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First Person Research

Knitting together the strands of my life: The secret pleasure that trans/in/forms my work[☆]

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Abstract

The craft of knitting serves multiple apparent purposes, from the construction of warm garments to engagement in the mathematical calisthenics required to master both design and fit. But this academic knitter finds satisfactions that are not so apparent to the observer, although they are profound and vital. As knitters gain in proficiency, they may also grow more self-confident, more generous, calmer, and more subversive. As knitting is integrated into one's life, the process and products may become the outward expression of attitudes, emotions, and aspirations, well before these are articulated in words. The work of professors is nearly always expressed in spoken or written language. In contrast, the act of knitting is an opportunity to create and express ideas visually rather than verbally, to learn from our senses, to engage in active loving even while at work, to inspire others by actions and beauty. In these ways, the world of knitting opens doors for new insights in teaching, research, and self-understanding.

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My day job as an academic keeps me surrounded by papers, journals, and books, in hard copy and electronic forms. Like so many of my peers, I love the written word and am delighted to have found an occupation where I can read and write to support my family. But to escape work, I gravitate towards more sensual pleasures. Cooking, knitting, and Nordic skiing are high on my free time list. These are activities I can immerse myself in to leave behind hypothetical questions, grade disputes, and the frustrations of article revisions. When I'm cooking, my mind focuses on combining the right ingredients for the dishes I want to feed people who will show up hungry, expecting to be nourished. I am guided by smells that emerge, by the feel of fresh leaves, or grains of seasonings, by the recognition of color and texture changes indicating doneness.

When I am skiing, I coach myself into a rhythm of relaxing, reaching, and striding. It is a good metaphor for life as well as for work, but outdoors, the air and the landscape dominate. I breathe deeply, wanting to absorb the feel of the crisp air, the smells and sights around me. Trying to clear my head of critical discussions of

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theory, I appreciate the snow, the trail, and the patterns of trees, mountains, and clouds.

Knitting also pulls at me with its sensual intensity. I have long thought of it as a productive and pleasant antidote for interminable hours in airports, one-sided conversations, and the tedium of buses and trains. But I have been noticing recently that there is more to knitting than escape for me. In fact, much like travel on foreign soil, knitting offers the illusion of escape, while in reality providing unanticipated self-insight and knowledge. As with foods, the colors and textures of yarns seduce me, persuade me to take them home. I love the anticipation of making something beautiful and warm and the fun of giving it away. When I reflect on knitting as a process, a journey traveled over decades, armed with my needles and yarn stash, I open myself to discovering more about the internal territory I have covered.

Knitting is many things to me. It is meditation, it is doodling, it is an act of generosity and sometimes of rebellion, it is productivity in spare moments, and it is a secret sensual pleasure. As I've grown through various stages of life and my academic career, I have come to recognize it also as a means of being honest, holding onto what matters, and integrating my life.

Meyerson and Scully (1995) coined the term "tempered radicals" to describe people whose personal values and goals are in some way in conflict with their professional lives or organizations, while they are also committed to the success of those organizations and the progress of their careers. Such people have chosen to "temper" their outspokenness to some extent, learning when to confront and push for change, and when to support the way things work. They have also been "tempered" by the heating-up and cooling-off processes needed to balance the contrasting pressures. The conflict between their personal values and professional goals often leads to ambivalence, and self-doubt. It can lead as well to criticism from those who share their professional goals but not their personal values, and those committed to the values but who see the professional engagement as selling out. The examples given by Meyerson and Scully reflect the authors' shared values of radical humanism and social equality. The radical aspect of their values is their commitment to active social change, promoting workplace inclusiveness for all people, regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation. They contrast these values to the traditional North American corporate workplace, and business schools,

which long promoted a white, male-dominated environment, where women and minorities were expected to fit in and adapt to established norms. Speaking out to promote more radical goals of inclusiveness was not likely to lead to success or recognition as a strong team player.

