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Running Head: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

An Autoethnographic Journey through Craftivism: Making with/for Meaning

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

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Richmond, Virginia  
October 7, 2019

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## Acknowledgment

There are several individuals I would like to acknowledge, whose help, guidance, and support will never be forgotten. It was in late January or early February 2015; I made a phone call to Dr. Sara Wilson McKay. She and I spoke at some length about the new PhD program at VCU for Art Education. I was at the end of one program already and she asked if I would be willing to start over from the beginning of a new program. My response was, I would be willing to start at the beginning. Her kindness and support has meant the world to me through this journey. When I began again at VCU the first faculty member I worked with was Dr. Pamela Lawton. Within the first moments of meeting her I had absolutely no doubts I wanted to work with her as my journey took off. It has been her support, encouragement, and listening to my endless chatter that I find myself now at the end of one journey and the beginning of another. I try, but really no words can truly capture how much I appreciate all Pam has done for me. It was when I took ARTE703 with Dr. Courtnie Wolfgang that I realized I do not know anything and my world was turned upside down, sideways, my mind was stretched, pulled, pushed, and has never been the same. I try to always use what I learned and to continue learning with an openness I realized in her class. I make mistakes and will probably continue to do so but in the back of my mind there is a Dr. Courtnie Wolfgang questioning all I do in order to be the best I can be in all I do. It was

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Last but NEVER least, I dedicate my dissertation to my husband Henry Quiroz, my children Carney Quiroz and Quinn Quiroz without your support, love, and never-ending encouragement none of this would have been.

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# AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

## **Abstract**

### AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM: MAKING WITH/FOR MEANING

By Virginia H. Brinn,

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2019

Major Director: Dr. Pamela Lawton, Associate Professor, Department of Art Education, School of the Arts

Through this dissertation, I set out to investigate how craftivism as a way of making with/for meaning might foster transformative experiences within the discipline of art education. My motivating questions for this research project as I began my qualitative process follow. In what ways does my art making inform my teaching practice? How do both my art and teaching practice inform my research practice? In what ways does my feminist identity impact these practices, ways of thinking and knowing, and the process of becoming who I am? And why is this research relevant to the field of art education? Given the nature of my research questions, I employed qualitative methods to critically explore, research, gather data, analyze, to better understand my place within making with/for meaning and to ultimately discuss my findings.

**CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**



*Figure 1.1.* Voice lost. Photograph of author circa 1978. This image illustrates my feelings of inadequacies. The feeling of not having a voice, being unheard and not good enough for any endeavors I might try.

As a self-identified artist-educator-researcher, I take a holistic approach to art education (Lawton, 2012). Each of these identities informs the others and the questions I ask myself in the process of moving through my research journey. For example, after seeing me knit at school, my students wanted to learn, so I taught a unit on knitting. I had my students start their knitting projects by creating their own knitting needles before even casting on their first stitches. For me, this step was a way to have them come to a deeper understanding of knitting and creating. It was also my hope students were better

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

able to appreciate the time, thought, and care involved in creating an object made solely by hand. Capitalism creates consumption of mass-made objects. Mass production sometimes creates depreciation of and forgotten knowledge about handmade items. According to anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake (1995), humans have a deep need to create, to make special, to decorate, and to claim as our own through the act of creation. In the process of *making special*, many humans intentionally make otherwise ordinary items unique by incorporating artistic elements such as patterns and color, creating a self-pleasing aesthetic for the senses (Carroll, 1998; Dissanayake, 1995). It is important to embrace the notion of *making special* and with it, the meaning that goes into making (Carroll, 1998; Dissanayake, 1995). If we lose the ability to recognize the meaning that often goes into making special, we may also lose part of what makes us human. Before embarking on this research journey, I forgot about my own need to create.

I remember sitting in a doctoral seminar listening to my professor's retelling of a trip to the local science museum where a model train exhibition was on view. According to the professor, many of the exhibitors identified as male. The professor recalled the discussion among trip participants; some considered *craft* feminine but *hobby* masculine. In my mind, the story triggered thoughts about how makers/artists were shattering, transforming, and rebuilding definitions of hobby, art, craft, and notions of gender in a more inclusive manner. This inclusivity involved the stripping away of gendered ideas, allowing for more voices to be heard, voices that perhaps had been shut down. This was also the beginning of my rebirth. I walked away from a program of study in which there were many separations for me and returned to a place where I

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studied as an undergraduate and was encouraged to rethink and rebuild what I thought I already knew. The institution I left did not openly encourage my personal art practice; only the educator-researcher self seemed to be valued. I found myself shattered and broken, seeking a place that would accept and appreciate me as an artist-educator-researcher. The literal place I moved into not only encouraged my artist self but demanded that I practice all parts of myself as a whole. I was able to freely practice and explore my need to create, and my response to this new need began to feel natural for me. This is where my journey of self changed from comfortable to uncomfortable, from what I thought and had been told was right or correct to freedom of thought and the ability to explore.

The seeds for my journey of self were planted from before I can even remember; my ancestors were creators and makers. They crossed time and space, leaving pieces of themselves through their creations and teaching their craft(s)<sup>1</sup> to successive generations. There is an afghan my great-grandmother made that was passed to my sister; she displays it on her guest bed, ready to keep off the chill. I have a set of old chairs made with hand-embroidered cushions that my grandmother stitched (Figure 2). Each of the items carefully created by my ancestors reminds those of us who remain of the role handicraft played in making our lives special and our surroundings beautiful. As I knit, I think of these women and the love and care embodied in the craftworks they left behind. I think of my grandmother who learned to craft from her mother. Crafts have passed from one generation to the next in my family, and in teaching my children I

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<sup>1</sup> Handmade objects both functional and decorative made from and with fibers define the use of the word craft(s) for this study.

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continue the tradition. I remember growing up surrounded by creative people, but I never imagined that I was creative as well.



*Figure 1.2.* Grandmom's seat cushions. Photograph of seat cushion embroidered by my grandmother. This seat cushion illustrates the passing down of handmade objects that are special. This is one of the first hand embroidered pieces made by my grandmother. I remember her telling me that she wanted to make these cushions as special pieces.

As far back as I can remember, the women in my life were making clothing and afghans for warmth while simultaneously making my world more colorful and special. I remember as a young child sitting on the floor of the house I grew up in watching one of my grandmothers crochet something. I do not remember exactly what she was making. I just remember the crochet hook and yarn coming together to make something. I also

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

remember a large closet in the house that was overflowing with fabric, in all different colors and textures. My mother had a stash of fabric always at her fingertips to create clothing, accessories, and other functional items made special because they were one of a kind and made with love and kindness, care, and much thought. My mother made clothes primarily for economic reasons, as she had the fabric and it made sense to make the clothes instead of purchasing ready-made objects that were not made with care in details or thought of lasting. The handmade clothes would last longer; they were more economical, and I hated them. These items my mother made out of financial need, with love, especially for me---I loathed. I did not understand at the time the love, care, and the making special my mother put into these garments, nor did I fully grasp the financial stress she felt. As I grew older I began creating and making objects. My mother taught me to sew, and I began making some of my own clothing. I now cherish the items that were and are made special because they are items created and made by hand, an extension of the maker's feelings. I now know that there is a place for craft, for sharing, for caring, for making with/for meaning. My conceptualization of making with/for meaning is two-fold, recognizing the intent behind the process of making and the thinking involved during the act of making. The intent and process of making are influenced by emotions, needs, and what is valued in the self and others, and it is through the making ideas happen (Anderson, 2004; Sullivan, 2002).

Making with/for meaning knits together with craftivism; for example, as I plan a creative project, I have a specific intention, such as making an article of clothing for my children to keep them warm or to decorate their space. Craftivism is the merging of the words craft and activism in which craftwork(s) create disruptions from our everyday



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existence, whether by calling attention to small acts of kindness or large-scale political issues (Greer, 2014). Betsy Greer (2014) describes the core of craftivism as creating a thing of meaning that in turn leads individuals to question. As an artist-educator, I witnessed acts of craftivism open spaces for students to make with/for meaning with the potential to impact communities. I saw this through my own work in my course Introduction to Art Education with a group of students who created embroidered messages of positivity for strangers to find. As a class, we began by talking about the possibilities of positive messaging after watching the video *Sara Corbett: Should Craftivism Be Fun* (frank gathering at University of Florida, 2018). In the video, Sara Corbett spoke about how often a positive protest message can be more difficult to share than a negative one. I had students think about this concept for a while, and we agreed that often the first response upon hearing or reading the word *protest* is negative. I then had the students create a positive message to embroider on a piece of fabric. Then they left their positive protest message in a publicly accessible area for strangers to find (Figure 1.3). It was our collective hope to spread positive messages and good-natured feelings with others. Feedback from students was good as we talked in class about the project once it was completed. They indicated they would use this form of craftivist thinking in their future classrooms. As an artist-educator-researcher, every curricular choice is a political act (hooks, 1994). For example, my decision to have students rethink words they hear and how they understand the meaning of these words is a political act on my part because I am asking them to reconsider their knowledge. Through craftivism, the curriculum may be reconceptualized, motivating students to make with/for meaning at a deeper level and become active participants within their

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communities and beyond.<sup>2</sup> The assignment I gave my students, to craft positive messages for strangers to encounter is an example of this. Through my research on craftivism, I felt shifts within my teaching and art making, leading to a desire to explore the impact of craftivism on my practice holistically and the potential effects craftivism may have on reconceptualizing art education curriculum.



*Figure 1.3.* Craftivist works. Photograph collage illustrating the craftivist works made by my students. These craftivist works were made as objects to be discovered by other students as they went about their business on campus. The objective was to make something positive for another to create a moment of disruption and a place to think.

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<sup>2</sup> My notion of a reconceptualized art education curriculum insists that making with and for meaning are one holistic process; that is, never an either/or activity. It is through the intention to make, the process of thinking, and the questioning through rethinking that I envision a reconceptualized art education as craftivist pedagogy.

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The passing down of craft and the concept of making with/for meaning is not unique to me. Other art educators have also written about making with/for meaning. Olivia Gude (2008) writes about aesthetics as making meaning through art. Julia Marshall (2010) speaks to making meaning through contemporary art and arts integration. Tom Anderson (2004) pulls together meaning making and reasoning--drives behind making art. All of these individuals speak to making art with and for meaning. The differences in my work are the lived experiences I draw upon to make sense of my world and my understanding of knowledge that is unique to me. During acts of making I have many thoughts and feelings, both positive and negative, and it is through my knowledge I am making sense of and building new knowledge. However, most often my stitches are made with love, as I am thinking of those who have created for me. As I create, I think about who I am making an object for and how they are a part of my world. All of these thoughts and intentions spin together to create fibers of meaning for me that are then knitted together, creating an object that has been made with/for meaning. As I make, it is from a place of intention and careful thought; I make with/for meaning. The need to make never left my inner self. I make with a desire to better understand and perhaps even to harness a little bit of myself to share with others (Dissanayake, 1995).

As an educator, I seek to reconceptualize art education curriculum as living, fluid, and transformative—I seek “critical self-reflection that leads to new assumptions, beliefs and ways of seeing the world” (Cranton, 1994, p. xii)—through the use of making with/for meaning. "For artmaking to be meaningful, one needs motivation to engage and persist at a task that leads to the self-construction of knowledge and meaning-making" (Lawton, 2012, p. 170). Meaningfulness itself involves metacognitive reflection on the

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activity taking place in order to absorb and process knowledge of others and self (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007; Lawton, 2012). I sifted through my metacognition while actively making with/for meaning, recording my self-reflexive thoughts, and the reflective nature of making with/for meaning to get at the core of the meaning that transpires while making. Using both autoethnographic and arts-based research methods, I holistically examined my journey of self through my experience(s), ways of knowing myself, and making with/for meaning as an artist-educator-researcher (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997; Klein, 2008; Lawton, 2012).

Fiber arts have historically been seen as women's work, a lesser, gendered art form, not worthy of attention in the male-dominated art world (Author, 2010; Elinor, Richardson, Scott, Thomas & Walker, 1987; Parker, 2010; Parker & Pollock, 1981). The stereotype of craft as a lesser art form comes from its perceived convenience—that it could easily be done while tending to household tasks (Barber, 1995). As women were typically cast in the role of homemaker, the gendering of craft emerged. Women gathered in groups such as quilting bees or knitting circles to socialize, and while in these groups, women felt free to talk about politics and other issues not perceived as feminine. As such, crafts became a means for engaging in activism and drawing attention to marginalized groups; together, these activities became the foundation for craftivism (Barber, 1994; Macdonald, 1988; Parker, 2016).

Craftivists are activists who create works of art in response to social justice concerns as a form of activism. Craftivists engage with the public, creating community-based artworks for social reform, demonstrating art making with purpose—making with/for meaningful change. Knitted and crocheted pussy hats worn by thousands of

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supporters at women's rights marches are an example of craftivism and how such craftivism can start as a small action but grow into an internationally recognized symbol. Not without controversy, the pussy hat has come to symbolize, for some, white feminism, rather than intersectional feminism (Brewer & Dundes, 2018). The symbol of the pink pussy hat shuts out women of color by using pink as the color of choice to represent all women's genitalia, nor is the hat inclusive of transwomen (Brewer & Dundes, 2018). The pink pussy hat, even if it is not representative of intersectional feminism, does illustrate how quickly acts of craftivism can grow from the work of an individual to a large-scale movement.

Yarnbombing is another means by which craftivists relay their message. Yarnbombings are created with knitted or crocheted works stitched together to cover a surface or object, usually outdoors in a public space, with a particular message in mind. Yarnbombing is a type of graffiti or street art that is ephemeral and can be easily removed, unlike painting directly on a surface. Artists such as Olek (n.d.) and the Yarnbomber (n.d.) usually create large installations with the help of other crafters. Both artists put out calls for crafters to help with large-scale projects that they themselves cannot get completed quickly. For example, Olek put out a call for help from individuals crocheting pieces for a billboard of Hillary Clinton in New York after she lost the 2016 election. It was through Olek's call that the yarnbombed billboard was able to be revealed within a short span of time. The Yarnbomber has similarly put out requests for individuals to send crocheted works that he can use in his installations. Individuals who are interested and want to help with knitting and/or crocheting for craftivist artists have an opportunity to amplify their voice in a public space, collaborate with others through

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collective action, express their thoughts about specific issues, and become a part of something larger than themselves. I began to notice how craftivism such as yarnbombing creates a space in which more introverted individuals like myself can speak out in a visual manner (Olek, n.d.; the Yarnbomber, n.d.).

Learning about the work within craft of Ellen Gates Starr (1859-1940) at Hull House helped to fuel my curiosity regarding the uses of craft. My ideas of craft and making with/for meaning began to change; I went from thinking that my own work was not important to realizing my work has meaning for myself as well as others. There is a long history of craft and making with/for meaning that helped fuel my inquiry. Through her work with Hull House in Chicago, Ellen Gates Starr employed craft as a means of social reform (Archer, 2011; Trolander, 1982). Starr's work at Hull House and her inclusion of craft from the neighborhood inspired me and helped validate my practice of creating and making through craft.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Through this study, I investigate how craftivism as a means of making with/for meaning might foster transformative experiences within the discipline of art education. By exploring my own journey of self<sup>3</sup>, my goal was to gain a deeper understanding of craftivism and the possibilities for a living, fluid, and transformative curriculum via making with/for meaning. The following research questions were my guide through my journey of self:

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<sup>3</sup> My journey of self refers to my exploration of the things that make me the art educator I am now and what has come to shape my thinking as I moved forward.

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- In what ways do both my art and teaching practice inform my research practice?
- In what ways does my art making inform my teaching practice?
- How does my feminist identity affect these practices, ways of thinking and knowing, and my journey as an artist-educator-researcher?
- Can a reconceptualized art education curriculum emerge from making with/for meaning?
- Why is this research relevant to the field of art education?

There are common threads that weave individuals together and as such, there may be ways to harness a conceptualization of craftivist curriculum for use in art education curriculum. By investigating myself within the cultural phenomena of craftivism, making with/for meaning, and connecting the past and present through my own narrative, connections may emerge to transform and reconceptualize art education curriculum. Through my study, other artist-educator-researchers in the field of art education will be able to see the value of reflexive praxis, which is thinking about one's theoretical framework and how that framework impacts one's practice in the moment toward designing an emerging arts curriculum (Schön, 1983).

### **Conceptual Framework**

I find myself constantly rethinking, reevaluating, and reworking myself as I reflect on my thoughts and experiences. My thinking shifts with each (re)discovery of knowledge, both old and new. It is through a growing awareness of my feminist way(s) of knowing that I am better able to locate myself through my journey (Ahmed, 2017; Belenky et al., 1997; Harding, 1991; Lerner, 1993). I honestly never thought of myself

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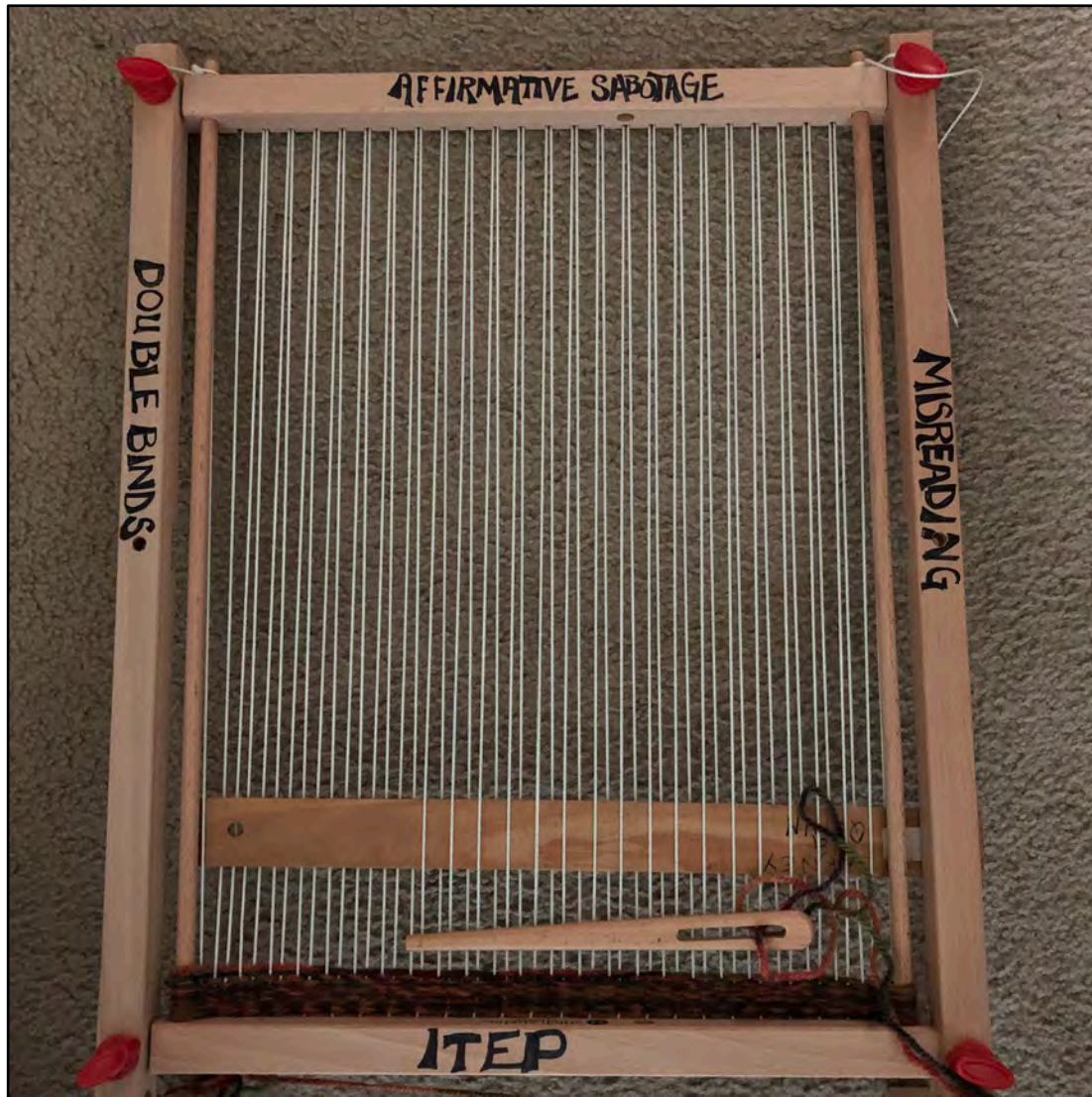
as a feminist until a moment of disruption when I began to understand what feminism might be. The disruption in my mind that made me realize I was a feminist occurred as I was reading and examining works by education scholar Maxine Greene (1995, 2001). Greene's (1995) question "and who are 'they,' the anonymous ones who have established themselves in control" (p. 46) resonated with me. It dawned on me that I, too, have a voice. Further discussions with peers and professors increased my self-confidence and self-worth and encouraged me to speak in oral, visual, and written form. With the realization that I have a voice, a narrative to tell, and knowledge to share, I began to embrace feminism as the lens through which I experience the world around me and make sense of that world.

My conceptual framework is informed by the scholarship of Gayatri Spivak's (2012) affirmative sabotage, misreading, double binds, and imaginative training for epistemological performance (ITEP). Affirmative sabotage is the rethinking of curriculum in regards to the importance of educating minds within the humanities allowing for the use of imagination to ignite possibilities; it is through making with/for meaning this way of thinking can occur (Spivak, 2012). Misreading is the bringing of knowledge we carry within ourselves to life in order to make meaning as well as to build new knowledge from what is learned (Spivak, 2012). Double binds are the contradictions humans face at all times, creating the need within us to make decisions constantly, on both a conscious and unconscious level (Spivak, 2012). Finally, ITEP is a new way of thinking, not new things to think about; therefore, ITEP is the actual transformation of one's thinking to see the possibilities within and from the imagination (Spivak, 2012). ITEP is the most difficult concept to capture in practice because of its ephemeral nature; it is



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difficult if not impossible to capture in terms of validity, because others outside of self must witness if a change has taken place for a change to be acknowledged.



*Figure 1.4.* Conceptual framework beginnings. The loom illustrates my conceptual framework as the journey of self began. I imagine my data as the thread being woven back and forth on the loom. The thread becomes the knowledge growing from the process of data collection and data analysis and the working of the old and new knowledge being created as I work.

