chase. L desired to mimic M’s choice of marker and was glad to follow since she was initially hesitant. However in the second chase, L seized the opportunity to take a leadership role in scribbling and noted she was getting revenge for having to follow M’s lead. The scribble chase directive allowed more equality in interaction, with L able to more fully assert her identity in artmaking.

The salt dough and art card directives both enabled the couple to work out aggression from prior disagreements. L forcefully pounded forms created by M, and M retaliated by making aggressive symbols such as a stingray and phallus form in the salt dough directive. Through visual communication, the couple reconciled by creating a more peaceful rabbit form. In the art card directive, M chose Van Gogh images in an effort to please L after disagreement earlier in the day. The visual gesture was well received by L, who chose the images as preferred when choosing from M’s pile. The art-making was able to again effectively end disagreement of

the couple that had occurred prior to the session. The couple noted they enjoyed interventions for providing a source of greater equality, recreation, and socialization.

Case Two

Case two was composed of a Caucasian couple identifying as heterosexual. The caregiver was referred to as "N" and individual with AD referred to as "B." The individual with AD was age 79, officially diagnosed with AD at age 72. B additionally had essential tremors caused by a nerve disorder and was hard of hearing. As a result, B had difficulty both in utilizing and understanding verbal language. He also exhibited difficulties with motor activities due to hand tremors. The spousal caregiver was age 76 and noted that her activities with her spouse were limited by B's disease progression. N often noted frustration that her spouse had growing difficulties with memory and overall functioning.

Scribble Chase Directive

In the scribble chase directive, both individuals chose their markers quickly. B began as the leader. When asked if the couple noticed any images within the scribbles, N said she saw winding roads, and B said he saw "cow titties" (Figure 4). N explained that B grew up working on a dairy farm. N then took the role of leader in the scribble chase, with B following slowly.

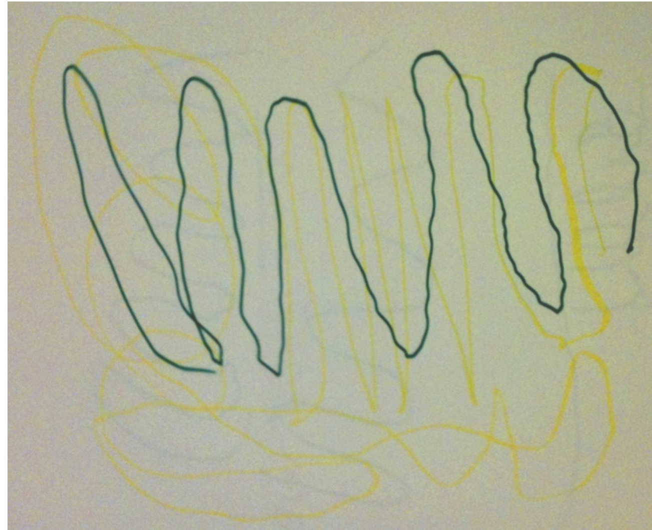

Figure 4. B and N's scribble chase.

The couple alternated making marks in creating another piece of artwork since they had difficulty in creating a single image from the scribbles. B continued to draw a wavy line motif, which he referred to as "cow titties." N visibly became frustrated and began to draw smiley faces. She then instructed B in what to draw. In a final collaborative drawing, N began to draw and B mimicked her marks on the opposite side of the paper.

Salt Dough Directive

The couple worked together in the second directive to make salt dough. N recounted she used to enjoy baking. The couple was asked to form all of the dough into a ball. N said she wanted it to be yellow, but the color green of B's dough dominated. They passed it back and forth to make different shapes. B formed the dough into a coil shape and said it was a "wiener" or a "cow tit." N added yellow and red food coloring to represent mustard and ketchup (Figure 5). Following the addition of the food coloring mustard and ketchup, N added a smiley face. When leaving, N said she enjoyed the visits. She said it brightened her day.

Figure 5. B and N's collaborative salt dough creation.

Art Card Directive

In the final art card directive, N held up fine art cards from which B could choose. B worked slowly to choose images, which N said was frustrating for her. B chose the image of the Mona Lisa because he said it looked like the Virgin Mary. N chose her cards quickly, noting she liked the image of the farmer and wife.

The couple then worked to select cards that were preferred by both. When arranging the cards for a final collage, the couple worked separately on opposite sides of the paper (Figure 6). B's cards, which were on the left side of the page, were rotated to face his direction.

Figure 6. B and N's collaborative collage of fine art cards.

Interpretation

In the first scribble chase directive, B became fixated on a wavy line motif, which he referred to as “cow titties.” Anytime B exhibited this fixation, N became visibly frustrated and would respond visually with smiley faces. Smiley faces appeared in both the salt dough and scribble chase directive. For N, the wavy line motif symbolized B’s disease progression. N worked to control the interaction when B began to repeat the motif. In the final drawing of the scribble chase directive, N had regained control of the interaction with the couple’s marks completely separate with B mimicking the marks of N.

The art card directive was in line with the prior two directives. Equality was effectively created through the art process, making B’s visual marks were more visible. When his marks became more visible, N became more frustrated because she could notice signs of disease progression.

The final collage in the art card directive showed the couple working in a separate fashion, with B’s cards fully rotated in his direction. However, the couple was able to express their identity as a couple. B chose the image of the Mona Lisa, which could be seen as representing his wife. N chose an image of a farmer and wife, which could be seen as representing her relationship with her husband. The couple said they enjoyed the art intervention for providing a source of socialization and recreation.

Case One and Case Two Analyses

In case one, caregiver M was found to have taken a leadership role in her relationship due to her partner’s disease progression. The interventions allowed L to take more of a leadership role by allowing her to communicate more easily. By providing L the means for greater communication and equality in interaction, art making was effective in mitigating disagreements

between the pair. Additionally, art making allowed the couple to share memories that were triggered by the sensory stimulus of making art.