Like Meyerson and Scully, I too want to champion feminist causes while on a business school faculty. I too am ready to speak out in support of gay rights and equal access to jobs and benefits for all people. But here is my dilemma: I want to speak out for these once "radical" goals, while teaching management courses, and knitting. It may seem a little contradictory to demand professional recognition and opportunity as a woman, in a traditional male environment, and then risk all that by engaging in the traditional grandmotherly activity of knitting. I have seen the eye rolling of my female as well as male colleagues. I get it that knitting does not fit everyone's idea of professionally approved recreation. It is not golf. But I continue to keep several colorful skeins of wool on my office shelves to give notice that I have not been co-opted by any of the worlds I inhabit. "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution," Emma Goldman famously said. Knitting is part of my dance.

In this article, I reflect on why knitting is valuable in my life, what I have learned from my practice of knitting, and how my engagement in this sensual, creative, pleasure-giving activity might contribute to the ways other scholars integrate and validate their lives.

Knitting as art and craft

Pick up a book by nearly any knitting writer, and you'll find an extolling of the calming effects of knitting (e.g. Manning, 2004; Pearl-McPhee, 2005). Some of these effects come only with experience and confidence in the craft. But for me, even the visual impact of yarn is significant. When I am suddenly in view of beautiful yarn, my breath slows down and my shoulders lower. My body acts as if I am preparing for yoga. I feel the same way around rising bread dough. The sight of these meditative aspects of my life evokes calm in me, as sacred places or familiar smells may do for others. In addition, knitters develop a craving for the range of sensual satisfactions of knitting: the touch of soft yarns, the visual richness of an enormous spectrum of colors and textures, as well as the emotional satisfaction of creating beauty and comfort. When we are not knitting, we wish we were.



Boston pediatrician and fiction author Perri Klass writes,

Knitting for me is serenity and comfort, a steady rhythm that underlies the rest of my daily life like a heartbeat. Knitting is ... my chance in life to work with color and texture and design ... I reach for subtly varying shades of red and brown, or for a great heap of gentle gray; as a knitter I play ... with color on color and pattern on pattern. There is nowhere else in my life where things can be arranged and rearranged until a taste for visual harmony is satisfied. (Klass, 2004: 105)

The first sweater I knit was a rather complex Fair Isle pattern for my sister. We were both in high school; she was 2 years ahead of me. I did not have enough experience to understand the importance of carefully measuring the body you are knitting for, or even knitting a sample swatch to accurately assess your gauge of stitches per inch.

But I found a magazine pattern to follow, randomly decided that my sister was a size medium, bought all 16 colors of yarn, and hauled the bundle off to summer camp in Northern Minnesota. Over 8 weeks of morning assemblies, afternoon rest hours, and in-bunk reading time, I mastered two-color knitting and constructed a hefty but pleasing sweater. It became an item of camp wide support – as it grew I was cheered on by dozens of observing campers and counselors. I became the camp knitter as I worked my way through this one sweater for a sibling no one else knew.

It was a tight, sturdy garment – the product of young hands learning to carry multiple strands of yarn simultaneously, which often, as in this case, results in tightly wound stitches and a stiffer fabric. With more experience, knitters learn to relax their hands while carrying and throwing multiple color strands. My sister received the sweater with appreciation and wore it occasionally, under a ski jacket. The fact that it lived mostly in a drawer did not diminish my pride. Over these 40 years, I remember the feeling of being recognized as a knitter, the feeling of working through row after row, constructing an amazing gift while others watched. It was a small act of performance art. When I knit in public, I am consciously making a statement. Of course, not all knitters make the same statement. My statement is: “I knit to create a peaceful, productive space, where I can engage with the world from a loving centeredness.” I found this peaceful place at age 14 – knitting while others were planning, organizing, arguing, gabbing, or waiting. Knitting enables me to listen to others as well as listening to myself. It is a way to be quiet and active at the same time.