## Methodology

I explored my experiences within craftivism and making with/for meaning through autoethnography and arts-based data collection methods.<sup>4</sup> I collected data through journal reflections of my craftwork with and for my children, my personal art-making practice, and teaching my preservice art education students. I was curious to explore where my journey of self would take me. The practice of engaging with craft and making with/for meaning revealed a space in which making with/for meaning and craftivism intertwined to make possible an impact within art education curriculum. The often-repetitive nature of craftwork creates a meditative quality to craftivism that stimulates deep reflection and has the potential to foster transformative learning spaces that, in turn, may lead to new ways of thinking (Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013).

My explorations with craftivism: making with/for meaning led me to consider the need for reconceptualizing art education curriculum (to teach with/for meaning through craft). A curriculum reconceptualized can become a place of action where the curriculum is no longer just a noun. It becomes a verb as it includes the teacher's experiences as artist-researcher as well as those of the students as meaning makers through art (Pinar, 2012). There is a meditative space for me while making with/for meaning where deep reflection takes place. In turn, these reflections have the ability to create transformative learning spaces in which new ways of thinking and seeing can lead to possibilities. Spaces of teaching and learning should be flexible so that both teacher knowledge and student knowledge work in conjunction to co-construct new

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<sup>4</sup> It was through my reflections after reading works by James Rolling (2014, 2018), Patricia Leavy (2015, 2018), and others that I began to see connections woven between autoethnography and arts-based methods. My methods weave together; this is a journey of self and as such I cannot separate my processes.

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knowledge. Transformative moments can occur when teachers and students share knowledge, process knowledge, and make sense of knowledge together—and then return again to the sharing of knowledge. Instead of perpetuating the same conceptualizations as those that have come before, teachers and students need to allow for new and oftentimes differing views and ideas to continue the process of knowledge building.

I employed self-reflexivity to critically explore and understand my place within the phenomena of craftivism: making with/for meaning. Self-reflexivity is a process of theoretical understanding that occurs in the moment of actions, while self-reflection occurs afterward (Faulkner, Kaunert, Kluch, Koc, & Trotter, 2016). It was through both self-reflexivity and self-reflection that I conducted my research (Faulkner et al., 2016). I analyzed and made sense of data collected using autoethnographic and arts-based methods to posit a space for others to make connections and knit together further spaces for transformation. Each of my research questions guided me on a path toward locating where I was within the greater context of making with/for meaning and the sociocultural space in which I reside. I explored my questions and how they can affect and extend art education curriculum. By turning the lens back onto myself as the researcher, I was better able to reflect on and analyze my findings, positing a curriculum within art education in which acts of craftivism: making with/for meaning can play a significant role.

## **Organization**

The introduction is the beginning, a base to build upon. In knitting, the cast on row is the foundation on which the rest of the project will emerge. The literature was my casting on, the foundation of my work. After casting on, the following rows of knitting set the stage for patterns to emerge, and the project became what it was meant to be. The second row, methodology, illustrates the process. The third row, findings and discussion, evolved from the first three chapters and show the patterns and textures that emerged from my research journey of self. Finally, the last row, conclusions, leads to possibilities for future growth and research.

## **Limitations**

Autoethnography is a form of research in which the researcher's narrative is presented to engage a wide audience, connect with individuals on a personal level, and take individuals with whom the research has connected to a place where they can think more deeply about their place and space within the research (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Ettore, 2017). The nature of qualitative research is highly subjective, and the researcher must acknowledge limitations and assumptions made, particularly around generalizable knowledge.

My research methodology, autoethnography, is a journey of self where I explored what made me the art educator I am now, and now report the research as a narrative (Ellis et al., 2011; Ettore, 2017). Given the highly subjective nature of autoethnographic research and my role as both researcher and researched, I must conduct my study in a highly transparent manner (Chang, 2003; Ellis et al., 2011; Ettore, 2017; Leavy, 2017). I must question, analyze, and report my findings perhaps with even more rigor than other

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methodologies require. I must make clear and account for the underlying assumptions that I make throughout my entire research process. My journey of self, directed by my questions, led me to where I find myself now as an artist, educator, student, researcher, and self-identified woman. Some important assumptions to keep in mind for my research are:

### **Assumptions Made by Me Within My Research**

- There is a historical conceptualization of handicraft as women's work, and craft as an art form is seldom viewed in the same light as fine arts.
- There is a need for art education curriculum to be reconceptualized and become more fluid.
- Despite debate about the validity and rigor of autoethnographic and arts-based research, I assert that it holds value for the field of art education.

### **Assumptions Visited by Me within My Research**

- Making with/for meaning embodies merits of making special through craft, handiwork, and art making as a form of celebrating and making connections.
- Inquiry via a personal journey of self presents an opportunity to make connections and comparisons others may follow on their own journey(s) of self. Such journeys create impactful, dynamic, and fluid spaces for teaching and curriculum design.
- There is a need for a broader conceptualization of art education curriculum to include making with/for meaning through craftivism.

In the following chapters, I will lead the reader through my journey of self as I examined my research questions and explored the potential for a living, fluid, and

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transformative art education curriculum through craft/craftivism: making with/for meaning.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### My Story

I am a teacher of art education.

I teach people of all ages and enjoy every moment of being a teacher.

I am a mother who is tired and wants to create.

I want to make, discover, communicate and find meaning through art.

I find myself reflecting constantly upon my practice and question all that I know.

Language often escapes the ability to fully illuminate what I want to share.

I find that I must look not only to that which surrounds me but also to that which is inside me.

I must do the work of becoming, and in doing so emerge and transform.

I want to share with others the ability to embrace the act of becoming.

I am a critical feminist who believes previously suppressed voices should be heard.

Learning is a democratic process in which all voices are equal.

I believe that learning environments should provide spaces for and encourage transformation.

Through these beliefs, self-reflexive praxis, and the metacognitive aspects of my journey toward

becoming, I hope to shape an emerging curriculum theory that will contribute to a living, fluid

and transformative curricular space within art education.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As I began writing my journey of self I wrote stream of consciousness prose to assist me in critical self-reflection on my arts-based research. Each of these works became the epigraph for my chapters. This epigraph sets the stage for my working through readings for the literature review that follows. It illuminates my thoughts as I work through the knowledge I gather from reading. It shows who I am and who I am becoming as I work my way through the process of autoethnography.

## **Organization**

To build the foundation for my study, I begin with the historical underpinnings of craft at Hull House, specifically Ellen Gates Starr's work with craft and the community. I will then speak to my ways of knowing through a feminist lens. I then work my way through ways of knowing and understanding knowledge because this is intricately woven through my journey of self. I then move to how my way(s) of knowing knits together within craftivism and art education. Then, through the history emerges the newer contemporary thought of craft + activism = craftivism (Greer, 2014) and the possibilities of craftivism and art education.

## **Settlement Houses and Craft**

Toynbee Hall, the first settlement house, was located in London and founded by Reverend Samuel Barnett in 1884. The success of Toynbee Hall spread throughout Europe to North America and was a model for the development of the famed Hull House of Chicago (Abel, 1979; Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003; Reinders, 1982). The underlying conceptualization of the settlement house movement was to create a more connected community in which neighbors worked together for the good of all individuals (Yan, Lauer, & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016). The settlement house movement in North America facilitated social change by creating a more compassionate and democratic society through education (Flinders & Thornton, 2009).

Toynbee Hall provided an organizational model for Jane Addams and her partner Ellen Gates Starr (Archer, 2011). The underlying purpose of Hull House and other North American settlement houses was to create a space for social reformers of the time to improve the lives of the working poor through educational opportunities (Archer, 2011;



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Trolander, 1982; Yan, Lauer, & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016). Hull House sought to expose the oppression that was the reality of the working poor, specifically immigrants.

Crafts/handiworks were often used as a way to connect with the surrounding community (Archer, 2011). At Hull House, members of the community developed the means to describe their oppression through education. Starr created a space to speak out against the oppression (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003; Flinders & Thornton, 2009; Hoy, 2010; Reinders, 1982). Ellen Gates Starr worked to create spaces for social expression through her work at Hull House, this social expression was through forms of protest such as picketing due to the working conditions individuals faced from the surrounding neighborhood to expression of one's self through the creation of handicrafts (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003; Starr, 2010). Spaces for reform created through Starr's work at Hull House are similar in nature to the epistemological framework woven throughout feminist pedagogy whereby praxis allows for an awareness of oppression to develop, creating opportunities for social change (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003; Starr, 2010).

Ellen Gates Starr came from a family with a strong feminist background and in which the arts were valued. Her father was a supporter of women's suffrage, women's rights, and equal education for all (Stankiewicz, 1989). When Starr was growing up, art education was a luxury that could only be afforded by the wealthy. According to Stankiewicz (1989), Ellen Gates Starr wanted to have a life where she could make a contribution to society. This is evident in her work at Hull House in Chicago. Starr began using fine art prints as a way to decorate, teach, and expose individuals living around Hull House to great works of art and was focused on helping those at Hull House in the development of an aesthetic sensibility (Archer, 2011; Stankiewicz, 1989). When Hull

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House workers were planning their first expansion, Reverend Samuel Barnett, a founder of Toynbee Hall, spoke about how fine art exposure was invaluable to those who were less fortunate and might not otherwise have access to fine art (Stankiewicz, 1989). This characterization of the people served by Hull House as less fortunate is troublesome in that it implicitly demands assimilation by those being served and creates an opportunity for the mostly upper class women running the house to embody a savior mentality (Yan, Lauer, & Riaño-Alcalá, 2016). However, Starr grew more interested in how art could be used for social reform within the community, thus making way for the immigrants' handicrafts to emerge as an important component of their community art curriculum (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003; Starr, 2010).

There was a shift in the way art was used within Hull House when arts and crafts classes were offered as leisure activities as well as for vocational training. Ellen Gates Starr felt that exposing the population to the arts in all of its many forms was a way to teach adults and children (Duran, 2014). She also believed that art had the ability to be taught between individuals in an informal manner much like Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory—that is, learning as it happens within a social context. Lave and Wenger (1991) posit that “learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (p. 31), and as such, individuals are learning through all aspects of living. Being in a room of individuals who are sharing their craft as happened at Hull House illustrates knowledge being passed down as it pertains to the handicraft works (Duran, 2014). The local immigrant population began to share their craft(s) with Hull House around this same time. Neighbors shared the handicrafts they brought to the neighborhood with them when they immigrated to the U.S. from other countries. These

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handicrafts became the art of Hull House (Archer, 2011; Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003; Parkhurst, 1905; Stankiewicz, 1989). The list of handicrafts ranged from fine art such as drawing and painting to functional crafts such as clay modeling, basket weaving, needlework, and bookbinding.

Historically, handicrafts have not always been classified as fine art, but when looking at communities and the crafters who live in them with an eye towards appreciating handicrafts as Ellen Gates Starr did, then handicrafts can be equated with fine art. For the purposes of this research, the term handicraft(s) is defined as highly skilled handwork that can be functional as well as decorative. The immigrants' handicrafts were in many ways viewed as better than the manufactured goods that were becoming more commonplace during this era (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003). The making special, the patience, and care involved in the creation of the handicrafts made by the immigrants at Hull House displayed the high level of craftsmanship lacking in manufactured goods (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003). Handicrafts were made to last, whereas manufactured goods were not necessarily created to last but rather made quickly for a booming population and growing consumerism. The art education program at Hull House started as a way to introduce the community to fine art reproductions that were deemed traditionally beautiful (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003; Duran, 2014; Stankiewicz, 1989). However, Starr realized the importance of individuals' own handicrafts as a way to learn and share with each other, she also saw their work being as important and special as the fine art reproductions used as instructional aids at Hull House (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003; Duran, 2014; Stankiewicz, 1989; Starr, 2003).

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Ellen Gates Starr was a spiritual person who felt that it was vitally important to achieve wholeness in the education of individuals, meaning the individual would have an education beyond just reading, writing, and arithmetic (Archer, 2011; Duran, 2014). Art was a way to achieve this wholeness, and she believed that all people should be familiar with it. As stated by Jane Duran (2014), Starr thought that aesthetic experiences were important, and if they could be (re)created within learning experiences, then they could be used for teaching. This use of aesthetic experiences is a concept tapped into as a way to enhance or create more holistic learning environments (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Greene, 1995, 2001). Engaging in aesthetic experiences can foster possibilities for transformative learning, holistic learning, and the development of lifelong learners (Carr, 2006). It has been through my discovery of Ellen Gates Starr and her work with craft that I began to uncover my own work through craft and the possibilities it may have not only for my own learning but also my teaching and my art practice.

### **A Feminist Way of Knowing**

According to the book *Women's Ways of Knowing* by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997),<sup>6</sup> women's construction of knowledge comes from within, creating a shift from passivity to action. Historically, there has been the assumption that women are passive and therefore defer to the power of patriarchal societal norms (Lerner, 1993). When Belenky et al. (1997) conducted their study, issues of intersectionality were not considered. The researchers assumed that women are only one thing: biologically female. They did consider the many facets that define

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<sup>6</sup> Though problematic because of its limited presentation of feminism, I choose to include this source because I feel it is important I acknowledge where I began my ways of feminist knowing as a cisgender white woman.

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*woman*. The dominant conceptualization of *woman* has come and still comes from the sole perspective of the cisgender white middle-class female (Ahmed, 2017). I myself am a cisgender white middle-class woman who has on occasion fallen into the dominant narrative without intention. I work hard to break from the dominant narrative, as it is my intention to move past the confines of stereotype(s) and intentionally seek out the intersections without pushing assumptions upon others. I strive to be open to other narratives as they are offered and to learn whenever and wherever possible.

The discovery of one's inner voice or finding oneself is a liberating event that can be viewed as an aesthetic experience; such experiences can shift or alter one's sense of self (Belenky et al., 1997; hooks, 1994; Spivak, 2012). Epistemological perspectives have historically oppressed and suppressed women's embodied/intuitive forms of learning as emotional and disordered—and thus inferior to other ordered and disciplined masculine cerebral/logical forms of learning (Belenky et al., 1997, Lerner, 1993). “Feminist scholars have argued that the taxonomy of dualisms allied to mind [male] versus body [female]—thought/feeling, objectivity/subjectivity, abstract/concrete, and culture/nature—is always a gendered construct” (Michelson, 2015, p. 31). How are women's voices heard in regards to the influences of knowledge as it is constructed and communicated by and for women? Belenky et al. (1997) began to shed light on ways in which women construct knowledge, pushing back against dominant ways of knowing and opening space for a more subjective way of knowing (Michelson, 2015). Subjective knowing comes from an intuitive way of making knowledge internally, whereas objective knowing is based on the belief that knowledge comes from but one place in which knowledge is observable through a more traditionally scientific manner of knowing

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(Code, 1993). To break through and allow more voices to be heard, art education scholars must question the very foundations on which we find ourselves. According to Sara Ahmed (2017), “to live a feminist life is to make everything into something that is questionable” (p. 2). “Feminism as a unified category” (p. 3) has shifted and changed through the building of new knowledge as stories have been told and stories are questioned, creating new stories (Hemmings, 2011). It is through shared ideas that knowledge is formed and reformed, changing as we move through time. We who are feminists are not a singular entity but rather multifaceted and as such must acknowledge the intersections where we meet and strive to understand and learn at the spaces where we are different (Hemmings, 2011).

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) is credited with the term intersectional feminism. Crenshaw’s (1989) theory of Intersectional feminism grows from the need “to develop a Black feminist criticism because it sets forth a problematic consequence of the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis” (p. 139). Within feminism there was/is a preponderance of white women creating the narrative of what it means to be a woman, therefore perpetuating the oppression of Black women by silencing their voices as they describe their experiences of what it means to be a woman. If people only construct knowledge through what is known intimately within oneself, others are excluded and knowledge will be incomplete (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Individuals must move beyond a singular way of knowing and work toward knowledge construction through a more complex process in which we are inclusive of all voices (Crenshaw, 1989). But simply including others is not the answer. We must meet at the intersections of our individual experiences in order to learn and

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grow together (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality allows for multiple experiences to be heard (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Crenshaw evolved her theory further in that she believed it should be malleable in nature and able to change as more voices are heard (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016) further emphasize the need to focus on multiple identities, as individuals are complex beings. Because people are not homogenous, Collins and Bilge (2016) posit that intersectionality creates a framework for better understanding the divisions between people in order to create room for understanding and to grow in our knowledge of others. It is through these intersections we must meet, listen, and hear each other. It is from these intersections that stories emerge and we can construct new knowledge among the multiple concerns at play. It is through this new knowledge that all voices can be heard with new understandings of others, thereby working toward a greater knowledge not only of self but also of others. It is through this new knowledge transformations might occur bringing change.

Feminism accepts that knowledge comes from a socially-situated perspective and is not a value-free construct. Knowledge is constructed internally and externally as a social place of being (Ahmed, 2017; Harding, 1991). Unfortunately, white feminism has become part of the oppression of others as this movement is seldom inclusive and silences voices of those who are oppressed by creating a dominant narrative (Brewer & Dundes, 2018). From this perspective, the notion of total objective knowledge is false, as there is not a space for true value-free objectivity with one master narrative, especially if knowledge is viewed as socially constructed (Kuhn, 2012). Research driven by social values and political agendas can and does produce empirically sound

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knowledge construction as well as theoretically preferred results, adding strength to the power of all empirical research whether it be quantitative or qualitative in nature (Harding, 1991). Feminism pushes back against an Enlightenment way of thinking in which there is only one truth (Harding, 1991). Feminism instead encourages an approach in which multiple voices are heard from all beliefs and no voice is silenced as each has a story to be told (Harding, 1991). Given that knowledge is socially constructed and there is room for many voices, such conditions allow for a multiplicity of realities. As a teacher, I need to allow for multiple voices to be heard and to encourage the acceptance of the multiple realities of all, including my students' and my own. Through the acceptance of all voices and all realities, as a teacher I am better able to facilitate the building of knowledge within a classroom.

Feminism creates a space for the voices of those who are often silenced to be heard, empowering all individuals to participate in the creation of knowledge (Keifer-Boyd, 2003). According to Keifer-Boyd (2003) the benefit is social, obtained through the disruption of hierarchical formations that often occur within society. Specifically within the act of teaching all voices need to be heard; both bell hooks (1994) and Keifer-Boyd (2003) write about how teaching is a political act in that the teacher designs and implements curriculum. The teacher is a political being making curricular choices. The teacher is not a value-free, objective being, but rather a subjective being making decisions based upon individual lived experiences and socially constructed knowledge. As a teacher, my goal is to disrupt the status quo and create a space where the meaningful transgression of forms of oppression may occur, leading to the emancipation of the learner as well as the teacher (hooks, 1994). Learning is a space in



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which we construct knowledge together and continue to grow and develop as humans, continually building and rebuilding knowledge (hooks, 1994).

### **Making Sense**

In *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2012) explicates the following themes relevant to this study: *affirmative sabotage*, *misreading*, *double binds*, and *imaginative training for epistemological performance (ITEP)*. Affirmative sabotage emerges as the need to educate minds trained in the humanities. Similar to works by Maxine Greene (1995, 2001), Spivak (2012, n.d.) spoke to the need for training the imagination through the humanities. Narrowing humanities to be more specific to the use of visual arts in this study allows for the use of imagination for ethical interventions, keeping in mind possibilities, and always looking at things differently in order to make change happen (Greene, 1995, 2001; Spivak, 2012, n.d.). Through affirmative sabotage<sup>7</sup> Spivak (2012, n.d.) wrote of bringing forward resources and reworking or sabotaging resources/knowledge that were brought forward. It is through *sabotage* that knowledge gets broken down and reworked, then rebuilt as knowledge again. It is through connections to the past and to contemporary society knowledge will be made (Spivak, 2012). To add another layer to the connections made between past and present, there also must be an interdisciplinary approach to curriculum (Gale, 2010; Kuhn, 2012; Feyerabend, 2010). Interdisciplinary connections are made constantly through the use of arts integration and the use of STEAM as curricular choices within schools. Curricular choices should be approached with no walls to block off other thoughts and ideas for the construction of knowledge. Often the use of

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<sup>7</sup> Spivak's (2012) intention with the use of the word *sabotage* is to critique and reimagine the work of Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*.

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language is at play concerning the conceptualization of ideas and the current educational structures in which we as educators currently work. The way language is used constructs walls, creating silos of knowledge. Language can hold us hostage when expressing what it means to be in the process of constructing knowledge (Farahani, 2013). We therefore need to be cognizant of language and how we use it, aiming for a more interdisciplinary and transparent approach within the creation of curriculum (Gale, 2010; Kuhn, 2012; Feyerabend, 2010).

Spivak (2012) describes double binds as the contradictions faced at all times, creating the need within us to make decisions constantly, both on a conscious and unconscious level. As I previously wrote, teaching is a political act (hooks, 1994; Keifer-Boyd, 2003), Spivak's (2012) concept of double binds in which we are in a constant state of thinking and rethinking is definitely at play when we are making choices. In life we are constantly faced with contradictions; as Spivak (2012) describes it, the double binds that we face are turned into single binds as we make choices. However, single binds are not single for very long before our knowledge growth transforms the single bind back into a double bind, beginning the cycle anew (Spivak, 2012). As I worked to make sense through my journey of self, I found myself in a cycle of making decisions for my work. As I made choices and came to a single bind, it was not long before I was presented with yet another double bind. Misreading weaves together with the theme of double binds because it is through our way(s) of knowing that we enter into new knowledge. Misreading is knowledge we carry within ourselves in order to make meaning as well as to build new knowledge from what is learned (Spivak, 2012). The

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single bind goes with us into a misreading, thus creating a new double bind, making double binds a continuous cycle to work through.

Spivak's (2012) theme of imaginative training for epistemological performance (ITEP) connects with Maxine Greene's (1995) ideas for the possibilities within and coming from the imagination. ITEP was important for my study since it was through my journey of self that I claim to have changed my desires. The concept behind ITEP is to change desires; these desires are a person's ways of knowing and the knowledge individuals have within themselves at any time. According to Spivak (2012), people can say they have changed, but in order for real change to occur, others must see the change and express to the person they have changed. It is only when others express that an individual has changed that one's way of knowing has changed. The humanities are a space where we can teach students how to think critically about the vitality of changing desires (Spivak, 2012).

### **Ways of Knowing: Self-Reflexivity, Autoethnography and Arts-Based**

Teachers are often encouraged to question their purpose, their process, the curriculum they teach, and how best to assess their learners. Experienced teachers engage in self-reflexive praxis, meaning they think about their theoretical frameworks and how these frameworks affect their practice in the moment, as they are teaching, and take informed action during the process (Freire, 1970; Schön, 1983). Both self-reflexive praxis and critical self-reflection are metacognitive forms of improvement and meaning making through personal experience. Both can occur during action and after the action has passed (Crouch, 2007; Crouch & Pearce, 2012). Self-reflexivity occurs in the moment of action while self-reflection occurs afterward, looking back to the moment.