In the second case caregiver N, similar to M from couple one, took on a leadership role. In case two, the intervention was successful in creating equality in interaction, however N became uncomfortable when equality was reached. When B asserted his identity, N became frustrated because it visually revealed his disease progression.

Although B's disease progression of AD was a similar level to couple one, B exhibited lower functioning due to the addition of a nerve disorder. Due to B's lower functioning, every attempt to assert his identity revealed how far his disease had progressed in the eyes of N. N was already in the beginning stages of grieving the loss of her spouse's identity. Earlier intervention may have been more effective in increasing relationship quality through art intervention.

Despite case two's difficulties in maintaining equality in interaction, the intervention was effective in increasing positive interaction for the couples. Both couples noted the artmaking as a positive experience in providing recreation and interaction. Additionally, both couples enjoyed recounting past memories as they created art. The two couples noted they enjoyed having someone visit their homes, expressing feelings of isolation due to the responsibilities of caregiving.

Intervention based on visual communication was found to be effective in increasing relationship quality in caregivers and spouses with AD. The intervention was found in both cases to increase communication, provide a source of shared experience, and gave the couples greater opportunity to interact more equally in visual interactions.

Conclusion

I developed an art therapy intervention based on visual communication in response to my grandfather's challenging caregiving relationship with my grandmother with AD. The resulting intervention was found to be effective in two case studies in improving relationship quality by increasing positive interactions of the couples. Visual communication was found to be valuable in increasing communication, providing a source of shared experience, and creating the opportunity for more equality in interactions. However, through the comparison of the case studies it was deemed possible that early intervention increased the effectiveness of the intervention in increasing relationship quality.

My grandfather experienced two waves of grief. The first was when he began to believe my grandmother was no longer connected to her prior identity, and the second was after she died. It was found in the two case studies that intervention prior to the first wave of grief is important. Once the caregiver has begun grieving the loss of their partner's identity, as in case two, it is difficult to convince the caregiver that the identity has not been lost. An art therapy intervention based on visual communication would seem to be most beneficial as a preventative tool in early stages of disease progression.

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Remembering through Art: Imaginative Reconstructions with Older Adults Experiencing Dementia

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Remembering through Art: Imaginative

Reconstructions with Older Adults Experiencing Dementia

As early as 1932, Frederic Bartlett at Cambridge postulated that memory was not static, as then-current theories held, but rather a dynamic process of remembering. He wrote: "Remembering is not the re-excitation of innumerable fixed, lifeless and fragmentary traces. It is an imaginative reconstruction, or construction, built out of the relation of our attitude towards a whole active mass of organized past reactions or experience, it is thus hardly ever really exact" (Sacks, 2012, p. 154). Memories are not like volumes in a library, organized and discrete, waiting for retrieval in the same state they were when archived. Rather, memories are fluid and malleable. Simple things, such as an aroma coming from a kitchen or the sound of a particular song can feel familiar and make us stumble into a memory, or make us feel safe, happy, or scared even if we do not know why.

Despite the relative instability of memory, we desire to remember, and culturally, we have come to fear changes in our ability to do so. More than 80 years after Bartlett 's claim, physicians and scholars debate if people who experience memory loss, such as that associated with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, should be viewed as suffering from a disease or, rather, experiencing a natural part of aging. How we view this phenomenon has the power to perpetuate or to remove fears associated with changes in memory, treatment, and quality of life (Whitehouse, 2008). There is no denying that accessing memories is challenging for older adults with dementia and it can lead to frustration and even depression or anger. In efforts to address this, scholars, artists, and art educators (Basting & Killick, 2003; Boyer, 2007; Rosenberg, Parsa, Humble, & McGee, 2009) have looked to creative engagement as a means of contributing to the quality of life for both those experiencing memory loss and for their caregivers.

In this article, we examine creative engagement as a strategy to support remembering with older adults. We discuss two forms of remembering as imaginative reconstruction. In the first section, Davenport discusses artmaking as a means toward remembering specific life events, which can help older adults with dementia maintain a sense of identity through personal history. In the second section, Woywod discusses artmaking as a way to support older adults with dementia in remembering feelings of productivity, engagement, and belonging to a group, which helps meet higher level needs (Maslow, 1970) and supports a sense of selfhood. We posit that for older adults with memory loss, creative engagement can make facets of past experiences tangible, as well as commemorate new, generative moments. In the following section, Davenport describes the first form of remembering through her art making with her mother.

Reconstructing Memories

For many of us, the motivation for utilizing art with elders comes from a personal connection. While my very first job teaching art was an afternoon class at a small-town senior center, I quickly realized that what I thought I needed to teach was not what the women at the center wanted me to teach. Although this job was short-lived, I learned that the needs of older adults who seek out opportunities to engage in creative activities were not the same as those of high school students or others I might teach. Many years later, I developed opportunities for my own art education students to gain similar insights by working with older adults. However, I became passionate about this process when it became personal for me. My mother began suffering from cognitive impairment in 2002. Since she moved in with me in 2009, I have had the opportunity to learn firsthand how artmaking can support remembering in older adults suffering from dementia.

Although I had been making crafts with mom for years, and even engaged her in making animations with me, I recently started engaging her in drawing pictorial scenes as a way to reconstruct memories of her youth. This was initiated by a conversation we shared about a drawing of boats in the sunset on Lake Lanier from the view of my parents' dock in 1959.

As a gift to my mother, I had this fading, frayed image framed, believing that my deceased father had drawn it during one of their weekends at the lake in the 1950s. I had assumed that it was from his hand because he was acknowledged as the more artistically inclined of my parents, and often drew sailboats and other designs. However, when I showed my mother the picture, she began reminiscing about their place up on the lake and revealed to me that she had actually drawn this picture of their view from the dock. Reminiscing with her about this image allowed me insights into their lives together before I was born, and allowed her to express both sentimental feelings and a renewed sense of self-esteem prompted by seeing her long-forgotten artwork nicely framed.