Years later, I knit a Norwegian ski sweater for a serious boyfriend. Carrying it with me on a Greyhound bus ride from New Hampshire to Washington, DC, I worked for hours on the colorful yoke pattern, only to discover on arrival that knitting in crowded conditions results in crowded, scrunched up fabric. The yoke was significantly smaller than the rest of the sweater and it needed to be ripped out and knit over again. When I rip out a section of knitting, I’ve learned to breathe deeply and think about how beautiful it will be when it is done properly, and how much I love knitting as a process. I try not to think about any looming deadlines for the project. Now I do this with writing as well: it will be so much better when it is right. This is a gift, I tell myself, expressing the beauty of my ideas or design. Its value will be recognized and appreciated. Take time to make it the best you can.

Knitting as loving

In knitting I find, as Klass described, a reason and opportunity to use color and texture. I might start with a person in mind, and look for just the right color for them. We have a cafeteria in our building, and the man who owns it is sweet and generous, and apparently hatless. I have been eyeing some maroon yarn leftover from a vest, and thinking of Elio and his need for a hat. I also see a yarn that makes me smile because it would be a perfect match for the coat of my good friend Naomi at work. Sometimes larger projects must be delayed or put on hold, so that small spontaneous gifts can be completed when the spirit moves me. When Christmas time comes, quickly followed by all the family birthdays, I annually develop a stress injury in my left thumb; with the repetitive motion of so much knitting, it swells up and gets stiffer and stiffer. It is a condition I ignore for as long as possible, but eventually I resort to receiving a small steroid shot. Without fail, I inquire about the wisdom of continuing to knit in the face of such an obvious message of complaint from my body. Without fail, doctors have enthusiastically reassured me that active knitting is a vital exercise. I choose to believe them. The steroid injection has become a little spring ritual for me now and I thank my thumb for its sustained contributions to my gift giving before we shoot it up.

The best-knitted gift is indulgent but nonthreatening. It is like a loaf of homemade bread – unusual, thoughtful, and generous if it turns out successfully, but not overwhelming. A warm hat, knit in just the right color, is a gift I can give almost



anyone, from my neighbor to my favorite bus driver. It is a gentle way of saying here, this is for you, because I like you. As adults, we tend to give gifts to our partners and family members, but to everyone else, if we give anything at all, it will be on the order of wine, grocery store flowers or a card.

As a spontaneous gift giver, I have learned that gifts can be disconcerting to some people. They might think they need to give something back, or that you are giving them a gift for an ulterior purpose. Appropriate gift giving is a socially learned skill, with all kinds of boundaries, defined by culture and tradition. Children often give their toys to each other, but as we age, we worry increasingly about what others will think of us, and how to send just the right message. In fact sometimes we worry so much about what others might think that we get to the point of trying not to send any messages to anyone and just keep our feelings to ourselves. "I hope she doesn't know how I really feel about her" would not be a surprising statement to hear.

I am an ethicist, so I try not to keep a lot of secrets. Or perhaps because I find secrets rather burdensome, I became an ethicist, which gives me the opportunity to lecture others on the virtues of my preferences. One way or the other, I am not shy about telling people what I think of them. I love letting particularly wonderful people know that they are worthy of celebration. A knitted hat is a fabulous way to communicate that. Hat gifts are for me what secretly passed notes are for a fourth grader. Fortunately, my husband gets enough sweaters, vests, and hats that a dozen or more knitted gifts, made with the intimacy and affection of my hands and given rather spontaneously to appealing characters in my life, are of little concern.

Giving of love feels indulgent, perhaps even inappropriate within most work contexts. The social bounds on appropriate and inappropriate expressions of affection mean that we go through our days aware that our emotional expressions should be significantly limited, constrained until we are "off the job" and our time is our own. When I knit in meetings, I am able to give myself the physical pleasure of holding a soft wool or silk in a favorite color, and to create a gift that will offer delight and warmth in the wearing. I am actively loving. In this way, knitting pushes out the social boundaries around the expression of affection.