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Metacognition is the process of thinking about thinking; its product is metacognitive knowledge. The experience of obtaining knowledge through metacognition is metacognitive experience. Through the creation of knowledge, a nuanced understanding of oneself as both a thinker and a learner is developed, thus creating an awareness of self and identity (Desautel, 2009). Metacognitive knowledge informs, in the present, an individual's concept of self as a thinker and learner, thus creating self-reflexive capacity to create a narrative of self in the moment (Desautel, 2009; Warin, 2015). In order for self-narrative or identity to develop, an individual internalizes an integration of events and interactions happening externally from the previously internalized knowledge to create meaning (Warin, 2015). Metacognition, or more specifically, metacognitive experience and self-reflexivity, are core components of the construction of self and meaning making for and of self. The process of self-reflexivity within a metacognitive experience has the potential to bring hidden knowledge to the surface and influence identity or sense of self (Simmons & Daley, 2013). In particular, visual-spatial learners are able to make their thinking visible through drawing, writing, or other methods, thus making the implicit explicit (Simmons & Daley, 2013; Loughran, 2006). I argue that based on this concept, thinking can often be seen through an individual's making.

Autoethnography and arts-based research employ self-reflexivity and self-reflection to systematically analyze and explore specific phenomena through the lens of self, thus becoming not only a process in which to explore said phenomena but also a research product (Ellis et al., 2011; Faulkner et. al., 2016; Leavy, 2018). Through the process of autoethnography, exploration of past experiences leads to significant

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remembered moments in which transformative episodes (significant, impactful episodes from the past) can shape life as well as linger to create further lasting episodes and future learning and teaching moments. Through the thoughtful and methodical process of analyzing and sharing transformative episodes, autoethnography is able to illuminate and illustrate cultural phenomena for both insiders and outsiders (Ellis et al., 2011).

Self-reflexivity is an ongoing internal process whereby the individual is in a continual process of thinking about self-conceptualized theoretical frameworks, how the frameworks are practiced while in action, and taking informed action during the process of the action (Freire, 1970; Schön, 1983). Self-reflexive praxis is a practice that experienced teachers engage in, sometimes even unconsciously. Autoethnography and arts-based research brings the act of self-reflexivity to the surface and enables the researcher to become more deeply aware of choices being made in the action (Faulkner et al. 2016; Leavy, 2018). To be self-reflexive aligns with Spivak's (2012) *misreading* in that I am examining myself as a holistic being. The fluidity of the process I am undertaking is full of *double binds* in which I will be faced with contradictions, both at a conscious and unconscious level (Spivak, 2012). As teachers, in particular, are encouraged to constantly question their purpose, their process, the curriculum they teach, and how best to guide and assess their learners, the practice of self-reflexivity and autoethnography can bring about a deeper, more holistic understanding of the process. Both autoethnography and arts-based methods create an open space for exploring and questioning lived experience(s) and how an individual's experience might intersect with others to create better understandings (Rolling, 2014). Graeme Sullivan (2010) posits that "the arts provide a special way of coming to represent and understand

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what we know about the world” (p.56). Sullivan (2010) also wrote of how inquiries grounded within the arts expand on existing social science methodologies. As a result of this thinking, I undertook the merging of autoethnography and arts-based research in my study, as this approach seemed to bring together my work in a holistic way. Art-based methods using photo-writing and memory work can be used to bring memories to the forefront within reflective practice (Guyas, 2013). Photo-writing and memory work are similar to the use of photographs in ethnographic interviewing to elicit information from participants (Pink, 2004); however, I was my participant within the research in this project.

Autoethnographic research leads to a product in which the autoethnographer is able to blend the aesthetic of narrative qualities often found within autobiographical stories with full rich descriptions similar to ethnography’s evocative descriptions of culture (Ellis et al., 2011). Our subjectivity imprints everything we do (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). Tony Adams, Stacy Holman Jones, Carolyn Ellis (2015) and others agree there is no value-free objectivity, and to strive for such a concept is suspect, as we cannot speak for others without first accounting for our own identity. Autoethnographic methods make research more accessible for larger audiences, reclaim lost and/or disregarded voices, and extend existing research and theories (Adams, et al., 2015). The product of an autoethnography has the ability to reach a wider audience, thus creating a wider audience with which to share knowledge of an explored phenomenon, thereby developing a space for a larger transformative experience.

Through the practice of self-reflexivity within autoethnographic and arts-based research, the researcher becomes deeply aware of their own contributions and

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constructions of meaning making within research, thus allowing for an even deeper connection to the work as well as the phenomena (Faulkner et al., 2016; Leavy, 2018). We are more than a single self; we are each parts of the greater narrative of those we interact with, constantly recreating our self (Chang, 2008). As we are part of a greater whole, it is impossible to bracket ourselves out of research as with other types of methods. It has been argued that value-free objectivity does not exist, allowing for empirical research to take many forms, both in quantitative and qualitative methods (Ellis et al., 2011; Faulkner et al., 2016; Kuhn, 2012; Harding, 1991). Reflexivity throughout the process leads to trustworthiness, confirmability, and increased credibility by making transparent the details of the researcher's values, beliefs, knowledge, and the biases influencing the work, thereby strengthening the qualitative aspect of the autoethnographic study (Faulkner et al., 2016).

The ways in which I build knowledge inform my actions, impacting me as an artist-educator-researcher. Exploring how I come to know and interact with knowledge through self-reflection, self-reflexivity, and metacognitive experience strengthens my ability to then share my knowledge. It is through the blending of autoethnography and arts-based research each stitch builds on the next, to create a solid foundation on which to grow.

### **Craftivism: Visual Art and Community**

Visual art has been used for social action and awareness within and for communities (Clover & Stalker, 2007; Garber, Hochtritt & Sharma, 2018; Helguera, 2011). When art is created with a social purpose, it can allow participants to critically reflect and re-examine their perspectives creating space for transformative learning to

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happen (Helguera, 2011; Mezirow, 1997). Craftivism can become the space where craft and activism come together as a form of protest, giving voice to those who may not otherwise be given a place or space to be heard (Greer, 2014). Ellen Dissanayake (1995) wrote that humans have, at their core, a basic biological need to create, make objects special, and use the arts within our daily routine and formal rituals.

Archaeologist Alexander Langlands (2017) writes about artifacts uncovered from ancient sites, further illustrating the potential for individuals making objects special for everyday living. One object in particular that he writes about is an unearthed textile that dates back three thousand years; handcrafted items often were and continue to be made to last far longer than those created through machines (Langlands, 2017). The basic human need to create is often met by educators using the arts to collaborate and connect with communities (Bastos, 2002; Keifer-Boyd, 2000; Krensky and Steffen, 2009). Community-based art education can build bridges between museums and academia and the public spaces of communities and schools.

Art educator Flavia Bastos (2002) worked within a small rural community of artisans building an appreciation within the community for what is and could be considered art. She wrote about how Community-Based Art Education (CBAE) gives importance to all forms of art; each member of the community can have a place within it. Bastos (2002) writes, “CBAE contributes a conception of art in which several categories of art making—for example, traditional and contemporary folk art, local crafts, women’s art, vernacular art, popular arts, and so on—are equally valued as intrinsic to a community’s culture” (p. 71). Bastos (2002) and Keifer-Boyd (2000) both created curricular frameworks taking artworks of local artisans into consideration. Similar to



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Ellen Gates Starr's work at Hull House, this framework creates a space in the curriculum for the work of crafters. Ana Mae Barbosa (as cited in Bastos, 2002) believed that by including local artisans in the art curriculum, students could see themselves as artisans who are aware of their importance within their community. Bastos (2002) referenced Paulo Freire's (1970) ideas about the importance of creating awareness of oneself within one's culture. When we acknowledge our basic human need to create and make our handicraft items special, we are creating art (Bastos, 2002; Dissanayake, 1995; Stankiewicz, 1989). Similar to the work of Ellen Gates Starr, Bastos (2002) reinforced the importance of striving to enact change in what others consider to be art through handicrafts created within a community.

In work similar to that done by Bastos, Karen Keifer-Boyd (2000) collaborated with a local community to develop a community-based art curriculum for an elementary school in McKenzie, Oregon. Keifer-Boyd implemented three steps: gathering community resources, making connections to the community, and creating strategies developed from the outcomes of the first two steps to design the curriculum. Having the immediate community be a part of the decision-making process made the program authentic and therefore more successful. This idea is similar to what Ellen Gates Starr implemented within Hull House's art education program where the immigrants' handicrafts became important as an educational tool.

Educator Zoe Weil (2016) is a scholar in the field of humane education whose philosophical approach intersects with that of Starr, Bastos, Keifer-Boyd, Greene, and others in that it is community and social justice focused. Weil (2016) posits the concept of *solutionary*, which she describes as both a noun and adjective. Her description of the

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term solutionary is similar to the writing of Maxine Greene (1995, 2001): to ignite awakenings within individuals to create a change. Within school settings, Weil (2016) writes about how students must learn to use critical, creative, and systems thinking to determine what is factual information. She argues that critical thinking is not enough; there must be creative thinking as well as openness to all ideas in order to evaluate, analyze, and process information. Scholars speak about how, in order to change that to which we have been awakened, we first must see something that needs to be changed and then become change agents (Greene, 1995, 2001; hooks, 1994; Weil, 2016).

### **Craft as Curriculum**

As a fiber artist and activist, Betsy Greer (2011) wrote about and coined the term craftivism, a combination of the word craft and activism. Many craftivists are yarn bombers. Yarnbombing is an ephemeral form of graffiti created by knitting and/or crochet. Knitting and crocheting lend themselves to building communities (literally knitting together communities) from diverse individual participants. Knitting involves repetition, creating a natural space for reflection about self and others, while simultaneously creating a space for community (Greer, 2011; Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013). Greer's (2011) personal journey toward social activism arises from being a part of a knitting group. The social constructions that take place within these community settings, both physical and virtual through social media, develop opportunities for global discourse on socio-political issues (Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013). Greer (2011) wrote about how the concept of craftivism is individual and encourages finding one's crafting passion while working toward making a difference. Making a difference can be donating

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works via charity, as many crafting guilds do, or making bold personal statements as yarn bombers do when creating public installations.

Craftivist artists create works within and with communities to draw attention to and awareness of social issues they feel need to be addressed (Corbett, 2018; Greer, 2011). Craftivism can be viewed as solutionary because it is a way to create a state of awakensness, meaning a heightened awareness of multiple realities and social injustices (Greene, 1995, 2001; Weil, 2016). Craftivism is a political act that creates spaces of interruptions to the everyday, whether it is a pleasant aesthetic or an aesthetic to illustrate an unpleasantness. These political acts foster possible transformations. Artisans and scholars find their passion within a world problem and then work to create a space in which they can make individuals aware of that problem (Greer, 2011; Olek, n.d.; The Yarnbomber, n.d.; Weil, 2016). Interconnectivity, collaboration, and working together in order to create solutions are imperative for awareness and change to happen. Making (knitting, crafting) is a space where these things can occur.

Other craftivists such as Olek and the Yarnbomber (Stephen Duneier) are seen as the public faces of their installations. They both create their pieces with help from knitting and crochet groups who send handcrafted pieces to contribute to the publicly installed works used to create spaces of awareness. During the summer of 2016 in Avesta, Sweden, Olek worked with Syrian and Ukrainian immigrants as a community to bring attention to the idea that everyone should have a home to call their own (Olek, n.d.). The group crocheted pink rectangles that were stitched together and used to completely cover a two-story house in Avesta, Sweden. Olek also worked with another group in Kerava, Finland. These large-scale yarnbomb installations were designed to

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bring awareness to a social issue that is current and relevant in today's world, migration and the plight of immigrants across the globe (Olek, n.d.).

These spaces for awakenings and places for creating change can be traced back to Ellen Gates Starr's work emphasizing the importance of functional handicrafts (Stankiewicz, 1989). Olek and the Yarnbomber, like Starr, accentuate the handicrafts of local artisans. They solicit knitted and crocheted work from individuals, combining them to develop installation pieces that create spaces of socio-political awareness. The Yarnbomber works to create spaces in which individuals have to get outside of buildings and into the environment to experience the pieces. He looks to build a global community drawn to nature and the outdoors, developing awareness of our impact on the environment around us (The Yarnbomber, n.d.).

Betsy Greer (2011) wrote about the effect knitting has on the brain and body to create a reflective, meditative state with the potential for critical reflection. This reflective, meditative state can be perceived as an aesthetic experience in which individuals can be open to learning on a higher level (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Greer, 2011; Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013). Because knitting has a positive impact on the overall health and wellbeing of individuals, it could mean the act of creating can be used as a way to develop interconnectivity, collaboration, and the ability to work together in order to build awareness of social issues (Corbett, 2018; Greer, 2011; Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013; Weil, 2016).

Through craftivism individuals' thoughts are often woven together, creating spaces in which voices can be visualized. Often the groups formed to make objects of and for craftivism create spaces for individuals to come together and speak out while in

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the act of creating. One of the many outcomes of craftivism is to call attention to an injustice or issue that needs to be addressed. The product of craftivism can potentially create a transformative space where a person can be caught off guard and invited to look at their surroundings or their thoughts more closely. Though craftivism is not inherently feminist in nature, there are intersections between the two. Transformativity can be sought through feminism and various forms of craftivism (Greer, 2011; Keifer-Boyd, 2003). Keifer-Boyd (2003) indicates that transformative learning (learning that challenges and fosters changes in the way a person thinks) is an internal process, similar to ways in which individuals make meaning. This way of internalizing knowledge and making sense of knowledge through feminism is woven together with the concept of the self-reflexive process that happens through autoethnographic methods.

In order to investigate the therapeutic use of knitting, Riley, Corkhill, and Morris (2013)<sup>8</sup> conducted an online survey in which participants answered questions about the impact knitting had on their lives. They analyzed the survey via quantitative methods to establish relationships and differences among the data. Qualitative data were used to establish key terms of importance within the collected data. Their participants, predominantly white females, were from virtual knitting communities. Results showed a significant relationship between knitting frequency and feeling calm and happy. Knitters frequently reported higher cognitive functioning; knitting in a group significantly impacted perceived happiness, and improved social contact and communication with others. Knitting has the ability to create communities where knowledge is passed down

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<sup>8</sup> This survey is the only one of its kind currently. It should be looked at again for possible replication as this information could use updating and is important for the conceptualization of mindfulness and making.

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through generations impacting expression as well as the creative and cultural aspects of life. Knitting groups can be places of contemplation, reflection, wellbeing, and therapy—creating social situations in which individuals can become more aware of their surroundings. Participants indicated that being part of a group gave them self-confidence and a sense of belonging. Belonging comes from our collective identity where our sense of self is strengthened, thus helping us to create a deeper understanding of not only our sense of self but also our place within a larger space of being (Brown, 1997). Being a member of a group helps us as individuals to create an inner sense of community and belonging to something larger than ourselves. Through these groups we give voice to our inner narratives as a way of sharing our self with others. Riley et al.'s (2013) study indicated that knitting creates these spaces of belonging and contributes to an overall sense of wellbeing. If, as an artist-educator-researcher, I were able to harness this same sense of mindfulness, would it not facilitate greater knowledge building in my classroom?

Zabe MacEachren (2011), a teacher educator, taught her students how to knit socks as a way of working through larger issues while learning how to become educators. MacEachren (2011) had an epiphany while knitting socks herself and reflecting on the mental focus required to turn a heel. There were three things that transpired around the same time that had her thinking about including the assignment to knit socks. One was the focus she needed for turning a heel; another was dealing with her mother who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease; last was her interest in Waldorf education. MacEachren (2011) described her interest as follows: "Craft work seems to have an additional rigor to it as ideas cannot just be conceived and illustrated as in

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visual art; instead craft work requires knowledge to be demonstrated through the process of creating something that fulfills a function” (p. 170). These ideas led her to further research brain function and how the act of teaching the class to knit socks could teach teaching. Though not an art educator, she taught the craft of sock knitting to students, demonstrating the importance of metacognition and teaching holistically. Incorporating knitting in her curriculum showed her students the importance of developing curricula that includes creating a sense of wellbeing and mindfulness (Greer, 2011; Kokko & Dillon, 2016; MacEachren, 2011; Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013; Springgay, 2010).

### **Summary**

The epigraph that begins the chapter weaves its way through the narrative and the connections I make with readings, setting up the work that is to follow as I take my journey of self. Ellen Gates Starr and her work at Hull House made connections through craft and created possibilities for change for those living and working in the community. This work is an important part of where my research journey of self started. It was through the work of Starr that I began to see the connections between making and engaging others to create change. Art educators have been working with the visual arts to create and build bridges with the communities outside of the school walls similar to the work of Starr. Craft and making with/for meaning can engage students in the classroom when they experience the importance that craft plays in their everyday lives. Further, by harnessing the spaces of potential awakenings and the ability to create change through craft, there is a place for craftivism + art education to emerge.

## CHAPTER 3. METHODS

### My Story 2

You are not worthy.

Your interests are not strong enough to carry through.

You are weak and not smart enough and therefore do not belong.

How can you expect *this* to be considered art?

Who do you think you are?

I remember sitting in a class knowing an answer to a question and timidly, barely audible, replying to a question in the barest of whispers, “anything goes.”

The professor looked at me, I felt humiliated, my face was on fire, all of the past negativity flooded back and I wanted to crawl away.

I was thinking how stupid I must be.

My professor looked at me and she said that I was correct and what else.

She did not shame me or make me feel ignorant but rather encouraged me to think back for the rest as there was more and I know the information.

I am worthy.

My journey matters.

My narrative means something to me and to others and it should be heard.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This epigraph sets the stage for my methodology. As I began I reflected upon a moment in a class where I was just beginning to feel comfortable with myself. I was finding the ability to speak up and out with answers. I was timid at the onset but through my journey of self I find my voice emerged and felt my confidence grow.



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My research questions for this research project as I began my qualitative process follow: How do both my art and teaching practice inform my research practice? In what ways does my art making inform my teaching practice? How does my feminist identity affect these practices, ways of thinking and knowing, and my journey of self as an artist-educator-researcher? Can a reconceptualized art education curriculum emerge from craftivism? Why is this research relevant to the field of art education? I employed qualitative methods to explore, research, gather data, analyze, and ultimately discuss my findings. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) along with Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Leavy (2017) note that the use of qualitative research methodologies is growing in frequency. *Qualitative methods* is an umbrella term for many rigorous research methods woven through different fields of study. Qualitative research is less focused on the researcher as outsider and instead considers the researcher's place within the research. Qualitative methodologies focus on meaning(s) and context, as this form of research is often grounded in individuals' lived experiences; it is research that is often non-numerical and self-interpretive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative researchers strive to collect descriptive data that can, in turn, reach many through their meanings and presentation.

Sandra Harding (1987) differentiates between methodology and methods in the following manner: methodology encompasses the choices made by the researcher—that is, why they are using particular methods—while methods are the techniques used to gather and analyze data. In other words, methodology is the *why* for the method. In my case, I used the qualitative methods of both autoethnography and arts-based methods to explore myself within the phenomenon of craftivism: making with/for

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meaning. According to Ettore (2017) and Leavy (2017, 2019) feminist narrative writing and autoethnography are naturally woven together in that narrative methods generate useful ways of creating knowledge as well as a more accessible body of work. Leavy (2015, 2017, 2018) posits that autoethnography and arts-based methods have intersections that create places in which they both become blurred. My journey of self was an exploration of how my identities inform my work, and as such my methods (autoethnography and arts-based) join together in a holistic manner, sometimes becoming blurred in that my identities overlap and inform each other. My research questions were my guide as I went through my research process, how do both my art and teaching practice inform my research practice? In what ways does my art making inform my teaching practice? How does my feminist identity affect these practices, ways of thinking and knowing, and my journey of self as an artist-educator-researcher? Can a reconceptualized art education curriculum emerge from craftivism? Why is this research relevant to the field of art education? Subjective knowing is significant to my journey of self and can best be described as a way of moving from passively knowing to having an aesthetic experience that creates a place for action to occur and the possibility for transformation (Belenky et al., 1997; Keifer-Boyd, 2003). As a researcher whose personal story is integral to this research, it is all but impossible to step away from my own narratives, as they are the foundation of my research. My personal history (narrative) cannot be viewed as dichotomous in nature with a separate focus on subject and object because my history is intricately woven together to create my whole being (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

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There is no one way to do autoethnography as I discovered through my journey of self. In trying to piece together and hold to the rigor required for my study, I looked to the works of others who have used autoethnography. I examined the works of Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2011, 2015) who have been doing autoethnography for decades, as well as Leavy (2015, 2017) and Chang (2008), all my guide(s) as I strived to tell my journey of self. What I learned from reading autoethnographies is that there are no two alike: autoethnography is a subjective process, and the way an individual chooses to tell their story is deeply personal. Ellis (2003) writes an autoethnography that weaves together a fictitious graduate course while weaving in various methodological approaches that she uses for others who choose to write their own autoethnography. To fully use her ways of writing autoethnography, Ellis created an imagined graduate class to illustrate how she used self-reflection to collect data via journaling. She also had her imagined students collect their own self-reflective data through journaling during and after the class. Leavy (2019) began truly weaving arts based research with autoethnography in her recent work of fiction, *Spark*. Weems (2013) uses poetry to share their autoethnography. Variety is the common thread running through the autoethnographies I researched. For example, self-narrative might be told through short stories, poetry, artwork, performance, etc. The process of creating a self-narrative is as varied in creation as in its subjectivity. Kristina Medford (2006) states about autoethnography, “No other form of academic writing affects me so deeply or causes me to think so critically” (p. 859). It was through the process of autoethnography, I discovered, that I too began to think more deeply and critically about myself as an artist-educator-researcher. The process of examining myself during my journey of self has

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transformed me. I think differently, and I feel differently, yet as with the self-narratives of others mine too is highly subjective. As freeing as the idea of autoethnography felt, as an emerging scholar it was not an easy process to navigate since there are so many different ways to go about the work of a self-narrative. Other than my internal feelings of transformation through this journey of self there is no assessment to definitively show that these feelings are in fact valid.

My way of doing autoethnography was like weaving on a loom (Figure 1.4). Through my autoethnography I gathered the threads from my journey of self and metaphorically wove them on my loom. My journey of self was woven through my misreadings and double binds. I came to my data with knowledge of self, and I worked my threads to make new meanings. Using affirmative sabotage or the pulling my past through to the present I was able to visualize my journey of self. My final weaving was the unification of my past and present enabling me to move toward my future. An overarching objective that resonates with me as an emerging scholar is autoethnography's ability to tell the story of self in a way that others can relate to. The connections made can potentially join voices and transform experiences, on some level isn't this what most individuals want?