This interaction encouraged me to begin drawing with my mother, to support her wellbeing through remembering, and to encourage creative impulses that I had not fully acknowledged or appreciated previously. Although I have not had the opportunity to seek training in Reminiscence Therapy, I have found resonance between this strategy and the process I utilize with my mother when drawing. Essentially, Reminiscence Therapy [RT] involves individuals or groups of older adults with memory loss in "evocation and discussion with another person or a group about past activities, events and experiences, using a variety of supporting materials...[such as] music, photographs and other aids, often prepared with the involvement of caregivers" (Cotelli, Manenti, & Zanetti, 2012, p. 203). Many people in such fields as Gerontology, Nursing, Psychology, and Occupational Therapy (Brooker & Duce, 2000; Chao,

Chen, Liu, & Clark, 2008; Lai, Chi, & Kayser-Jones, 2004; Parker, 1995; Schweitzer & Bruce, 2008) agree that RT can be a way to enhance the wellbeing of older adults with memory loss.

Making pictures while reminiscing is one strategy RT recognizes as a means of imaginatively reconstructing memories (Baines, 2007; Gottleib-Tanaka, 2006; Kennard, 2006; Meaker, 2010). As a caregiver and art educator, I find drawing together to be a mutually enriching experience to share with my mother. I only wish that I had more time to engage in this process with her. Below I share two of the drawings she created within several months of each other in 2010 and 2011 (figure 1; figure 2). Creating these pictorial representations of her early memories not only engaged her in acts of remembering and brought her joy, but they also revealed to me the slow but steady advance of her ongoing memory loss.

The first time we sat down together to draw, I spread out paper and colored pencils on the dining room table so that she could work beside me as I made a teacher sample for a lesson plan to present to my class. At first, she was tentative when I invited her to draw alongside me, so I suggested that she illustrate a memorable event from her childhood. I find that I remember her childhood stories that she has shared repeatedly over the years more clearly than she does, so my process began with gentle questioning:

Daughter: "Do you remember the story you told me about getting lost at the county fair as a child?"

Mother: "Oh, yes, I guess I was only about 3 or 4, one of many children, and I wandered off and attached myself to the next big family that I ran across."

Daughter: " I imagine that might have been frightening for some children, but I remember you told me that your family was far more worried than you were!"

Mother: "Yes, they split up and went around looking for me, but the family I had attached myself to let me come back to their picnic table and help myself to a biscuit. I was just enjoying myself and making new friends when I saw my older sister walk by. I said, 'Oh, there's Opal!' and that's how they found my family. When they had asked my name, I had repeated my middle name to them, because my parents had told me they wanted to change my name and give my middle name to my new younger brother, but I was having none of that!"

Daughter: "I love that story, Mama! I wonder, though, what did the fair look like back in the 20s? Was it mostly farm animals and vegetables or did they have other things for people to do?

Mother: "Oh, there were pigs and cows and vegetable booths and other food...but there was also a Ferris wheel and a haunted house!"

Daughter: "Do you remember how it was arranged? Was it in a field or a park? Was it a pretty day? Can you show me? I wasn't there, but I would love to know what it looked like."

These questions inspired her to reminisce, and as she did so, she began drawing a birds-eye view of the scene, imaginatively reconstructed. Figure 1, from 2010, shows the County Fair as she portrayed it:

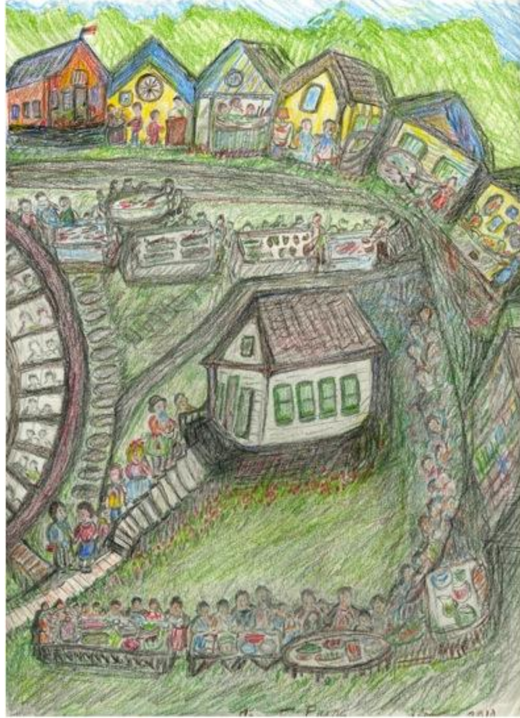

Figure 1: Lost at the 1927 county fair (2010).

In this image, she adopted the birds-eye view common among vernacular artists. I invited her to draw by helping to elicit her memories of the story she told of that occasion, but she took it from there. My hand is present in this piece only slightly, because I helped her fill in the background with trees and sky, but what is notable is her attention to the details of what every family had on the picnic tables, and the offerings of those with agricultural booths.

She placed the haunted house in the center of her image because she seemed to remember is was in the middle of the fairgrounds, and she wasn't sure where to place the Ferris wheel, so I suggested that it could run off one side of the page if it didn't fit in her composition. Through working on this drawing together, in which I intervened as little as possible, my mother was able to recall many details about the occasion and she took ownership over her drawing. But the next

time I drew with her, it was apparent that her ability to recall and to represent her childhood memories had waned and she required much more assistance.

Figure 2, below, illustrates Mama's story of how she and her siblings would climb up on the scuppernong arbor when the grapes were ripe and they would indulge until they made themselves sick.

Figure 2: Eating scuppernongs on the arbor (2011).

My hand is more apparent in the second image. In the intervening several months, Mama had lost her confidence in composing an image on her own. She asked me numerous times where the arbor was located in relation to the barn, what the barn looked like, and so on. I pulled out old photographs for her to work from and suggested ways to show depth of space in her image. Again, I asked her many questions to help her reconstruct her memories. In this instance, however, I would describe the resulting product as a co-construction.