My nudging of these boundaries has not gone unnoticed. As Meyerson and Scully (1995) noted, attempts to bridge the worlds of professional

organizations and personal values can provoke significant anger from those who have invested themselves in conforming to the expectations of one side or the other.

Knitting as resistance

When I had children in my forties, I learned that many people want women to choose whether they are going to be serious full-time mothers, or serious full-time researchers. It is apparently baffling that women might feel very strongly about being both, and it is surprising to some people that one desire does not cancel out the other. So, when my first child was 6 months old and it was time to integrate his needs into my world of full-time academic, a few men in my department intimated that it was time to make a choice about which activity I wanted to do most: mother or work.

Knitting for my child, under the table during long meetings or at conferences, became my act of rebellion. It was a way of demonstrating to myself that I could pay attention to serious theoretical arguments, strategic plans, or committee responsibilities and at the same time, I could actively love and care for my children. Of course, I worked hard to find that essential balance between thumbing one's nose at the widely accepted norms for the behavior of tenure track faculty, and mindlessly following all the rules. I am not sure that I always stuck to that line, but I kept it in mind anyway, and tried not to rebel too flagrantly.

But gradually, my knitting has come out from under the table. I routinely knit during my students' exams, because I have learned to knit with my hands while my eyes are elsewhere. I knit on buses and the subway. I knit in waiting rooms and in video-conference meetings. I knit on airplanes. I knit while my son, in middle school, spun long stories about Bionicle characters with Star Wars weaponry waging battles against those who attempted to bully them. In his stories, there was an old woman librarian named Raging Storm whose power was mighty. She knit, in her left hand; while vanquishing all opponents with the sword in her right hand.

When I wonder about my son's inclination to interweave these bits and pieces from our lives and current events, with the techno-weaponry of his readings into his own grand morality tale, I realize that he comes honestly by this longing to integrate his worlds – in this case his personal interior world of fantasy characters and weapons with his external world of family and school. As a family we endured

a multi-year process of my defending my position, after intimidating false accusations were lodged against me. I had reported student concerns of sexual misconduct and harassment by a professor. Ultimately I won, but Raging Storm in my son's stories took on some of the characteristics of an academic at that time, one that simultaneously knit and fought to defend her book-filled territory.

Unconscious of the term at the time, I was navigating the role of a "tempered radical" at my institution (Meyerson and Scully, 1995). Choosing to speak out about what I and others saw as systemic injustice, I leaned on the established grievance system to protest misconduct towards students and my experience of retaliatory harassment by the administration. It became clear that I was standing up to complain about processes that had successfully intimidated and silenced other faculty for years. In the hearings, the university equity officer was asked to confirm my presence at a faculty senate meeting the previous year, which she did, bursting out indignantly, "Yes, she was knitting!" I laughed at her obvious annoyance, but the implication was clear. I had broken yet more rules, the expected norms for loyal, conforming faculty members, and there was a cost to such behavior.

To be clear, I was not knitting in a meeting in order to annoy other faculty or to rebel loudly. I was knitting to stay calm in a contentious meeting, to feel productive during a multi-hour session that other faculty members emerged from exhausted and frustrated. Raging Storm was not knitting in order to fight. She was fighting because she had to, and knitting was just part of who she was. She was able to hold onto her core self, even in battle. I was not knitting to provoke the ire of others. I was knitting because even in faculty senate meetings I find it useful to remember who I am, what I value, and how much loving and nurturing are integral to my life as an academic. In some organizations this kind of integrating is perceived as inherently rebellious.