### **Autoethnography and Arts-Based Methods**

Both autoethnographic and arts-based research methods enabled my journey of self and gave me a voice as a researcher undertaking a research process. As an art educator whose praxis involves self-reflexivity as a way of knowing, qualitative methods enabled me to share my narrative. Autoethnographic methods intersect with arts-based methods, and I found through my research that they sometimes were one and the same

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(Faulkner et al. 2016; Leavy, 2015, 2017, Rolling 2014, 2018). My research project consisted of journaling, art making, and the use of personal photographs to elicit narratives of my lived experiences. The final project is told in a manner that knits together my own personal experiences to create a narrative within the cultural phenomenon of craftivism: making with/for meaning (Chang, 2008). This form of research relates to and connects with educators at all levels, as the end product of autoethnography is to create a narrative that reaches beyond academic research to embrace a wider audience. Incorporating arts-based research methods is important to this research as it allowed me as an artist-educator-researcher to remain as the subject within, and of, my research (Hafeli, 2013). Arts-based research methods generate other ways to know, question, and explore. As an artist-educator-researcher, arts-based methods enabled me to more fully immerse myself in all aspects of my research (Hafeli, 2013, Rolling, 2014). The arts-based methods I used for this autoethnography research were photos to elicit data, poetic inquiry (stream of consciousness works), and the use of making to create a meditative state in which to reflect upon collected data.

Through both autoethnography and arts-based research, I explored my experiences within craftivism: making with/for meaning through journaling about my experiences working with others<sup>10</sup>, within my own art making practice, and reflecting on working with my preservice art education students to explore where my journey of self took me. I employed the process of self-reflexivity to deeply explore and understand my place within the phenomenon of craftivism: making with/for meaning. Reflexivity takes into account self as well as identity as the researcher and researched (Rolling, 2014).

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<sup>10</sup> *Others* refers to my work with my own children, past K-12 art students, volunteer work at a retirement community teaching knitting and crochet, and volunteer work with middle school students.

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By turning the lens back onto myself as the researcher I was better able to reflect upon and develop the findings into a reconceptualized art education curriculum that considered the artist-teacher's lived experience through acts of craftivism and making with/for meaning. As a self-reflexive practitioner, I think more deeply about my own practice and ways of knowing and making meaning. I realized researchers are a part of their research; there is not a dichotomy within research for me (Cole & Knowles, 2001). There is a transformative power when writing self, and as such my self-knowledge and subjective being must be studied in order to make sense of my praxis as a self-reflexive practitioner (Ellis et al., 2011; Leavy, 2017).

### **Data Collection**

I began by collecting qualitative data illustrating the self-reflexive nature of autoethnographic methods. Autoethnographic data collection is similar to ethnographic data collection in that data are collected from multiple sources and then triangulated to verify credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the data (Chang, 2008). The triangulation process involved conversation with others about the data collected while in the process of data collection, the cyclical process of data collection and data analysis, and pulling of images to verify memories elicited from reflections (Chang, 2008; Leavy, 2017). It was through my conversations with others that I was better able to understand the cultural meanings behind as well as throughout my data collection process. Patricia Leavy (2017) writes that the work required within autoethnographic research requires the researcher to be vulnerable. Through the process of becoming vulnerable, the researcher must talk about the data with others. Throughout the process of data collection, I shared with those I trusted. Sometimes I spoke with others such as my

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advisor, sister, mother, and my children to make sense of the data I collected as well as to authenticate memories I had in relation to the data collection. Conversations with my mother and sister clarified memories from images I pulled from family photo albums. I asked my mother and/or sister to clarify for when Figure 1.1 was taken. This blurry photograph was taken during a time in my life when I first moved to Virginia from Florida. I had no friends and was constantly teased by fellow students while at school. This image ultimately became part of the data collection as the theme of voice began to emerge as it illustrated the feelings of my voice being shut down.

I employed autoethnographic methods of reflective processes such as, but not limited to, reflective writing (RW) that accessed my own narrative, as well as keeping a reflective journal (RJ) in which I recorded how my processes affected my practice as an educator. My RW came from my reflections elicited from personal documents and artifacts (PD/PA) made by others and myself. I also employed RW to record my reflections made upon knitting; this journal ultimately came to be where I recorded most of my reflections on the data collected and therefore became more of a primary resource for my journey of self. RW was an ongoing process and was recorded on my phone's notes app when paper was not available. I printed phone notes and incorporated them into the RW journal (Figure 3.1). I also kept a small notebook next to my bed to record thoughts as I had them while trying to get to sleep as well as waking from sleep due to thinking about my data. RJ (Figure 3.2) was written in journals; I used several small, purse size journals for the purpose of my RJ. I used the journals to reflect after teaching my preservice art education students.

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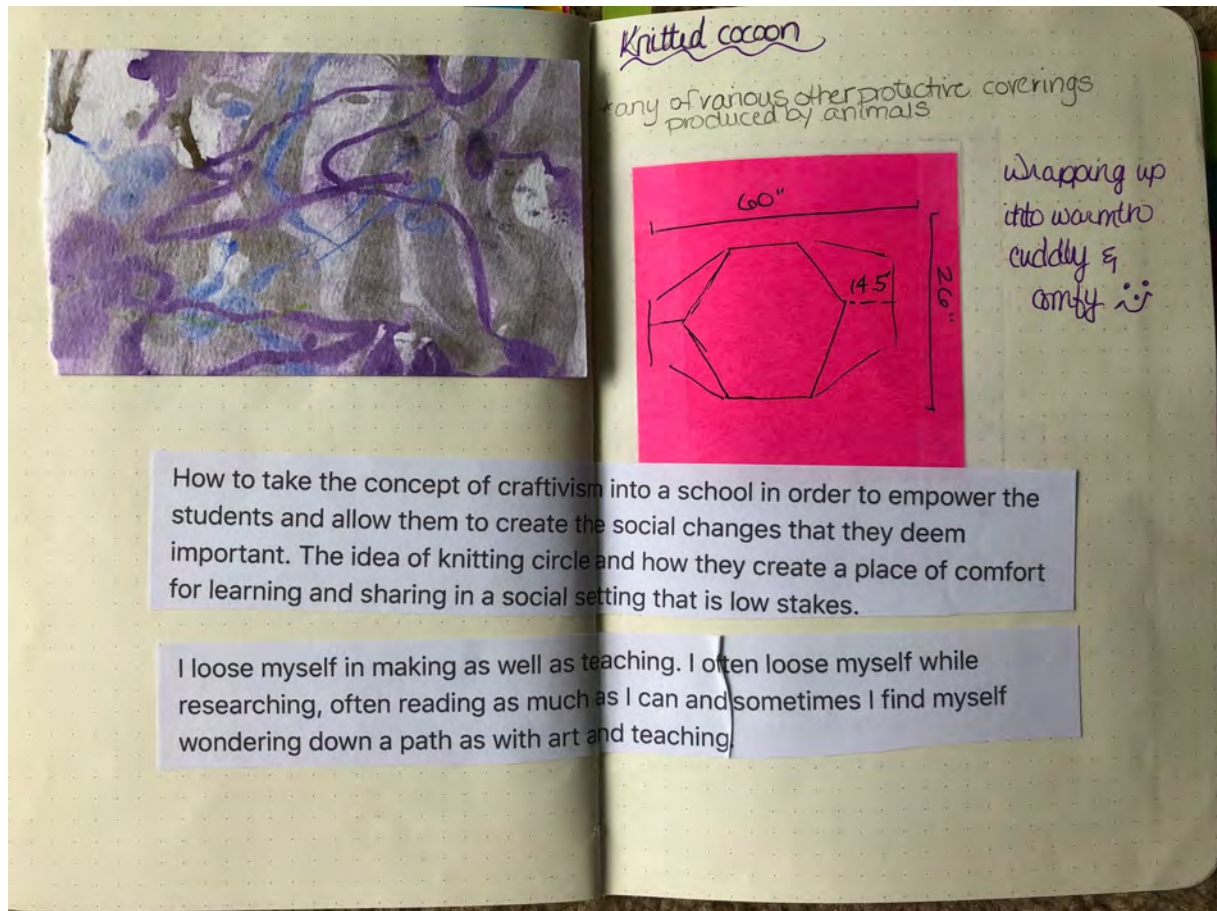


Figure 3.1. Reflective writing (RW) example. I used some aspects of artistic journaling when working with reflective writing as this was a process I learned from a seminar as a doctoral student and found it to be a useful means of working with my thoughts. It is through reflective writing I am able to reflect upon data collected in my reflective journal. The use of reflective writing was very helpful for recording reflections while in the process of knitting and to record data on thoughts about personal documents and other artifacts.



September 19  
2017

Today in class I asked students why they were in my class. I haven't asked students such a question before. It was intimidating to ask such a thing. Nobody ever asked me anything like that before. @ after I asked my thought was on crap what did I just do???

Turned out it was a great moment. Not everyone wanted to teach K12 art. Who woulda thunk. This might make a difference in HOW I work with them as individuals I always just assume K12 art teacher... well see how it plays out.

Figure 3.2. Reflective journal (RJ) example. I used this journal to record moments I worked with preservice art education students. This journal was primarily a journal in which I recorded through writing without taking any artistic liberties. I used this journal as a place to keep track of my thoughts while teaching and working with students. It was helpful to keep separate the day-to-day journaling reflections and the deeper process of reflecting upon these reflections in separate journals.

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My use of two different journals, RJ and RW, helped me to keep separate the data I collected. I used the RJ journal to record moments I found to be important during the 2017 fall semester through the 2018 spring semester; simultaneously I kept the RW journal. The RW expanded into the summer of 2018 as I continued to reflect upon data collected in the RJ. My practice of keeping the RJ is what Chang (2008) refers to as field journaling. It was through field journaling that I collected data from my teaching and work creating projects with others. The process of keeping the RJ enabled me to collect data from the field that I would later use to reflect. It was like a diary, and I used it as a place to record more day-to-day data. An example of day-to-day activities includes what happened while teaching (Figure 3.2). The RJ was also where I planned for classes and took notes during class. When I reflected upon my RJ, I would record reflections in my RW journal. My RW journal is where I would note thoughts that came to me while reflecting upon my RJ. These thoughts would often lead me to my past and helped guide me as I moved forward with more data collection. The process of reflection also enabled me to think about how I interacted with my students, and others I might be working with as I navigated my way through the task of collecting data. Reflection helped to inform my future practice working with others, thus collecting more data in my RJ to reflect upon, perpetuating the cycle of data collection and analysis that I immersed myself within while doing autoethnography. Adams, Jones and Ellis (2015) and Chang (2008) regard this cyclical kind of data collection, reflection, and analysis as the means to create rigor during autoethnography, each step informing steps already taken and steps still to take. “Data collection, analysis, and interpretation activities often take place concurrently or inform each other in a cyclical process” (Chang, 2008, p. 122). The

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research steps when doing autoethnography are not linear and inform each other as data collection and analyses unfold. This cycle blurs and becomes messy as a result. I found the constant support of my advisor beneficial as I worked through the process of doing autoethnography.

Arts-based methods of data collection included the use of personal photographs of myself, past events, as well as artifacts made by others and myself to elicit memories (PD/PA). I am the keeper of my family's photographs and as such have access to the images I could pull if a memory was brought up through my reflections, two of the images are found at the beginning and end of my written study (Figures 1.1 and 5.1). The first photograph I thought of as I began my journey of self and felt my voice had been blocked at some point as a child. The other image is an instant of time caught where I remember feeling powerful as I had received a fresh new haircut creating these feelings. It was through the process of reflection that I often had thoughts of my past come into my mind. Using images and other artifacts helped me to better solidify my feelings and memories. My reflections made from the RJ often brought back past memories and from those reflections I searched out images to further recall memories brought to the forefront from my reflections. In order to further reflect on my past I pulled out photographs from my past to use as a tool to elicit further memories and to verify the thoughts I was pulling forth through reflection. I used the process of making (specifically knitting) as a tool to help create a deeper way of thinking about the data I collected (Figures 3.3 and 3.4). Knitting was used extensively as a way to reach a meditative state to reflect more deeply upon my data collection and data analysis after collecting data (MacEachren, 2011; Riley et al., 2013). During my process of data collection, I also

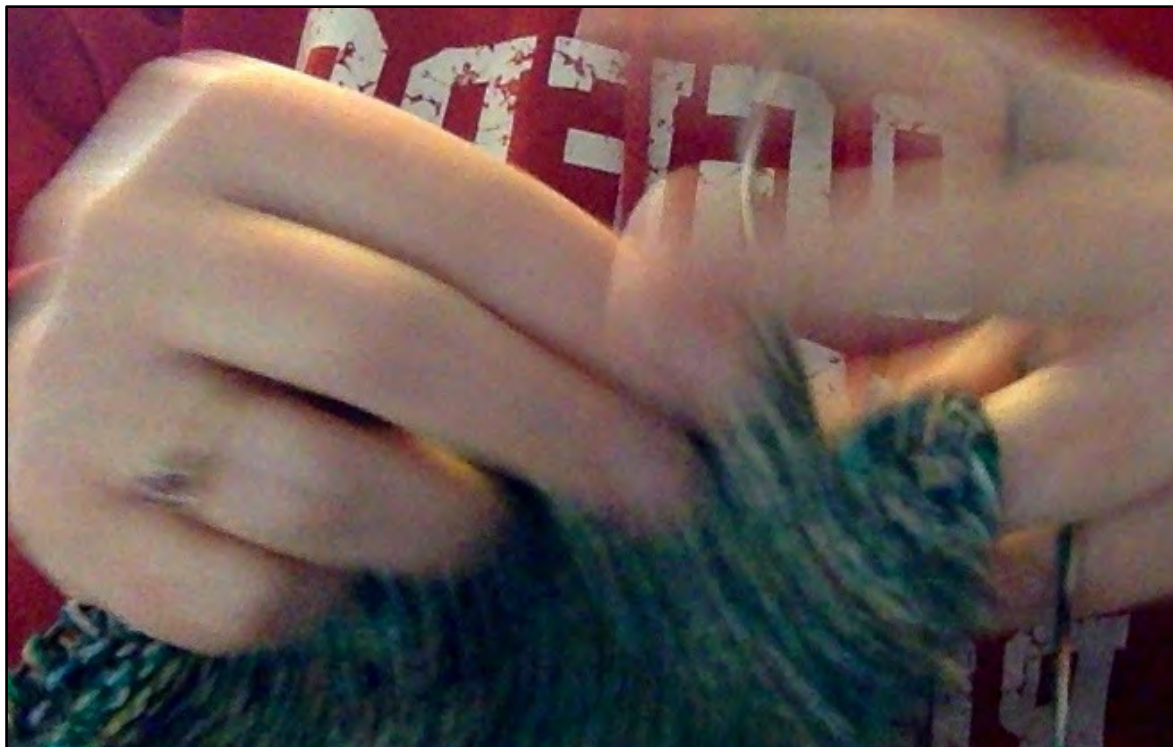
## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

wrote stream of consciousness poetry that helped me through the process of working with the collected data. The use of stream of conscious poetry is both an autoethnographic and arts-based method of data collection (Ellis et al., 2011; Faulkner et al., 2016; Leavy, 2015, 2017, 2018; Jones et al., 2013). I found the stream-of-conscious poetry helped to further clarify my thoughts and set my mind for pulling out feelings as I reflected on data collected. The poetry helped to work through vulnerable moments as often memories that came forth were not always pleasant and the writing helped me to gather my feelings. The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter came from looking at Figure 1.1 and remembering how I began to feel voiceless when previously my grandfather and others once called me chatterbox. Through the stream-of-conscious writing I was able to bring the feelings of loss forward to the positive yet painful feeling of my voice emerging and the feeling of worthiness.

I did not have specific prompts other than my research questions to guide me as I collected the data during my twice weekly class working with preservice art education students. Self-reflexivity is a continual, internal process, and as such, there was ongoing analysis as data were collected. After I collected data in my RJ I would then reflect upon the data collected. Reflection for journal entries often happened within twenty-four hours after the initial journal entry to maintain the vividness of the time. It was from the reflection upon data in my RJ that I would then collect further data. I worked constantly in a state of self-reflective analysis; as soon as I collected data, I began analyzing the data, making sense of it and placing it on my closet doors (Figure 3.5). In my early stages of data collection I placed my research questions on the closet doors and taped sheets of paper with collected data under the questions. As I placed data on my doors I

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determined which data fell under educative connections, artistic connections, and connections to my research practice. Visualizing my data helped me to better focus on what I was collecting. However, using sheets of paper as in Figure 3.5 became difficult, and I changed to sticky notes that I was better able to move around the closet doors as needed. The sticky notes I used were color coded to indicate if the data of note coordinated with an educative, artistic, or research connection. The use of sticky notes allowed for more freedom from sheets of paper with multiple notes written on them. The sticky notes also enabled me to start breaking data down to more specific pieces and significant moments. Sticky notes gave me the freedom to place items together as well as to move the notes around if need be once themes started emerging. For example, from my journal entry on September 19, 2017, I made a blue sticky note to indicate this was an educative connection and placed it on my closet door under my research question why is this research relevant to the field of art education as it was the logical place for it to be. The notation I wrote on the sticky note was asking students why they are in art education. Another notation I made was allowing student voices to be heard, this note was also on a blue sticky note but it was placed under my research question, how does my feminist identity affect these practices, ways of thinking and knowing, and my journey of self as an artist-educator-researcher, as it called to mind creating space for other voices to be heard.



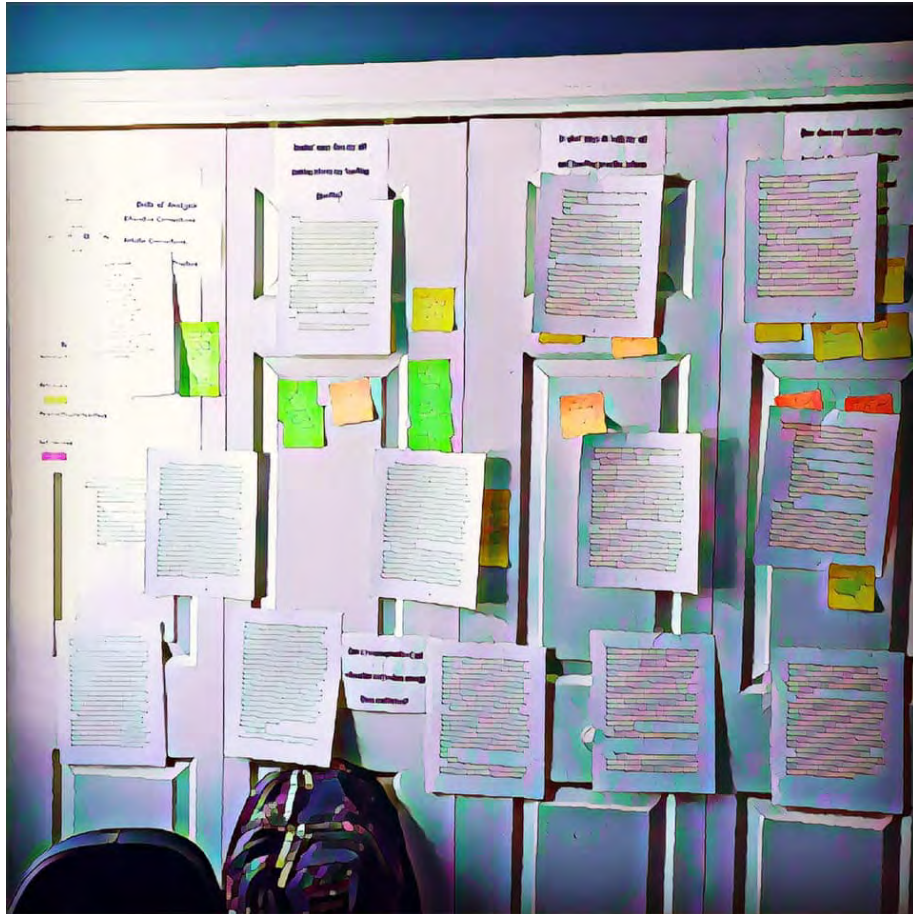
*Figure 3.3.* Ginger in action. I used knitting to create a meditative state in order to reflect more deeply upon data that were collected. This was done to reflect on day-to-day reflections.





*Figure 3.4.* Knitted thinking. Collage photograph illustrating some of the knitting done while in the process of research. I created many knitted pieces while in the cyclical process of data collection and data analysis. It was through the meditative state while knitting I was able to think about my data collection. I knitted through my entire journey of self, constantly thinking and rethinking about every step I took.

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*Figure 3.5.* Closet doors. I continually placed collected data on the closet doors in my home office. It made it easier to have my data spread out in front of me so I could look at them and reflect upon what I was seeing. The placement of data on the closet doors allowed me to sit back and look to the doors from my office chair while knitting. This was the only location where I could spread out the data and truly see where it all might fit.



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When I taught, I became highly cognizant of my choices in the moment and stopped to reflect in my RJ after I finished with class. I would actively journal after teaching occurred on a weekly basis, especially after classes in which I felt significant moments of change in my thinking or my actions. Figure 3.2 illustrates one specific incidence where I felt one such moment of change occur. It was in this journal entry I made note of asking my students why they were in art education and what their future goals were from being in my class. I never before thought to ask my students such a question and myself had never truly thought about what my thoughts were if I had been asked the same questions. After I spent time journaling in my RJ post teaching I then used knitting as a meditative activity to reflect further upon thoughts I had while actively collecting data. I would focus on my daily reflections so I could think about my research questions and the connections that were made, if any, where made. Not every day produced reflections similar to the one from September 19, 2017. This particular entry I found has stayed with me and made me think about myself more deeply and my students as well. I found the action of knitting allowed me to focus on collected data and make sense of my thinking as I worked through the process of data collection and analysis. Ultimately, my activism is not aimed at large-scale action but rather in the craftivist thinking related to small-scale questioning and changes that affect the work around me as an artist-educator-researcher. My activism is political as it informs my thinking and therefore my curricular choices within my teaching. I would journal about the thinking that goes into my curricular choices past and present. As I investigated the choices I made, I journaled about my thinking regarding how I found myself looking and thinking about the world around me.