She asked me to help her draw the figures of her siblings on the arbor, and I suggested she place her young self underneath, reaching up as she told me she would have done, but she was reluctant to do so. I have learned to respect her decision-making, even as she requests more input from me in her artmaking process. She did not want to portray herself in this image and I did not force the issue, but she did add a squirrel to the scene.

As memories become harder for Mama to retrieve, the act of reminiscing, and co-reconstructing her stories with me, coupled with communicating them visually, assists her in feeling that she can remember. Even if it is an imaginative reconstruction, she can retain a sense of herself and her life story through these activities; this form of creative engagement makes facets of experiences tangible for my mother and those who care about her.

While I regret that I did not start drawing with my mother during the earlier stages of her memory loss, every time I am able, I gather art supplies and sit down with mom. It brings such joy, focus, and determination to her face and allows her to reclaim herself and share herself with others. Creative engagement while dealing with dementia and other health problems has given me the chance to know my mother in a new way, and the artwork remains to mark new, generative moments.

Mama is open to any visual experience that I can present to her, but I have also found that she is now less able to do these things independently. I often set her up with drawing materials and visual references before running out the door to class, encouraging her to show me a story when I get home, but the absence of gentle questioning, the absence of her co-constructor, and the lack of a social aspect of remembering together, prevents her from making any attempt.

Although my interest in this topic stems from the very close relationship I have with my 90 year old mother, I think it is vitally important for art educators to be attuned to the needs of

older adults experiencing memory loss and to use art to enhance their lives as they age. Demographic data remind us repeatedly that the population of aging adults is growing (Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Aging, 2010). Research tells us that having creative outlets enhances their quality of life (Cohen, 2000, 2005).

Helping individuals remember specific memories from their lifetimes is one valuable outcome from making art with older adults. While there are caregivers like Davenport who feel comfortable in their own artistic abilities, many do not. This raises the question: when artists and educators are willing to facilitate creative engagement activities with elders living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, how do you collaborate to engage in acts of remembering and remembrance without a shared history? And when you figure it out, how do you teach other artists and educators what to do? In the following section, Woywod addresses these questions and describes a programmatic approach that exemplifies the second form of remembering, meeting higher level needs (Maslow, 1970) by helping people remember feelings of productivity, engagement, and belonging through creative engagement.

Remembering Selfhood

Behaviors have meaning and are attempts to meet unmet needs (Maslow, 1970). Though their ability to recognize or communicate unmet needs may be challenged, older adults with memory loss still feel and have a sense of personhood. As Millet (2011) stated "People with dementia continue to be participants in and co-creators of the lived lives of others…. Just like people who do not have dementia, they continue to be active subjects who create meaning for themselves as they encounter the external world" (p. 517). Therefore, older adults with memory loss have a need to feel productive and engaged, and have a sense of belonging. Creative engagement experiences are an important opportunity to do this.

There are many programs designed to facilitate remembering, art making, or creative engagement for older adults with memory loss, such as Memories in the Making (Henley, 2010) and Meet Me at MOMA (Rosenberg, Parsa, Humble & McGee, 2009). While some well-known model programs have attractive and beneficial components, artists and educators may feel they not speak to the exact population that will be served. For example, while inspired by Meet Me at MOMA, the educators behind Minnesota and Wisconsin‘s SPARK! programming realized that they would need to make modifications in working with populations outside of large cities (Tygeson, 2012).

In the same vein, I was approached by collaborators in a local community center to collaborate on Saturday arts experiences for a diverse group of older adults with memory loss in Milwaukee’s Latino community. The result was the Pathways Project, a collaboration between a small group of highly committed art education majors and university staff, bilingual caregivers, and 55 seniors with a range of memory loss, cognitive, and physical impairments. Similar to Davenport’s first experience with seniors, my students had background in K-12 instruction, but quickly realized that there were big differences between what they thought art experiences should look like in the facility and what the seniors quickly and bluntly indicated needed to happen.

The art education students and I took time to experience the neighborhoods the seniors lived in, read articles and program manuals, and visit other programs in the community in order to learn. Each week we came together, ready with reflections and new ideas to try. We had questions for the adult day center (ADC) staff so we could better understand the clients, get ideas about what was needed and what was working, and address our feelings and concerns about

working with the seniors in an emotionally challenging situation. Even though the group knew each visit could be a challenge, it promised to be highly rewarding too.

In order to try to sustain the program, we prepared to teach Certified Nurse Assistants (CNAs) and new students about what we had learned over a year and a half by analyzing reflections, observational notes, interviews, and visual data to describe qualities within the most positive and remarkable creative engagement experiences implemented through the Pathways Project. While art making in each experience helped facilitate interactions, some art making activities and the documentation of them made facets of past experiences tangible; others were larger collaborations that commemorated new, generative moments. We concluded that four overarching qualities of our most successful experiences were: 1) collaboration and celebration, 2) familiar tools and purpose, 3) movement and group energy, 4) humor and play. Examples of projects that illustrate each quality are described below.

Mural de Recuerdos was one of our early projects, developed over six months (figure 3). It exemplifies collaboration and celebration. The pieces in this ceramic mural became a physical record of the older adults' creative engagement during Saturday programs. The students worked with the seniors and day center staff to share stories and memories, enjoying the moment while forming the individual ceramic pieces. Recurring themes that grew from these conversations included family, culture, music, nature and love. For many of the older adults, this was their first experience working with clay. While creating, many participants recalled a range of memories, described a sense of happiness and demonstrated pride as they contributed to this collaborative piece.

Figure 3: An important part of our experience with the ceramic mural was the unveiling and celebration with family members, caregivers, university staff, and staff from other facilities that work with older adults.