"Resisting quietly and staying true to one's 'self' " is one of the action strategies that Meyerson (2003) observed among the tempered radicals in her study. Several variations of this pattern of resistance enable people to hold onto their own sense of identity and value aspirations, while still participating in the organization's activities. My knitting in meetings fit in the category of self-expressions that demonstrate an aspect of uniqueness and difference from the norms. Other examples of this offered by Meyerson include noticeable articles of clothing

that signaled distinct and nonconforming personal choices, office cartoons or photos publicly displayed signaling family commitments (while standard practice for heterosexuals, this is a riskier display for gays and lesbians in many work environments) or personal interests apart from work (Meyerson, 2003). These actions may go unnoticed by many people and may even seem insignificant in the grand scheme of change strategies, but they establish some space for difference and the gradual acceptance of new and broader norms.

In a very different story of knitterly activism, Susan Lydon describes an environmentally friendly practice called yarning "... used to still the chain saws of clear-cut logging. Instead of spiking a tree or lying down in front of a bulldozer, someone winds yarn among the trees. The yarn gets into the innards of a chain saw and disables the machinery, without causing damage to logger or tree (Lydon, 2005: 103)."

I can not verify Lydon's assertion of activism, but it is clearly a story that knitters would like to believe: that yarn – the lightest of fibers, the same yarn with which we make beautiful and warm garments, can also be used to effectively protect the environment in a nonviolent way. The message is: the only thing that gets hurt are the machines. It is a bulldozers into knitting needles story. You can imagine the peace-loving knitters giving each other high twos with their needles in celebration. All that environmental destruction halted by carefully placed strands of fuzz. Knitters of the world unite!

Knitting as sense-making

I have experienced and described knitting as performance art, as active loving, and as an expression of strongly held values. Knitting in public or even in the quiet of my own home, I embrace and demonstrate all of these. Beyond these outgoing communications, I have learned to watch and listen to my own feelings about knitting, as indicators of my inner private emotions. There is an interesting positive correlation in my life between the times when I have been really content and the times when I have been an active knitter. For example, I look back nearly three decades to the 8-year period that encompassed my first marriage, and I see now that I did no knitting in that time period, and think, "Aha! I should have known!" I do not think of this in terms of causation, as in, "If only I had knit that man a sweater, the marriage might have survived." But I do think of it as



significant in several ways. Knitting has long been a visible expression of my love and affection. That I spent nearly a decade in a relationship where I did not even think of knitting a sweater or a hat is rather startling in retrospect. From this distance, I see that time as a period when I was not entirely honest with myself (or others) about whom I loved and how I loved, although I certainly considered myself an honest person. I was also engaged full time in researching individual moral reasoning. I realize now that it can take years to fully express the qualities and characteristics we value. In the process of understanding ourselves better, we are gradually able to share who we are with confidence in the world. When I pay attention to my longings, knitting and otherwise, I learn more about myself.

It is now transparent to nearly anyone paying attention that I knit for those I love. The people who have really mattered to me are people for whom I am eager to knit. When my children were small, I thought of hand knit sweaters for them as the extension of my arms, when I was not there to hold them all day. Now they have more hats and scarves than there are snowstorms in Alberta. My husband has only to mention that another vest would be handy, and it is soon on his shelf. In adolescence, my daughter is choosing hoodies over handknit sweaters, and brand name toques and mitts over the homemade variety. She is letting go of the fabric I have made to hold her and keep her within reach. I must learn new steps in this stage of my knitting dance.

As academics, we generally spend a disproportionate amount of time in our own heads, led by our cognitive ability to sort through grand theories, track research streams, and catalog critical debates. Even such issues as individual honesty and responsibility can be diagnosed and analyzed through multiple frameworks, each justifying a different range of actions. Full intellectual engagement is rich, exciting, and challenging, in our heads. But learning from our senses and through sense-based activities enables us to be alert to, and comprehending of, feelings and responses well beyond our cognitive grasp. While writing my dissertation in the 1980s, I learned to separate my life into working and playing, writing and exercising, analyzing the ethical dilemmas of others and living my own life. There was some balance but not much integration. My cognitive learning process was actively developing, but my sense-based learning was detached.