### **Data Analysis**

I began my data analysis first by breaking data into educative connections, artistic connections, and connections to my research practice. Educative connections were those data collected that related to my teaching in all forms such as in a formal classroom teaching environment, to teaching my own children and working with others in informal teaching environments. Artistic connections are those connections made during the process of creating, from knitting to all forms I classify as making. Connections to my research are those connections that fall into my research practice and the process of autoethnography. These connections blur and merge messily, and this is why Chang (2008) and Adams, Jones and Ellis (2015) suggest not letting collected data sit without further analysis. Thus, the acts of collection and analysis become a cycle. As I collected data I continuously placed notes on my closet doors from the journals, pieces that began to stick out as important and noteworthy as relating back to my research questions. As I mentioned previously, and as seen in Figure 3.5, I began my process by using paper with notations on the sheets to track educative, artistic, and research practice connections. This process became cumbersome and difficult to work with as I collected and analyzed more data. As a result, I changed my way of working to using sticky notes on my closet doors and color-coding with the use of colored sticky notes. As I went through the data of my journals, both RJ and RW, I pulled out instances of data as they corresponded to educative, artistic, and research practices I assigned each piece of data a colored sticky note that was then placed on my closet doors. Blue was the color I chose to represent education connections, pink to represent

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

artistic connections, and orange to represent connections to research practice. I also used light pink as I began to see intersections between the three main connections.

While in the process of separating data into educative, artistic, and research practice connections I also analyzed my autoethnographic data using Spivak's concepts of affirmative sabotage, misreading, double binds, and imaginative training for epistemological performance (ITEP). It was as if I were always in the process of weaving together my data upon my conceptual framework loom. For example, when I first asked students why they were in art education my own misreading was that they were in the program to teach in a K-12 public school setting. This assumption came from my own misreading, or the knowledge within me that made me assume that everyone in the art education program was there for one reason, to teach in an art classroom, K-12. By posing the question to the students I could sense my assumption moving across the metaphorical loom towards a change in my thinking and my assumption falling away as I reflected on the incident that I originally made the journal entry about. I was in the process of interpreting my perspectives and the impacts of my lived experiences in the field of art education. Autoethnographic as well as arts-based methods were used to potentially help other artist-teachers make connections to my work. The inductive process of data collection in qualitative methodologies allows for intuitive understandings and sense-making creating the cycle of collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I began to see the data collecting on the closet doors, I began to make connections. Connections between ideas were signified with light pink sticky notes. For example, the notes I pulled from September 19, 2017, I used blue sticky notes to indicate the educative connection and placed them on my closet doors

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under the research questions they fit with. I then looked for connections to other notes. I made a connection between creating space for student voices to be heard to the note about how I felt comfortable and welcomed when with my grandmother on a light pink sticky note. This process continued as I began making more connections between moments captured in my journals and personal objects and images.

According to Chang (2008), there are threats to avoid in this method of data analysis. First, the researcher must avoid isolation due to excessive focus on self, separate from the cultural aspects being examined. Second, the interpretation of data must avoid excessive narrative as there needs to be a focus on analysis and cultural interpretations of collected data. Finally, personal memory, though vital to autoethnography, should not be relied upon exclusively. In order to avoid these threats, I worked diligently to create transparency within my research by being explicit about decisions made regarding any data collected but not used and regarding the choices I made during the process of reporting. Because my research questions guided the process of analyzing my collected data in order to determine emerging themes as they came to fruition, the use of sticky notes allowed me to post my questions on my closet doors and place the sticky notes to each corresponding research question. Seeing the colors on my closet doors allowed me to visualize where connections were emerging.

Similar to data collection, analysis is cyclical in nature for most qualitative research, and this is no different with autoethnographic research (Chang, 2003). As I mentioned previously, I found myself in a cyclical process of analyzing my collected data while still collecting data. I would reflect on journal entries made within a twenty-four hour period while the incident was still vivid. In order to create a reflective,

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meditative state I would knit so as to let my mind think more deeply about the data collected and to make connections, if there were any connections to be made. The reflection upon my data as I collected it led to more data collection, the RJ led to reflections made in the RW as I worked through my process of autoethnography. The sense making of what I collected sometimes led to revisiting data to think more deeply through the reflective process using knitting and/or looking through photographs to elicit further possible meanings. For example, as I reflected upon choices I made as a teacher after being asked by a student about teacher burnout I noted this instance in my RJ and reflected on this moment further after the class was over. In revisiting this question from a student and my answer to the student I realized that as a K-12 art teacher I had become burned out. It was through my revisiting and thinking more deeply about my RJ entry that I thought about how I became burned out and how this was part of my journey of self. Confronting my burnout as a K-12 teacher better enabled me to revisit the question from my student and talk with the class about burnout and ways to combat it on a personal level, sharing my experience with them and working to find answers together. The data analysis for autoethnography must be dealt with in a methodical manner as it uses data collected from self rather than from an outsider's point of view; as a result, the need to create transparency within data analysis is vital. Looking at this bit of data from my RJ, then reflecting on the data collected and adding my thoughts about my past in my RW, and *then* returning to the class, the cycle of data collection and data analysis continued. This methodical process of data collection and analysis, this zooming in and zooming out, was how I worked through the process of doing autoethnography. Data collected were then analyzed again and broken down

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

again for educative connections, artistic connections, and connections to research practice. The process of separating the data into the three categories was once again placed on my closet doors.

As the data were collected, there were choices to make and simultaneous analyses to conduct because as Chang (2008) writes, the process is constant, for every piece of data that is collected it is analyzed and I had to make decisions for where connections were and themes emerging, if there were. As I reflected on my process of data collection and data analysis I looked to Spivak's (2012) themes: affirmative sabotage, misreading, double binds, and finally imaginative training for epistemological performance (ITEP) as my conceptual framework to help guide my data analysis. As I knitted and reflected my mind visualized the process of data moving as if being woven on a loom. By using Spivak's themes, I was better able to think in ways that helped me see the themes that emerged from my collected data and how they fit with the questions explored. I began to think of my conceptual framework as if it were a loom set up for weaving (Figure 1.3). Affirmative sabotage and ITEP became the warp of my frame in that they both are stationary. It is through affirmative sabotage that I am learning and teaching humanities while exploring my journey of self to reconceptualize art education curriculum through craftivism: making with/for meaning. ITEP is also part of the warp of the loom, as it is through the change of desires that a reconceptualized art education curriculum through craftivism: making/with for meaning can emerge. The weft (working fibers/data) of the loom were the double binds and misreading, as they are the knowledge I am working with and are constantly changing, like a fabric being woven. I am bringing my knowledge through misreading, moving toward a double bind, making a

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

choice and becoming a single bind that then becomes another double bind through my misreading: and so it continued through the entire research process. Finally, as the analysis narrowed, I was able to articulate the relevance of my research to the field of art education.

As with most qualitative data analysis, data were coded for emerging themes to organize and guide me through the research process. I settled on the use of color-coding with sticky notes to better see where educative, artistic, and research practice connections were. Some of the words I looked for to pull out instances of educative connections were teaching, preservice, K-12, education, classroom, art education and practice. Artistic connections came from words such as making, creating, craft, and art. Research connections came from words such as assumptions, question, wonder, and how. Visually spreading out the notes on my closet doors gave me a needed space to see both the color for quick reference and the written words. It was on the sticky notes I would jot notes such as questions asked in class about teacher burnout from RJ. Then another sticky note with a note about my reflection to my own K-12 experience from RW would be added. I then examined the notes on my closet doors for recurring themes and patterns, cultural themes, exceptional occurrences, connections between the past and present, the analysis of relationships between self and others, and the framing of data within the theory (Chang, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I moved the collected data on their sticky notes in order to keep track of themes as they emerged. For example, my educative note about my own feelings of uncertainty in asking students why they were in my art education class, led to a note about making space and time for student voices to be expressed, led to voice emerging as a theme. As I continued to work with my

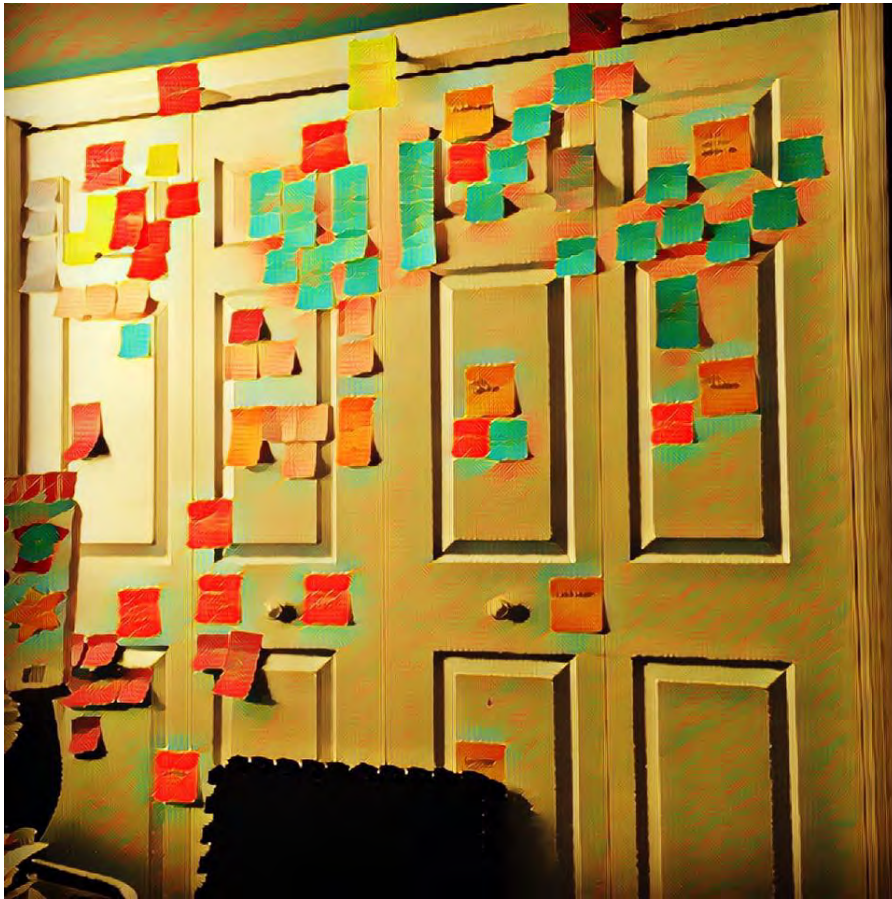
## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

data, I created more memos and notes that I then posted to the closet doors in my office to visually keep track of themes as they emerged. Ultimately my coding system was color-coded to keep track of educative, artistic, and research connections to themes as they emerged. This was a messy process as there were many connections. I once again looked to my closet doors and used sticky notes to color code the data further (Figures 3.6 and 3.7). As the sticky notes moved around the closet doors, themes began to emerge. I began to make note these emerging themes in a notebook that I would easily be able to transport to meetings with my advisor to talk through the themes.



*Figure 3.6.* Data analysis. Filtered photograph showing color-coding occurring during the process of data analysis. This process was messy and was done and redone as needed. The exercise of placing the color-coded sticky note on the closet doors allowed again for me to fully see where data was fitting together or not fitting together.





*Figure 3.7.* Data analysis 2. Filtered photograph of color-coding. The process of using colored sticky notes to place data helped for me to visually see where data was fitting together. I was able to see how many times and where the data crossed. I could zoom in and out and move the sticky notes. I could add a different color for instances of sameness and difference. It also gave me places to further investigate and question.

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

Once the data were coded and placed according to colors, emergent themes became clearer. I then began the process of looking again at the connections to art, education, and research practice. I made connections between photographs, objects and pieces I was knitting while in the process of reflecting. This continual process helped guide the research as it progressed as well as create transparency. My research questions and my conceptual framework helped guide my purpose, data collection, and analysis during the cyclical process of inquiry while allowing me to place myself within the sociocultural context (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Data collection and interpretation are woven together within autoethnographic and arts-based methods with a constant analysis occurring during data collection that helps to make sense of the data being collected. Zooming in and out from the personal to the broader cultural context of the phenomena being examined creates a constant fracturing of data; this fracturing allows the researcher to make connections, ensure transparency is achieved, and provide a check on the data collected (Chang, 2008). As I worked through my data analysis, I continued having conversations with others about what was emerging. Ultimately, through data analysis and conversations, the themes of voice, slowing down, intersecting identities, and a sense of empathy emerged (Figures 3.8, 3.9, and 3.10).



## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

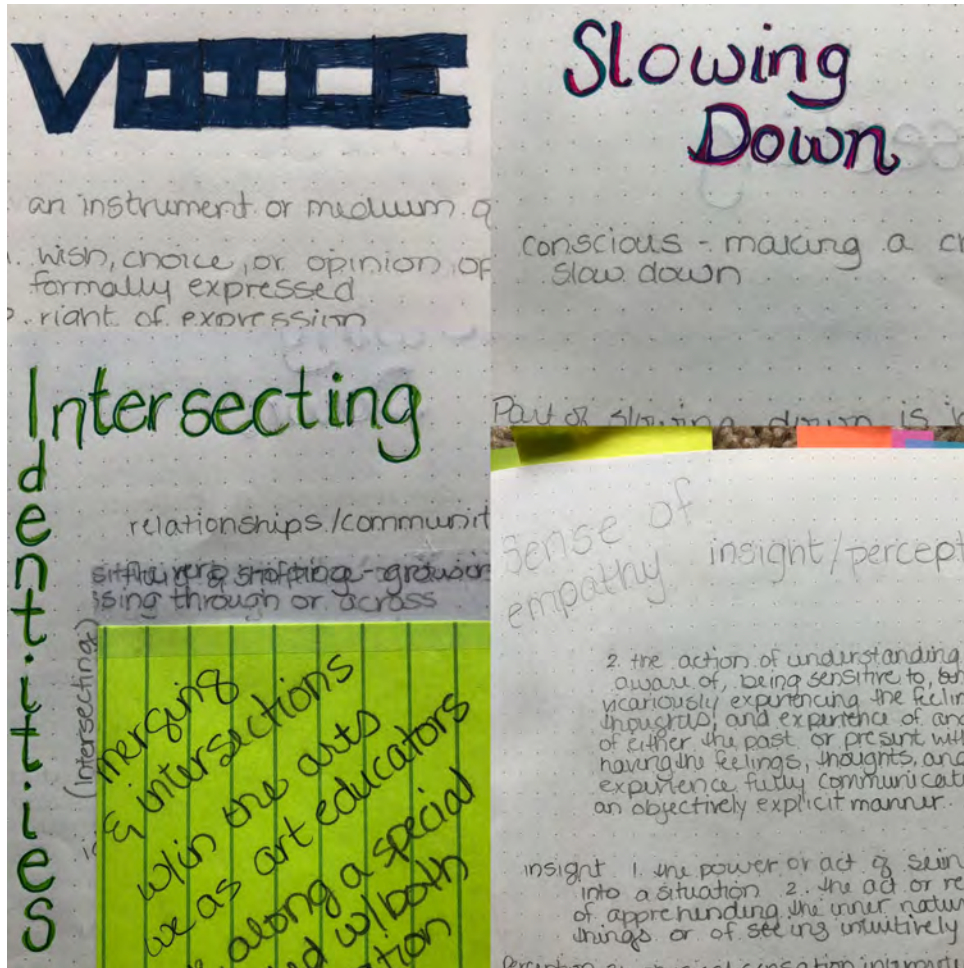


Figure 3.9. Making sense from data analysis 2. Collage photograph of notes from data analysis that I brought with me when meeting with my advisor to talk about themes emerging. Themes that emerged were voice, slowing down, intersecting identities, and sense of empathy. Under the themes I defined and wrote about them and connections from time analyzing the data.



# AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

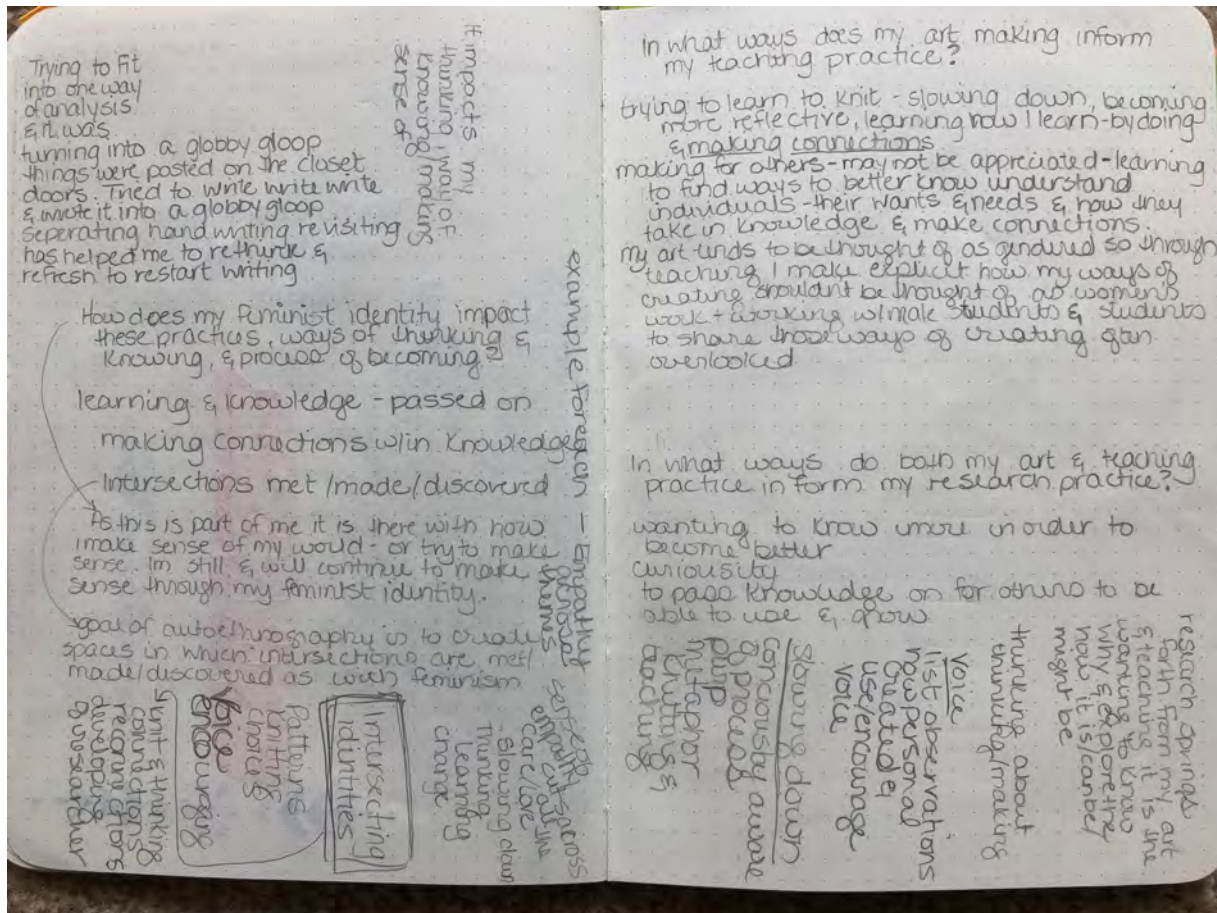


Figure 3.10. Themes emerged. Photograph of themes as they emerged after meeting with advisor. Notes made from meeting with my advisor while discussing the themes I found emerging from my data analysis.

# AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

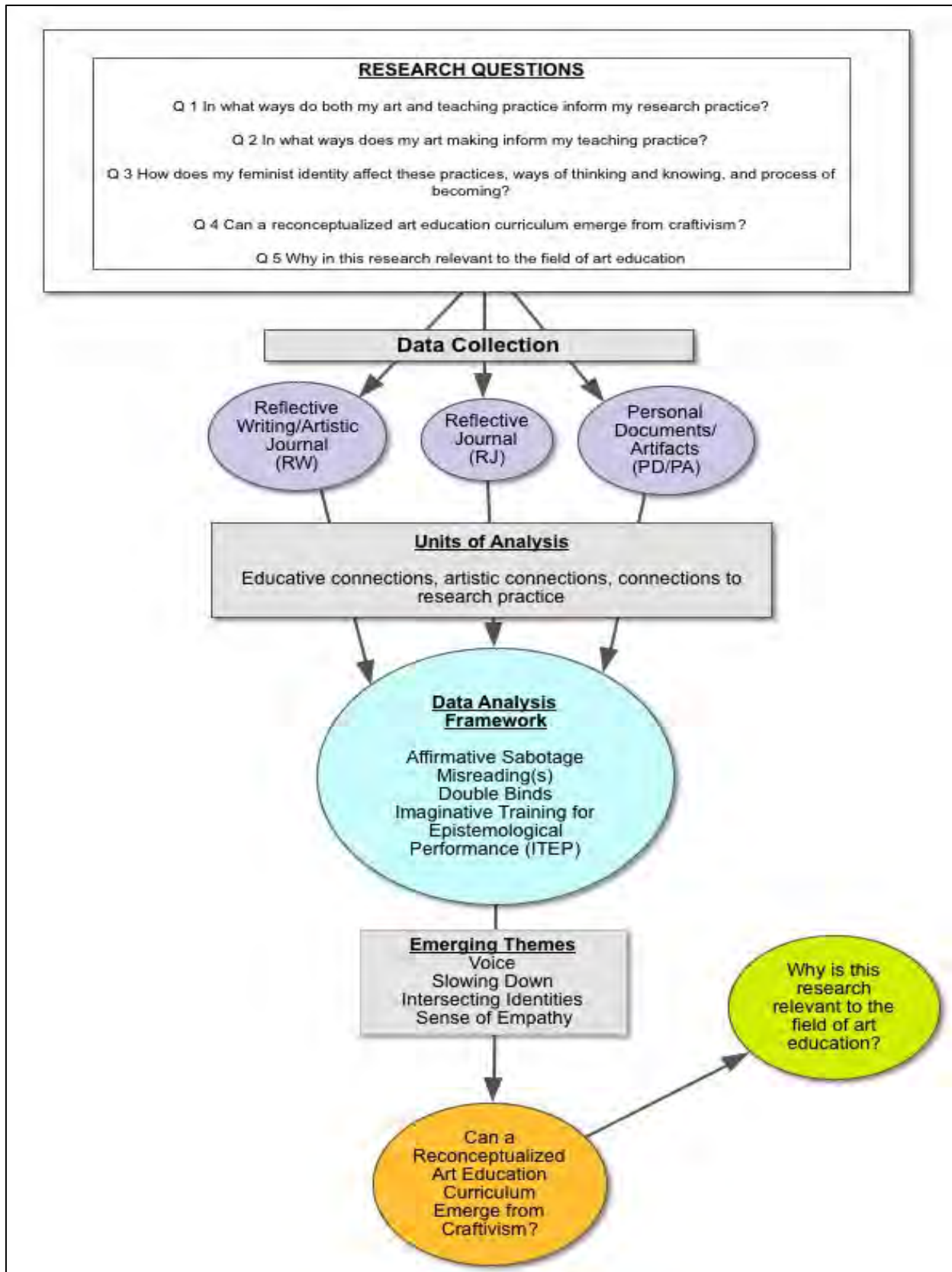


Figure 3.11. Data analysis flowchart.