The unveiling the mural was a memorable celebration. It was an emotional experience for the older adults, their family members, and the ADC staff. It was moving for the students and me too. Family members wanting to know more about what their loved ones had created overwhelmed us. One student, Liz (I use pseudonyms for all the students and ADC participants discussed in the following sections), shared this moment in a reflection about the event:

> Jacobo wanted to know which ceramic pieces his father made and I did my best to help answer his questions. Perhaps the most astonishing moment was when Jacobo approached me again later after using our map. He had discovered what portrait his father made—it was the one that had sunglasses and a hat on. He told me that his father used to work in a foundry and wore safety glasses and a hard hat. He said as a child his father used to scare him when he came home from work wearing all of that, because he didn't recognize him. He was surprised to realize his father depicted himself. He hadn't realized his father made those connections.

There were many moments like this and many tears of joy as people found the pieces they were looking for on the mural, talked with the older adults who were able to discuss their experiences, or simply looked at it together without words.

While working with clay, some of our most utilized tools were familiar objects, such as pencils, beads, and hair curlers (figure 4). This highlights part of the second set of qualities we recognized in our most successful experiences, including familiar tools and purpose. The following image is from a weekend where we created concrete stepping stones intended for use in the preschool playground, which can be seen from the ADC's second floor location.

Figure 4: ADC participants arrange mosaic pieces together for their stepping-stones.

In a place where neat materials, like watercolors and colored pencils are used, clay was plenty messy. Concrete for stepping-stones seemed even more outlandish. However, once we learned that some of the older adults at the ADC had worked in construction, it led to a great opportunity to remember feelings of productivity and engagement. Veronica was proud to have

the responsibility of mixing concrete for others. Leo brought his own tools from home that day and was happy to teach us how to mix the concrete well. Not only did we make objects that could be useful on the playground, but also it gave several of the older adults the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise.

Familiar tools were an important starting point for large abstract paintings the older adults created too (figure 5). Creating these paintings exemplified the qualities of group energy and movement. Knowing that the older adults liked to start the morning with some modified Zumba, one of the students, Gina, suggested we try the following project involving movement. We started with brooms, mops with different kinds of heads, and plungers as painting tools used on drop cloth sized canvases taped securely to the floor. The first few painters were hesitant to make marks, but after we turned on some lively music, we could barely get people to stop painting and clean up for lunch! The brooms and mops made it possible for people with limited mobility to paint from chairs and wheel chairs. Several people who were done with their turn painting continued to be engaged by watching others paint from chairs and benches we had moved into the room.

Figure 5: The older adults used a variety of tools to create collaborative abstract paintings.

As I look back over photographs from Saturdays like this, I am reminded of the joyful signing, laughter, and amusement that we *all* felt using clay, mixing concrete, and painting with ridiculously large tools. This brings me to the fourth and final qualities of successful projects that we tried: humor and play.

Figure 6: Older adults with memory loss collaborate on a visual story, inspired by the process of storytelling learned through TimeSlips (Basting, 2009).

Anyone who intends to work with older adults with memory loss needs to be able to see the humor in most every situation. Although we deliberately planned experiences that involved playfulness as we introduced new materials, it took us a while to become comfortable with not knowing how things might turn out and to be able to laugh along with the older adults. Eventually, we realized the importance of embracing humor as part of our projects. This is exemplified through Liz's description of a final project she tried with Gina, which they designed to be a variation of the Timeslips (Basting, 2009) story telling technique.

> This was a Saturday session and was probably one of the best ones yet! We brought two large sheets of black paper and mounted them on the wall, low for those in wheelchairs, high for those who could stand. I suggested we start with a drawing, have one person

> change it, and then we ask them to tell us what happens next. We started with a man named Eduardo who turned the drawing into a fish. At first it was quiet when Claudia, the ADC director, asked “What happened next?”. Then Mauro yelled out, "I cooked him in onions and oil!" This got the ball rolling. Claudia encouraged other people to come up and start drawing. At one point, Jose, who was sitting in the back by the windows, yelled, “There was a buffalo in the snow with a soldier!” Claudia told him to join us, and he did. He refused to draw, but as the story continued he started speaking to me and said to make the buffalo "wooly”. Jose has been very reticent in the last few weeks and it was good to see him interacting again…. At one point Amelia and Claudia were miming the story like they were walking through the forest, tiptoeing and then screaming.

As the group became more engaged, more people participated. There was much laughter and conversation as some double entendres entered the story. It was obvious that everyone was having fun and it even inspired some flirting. As Liz described it “I think Maria enjoyed the attention and Pedro was having fun flirting. I've never seen either of them smile as much as they did.”

Similar to Davenport’s case, creative engagement resulted in benefits for both the seniors with memory loss, as well as their caregivers. Unexpectedly, for the undergraduate students involved, the Pathways Project also resulted in the transcendence of cultural boundaries, language barriers, and fears about the ability to be effective artists and art educators in this type of setting. While preservice art educators typically understand the sense of hope and joy that many people associate with working with children, the students and I realized that it can be equally engaging and joyful to work with older adults through the co-construction of meaningful experiences.

Implications

Care for older adults with memory loss may begin with efforts to address physical well-being and safety, but creative engagement offers moments of remembering through which artists and art educators can not only help individuals reconstruct identity through the remembrance of specific memories from their lifetimes, but also help people meet higher level needs through remembering feelings of productivity, engagement, and belonging.

Aging and creative engagement is gaining increased attention as an area of growing interest and need as national demographics change and the population grows older. As the population of older adults grows, so does the need to develop strategies for working with older adults with memory loss. We encourage our colleagues in the field of art education to recognize the importance of this juncture and engage in imaginatively reconstructing our professional practices to support the well being of older adults with memory loss.

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The Central Role of Creative Aging

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The Central Role of Creativity in Aging

It possibly was Picasso who said that, as one grows old, life and art become one and the same. From the point of view of an artist like Pablo Picasso, living is the vehicle for the making of art—in fact, longer life gives time for the creation of masterful art![1] More time to live gives more time to practice, to understand, and to gain insight, making one better able to create something new of value, and this is true not just for artists, but for everyone. This position paper explores the creative process and its central role in aging vitally, giving implications for future development in the field of art education.

Whether the creation is an original Picasso, Jonas Salk's discovery of the Polio vaccine, or a successful variation of one's favorite family recipe, it contributes to the individual's self-esteem and society's capacity to move forward.[2] Carl Jung believed creativity to be one of the most important human instincts. Jung noted that creativity, like psychological and spiritual development, is independent of age but fertile ground for aging well[3].

America is graying. In 2010, the United States will have as many people over the age of 65 as there are under the age of 20. The fastest growing percentage of the population is people 85 plus. And, every day, 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 years of age. The American population has gained nearly 30 years of life expectancy since the turn of the 20th century. This demographic shift is due to better education and healthcare. It will not stop with the baby boomers of the 1940s and 50s but is expected to continue with a high percentage of children born in the millennium of the 21st century living to be 100. Opportunities and challenges abound in this demographic sea change. As the adolescence stage was invented at the beginning of the 20th century, longevity is creating the new age between middle age and old age. What this stage of life will include or even be named is still in the formative phase. There is, however, a new phase

of human development, which allows more time to live meaningfully with generative purposes for oneself and community.[4]

In a range of settings, lifelong learning in art education provides health benefits for older people, their families and community at large. Art Education is poised to benefit from this tremendous need for high-quality, cost effective creative activities. All people wish to grow older with dignity, living independent and purposeful lives for as long as possible. The arts are a key variable that provides both meaning and true connection across generations and cultures in this complex demographic change.[5]

The Creative Age

While problems certainly accompany aging, what has been universally denied is the potential around aging. The ultimate expression of potential is creativity.[6] Awakening the human potential in the second half of life, Cohen insisted, is about being creative in using life experiences to invent new ways of living, enabling one to continue to be generative, and to contribute to one's own life and those across generations. He describes creativity as being "little c creativity" or "Big C creativity."[7]

Big C creativity includes contributions to society at large that change its knowledge base and revise structures through discoveries. It includes major works of arts and scientific discoveries that enable society to move forward by, for example, overcoming diseases or social prejudices or developing new technology or belief systems. Big C creativity allows individuals and their communities to decrease suffering and enhances the freedom to live life by producing more time to pursue happiness. From the invention of the printing press to that of the data chip, creativity comes in all shapes and sizes, in which the human experience is amplified to reach new levels of consciousness.[8]

David Galenson, author of *Old Master and Young Geniuses: The Two Life Cycles of Artistic Creativity*, describes two kinds of creative genius: the youthful burst of prodigies like Mozart and the slow and methodical work of a master like Beethoven. Galenson found that the majority of creations come later in life. Through living and experimenting, the artist or scientist gains insights and information that lead to major breakthrough or advances.[9] Charles Darwin, for instance, discovered the animal variation of the Galapagos Islands in his twenties. Yet it took him thirty more years to gain an understanding of this variation and develop the theory of evolution. Big C creativity often takes a lifetime of work to achieve its seminal discoveries, and this makes creativity in later life extremely important.

Little c creativity is exploring and finding potential in new ways of doing everyday activities of work and pleasure. New methods of gardening, cooking, and arts and crafts are often developed from family traditions or stimulated by community settings through social engagement. Many cultures hand down methods of creative expression that define their overall society based on customs related to family, faith, and work, such as the totems of the Northwest or the grass baskets of the South. Improvements in skills and individual interpretation bring new creations to be shared and treasured.

Little c creativity can become Big C creativity as the contributions shape the next generations and inspire further exploration. For example, Mrs. Smith enjoyed growing apples late in life, and she happened upon a seed variation that produced the delicious Granny Smith apple that bears her name today and graces many a lunch box. Julia Child became interested in French cooking in her fifties, and her passion for it drove her to introduce it to America by writing books and appearing in television productions well into her nineties.

Creative expression compounds and amplifies itself, sparking increased self-knowledge and self-esteem. The potential of creative expression does not necessarily diminish with age but can be enhanced by it, through the exploration of personal preferences and environmental opportunities. Like Jung, Cohen describes later life as a time for self-reflection, evaluation, and liberation. The question, "If not now, when?" Cohen says, is the impetus for trying something creative. He explains that age brings freedom; an older person may ask, "What can anyone do to me in any case, if I try and fail?"[10]

There are three key entry points to the engagement by older people in creative expression or activities. An older person can become engaged in creativity for the first time late in life. Alternatively, some older people become engaged in the arts as children or young adults, have to stop because of other demands on their time and energies, and then later in life begin again. Finally, there are older people who have been able to maintain creative pursuits all their lives.

The Beginning Participant

The person who begins in later life to have a strong interest in creative expression is, according to Corbett, accommodating a rebalancing, usually stemming from an internal revelation[11]. In fact, most folk artists and untrained artists (often called "outsider artists") begin making art late in life using their life skills to express a story or image that they feel is important to share. Folk artists feel driven to share their beliefs about their faith or love of the natural environment, or to express the joy of making new things out of useful objects through art making.

The Returning Participant

The person who was once involved in creative activities (such as playing in a school band or singing in a chorus) but discontinued these pursuits as job and family commitments took

priority, often returns to them in later life. Both Corbett and Cohen describe this return as usually accompanied by a loss or a change in life status, perhaps retirement, the death of a spouse or other family member, or the person's own encounter with illness.[12] [13] For this older person, being involved in creativity in later life means returning to an activity that has brought joy and is now bringing comfort and a renewed sense of meaning and purpose.

The Lifelong Participant

The person who has been substantially involved in creative expression throughout his or her life is most often a professional artist or scientist or some kind of innovator in education, policy, or social services. These people found creativity early in life and have kept exploring its paths, while obtaining enough substantial support to maintain it as central to their life's work. These individuals have been identified as role models for successful aging because they stay highly engaged in a larger reality where they do not lose their purpose or meaning. Retirement is not an option, in that they would not choose another way to live and are satisfied with their life choices.