### **Summary**

Each research question was a guide on my path toward finding my space within a greater context of making with/for meaning and the sociocultural space in which I reside. It was through intense reflections and allowing myself to be vulnerable as data emerged from myself that I was able to begin to find the emerging themes I write about in Chapter 4. There are common threads that weave us together, and as such, there is a way to harness a conceptualization of craftivist curriculum for use in art education curriculum. It was through autoethnography and arts-based methods I was able to collect my data, and through my conceptual framework I analyzed the data for what follows. By investigating myself within the cultural phenomena of craftivism: making with/for meaning and connecting the past and present through my own narrative, connections began to emerge that strengthened my vision of a reconceptualized art education curriculum. I reflect back to the epigraph that begins this chapter and think of where Chapter 3 began, with a plan to collect data and analyze the data collected. How this journey of self and a lost voice so shaky becomes stronger through the process. In the following chapter I will present my findings, diving deeper into the themes that emerged and their relationship(s) to my research questions that guided my research process.

## CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

### My Story 3

#### Struggling

The data was collected and the data was analyzed.

So much time spent thinking about the data.

Data can seem so cold; the word data conjures thoughts of numbers, flow charts, bar graphs, coldness, reciting, French class, and fear.

It changes when the data is from within and is an expression of self.

Rethinking what is and what can be with data can potentially give the data warmth.

People are not necessarily cold; they are not numbers, flow charts, and bar graphs...

People are makers of meaning

People crave meaning

Wrap up in the data to see what comes from the data

What meanings emerge

Where does the data take us

Where will we go with the data

How will the journey change, will it change

What will it show me when it is puzzled out and then put back together as an image?

Let the data speak.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> As I began writing my journey of self I wrote stream of consciousness prose to enable myself to enter my thinking. This epigraph sets the stage for my findings. This piece was written while the themes emerged. I wrote it as I strove to make sense to the emerging themes that follow with the findings.



### Emerging Themes

In this chapter I report findings of my autoethnographic journey of self. Through my analysis of data, four distinct themes emerged. These themes are: voice, slowing down, intersecting identities, and a sense of empathy weaving its way through all of the other themes. *Voice* I define as one's expression within and outside of the self. Voice can be oral, written, visual, thought, or performed and is impacted by choices constantly being made and shared. *Slowing down* is the conscious effort to diminish distractions and become more aware of what is happening both internally and externally. *Intersecting identities* speak to the fluid nature of identity formation and re-formation, the shifting that occurs as we continue to grow and learn through artistic experiences, relationships, and interacting with a variety of communities. Using knitting as a metaphor, an example of intersecting identities would be yarn passing through loops, interconnecting, and becoming something larger than itself. The fourth theme, *a sense of empathy*, interconnects with the others. I define my theme of empathy as an action. To be empathetic is to have a sense of understanding and awareness for others around me. It is a perception or making sense of others through intersections to better understand the experiences of others and being open to learning from others. In this context, empathy emerges as the insight or perception I feel with and for others and myself as my narrative unfolds.

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

Through autoethnography and arts-based methods, I more closely explored my experiences within craftivism: making with/for meaning primarily through reflective journaling about my experiences working with others, within my own art practice, and through reflections on working with my students to explore where the journey of self took me. I traveled to unexpected places through the vulnerability I had to expose (Leavy, 2017). During self-reflexive and reflective praxis, I thought more deeply about my own practice and ways of knowing and meaning making. I thought about my personal transformation across time and how this affected my actions in the past and into the future, and I realized researchers are a part of their research. There is not an either/or in research for me. I am what I am doing (Cole & Knowles, 2001). I am not pieces torn apart. I am whole, and my actions as such are those of a whole entity.

I collected and analyzed data from three data streams: reflective writing/artistic journal (RW), reflective journal (RJ), and personal documents/artifacts (PD/PA). As I collected data, I continuously reflected on the meaning(s) inferred from the data. I was in a constant state of interpreting my reflections and writings from reflection. I consistently looked for overlapping ideas in order to uncover themes as they emerged. I constantly went through the data creating lists of ideas that I grouped together. From these groups I began to see patterns from which the themes emerged. Autoethnography demands constant analysis; this analysis, in turn, helped guide my narratives in order to explore what emerged. Digging deeply and allowing my vulnerabilities to come to the forefront, I recreated the artist-educator-researcher I am today.

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

Making with/for meaning through craft impacts my ongoing teaching and research practice as well as my art practice and informed my autoethnographic research data collection and analysis. I view the themes that emerged from the data collected as holistic, coming from the wholeness that is me with the sense of empathy on the bias, creating a movable fabric that allows for change and recreation. Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of the data collection methods, the four themes that arose from the data, and how they interrelate. In autoethnography each form of data collection is a form of self-reflection. As such, the data collection methods are closely related and seamlessly connected like a weaving on a loom. In this chapter, I speak to the themes that arose from my analyses and follow by answering my research questions.

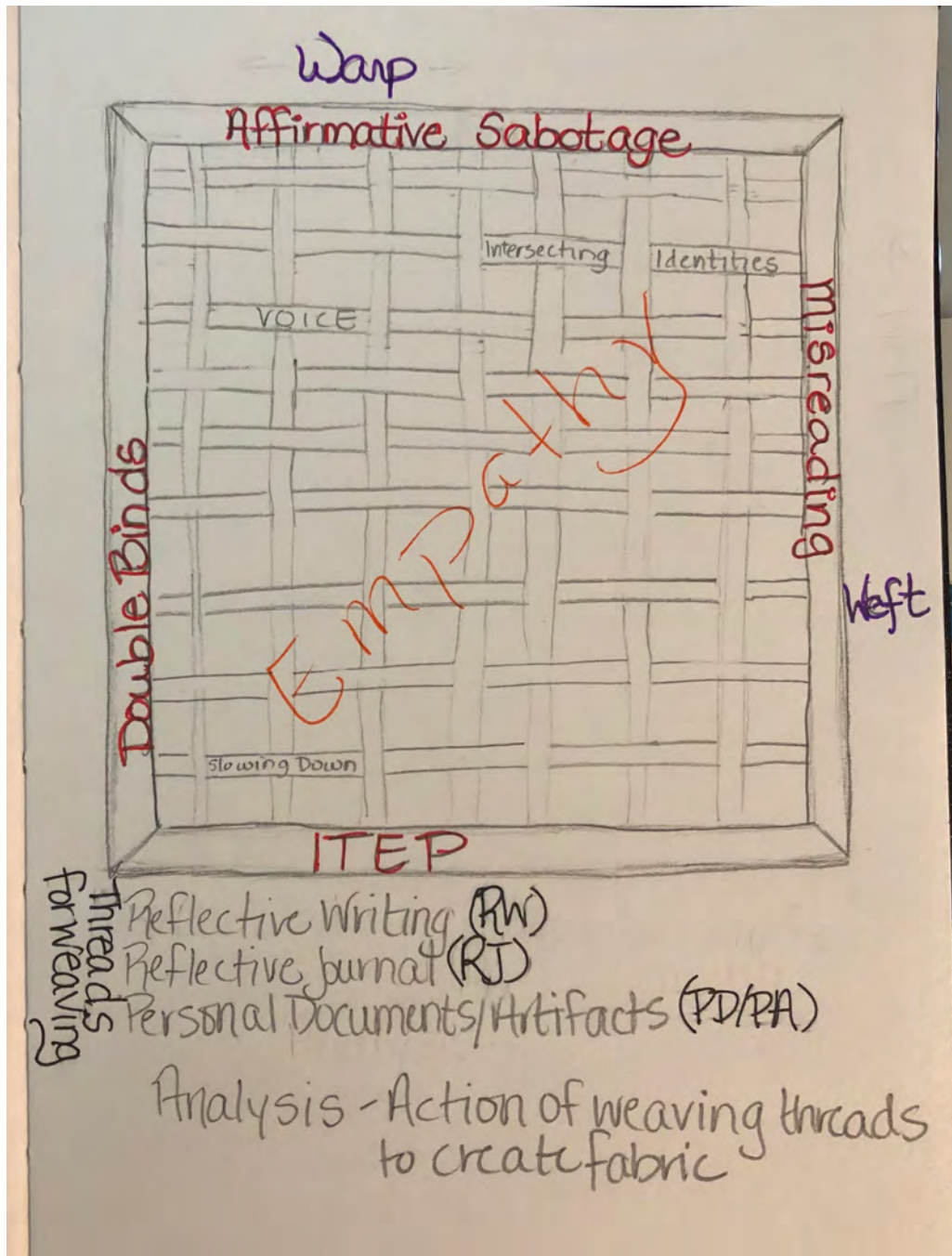


Figure 4.1. Emerging themes. Photograph of drawing representing the conceptual framework that informed my process; present are the themes of voice, slowing down, and intersecting identities with empathy on the bias allowing for elasticity and fluidity in the fabric woven.

## Voice

Voice can be oral, written, visual, thought, or performed and is impacted by choices constantly made and realized. As with double binds, I am constantly faced with choices to make. With each choice made there is a brief moment of a single bind. The single bind will not last but becomes a simultaneous new choice to be made, thus creating another double bind to work through (Spivak, 2012). Individuals express their voice from within and outside of self. The theme of voice emerged as I felt supported and encouraged to express my voice, both orally and in writing, and in turn I found myself consciously making the effort to do the same for others around me (G. Brinn, RJ, November, 2017). I found that by encouraging and supporting my students as others did for me, my students began to use their voice(s), as they, too, felt empowered to express themselves orally, visually, and in their reflection journals in class. Part of teaching students to use their voice is to encourage them to find the most comfortable way to communicate their thoughts and ideas (G. Brinn, RJ, November, 2017). I found ways to express my voice through discussions, small groups, digital media, journaling, and creating art (G. Brinn, RJ, December, 2017; G. Brinn, RW, December, 2017). Finding my voice gave me tools to potentially help my students find their voice (G. Brinn, RW, December, 2017). The following reflections are from time knitting and reflecting upon working with my practicum students and the emerging theme of voice. My own voice as a child wavered and slowly eroded. Reflecting upon my own experiences allowed me to better communicate with my students and to create a place for them to feel more comfortable expressing themselves. From my place of vulnerability, I was able to rethink my approach as a teacher (Leavy, 2017). I reflected upon the possibilities of why I

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

began to hide my voice and feel it was unworthy of being heard. The following reflections emerged from my time knitting and reflecting on my own voice.

It is not an easy task to put myself out there front and center and express my thoughts. Therefore, I work to create a classroom community where all voices can be heard in a respectful manner. Somewhere in my life this changed. I remember as a young child talking constantly in front of people, I was never uncomfortable speaking to anyone who would listen. My grandfather even nicknamed me *chatterbox* since I never seemed to stop talking. I do not know what changed in me. I cannot pinpoint a time and place when I was no longer comfortable speaking in front of people. Reflecting back, it is as if I woke one morning and found it difficult to be on stage, the one in front, talking and to be *me*. I have not always felt comfortable freely expressing myself. I grew up with negative thoughts implanting themselves within my mind. My father's words and actions intimated that I was fat, unattractive, and ultimately lazy. Reflecting back on these moments, I see how these constant barbs helped create my feelings of inadequacy making it difficult to overcome future incidences of being told I would not succeed. As a child I was also bullied and as such I continued to close myself off from others for fear of being ridiculed for either my physical self or the expressions of myself through my voice. I specifically remember as a child being called the *redheaded whale* by a boy who lived in my neighborhood as we rode the bus home from elementary school. The other kids sitting near us on the bus laughed and to this day I remember how I felt. I felt embarrassed, not liked, and as if I did not belong. Another memory I have is that of being at a community pool

## AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH CRAFTIVISM

with a friend, I was probably around 9 or 10. As I entered the pool most of the kids swam to the opposite end while yelling, “watch out, take cover it’s a tidal wave!” Between hearing kids make fun of me and the negativity of my father I internalized feelings of inadequacy. Sometimes I felt it might be the clothing my mother made for me out of love and necessity; as a child sometimes our thoughts do not always make sense but my mind did think this way. Often, my mother did not ask for my opinion in regards to patterns or the fabric choices she made when sewing clothes. I find it hard to take the spotlight and voice my thoughts to others; therefore, as a teacher, knowing how difficult this is for me, I strive to create a classroom community in which all individuals feel comfortable voicing their ideas and concerns in ways with which they are most comfortable. I realized I would start by having students think about what they are doing and why and to ultimately have them to think about what they are thinking. (G. Brinn, RJ, Fall, 2017; RW Spring, 2018)

Engaging in metacognition with my students and myself creates a community of critical thinkers where voice is employed as a means of empowerment. Remembering moments when my voice was heard, I realized I needed to make others comfortable with expressing themselves, too. I found when I stepped back and openly asked students to express their thoughts about why they were in my class, they seemed to answer honestly, and I did not judge (G. Brinn, RJ, September 19, 2017). Their responses and facial expressions indicated the possibility of not having been previously asked this question. As a class, we talked about the possibilities of their futures as art teachers in the spaces where they wanted to teach. The settings for teaching were

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varied, including K-12 settings and community settings. Deborah Britzman (2003) writes about how teachers have many voices with which to speak; the teacher's voice shifts according to relationships and language choices made. This moment with my students caused me to relearn how I use my voice and to consciously make the choice to make room for the students to use their voice. As a student I did not recall being asked this question either, nor did I recall having the freedom to explore all of the possible settings in which to teach art. This moment was extremely empowering for me as a teacher. It shifted my thinking in that moment and is something I continue to ask students. I saw it as a way to get past any bias I may have regarding my students and where they may teach in the future while also helping them develop as a teacher (G. Brinn, RJ, September, 2017/January, 2018; G. Brinn, RW, April, 2018).

I had an epiphany that led to a transformation in my teaching approach. I remember the moment I looked at my students sitting around the table and thought to myself, "I wonder why each of these students is here in this room at this moment?" So I asked them. I began to feel somewhat liberated as they answered my question. As a teacher, I had not before thought to ask pre-service art students why they were in my classroom, to acknowledge I heard them, and to truly realize in that moment the power of this action. I saw in that moment the importance of shared power in the classroom by encouraging my students to express their voice(s) (G. Brinn, RJ, November, 2017). I feel this experience was transformative. However, taking ITEP into consideration, I cannot say I changed through the experience unless another claims I have changed (Spivek, 2012). ITEP demands others acknowledge change, so even though I changed my approach by including this discussion, how am I to call it a transformation?



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Not all of my reflections were negative; there were places I felt comfortable. Those times and places where I felt most comfortable as a child were during the summers I spent with my grandmother and her friends or when I was actively making and creating. My grandmother always welcomed me during the summer, and I cherished my time with her. To this day, I deeply appreciate the time I was lucky to have with her. It was a gift I hold dear. Her encouragement gave me a place where I could be me and a space where I could be a child who felt welcomed and heard. I was given a place where adults welcomed my thoughts and *me*. I felt wanted. I have always known the impact my grandmother and her friends had on me, but prior to embarking on this autoethnographic journey of self, I did not truly realize how deeply these memories were woven into the fabric that has become me as artist-educator-researcher. I looked to an afghan (see Figure 4.2) my great-grandmother crocheted to elicit the memories of comfort. Through feelings of comfort, I reimagined how to create similar feelings in a classroom. Most of my pre-service art teachers could remember similar feelings of comfort. It was my hope that through these feelings of comfort students could feel free to use their voices with their future students. By reflecting on my own feelings of comfort, I drew upon and was able to use my voice to guide students, creating a community of comfort.



*Figure 4.2.* Afghan. This Afghan was always at my grandmother's house in the room where I would stay when with her. It now is one of the many pieces passed on within the family and reminds me of her and the welcoming I always felt in her presence, her strength, her wisdom, and her love.

As someone who grew up with more negative than positive reinforcement, I am cognizant of my voice being silenced, whether by being told my work was not worthy based on a subjective aesthetic standard or my handicrafts are not considered art. I ultimately learned to take these negative pieces fed to me and craft a counter-narrative of self-worth and empowerment. I came to what I thought was the end, an end where I

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was told once again I would not be successful by individuals who I thought were the gatekeepers of knowledge. I realized the importance of small moments capturing my thoughts, stimulating me to think through choices I make, enabling me to use my voice, be heard, and in turn allowing me to be a better teacher for my students. I took a step, then another step until those small moments became big moments propelling me forward toward another place where I felt wanted and empowered to find my voice. I learned and continue to learn that these small moments can be extremely empowering for others as well when finding their own voice, just as when I began to find mine.

### **Slowing Down**

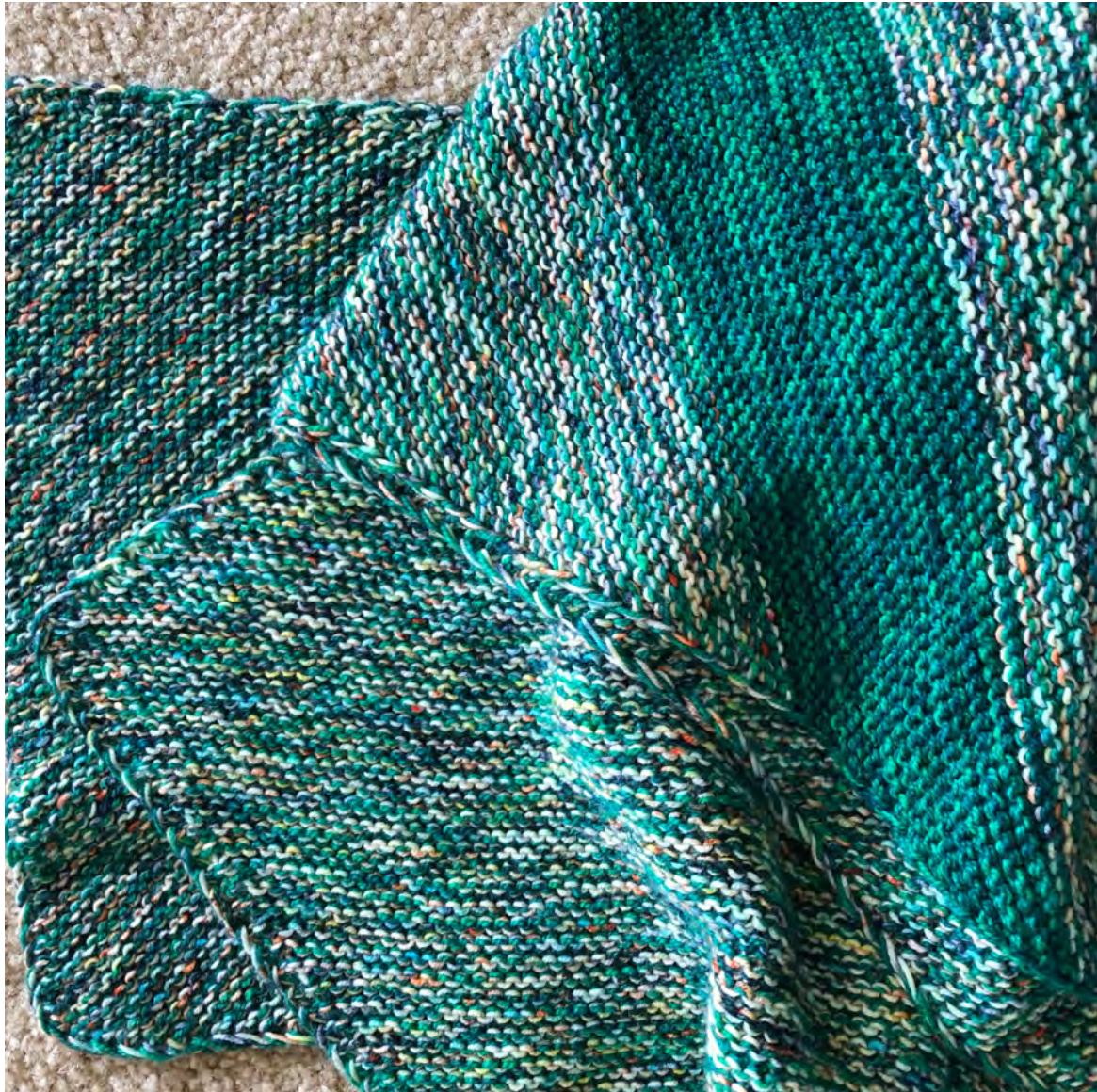
I define slowing down as making a conscious effort to become aware of things that often flow within the unconscious. I made a conscious effort to diminish distractions and become more aware of what was happening both internally and externally. I found myself thinking about my thinking while becoming explicit with my actions. I became more aware of my growth and learning through the process of slowing down. Journaling enabled me to reflect and think about what happened. This act/process of reflecting is one of slowing down, revisiting, and revising. Slowing down creates a space to recall what happened. I was able to revisit actions that happened in the moment, deconstruct those actions, analyze them, and rebuild the actions to try again. This is extremely helpful for unsuccessful actions. Slowing down also consists of taking the time to carefully plan for what is to come and working through each part in order to think more clearly about what should happen. I found stopping to write by hand, allowed me to slow down the action of taking the time to think more deeply as pen/pencil made marks on the paper, therefore recording more meaningful reflections. The act of writing caused

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me to slow down and take the time to think more carefully about the actions upon which I was reflecting. All of these actions, it turns out, were an effort to consciously become more aware of things happening within the unconscious—that is, to slow down.

During the act of making I was also able to slow myself down to become more mindful. I found specifically while knitting (Figure 4.3) I was able to be in a mindful state and think more carefully about the actions and items I wrote about (Riley et al., 2013). This intentional slowing down enabled me to better process my data on different levels. I could meditate on the meanings behind my reflections as I made sense of what had transpired, creating new meanings. I was constantly bringing my knowledge to my analysis in order to make sense of what was emerging from the collected data. It was through being mindful while making that I was able to misread the data and build upon my knowledge, creating new knowledge to carry forth (Spivak, 2012).





*Figure 4.3.* Mindful reflections. I often used knitting to create a meditative state for reflection while working through data collection and analysis. This knitted scarf was coded as slowing down as I did not just start knitting when I began. I purposefully chose the yarns I used and planned how the plain green could create a stripe in the pattern. As with slowing down in my teaching practice to plan this scarf was carefully planned and thought out.