Above Ground

"How are you doing today?" the researcher asks. The 97-year-old artist responds, "Well, I'm above ground." In the research study, "Above Ground: Information on Artists III: Special Focus on New York City Aging Artists," Joan Jeffri writes, "Artists who have learned how to adapt their whole lives have a great deal to offer as a model for society, especially as the work force changes to accommodate multiple careers and as the baby boomers enter the retirement generation."[14] This study interviewed 213 professional visual artists between the ages of 62 and 97 in all five boroughs of New York City and across cultures including English, Spanish, and Chinese. It found remarkable evidence that a life spent making art leads to satisfaction with

oneself and one's career choice. Despite a low average income (approximately $30,000 annually) and discrimination because of age, gender, and sometimes an artist's discipline, these older people displayed remarkable resilience. They visited with their artist peers at least weekly and sold works continually. They found ways to adapt their artmaking when their physical abilities weakened. For instance, if a chosen medium (such as stone-carving) became too difficult to continue, the artist might turn to ceramics as a less demanding way to create sculpture. To give up making art was not an option taken. When asked about retirement, the older artists responded that to retire from making art would be for them retiring from life itself.

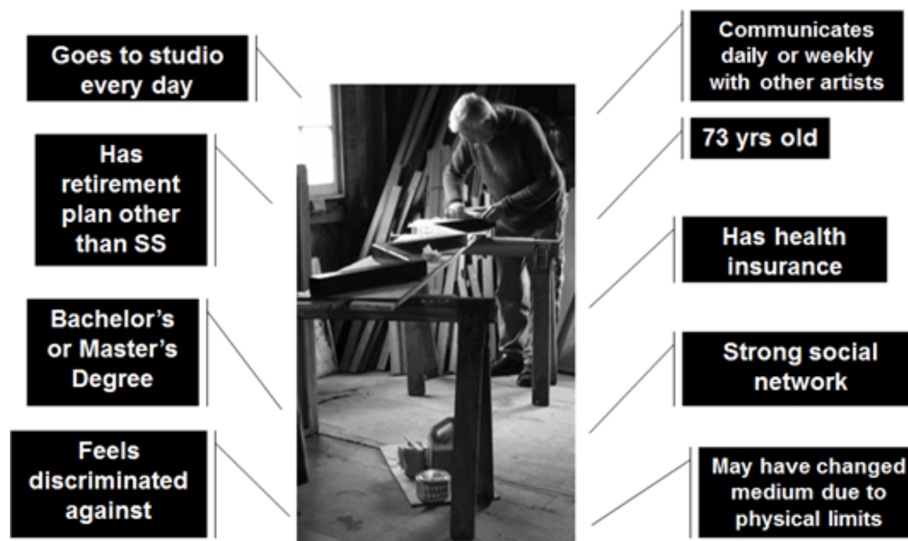

Figure 1: Profile of an older artist. Photo courtesy of the Research Center for Arts and Culture

A Framework for Accessing Creative Potential in Later Life: Policy, Research, and Practice

In March 2011, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, convened leaders from the public and private sectors to explore the relationship between the arts, health, and wellbeing. Rocco Landesman, the NEA Chair at the time, opened the summit asking, "How do the arts help build us as a people and as

individuals? We share a fundamental mission: how to improve the quality of life. The arts are central to human development."[15] Human development encompasses a complex web of factors affecting the health and wellbeing of individuals across the lifespan. Together, these factors yield cognitive and behavioral outcomes that can shape the social and economic circumstances of individuals, their levels of creativity and productivity, and their overall quality of life.[16]

This summit focused on three key developmental areas: early childhood, youth, and older adulthood. The section "The Arts and Older Adults" made the case for arts participation because of its optimization of health outcomes through creative expression and cognitive enhancement, imagination and arts processes related to Alzheimer's disease and neurocognitive disorders, and building community and strong social networks.[17] From the summit, an intergovernmental task force developed and produced a subsequent workshop focusing solely on research on the arts and aging, "The Arts and Aging: Building the Science," convened in September 2012.

This workshop was produced by the National Academies of Sciences and focused on research gaps and the opportunities for exploring the relationship of the arts to the health and wellbeing of older people. Presentations illustrated exciting possibilities for the therapeutic use of the arts as interventions to improve cognitive function and memory, general self esteem, and wellbeing, as well as to reduce stress and other common symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and other neurocognitive disorders (such as aggression, agitation, and apathy). Some interventions were found to promote psychosocial benefits as well. Interventions reviewed in the five papers presented at the workshop included music, theatre, dance, and visual arts, with a strong focus on environmental design, especially the use of universal design to accommodate various physical and cognitive disabilities.[18]

Early studies are being replicated and expanded to further confirm findings that community arts program have a significant positive impact of the health and wellbeing of older people. A key study focusing on chorales and using a control group of equally active people with a mean age of 80 found that health significantly improved during a three-year period. The key findings were that, compared to the control group, less medication was used, less depression was recorded, and greater social interaction occurred.[19] Based on these results, possible savings in Medicare Part B expenditures in the billions of dollars were projected. A national taskforce is continuing with the aim of encouraging further research and policy changes that could result in increased funding despite the dire economic environment in the governmental sector.

Creativity in Later Life for Health and Wellbeing, Lifelong Learning, and Community Engagement

From the grassroots activism of the 1970s, when Robert Butler wrote "Why Survive? Growing Old in America,"[20] to the macro governmental systems of the twenty-first century with an asset-based focus on the benefits of creativity in later life, accessibility to the arts and other creative opportunities are evolving into communities of practice. Creativity supports increased health and wellbeing, lifelong learning, and community engagement. Professional practice in arts education has unprecedented opportunities to grow the field through developing support services in lifelong learning, health and wellness, and community engagement. The final section of this paper identifies ways in which creative expression can positively and significantly impact the older person, and his or her family, and community. Each area of practice is not mutually exclusive, but builds and reinforces the others in something of a Maslow hierarchal structure.