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Slowing down resulted from various moments and reflections. Through reflecting on pre-planning and creating agendas for my teaching, I became a more thoughtful teacher (Figure 4.4). Through the thinking involved with carefully planning and creating agendas to complement that planning, I was able to cover all the required information while also touching on the unexpected conversations and questions that took place.

At one point while teaching K-12 art, I found I stopped pre-planning. My teaching as a result suffered from the lack of pre-planning. Classroom management suffered also as a result. I realized I needed to slow down and take the time to plan carefully and thoughtfully, as my students deserved the best I could be. It was in the process of slowing down and taking the time to plan all aspects of my teaching my students became more engaged and classroom management became easier as students were engaged with their work. (G. Brinn, RJ, May, 2018)

Before slowing down, I found timing to be erratic, and not all of my planned information got covered, leaving me feeling as if I had not given my students what they needed.

Realizing the importance of careful planning and through the creation of agendas, I was able to share the importance of taking the time to thoughtfully slow down to plan—and all that may entail. Having lived through my own lack of planning, I was able to share my experience with my preservice art teachers in hopes that they could learn the impact this might have on their own future teaching experiences. Slowing down allows me to listen and hear students, ultimately giving them agency within the classroom. By letting go of the control imposed by my own conception of right and wrong, I am able to create the space to stop and listen to the students and hear what they are saying. We are in a



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classroom to learn and build knowledge together, and by letting go of the notion of right and wrong I was able to grow and learn. Recreating plans, relearning, and reteaching all allow me to better understand myself and how what I do fits into my community. As fluid beings, we must learn to let ourselves step back to redo.



Figure 4.4. Agenda page. This is a page illustrating how I use agendas to not only plan for teaching but for reflection and slowing down. I find by working in this way I am better able to not only plan for the class but to post plan for how to move forward. This agenda was coded as slowing down. It blurred the lines having educative, artistic, and research connections.

I not only noticed slowing down in my classroom teaching but also in my making. Watching fashion, I notice new styles but also a resurgence of older styles as vintage

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items or slightly reconceptualized new items. This concept of change reworked can be seen in our teaching practices if we slow down enough to notice the sameness of change. I saw this in my making for others, specifically items made for my daughter (Figure 4.5). Figure 4.5 shows a sweater in progress I made for my daughter. I lovingly chose the pattern and yarn to knit the sweater for her. Unfortunately, I never asked her if she liked the color I chose or the pattern I decided to use. I assumed she would like it because I was making it for her. I assumed what should be made, what would be worn, liked, and cherished. I was revisiting how my own mother made garments for me to wear. I did not let go of the control of right and wrong, and I was not creating a space to listen or perhaps notice what was around me.





*Figure 4.5.* Knitting assumptions. This image is of sweater pieces to be sewn together for my daughter. At the time I assumed she would love and wear the completed piece. I never asked her if she liked the style or color that I chose for her. I did not allow for her to have a voice in this creation I made for her and as such it was put into a drawer and forgotten.

Knitting and creating was a space where I found I was able to truly slow down and reflect upon questions, thoughts, and concerns. By slowing down, I worked on projects while allowing my mind to think in a meditative manner (G. Brinn, PD/PA; G. Brinn, RW). The meditative aspect of this work allowed my thoughts to come freely and helped create a space in which I thought about specific things such as my research questions and the data I was collecting. Using my knitting as a tool to reflect upon my

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work, I actively became very aware of the research previously carried out about how knitting creates a meditative state for thinking more deeply (Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013). I was able to reflect on how a day may have gone. I reflected on how to approach things new and old. I could ponder how to change something that may not have gone well and how I might improve upon my actions. It also was a space where I was able to think through future ideas (G. Brinn, RW). There is a need to make our surroundings a place where we are aesthetically balanced. The act of creating and making helps balance our inner being. I spent many hours reflecting while in the act of knitting during my research process. The repetitive action of knitting and the calming space I found within making enabled me to get to a place where metacognition was very much at the core of my actions, using yarn to knit an object while simultaneously meditating upon thoughts (Figure 3.2; G. Brinn, PD/PA). These moments deep in making and the meditative quality it brings are what Csikszentmihalyi (2009) refers to as flow, seemingly lost in the thinking of thinking while engaged in the making.

I found meditation and slowing down to share a reciprocal relationship. I also found teaching others to knit caused me to slow down in my teaching in order to check on my students, to see if they are following along. I found myself reteaching and relearning what I am teaching in order to think more deeply about what I am doing and to see it all through another's eyes. I often think about the many different ways to teach individuals how to knit. However, in one particular instance I stopped myself and reversed what I thought I knew to rethink what I was doing. I ended up reversing my hands for knitting. Instead of thinking like a left-handed person I stopped and re-taught myself how to knit right-handed.

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When I knitted right-handed, I was able to slow down and teach more effectively. I felt transformed in this moment of action. By slowing down I was able to think in the moment. I was able to connect. (G. Brinn, PJ, June, 2018; G. Brinn, PW)

I was able to create a space for myself to think about the double binds and the choices I made as I slipped from the double to a single bind and back to the double bind (Spivak, 2012). By slowing down, I was also able to better grow new knowledge from the previous knowledge I brought with me to my research as artist-educator-researcher (Spivak, 2012).

### **Intersecting Identities**

Intersecting identities speaks to the fluid nature of identity formation and re-formation, the shifting that occurs as we continue to grow and learn through artistic experiences, relationships, and interacting with a variety of communities. According to Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), intersectionality should be malleable, changing and growing as knowledge is built on the spaces where individuals intersect. In acknowledging the places where we intersect, it is imperative we acknowledge the power structures in the places we do not intersect with others (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). It is my belief that individuals come together at intersections, and it is at these points we find a common space of understanding from which to grow new knowledge, together. It is through the differences we need to learn in order to create a space for understanding and growing in our knowledge. We are constantly finding new points of intersection from which to grow together, much as with misreadings and double binds (Spivak, 2012). Through my teaching, I interacted within a variety of communities; each year, each class, each individual forms a new community with which to work. My own identity has

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been in a state of constant flux, always taking in new knowledge and rethinking my old knowledge. For as long as I can remember, I have created and felt the need to create, whether for myself, someone else, or to simply be in the act of making. The act of making brings me comfort and connection to others. Whether crocheting blankets, cooking, sewing, stitching, painting, or drawing, I always had the need to create, and my projects are ongoing. I even found myself seeking employment in spaces where I was able to create. I worked for many years in the floral industry creating floral arrangements. If I happened to find myself working in a retail position, I found myself in charge of creating the displays for the store. It was not until I found myself in art school that I began to feel as if I discovered a place where I felt pieces of myself coming together. My mind was thinking in a much more holistic manner. My whole being seemed to come together, and my work made sense as I encountered others like me. Art school was the place I was unknowingly searching for all along.

Through making, I was able to begin making connections within knowledge (Figure 4.6). My identity constantly shifts as I take in new knowledge and begin the process of meaning making, thus creating new knowledge. When I worked with middle school students who asked me to teach them how to knit, my identity as maker and teacher came together to teach my students how to knit. Through this experience I was also intersecting identities with my students, as I stepped back from my preconceived notions and figured out how to teach them how to knit. Even though my students asked me to teach them how to knit, there were several in the class with preconceived notions of knitting as a gendered way of making; as young men they did not feel it was

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something they wanted to learn. The concept of knitting being only for girls perplexed me.

I set about rethinking and re/envisioning knitting for my students. I needed to find ways to connect with the students who felt knitting was not for them. I found ways to make connections by finding masculine role models who knitted to share with them. I shared historical information on knitting and fiber arts with them. We started by making their knitting needles to create the feel of those who were once not able to purchase such items readily from a craft store. We ended up creating a knitting community within our classroom where we found similarities to build upon and a place where differences became sites of learning and understanding. For me knitting was not an art form that came easily and in order to teach others I figured out many different ways to learn how to knit in order to teach my students. (G. Brinn, PD/PA, RW, November, 2017)

This moment working with my students helped solidify within me the realization that there truly are many ways to solve any and all issues that arise every day. Finding the intersections with my students whether in a K-12 setting or now in a higher education setting is important for me. Where we intersect, we are better able to work together to build new knowledge and to cultivate the knowledge together. It was through these points of intersection that I was better able to meet my students in a place of understanding and with a sense of empathy to begin facilitating the construction of new knowledge.



*Figure 4.6.* Knitted making sense. I spent a lot of time reflecting upon my data from the collection to the analysis. It was through the action of knitting I was able to create a meditative state for freely reflecting on all the many aspects of my research process. This image illustrates some of the many finished pieces created during the research process. This image is representative of the many different pieces I knit during my research with the green piece made by a student across the other pieces creating intersections.

### **Sense of Empathy**

The fourth and final theme to emerge from the data is a sense of empathy. Empathy is at the core, interconnecting with the other themes as seen in Figure 1.3. The sense of empathy that emerged is an insight or perception I felt within others and myself as my narrative unfolded. I see empathy in the passing on of traditions and the



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making of crafts as a place of intersection with all the themes woven together. I envision empathy as a knitted blanket made to wrap us in its comforting warmth. Working with others through teaching opened my being to the traditions and skill passing through me from others and to others. Working together and collaborating on projects helped ignite my passion to inquire into the ability of making with/for meaning through a craftivist curriculum. Having empathy creates a space where little sparks of disruption can emerge. Craftivism can have large (flame) or small (spark) impact. Each provides the possibility for personal and social transformation to occur. Corbett (2018) speaks to how working on craft projects around a table creates a place for uncomfortable topics to be spoken about comfortably. While still in the presence of others, there is a sense of comfort in working side by side but not looking at individuals while speaking. This setting can create places to connect over uncomfortable topics, thus growing knowledge (Corbett, 2018). I tried this with art education students and received feedback via course evaluations that the students enjoyed that I created a similar atmosphere to the one Corbett (2018) describes in her video.

Through my work within craftivism (Figure 4.7), I experienced a personal transformation. My own work changed me; I could envision how the impact of craftivism and making with/for meaning has the potential to create change. I worked with my son and the school community to create a yarnbombing for the school. The process of making as well as the completed work allowed me to imagine the effect craftivism could have for others in a reimagined craftivist art education curriculum. From the moment I began working to plan the yarnbombing, I felt as if I were part of something larger than myself. I worked with my son, cutting empty saline bottles donated by a local medical

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facility. The process of cutting the bottles seemed to continue forever; my hands grew sore and tired, but I carried on with my son's help. The time I spent with my son was wonderful. While working together, we talked about our days and our thoughts. I came to realize the importance of connections with others and the understanding we need to have while working together. We worked together in a meditative state conducive to sharing, and I felt we grew closer during this process (G. Brinn, PW). After all of the pieces were completed, feathers made by the school's students were assembled into wings along with hand-stitched letters to form words. My daughter helped me install the work at the school (G. Brinn, PD/PA). Again, working with my child allowed me time to talk with and create stronger bonds. As we finished the installation, the students from the school came out to help and weave yarn pieces on the fence. While working collaboratively, the sense of coming together created a space where we all worked for a common purpose, to bring attention to a beloved school (G. Brinn, PD/PA; G. Brinn, RW; G. Brinn, RJ, June, 2017). Through the whole process of creating the yarnbombing, we each used our voices and came together for a common goal. Though the piece was ephemeral, we each retained some part of the work and the process of making it within our memory (G. Brinn, RW).





*Figure 4.7.* Craftivist Yarnbombing. Photograph of installed craftivist work in Richmond, VA. Throughout the process of working on this installation I was able to make connections to the students I worked with, my own children who helped with the project and individuals leading the project. It became a community of sorts where I began to truly gain a sense of working from intersections to create a greater understanding of each person involved and to allow a sense of empathy to wash over me.

### **Research Questions Revisited**

The following research questions guided me throughout my autoethnographic journey:

- In what ways do both my art and teaching practice inform my research practice?
- In what ways does my art making inform my teaching practice?

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- How does my feminist identity affect these practices, ways of thinking and knowing, and my journey of self as an artist-educator-researcher?
- Can a reconceptualized art education curriculum emerge from making with/for meaning?
- Why is this research relevant to the field of art education?

Each question intersected with the themes that emerged from the process of analytic induction. The four distinct themes to emerge were: *voice*, *slowing down*, *intersecting identities*, and a *sense of empathy* which, in addition to being a theme, wove its way through all the themes. I briefly discuss how each question ties to the themes followed by a deeper discussion of how the questions intersect with the themes and my conceptual framework. I end with the implications of my autoethnographic journey for others as a reconceptualized art education curriculum emerges from making with/for meaning.

### **In What Ways Do Both My Art and Teaching Practice Inform My Research Practice?**

The theme most prominent within this question is that of intersecting identities. I am not pieces of a whole but rather a whole made of many pieces—artist, educator, and scholar, intersecting identities that speak to the very fluid nature of identity formation and re-formation. My thinking continually shifts and changes as I grow and learn through artistic experience, relationships, and interact within a variety of communities. The process continually intersects with others and myself. I remember sitting in a philosophy class nearly 20 years ago when a professor told us about flux, how we are always in a state of change with each passing moment. The concept of flux shared by

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my professor stuck with me from that point onward in my life. The very idea that we can never have the same exact experience again amazed me. This concept today helps me to better understand intersecting identities and how I as a person am constantly shifting and growing holistically.

Making has always brought me comfort as well as a space where I am able to connect to others. My autoethnographic journey further solidified for me the inability to separate my artist self from my teacher and research selves, as each of these roles informs the other, providing a holistic approach to art education (Lawton, 2012). Once I discovered art school as the place I was searching for all along, I discovered I was not alone. I found connections within art school that I never before encountered. I discovered a place where my curiosity was sparked. I found I wanted to learn more and share my passion for making. It is through these sparks I feel others can find connections to my journey of self and work toward a craftivist curriculum. Sharing my passion for making through my teaching practice ignited my research. To better understand how incorporating my passion for making into my teaching practice might impact myself and my students I first needed to look at myself and my place in the process of making and teaching. The practice of repetitive reflection and keeping journals to record my reflections enabled me to turn an eye back on myself to better explore how my actions inform what I do, from making to teaching to answering the questions that emerge to research.

### **In What Ways Does My Art Making Inform My Teaching Practice?**

Threads of this question can be seen in how my making encourages me to slow down and allows metacognition to take place through reflective practices. I found that

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being conscious of reflecting in the moment of action also led to my slowing down in my teaching practice to critically think about my thinking and my teaching. My preservice art education students ask me, "What did you want your K-8 students to learn in your art room?" This question grew to feel like a very important one to answer for my students. My ultimate goal is for students to leave my art room and have an appreciation for art in all its many forms. I want my students to appreciate the reflective nature of making and, even if they do not go on to careers in art, to make art, to exercise their creativity in a visual way as a means of slowing down, and to reflect on their actions and process. In addition, I want my students to know that as makers we can grow our understanding of what art can be and how making with/for meaning can be impactful on multiple levels. My journey taught me to slow down and make a conscious effort to become aware of things that often flow within the unconscious so as not to miss important moments. I became more cognizant of time shared with my children while we worked to create the installation wings (Figure 4.7) and the conversations we had about creating art and being part of a community. Through the act of slowing down I could focus on my students to create a deeper connection as I facilitated the learning process in a classroom.

I became consciously aware of my need to make, and in doing so, I came to better understand the basic human need to create, make special, and claim as our own through the act of creation (Dissanayake, 1995). As an artist-educator, the process of making special by creating unique and aesthetically pleasing functional items caused me to slow down and truly grasp the notion of making with/for meaning (Carroll, 1998; Dissanayake, 1995). When slowing down, I found myself thinking more critically and

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being more explicit with my actions while working with others. I am able to step back from a preconceived right or correct aspect within my making and see how the effect of this action empowered my teaching. I am able to think about and let go of biases that can otherwise stifle my students and me.

### **How Does My Feminist Identity Affect These Practices, Ways of Thinking and Knowing, and My Journey as an Artist-Educator-Researcher?**

I struggled to find my voice while on this journey. On some level I will always be finding my voice as I am continuously taking in new experiences that inform my knowledge making. Spivek (2012) writes about the changing of desires, to change one's desires and in doing so letting in the voices of others. This rearranging of desires is "the training of the imagination in epistemological performance" (Spivak, 2012, p. 125). To not only let in, but also to listen and hear the many voices and to create mutual change is how I strive to conduct myself in life, thus affecting all that I do. I strive to hear many voices as well as encourage others to express their voice through making and teaching. Through my autoethnographic journey, I examined my re-emerging voice. This task, though not easy or even enjoyable, has been enlightening. It made me see how my voice has grown and become stronger. I spent time crying through the process, realizing how my voice was silenced. I heard my daughter's voice tell me I am strong, and it is for her and others whose voices must be heard that I pursued this intensely personal and close examination of my life journey. By growing my voice, I am better able to step back and encourage the voices of my students to be heard. Through feminist ways of knowing, thinking, questioning, and exploration, I am better able to situate myself within my own journey while maintaining a sense of empathy for others

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and making intersections from which new knowledge may grow (Ahmed, 2017; Belenky et al., 1997; Harding, 1991; Lerner, 1993).

When I was a young girl around the age of 12 or so, I learned how to quilt. A close family friend was visiting from out of town and took the time to teach me. This family friend is someone who, for as long as I can remember, I think of as a mother figure. I often refer to her as my second mother. She was always kind and patient while teaching me. She never seemed to indicate there was a correct way to work. She guided me as I was learning; she always heard me and did not try to silence my voice. In reflection, she was the first individual I can recall who impressed upon me what a feminist might be. She was an ally. She modeled for me how to stand up for and beside others, to be a voice when others are unable to speak. When she taught me how to quilt, she gave me all of the supplies needed to finish my quilt square. She gave me a thimble made from the finger of a glove that she brought with her all the way from Germany. I never finished the quilt square. Sadly, my mother threw it away, the quilt packed in a box I forgot to take with me when I moved out of her house. I never forgot the thimble, the quilt square, or the time spent learning from my second mother. Her patience, kindness, understanding, and allyship helped me on my journey toward better understanding how my feminist identity informs all aspects of myself.

All of the threads weaving my autoethnographic journey together through my feminist identity helped me amplify my voice. The process and deep exploration of self awoke in me the realization that I have a voice, a narrative to share with others so they can make connections and see themselves within my story. Through my story, I discovered I possess knowledge to share. I have the ability to create spaces for

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awakenings and places for creating change just as Ellen Gates Starr did with her work, emphasizing the importance of making with/for meaning through handicrafts (Stankiewicz, 1989). I hold within me the ability to create spaces of critical reflection through the act of making with/for meaning and to encourage interconnectivity, collaboration, and awareness of social issues (Greer, 2011; Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013; Weil, 2016).

### **Can a Reconceptualized Art Education Curriculum Emerge from Craftivism?**

In the act of creating and making with/for meaning, there is slowing down, making a conscious effort to diminish distractions and become more aware of what is happening both internally and externally. There is a place within the act of making with/for meaning where craftivist curriculum can emerge to inform a reconceptualized art education curriculum. Some tenets I envision are the need to be explicit with actions taken (teacher and student), a need to rethink and redefine what is known (by all involved), vulnerability, and acceptance. Craftivism creates spaces where knowledge and learning can happen. As Corbitt (frank gathering at University of Florida, 2018) explains in her talk, the action of making often lends itself to more easily have conversations since while crafters are making they are not looking directly at others thus allowing for a sense of community while not being confrontational. This easy flow of conversation can also be experienced in knitting circles, quilting bees, and other forms of gathering to make. It has the power to spark excitement, curiosity, and disruption from the day to day. It can become a place where all voices are heard, from the extrovert to the introvert. All voices knit together creating a larger voice. This larger

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voice can be heard and seen in the pussy hat movement, in which the voices of many were heard through an object made by many individuals.

Our ancestors have been making with/for meaning for a very long time (Dissanayake, 1995). Handicrafts made with/for meaning embody a place of importance in our daily lives, from the external choices we make for our surroundings to our internal choices such as the thoughts we have. As I look around my world, I see more and more individuals seeking similar experiences, experiences that allow them to create and to make with/for meaning. There is a rediscovering of the deep, primal need to create, to make special, to decorate and claim as one's own through the act of creation (Dissanayake, 1995). I notice more people engaged with handicrafts, making with/for meaning. I see more people taking the time to be ethical in their clothing choices by sewing what they wear. I have become more aware of individuals seeking out classes to learn how to do things from knitting, quilting, embroidery, visible mending, and so on. People are acceding to the primal need to create. They are choosing to return to a time when handicrafts were a necessity, and they are choosing to make with/for meaning.

Craftivism is the use of craft for sharing, for caring, for making with/for meaning. Betsy Greer (2014) wrote about the core of craftivism as creating a thing of meaning that in turn leads to questioning. This questioning creates conversations with others that encompass social and political meanings both large and small. Through the writing of *Bell Hooks* (1994), I understand the choices I make as a teacher are political, I also know my very being is political. Through craftivist curriculum, as the teacher, I guide my students explicitly as they engage in political actions whether small or large. Through political action, we engage others through the work made. This leads into my



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conception of learning and teaching within Spivak's (2012) themes espoused in her book, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. These themes formed the conceptual framework for my autoethnographic journey and inform an emerging theory of craftivist curriculum that can guide a reconceptualized art education curriculum based in craftivism.

### **Summary**

The themes of voice, slowing down, intersecting identities, and empathy weave their way through my data. The data came from a place of vulnerability, and it is through this vulnerability that I was able to begin to see how my research might impact others. This is an autoethnographic work; it is my story. There is work yet to be done as my narrative goes forth. It is the final line from the epigraph that begins this chapter that I leave this chapter with, let the data speak. By relating each theme to the research questions, my autoethnographic journey of self ends and begins. In Chapter 5, I will further describe curricular implications.

## CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

### My Story 4

The end is near but is it an end or another beginning  
To rethink everything I thought I knew  
To rethink that which I did know  
To begin anew is refreshing  
To make connections to usher in change  
This is refreshing  
To grow, to learn, to know, to better understand  
These are things we need to change  
The journey is not always straight  
The journey curves  
There are roadblocks and there are restarts  
When there is community there is a space in which to spread our wings  
Will we fly, will we crash  
Will we dust ourselves off and start again  
Yes the dust will be blown aside and what will emerge is something different  
This is refreshing.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> As I began writing my journey of self I wrote stream of consciousness prose to enable myself to enter my thinking. This epigraph sets the stage for my discussion. This piece was written as I worked on the findings chapter. This epigraph was a cathartic step as I began to come to an end and a beginning.