Health and Wellbeing

Health and wellness in later life certainly mean staying active by living a robust physical, social, and spiritual life. Later life is a time of reflection that should bring the resolution of past failures and a celebration of accomplishments, integrating one's life story. This is crucial to successful aging through, in Jung's term, the arc of life.

Physical health becomes more dependent on nurture in later life. The casual engagement in physical activities by youth gives way to the imperative of the body-mind connections of later life. Through creative activities the mind, body, and spirit can be renewed and refreshed. One can dance, sing, recite poetry, or act in a play, tapping all senses and engaging the body in movement. The brain processes new information and solves new problems, while the spirit's reflections provide content for meaningful expressions that build self-knowledge and a legacy to share with others.

Community-based programs such as those involved in field-tested studies, including Elders Share the Arts (Brooklyn, New York); Encore Chorale (Greater Washington, D.C.); and the Center for Elders and Youth in the Arts (San Francisco, California), are accessible to older adults with different abilities and economic status and encourage vibrant healthy living in later life. Programs like these are being developed around the country but are still the exception. Older adults who have significantly compromised cognitive abilities because of chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's can access the arts through highly innovative programs such as Time*Slips*, Songwriting Works, Alzheimer's Poetry Project, and the MoMA Alzheimer's Project. These programs focus on imagination rather than memory to create common experiences between people with cognitive disability and their family, caregivers, and the community at large, enabling them to retain meaning and purpose in later life as well.

Figure 2: Creating Poems with Alzheimer's Poetry Project. Photo by Elizabeth Thomas.

Lifelong Learning

As cited from Corbett, the misconceptions about later life learning have been part of the view of aging as relentless decline. With the discovery at the end of the twentieth century of late-in-life neurogenesis, what we thought to be true about the inability of older people to learn new things has been scientifically refuted, but these stereotypes still persist in society. As mentioned earlier, many artists and scientists, who have made creative pursuits their life professions, have always defied the aging stereotypes by producing the majority of their best work in later life. Because the mind, the body, and spiritual connections are involved in creative expression, solving the mysteries of bringing new identities into existence, the brain is fully stimulated to regenerate itself and grow. It does not matter if it is a Big C creation or a little c creation: the positive benefits are the same.

The major challenge to providing lifelong learning is finding ways for people to access community programming. While opportunities exist, there is little infrastructure through which

one can easily find classes that cater to adults, much less creative programs for older adults in such things as visual arts, music, dance, writing, and drama.[21]

Higher education classes (credit and non-credit) exist but are not uniformly open to helping adults build new skills for new jobs or life enrichment. Osher Lifelong Learning centers, which include the arts, are being established across the country through university partnerships. Oasis programs are offered in retirement or community centers. Classes based in arts organizations such as museums and theatres are finding a new market in lifelong learners. Summer camps for older adults are growing, such as Chautauqua and similar programs. One of the earliest educational services for older people, Elder Hostels, is gaining attention and increased participation. Distance learning opportunities for those with cognitive impairments are being designed by major museums such as the Cleveland Museum, where museum educators can work directly with caregivers to provide innovative programs based on the museum collection. Older distance learning programs such as Dorot use the telephone in a low-tech, high-touch way to bring quality enrichment programs to older people, especially those in underserved areas. Senior Center without Walls brings many programs to older people in a virtual way as well. Overall, the potential market is huge, but currently business plans mostly target those with economic means. As Corbett wrote, successful aging in this country pivots on social status and economic means.

Figure 3: Man leading dance class. Photo courtesy of Stagebridge Senior Theatre.

Community Engagement

Health and wellness coupled with lifelong learning enhance more than the individual and his or her family. If successful, these two protocols for aging with integrity produce, as Corbett[22], Cohen[23], and Jung[24] wrote, wisdom. This wisdom influences neighborhoods, communities, and society at large by creating social capital. The functional work of bringing wisdom into community is creativity.[25]

Social capital has the largely untapped potential of being built through the late-in-life creative age. This involves the mature genius of lifelong innovators such as artists and scientists as well as the contributions of late-in-life community volunteers (as Marc Friedman describes in his books, *Encore*[26] and *The Big Shift*[27]). Late-in-life wisdom can be applied creatively to solve intractable problems such as school delinquency and food shortages, and it can lead to the renewal of underutilized community resources such as parks, libraries, and other public spaces.

Corbett wrote about the Gray Panthers in the 1970s dedicating themselves to changing the paradigm of older people consuming resources into one where the older person produces

resources.[28] Wisdom and creativity are central to this kind of resource development. As we have thirty more years to live than our predecessors of the twentieth century, the potential to gain from the active engagement of older people in community life is exponential.

Figure 4: Beautiful Mind. Photo courtesy of DSM.

Conclusion

In summary, creativity does play a central role in aging well. Creative engagement has benefits to the individual and society at large. It builds the infrastructure for an individual to gain self-knowledge and wisdom internally, as well as ways to tap the potential of the enlightened individual for the benefit of the community. Creativity comes in all forms, from the profound to the whimsical, and can be used at will throughout the lifespan. It is particularly important in later life, a time of reflection and rebalancing as one moves toward the end of the arc of life. Gaps exist in providing access to creative opportunities because of a lack of services to older adults, despite the potential market for programs promoting health and wellness, lifelong learning, and community engagement. The disparities between individuals based on social status

and economic means constitute barriers for all successful aging initiatives, including the utilization of creative programs. However, because of the instinctual nature of creative expression, given society's growing attention to the benefits of these activities in later life, with little means but self-direction, time, and a safe and supportive environment, creativity can flourish. The field of art education needs to embrace this demographic change related to longevity as a prime area of concentration for the future in research, policy and practice.

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