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This dissertation was a journey of self. I investigated myself within the cultural phenomena of craftivism: making with/for meaning, connecting the past and present through my narrative. Connections began to emerge through the process of self-exploration. My research questions always continue to guide the way, how do both my art and teaching practice inform my research practice? In what ways does my art making inform my teaching practice? How does my feminist identity affect these practices, ways of thinking and knowing, and my journey of self as an artist-educator-researcher? Can a reconceptualized art education curriculum emerge from craftivism? I set out to investigate how craftivism as a way of making with/for meaning might foster transformative experiences within the discipline of art education. By exploring my own journey of self, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of craftivism and the possibilities it may hold for reconceptualizing curriculum via making with/for meaning. Through my study, I hope that other artist-educator-researchers in the field of art education will see the value of reflexive praxis and the possibilities within a craftivist curriculum.

### **Craftivist Curriculum**

Based on my research, I posit an emerging theory of craftivist curriculum. Craftivist curriculum as I envision it brings together individuals with various experiences and backgrounds, introverts and extroverts, to collaborate and learn from one another through making with/for meaning and in that process rethink what is known to create new knowledge, constantly shifting and fluid. It is though both the coming together with a common goal of working through craft creates a place where conversations can happen, this can be seen through knitting circles, quilting circles, sewing circles, and

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similar groupings (Greer, 2011; Riley, Corkhill, & Morris, 2013). Corbett also suggests in her talk at the frank gathering at University of Florida (2018) that the ease in conversation comes from not making direct eye contact while in a place of deeper thought and creation through craft. A curriculum reconceptualized thus becomes a place of action, where *curriculum* is no longer a noun, but a verb that includes the teacher's experiences as artist-researcher as well as those of the students as meaning makers through art (Pinar, 2012). Artist-educator-researcher and student are woven together to create a transformative learning space through making with/for meaning. I envision craftivist curriculum taking place within a K-16 setting but can most readily see it as I work with preservice art teachers. I indicate preservice teachers as this is the group I worked with through my journey of self. It was through my process of working with preservice teachers I am better able to envision a craftivist curriculum. I began my process in a space as a teacher of teachers and began to implement parts of an imagined craftivist curriculum that my students might carry forward into their future art rooms.

To think about a reconceptualized curriculum I needed to rethink everything I thought I knew about art education. As a preservice art educator, I was prepared to teach using Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE). Beginning with the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 and continuing through *No Child Left Behind* during the early 2000s, over the last four decades American education has grown increasingly standardized. In Rivers (2014), Gil Clark reflects on his part in the creation of DBAE, describing the difficulty of getting art educators to accept this new way of teaching. He explains how DBAE was conceived as a means to integrate art experiences in schools

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that did not have art educators (Rivers, 2014). Born in the age of standardization, DBAE became a standard of sorts for the teaching of art. I believed this was the only way to teach art within a classroom setting. I felt teaching through a DBAE framework was the only way art would be recognized as a core subject—a discipline like math or science—and integrated into the general curriculum. My perception of how art ought to be taught, however, has shifted since my earliest days in the classroom. Through self-exploration, I examined how vital art was to my entire life. As a result, I recognize that art is intertwined with every aspect of my being. I learn with and through art. Craft, too, is art, and my handicrafts made with/for meaning have a place in the art world, as do my voice and the voices of others with similar narratives.

While many stereotype the world of art as a place only for innately gifted or fine artists, a craftivist curriculum makes art accessible to all individuals. I often felt out of place in the art world until I began to recognize my own handicrafts as art and worthy of a place in this world. Craft is a form of art in which art educators can and should engage more students. Craft is usually a common place where individuals who may not be what is stereotyped as fine art have experience in creating (Bastos, 2002; Keifer-Boyd, 2000). Returning to the notion that individuals seek out avenues to create and make ordinary objects special, it is through craft, I posit a common coming together for a larger group of individuals. I notice there is a return to wanting to make special through craft. The time is right for the implementation of a craftivist curriculum: the contemporary art world has embraced craftivism, and even high-end galleries have begun to exhibit handicrafts made by artists working in fiber, wood, clay, and metal (Garber et al., 2019). In the past, fiber arts were considered women's work, a lesser, gendered art form not

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worthy of attention in the male-dominated art world. But over time crafts have become a means of activism, drawing attention to marginalized groups; such work provides the foundation for craftivist curriculum (Barber, 1994; Macdonald, 1988; Parker, 2016). I see every day how individuals are finding their voice through making with/for meaning. I feel as if I have found my voice through the process of making with/for meaning. I am experiencing a transformation in my rethinking of what it means to be an artist-educator-researcher through craftivism: making with/for meaning.

The meditative aspect of creating, especially within craft, allows transformative rethinking to occur. The use of knitting helped me to create a way to fully immerse myself in the work of creating my self-narrative. I used knitting as a way to work through the reflective process, going deeper into my thinking to see connections as I worked yarn and needles to create works. This activity creates spaces where misreadings work toward double binds and where the creation of new knowledge occurs. Bringing our past knowledge into a space of learning and creating opens possibilities for transformative experiences, allowing our knowledge to change our way(s) of thinking (Spivak, 2010). The learning space becomes a fluid one in which knowledge is constructed and may grow and develop just as the weaving occurs on the loom in Figure 4.1 (hooks, 1994). I knit together the person I was to the person I am, leaving a strand of yarn to work in the person I am to become as I move forward. The teacher is a political being in that she has the power to both design and implement curricula. The teacher must acknowledge the power they wield in classroom spaces and work toward sharing power within the learning environment. In this way, the learning space becomes a place for fluid knowledge building and pedagogical approaches that are engaging and

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liberatory for all individuals (hooks, 1994; Keifer-Boyd, 2003). As we take in knowledge and construct new knowledge upon the old, we are faced with choices (double binds). The initial taking in and then reconstruction of knowledge is like the weaving of fibers (Figure 4.1); from misreading comes double binds, used to create a single bind from which comes misreading, starting the cycle again. The knowledge we construct helps us navigate our way through double binds—that is, the constant contradictions faced both consciously and unconsciously as we continuously take in and build new knowledge.

Craftivist curriculum, shaped by the tenets of craftivism and inclusivity, has making with/for meaning at its core, creating spaces for transformative thinking and learning to occur. This change in thinking parallels Spivak's (2012) imaginative training for epistemological performance (ITEP). Spivak (2012) explicates how a new way of thinking is an actual change of desires (thinking) and sees possibilities *within* the imagination as well as the possibilities *from* imagination (Spivak, 2012). Maxine Greene (2001) (often looked to by art educators) also writes about the possibilities within and from the imagination:

We are interested in openings, in unexplored possibilities, not in the predictable or the quantifiable, not in what is thought of as social control. For us, education signifies an initiation into new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, moving. It signifies the nurture of a special kind of reflectiveness and expressiveness, a reaching out for meanings, a learning to learn. (p. 7)

Spivak's work expands Greene's ideas and has pushed me to radically rework my thinking. Through my autoethnographic journey of self, I changed *how* I think and rethought all that I thought I knew. Autoethnography has facilitated my use of Spivak's

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themes of affirmative sabotage, misreading, double binds, and ITEP. It has allowed me to think more deeply and critically and to imagine an emerging craftivist curriculum.

Engaging in my craft not only allows me to reach a place where my reflective being is in action and therefore reflexive; it also reminds me that I possess a deeper sense of empathy through connectivity. In connectivity, I discover intersections and new, always-changing knowledge upon which to build, like weaving on the loom (Figure 1.4).

### **Craftivist Curriculum Imagined**

I imagine craftivist curriculum implemented in a K-16 setting as an inclusive space in which teachers and students work together to make with/for meaning. I imagine inclusivity that mimics, yet goes beyond work done by Ellen Gates Starr at Hull House, bringing in individuals from the community to share their ways of making. Most often the community shared their ways of making that involved craft such as embroidery and making lace, along with many other forms of craft (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003). It was through craft, both making and learning about that the community came together (Starr, Deegan, & Wahl, 2003). Ellen Gates Starr taught classes focused on her own craft of book binding to individuals at Hull House (Archer, 2011). Craftivism is a technique merging craft and activism; through this merging of words and ideas, work is created with the potential to spark interest and excitement for critical thinking and learning. Craftivist curriculum as I imagine it recognizes the hegemonic structure of standardized education and suggests a more liberatory approach, where teacher and student share power. Craftivist curriculum recognizes each voice—the teacher's and the students'—as equally important and critical to learning. The process of making with/for meaning encourages a setting of shared power where teacher and student learn from



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one another and sheds the structure of the all-knowing teacher, thus making possible transformative learning for all. Craftivist curriculum can be a powerful fusion of activism and art making.

The implementation of craftivist curriculum involves teachers engaged side by side with their students in art activities that encourage meaning making rather than skill development devoid of content. This working side by side I envision as being similar to knitting circles, quilting bees, and other forms of making where everyone is sitting around a table engaged in the act of creating, and allowing for conversations to easily flow as described by Sara Corbett at the frank gathering at University of Florida (2018). A craftivist curriculum is one in which the process of making, thought and reflection while making, and reflection on new, emergent meanings as a result of creation and reflection transforms teachers, students, teaching practice, and curriculum. When art is created with a social purpose, participants can critically reflect upon and re-examine their perspectives while creating space for transformative learning to happen (Helguera, 2011; Mezirow, 1997). Craft is often a way of creating that many have experience with but may not think of as an art form due to stereotypes of what may or may not be considered art, craft historically has been thought of as lesser as it often refers to handmade items used for a function. Individuals from all walks often engage in some form of craft and it is through craft I posit a coming together at a common place of making through craft that most individuals already possess. In craftivism, craft and activism come together as a form of quiet protest, giving voice to those who may not otherwise have a place or space to be heard (Greer, 2014). The art room becomes a space where all voices are encouraged and heard. Craftivist curriculum, then, includes

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collaborative work arising from individual work(s), further amplifying many rather than few voices.

The active process of creating is at the core of craftivist curriculum. The artist-teacher must maintain a space for their personal art practice. In the back of my mind, I realized I had stopped creating as I was teaching in a K-12 setting. I felt like I was not an artist, let alone an artist-teacher. I know now that maintaining an active art-making practice is vital for me as an artist-teacher, but I had lost that. It was not until I worked with a group of preservice art teachers who asked me about teacher burnout that I realized how forgoing creating was leading to my own burnout. In that moment I realized just how vital the art-making process is for artist-teachers. With my own thoughts of burnout I wonder if other art teachers who stop practicing their art, feel burnout. Myself and other art teachers I have talked with decided on teaching careers because they are practicing artists and see teaching as a profession that allows them to make a living while teaching others what they love to do.

Another important aspect of craftivist curriculum is reflexive practice. Teachers are often reflexive; however, until I undertook this research project I was not aware of the significant impact of reflection. As a teacher working with preservice art teachers, I find I need to be explicit in moments of reflexivity in order to model it for my students (Loughran, 2006). The process of being explicit in a moment, the stopping to explain and clarify why I have said something or taken an action creates a moment of knowledge building for my students and myself. These moments make me a better teacher and clarify for students what it means to be reflexive. Once they understand the process of reflection and begin to consider its usefulness, students become more able

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to embrace reflexivity. Reflexive practice requires slowing down and taking the time to reflect often. Danielewicz (2001) explored the importance preservice students' use of reflexive practice to better understand how they were to move forward in the moment of their thoughts while in action. The practice of self-reflexivity I returned to during my journey of self included journaling and making; this practice taught me to slow down and increased my awareness of making knowledge. By offering moments for students to reflect upon classroom culture, discussions, readings, and assignments, I help them begin to see the impact of slowing down, and I facilitate transformative moments in learning.

### **Why Is This Research Relevant to the Field of Art Education?**

During my autoethnographic journey, it has been my intention to connect with other artists-educators-researchers, inviting them to make connections to my narrative and learn from it. I want individuals to find themselves in my words and know they are not alone, as teachers may often feel in school settings. Autoethnography is meant to be accessible for those reading the work, allowing them to make connections with the writer. Qualitative methods of research and reporting are now recognized as rigorous methods of research. Within the broad field of qualitative methodologies, autoethnographic studies are increasing in number and regard. More specifically, autoethnography's approachability as well as rigor make it a useful starting point from which to knit an artist-educator-researcher community. In my experience as an art teacher I felt alone and often as if my voice was not heard. I often wondered if other art teachers felt like I did. Through autoethnography, teachers can begin to make important connections with others whose narratives are similar. Autoethnography allows art

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teachers to see the importance of the intersections made between art and narrative. Through autoethnographic research, artist-educators can tell their stories, make more connections, and continue to construct knowledge for themselves, their communities, and the larger field of art education. It is through autoethnography that others will make connections with my work and through our points of intersection put my work into action as they begin to tell their own stories.

It is important for art teachers to re/realize they are artists: being an artist is extremely important for the field of art education. I found I set my art aside more and more the longer I was in a K-12 setting without even consciously being aware I had stopped actively practicing art. In creating art, we are able to design curricula that are more creative and connected to making with/for meaning. As a teacher I am better able to understand the fears and problems my students may encounter because I, too, have faced them as an artist. My connection to my art practice makes me more empathetic and understanding as an art educator who teaches art skills and the importance of content and personal voice. As an art educator I must stay connected to my art practice. Perhaps those of us who work with preservice art educators must model this connection for preservice teachers, so they, too, make time for their art practice. Dissanayake (1995) wrote about the need to make; making, then, should be a core element when teaching preservice art educators. We are holistic beings, not pieces and parts, and as such we must embrace our artist-educator-researcher selves. As preservice art teachers are also holistic beings, we as their teachers should model for them the importance of keeping their researcher identities woven together as a whole.

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During my autoethnographic journey, I have seen myself growing and transforming as I implement knowledge constructed in the process of self-examination. As I collected my data, I was teaching, and because I identify myself as an artist-teacher-researcher, I could not turn off any part of my work. As I constructed knowledge, I implemented this knowledge with my students. During this time, I taught at the same university where I am a student, and even as I taught, I recognized that I remained a student, too. These identities sometimes competed within me. Now I am an instructor at a university where I am viewed only as the teacher, not a teacher/student. I feel freer to implement the knowledge I gained from my research. I have been transformed. I truly feel like the holistic artist-educator-researcher I am as I work with my students.

As a teacher, I am implementing my theory of craftivist curriculum. I have been explicit with my students that they are each artist-(emerging)educator-researchers. Because I see them as holistic beings, I have created a space for my students to explore and try out these identities. I incorporate readings for my students to facilitate deeper thinking about their identities. It is important for everyone to better understand where their knowledge is coming from, and as a result, the work of Kristin G. Congdon, Marilyn Stewart, and John Howell White (2002) is where I begin. The process of thinking deeply as they arrive at knowledge formation is imperative. Through the writings of Amy Pfeiler-Wunder I have students begin to think of their teacher identity and how it folds into their identity knowledge (Pfeiler-Wunder, 2017; Rao & Pfeiler-Wunder, 2018).

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I am explicit with each assignment I give to my students, whether it is a research assignment or an artist assignment. I want my students to experience the weaving together of their identities. Through the experiences I plan for them, my students will be more able to carry their holistic identities into their future practice and grow the knowledge they absorb. Through the process of knowledge building, students and I work to create transformative spaces of rethinking our current knowledge and building new knowledge through the loom metaphor (Figure 4.1).

The recent publication of *Makers, Crafters, Educators: Working for Cultural Change* edited by Garber, Hochtritt, and Sharma (2019) showed me I am not alone in my thinking. There is definitely a place for craftivist curriculum, and this book inspires me as I continue on my journey of self through the implementation of craftivist curriculum. I see this work as a place to grow from. The book includes essays about the Maker-Movement and Tinkering, which are important in their own right. However, I feel there is a place for focusing exclusively on crafts as functional items of handiwork without the need to include other forms of making in a classroom. Within other fields of study such as visual art, women's studies, and sociology, craft and more specifically craftivism are being researched and written about. There is a very slow emergence within research with regard to craft and craftivism my own emerging craftivist curriculum has a place to work within, spreading the embrace of functional handicrafts.

### **Limitations of Study**

There are of course limitations for the implementation of my work, including knowing if I am truly transformed by it. By far I feel that the most significant limitation for my study is truly knowing if I have transformed. According to Spivek (2012), imaginative

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training for epistemological performance demands that others see the change in me in order for real change to have occurred. My current students do not know me well and therefore cannot speak to my change in teaching practices. In order to consider my change authentic, I must in some way assess through others if it has actually occurred. A possible method to assess change over time might be critique during the semester; for example, students could be invited to anonymously report on their experiences within the course. Anonymity is important in order to curtail the effects of the teacher/student power structure on student feedback. Other teachers could also critique what is happening within my courses throughout the semester. These ways of assessing change are another research thread to explore. If I were to do this method of study again it would be imperative to devise a method to assess if in fact I have undergone a truthful, meaningful transformative change to verify imaginative training for epistemological performance. With the lack of others voices within an autoethnography there is no true check to the subjectivity employed by the researcher, the reader must decide for themselves if the self-narrative is valid. No matter the process employed during data collection and analysis the validity can only come from the connections made between the researcher and the reader.

The sheer nature of autoethnography being a self-narrative is a limitation to this study. The threats to avoid according to Chang (2008) and mentioned previously in chapter 3 make this study extremely subjective in nature, more so than many other forms of qualitative inquiry. Avoiding isolation is almost unavoidable as the process of reflection often tended to be highly isolating. I tried to avoid the isolation by talking with others as it is suggested to do during the process of autoethnography but even still I

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found myself alone in my office thinking about the data and how it fit together. This did lead me to add the added layer of stream of conscious writing that are included at the beginning of each chapter. With all of the many different forms of autoethnography currently out in various fields it can become overwhelming to focus on the specifics and if I were to do this again I would set up more stringent checks to keep the process on track. The messiness and blurring of this form of research also leads to the possibility of veering off track and this should be avoided at all costs by again, implementing a stronger set of checks. Looking back on my work I would only have one journal for my primary data collection. Working with two journals, though making sense for myself became cumbersome to articulate within the ultimate process of writing up my findings as I feel they become blurred for the reader.

I began my narrative with a story of my implementation of craftivist curriculum and an assignment I gave to students to rethink the word protest and then create a positive message for strangers to find in a public space. I can speak to the success of this lesson and describe students' positive feedback. I cannot, however, speak at this point for how others may use craftivist curriculum; I only can speak to my own work. The limitation of using autoethnography is that my research has been focused on a journey of self, and as such I do not include the voices of others yet. This is a huge drawback to the use of autoethnography I have found as I went through my journey of self. Often the best parts of creating a self-narrative are also the biggest limitations. An autoethnography strives to potentially make connections with others and create transformative connections within the subjective nature and yet without the voices of others there is not a way to have the validation of others until the work is out. This lack



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of other's voices to be included and the highly subjective nature of autoethnography itself is a very powerful limitation to the study. There are ways to change this—specifically, by moving from autoethnography to more traditional ethnographic methods in which the voices of others are represented. To move to a more traditional form of ethnography where there are much clearer methods to approach all aspects of the research process would have made the process clearer. I often found I was trying to fit in a mold that did not realistically seem to exist but was made as I went through the process of autoethnography. Moving forward to continue working on an emerging craftivist curriculum I will create guidelines with assessments to check on the research being done.

### **Thoughts for the Future**

I anticipate continued research on the implementation of craftivist curriculum incorporating preservice and practicing art educators. Specifically, I am interested in how the implementation of craftivist curriculum might affect them as they take these ideas into their future teaching spaces. When I was thinking about possible future studies, I gave a presentation titled “A Conversational Journey through Craftivism: Making with/for Meaning” at the Virginia Art Educator’s Association conference. There were several teachers who came to this presentation, and we sat around tables talking about ways they use core ideas of craftivism. Remembering this time spent with art teachers has me seeing possibilities for professional development where more art teachers could share what I have experienced. Professional development for art teachers could also be a way to assess outward change as I continue to implement craftivist curriculum. Professional development with practicing art teachers might allow

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me to move from an autoethnographic method to an ethnographic method and begin including other voices in my research. Finding teachers who are interested and designing the research study will be my first step post autoethnography as I begin to move from my self-narrative towards an implementation of an imagined craftivist curriculum. Moving away from my arts-based autoethnography is to also create a more inclusive approach for a craftivist curriculum. My journey of self is through my own personal art practice as a fibers artist. To move forward fully, I must begin to consider the practices of others and the mediums they work through as artists themselves.

I want to see where the journey can go now that I have situated myself within a space of an emerging craftivist curriculum. As I move away from my journey of self to include the voices of others and how my voice fits with others it will be through the use of *A/r/tography*. *A/r/tography* provides the methods for me to examine liminal spaces that exist between myself and other artist-educator-researchers helping to move my research forward (Irwin & Cosson, 2004; Leavy, 2012). I posit that through the close examination of the liminal spaces I will be able to see further connections being made through a craftivist curriculum. With more works coming out of art education in regards to the use of craft my work can fit in with the other voices as they emerge both in the field and outside of the field so others can experience how craft can enhance the learning process.

It is my plan to work with not only my own implementation of a craftivist curriculum but also with K-12 teachers in the field. Working with them to help bring to fruition this emerging imagined craftivist curriculum. To move from a self-narrative to that where many other voices are heard will strengthen the conceptualization of

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craftivist curriculum as I am beginning to imagine it moving forward. Through finding my place within my journey of self I am able to not only implement but also better see how the process will work. I am better equipped for the new journey ahead of me.

### **Conclusions**

When I began my autoethnographic journey of self, I was focused on how others see craft: as gendered work that is less than fine art. My voice was weak. As a result of this journey, I see things very differently. I see possibilities. I see craft as a valued art form, and I am constantly becoming more aware of craft artists who use their craft to speak truth to power and have their voices heard in many venues. Examples abound: Sonya Clark, a teaching artist, uses her craftwork to speak out on many issues and experiences as a Black woman. Ramekon O'Arwisters uses his work to create communities and speak out as a queer Black man. Lee Mingwei's *The Mending Project* creates a space where people come together through mended pieces of clothing. Gregory Euclide is an artist whose ephemeral work calls attention to the environment. Each of these artists is also a teacher and through their work, weaves together their identities as artist-educator-researcher to create works that speak loud and tell a story. Craft does have value, craft is not gendered, and craftwork speaks with a powerful voice.

**My Beginning**

Who am I?

Where am I going?

What is my purpose and how do I find out?

I am a daughter, mother, sister, friend, and wife.

I am an artist-educator-researcher.

I am whole.<sup>13</sup>



*Figure 5.1. Wholeness. Photograph of the author circa 1976.*

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<sup>13</sup> It is through my newfound wholeness that I continue on to a new journey, where I will encounter others, learn from them and continue to grow and amplify my voice.

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2011-2015.....Associate Instructor, Indiana University—Bloomington  
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