The idea of different styles of learning, and multiple kinds of intelligence are widely known (Gardner, 1999). The distinctive functions of our right brain and left brain have been well documented in relation to artistic skill (Edwards, 1999), personal creativity and life choices (Robinson and Aronica, 2009), as well as developing excellence in professional organizations (Pink, 2005). Nonetheless, within our business school work environments, it is often challenging to make the claim that we need to learn from our senses as much as we learn from our well-trained cognitive minds. Few courses integrate sense-based learning, or discuss the role of honing and trusting one's intuition in managerial decisions. No course that I have encountered either as student or professor, advocates for developing these skills.

Arguing for the inherent value of art in sense-making, Springborg points to common misconceptions:

We tend to think, in both business and academia, that bodily sensations and emotions are interesting and (sometimes) important phenomena. We try to make sense of these sensations and emotions, explaining why they arise and their meaning, but we rarely consider that the sensations and emotions we receive through our senses themselves can be the sense-making. Sense-making is often understood, roughly as some kind of analytical process performed by our conceptual mind. (Springborg, 2010: 248)

When I accept knitting as a component of my sense-making process, intentionally taking time to learn from my senses, I open myself to increased awareness of tactile and visual patterns. I am willing to make broader connections between experience and understanding. More imaginative metaphors come to mind, bridging sense sources with cognitive processing. I am startled by streams of colors and bands of interwoven patterns before falling asleep. In *No More Secondhand Art*, Peter London discusses the essential value of letting the hand lead the mind in creative endeavors (London, 1989: 17). Only when we let ourselves be led, perhaps pulled, by delight in color, fascination with textural complexities, curiosity about new sound patterns, amazement or disgust at flavors and tastes (not by just looking at these or reading someone else's description of them, but by actually working with them), can we break out of the cognitive limits of our intellectual reasoning to reach new levels of creativity and insight. Sensing in its most present form brings us to a kind of learning that is unique and inaccessible to the conceptual mind (Springborg, 2010). Being more attuned to our own sense-making may lead to greater emotional



insights, increased physical awareness, as well as more agile cognitive capacity.

Knitting the strands into fabric

Reflecting on my adventures with yarn and needles, it feels like I am knitting my life into one integrated fabric. When we knit, we create a row of loops and then build another row of loops on top of those and keep going until we have a finished garment. When we live, we loop the relationships, moments, activities of our lives together; pile them on top of each other, creating links, making abrupt turns occasionally. Starting anew, and then sewing it onto the section we already had, we continue through to the end.

New projects are constant temptations: new colors, new textures, yet more handmade gifts available for giving. These days I try to restrain my new projects to those that use up my accumulated yarn stash. New adventures are often related to ones we already completed, with slight variations. New patterns are found for leftover yarn. Sweaters, vests, socks, and hats can be made from bundles of skeins that collectively represent decades of knitting. Unexpectedly, life and knitting turn out to be much like streams of research. We find beauty along the way in the process as well as in the finished work. Each finished piece may fairly be said to have taken our whole life to create.

Bernadette Murphy, in her book, *Zen and the Art of Knitting*, writes,

Knitting a sweater is a tremendous act of faith. One undertakes an ancient practice that requires hundreds of thousands of hand-wrought stitches and hours upon hours of concentration to translate and follow pattern instructions that seem written in an archaic language ... Throughout, it's a tentative process. At any point, a firm tug on an unsecured piece of yarn could unravel the entire work ... When the work is finished, those webs coalesce into a garment rugged enough to withstand a lifetime of wear It is in this tension – between rigid and the provisional – that knitting best reflects the complexities of human life. As a metaphor for understanding the web of unity connecting all life, and as a practice that puts one in touch with the simultaneous fragility and strength of life, knitting is both expansive and fertile. (Murphy, 2002: vii)

I have found that knitting enables me to be more patient in meetings, less likely to engage in argument simply for the sake of staying involved in the discussion. When I feel productive, I can sit quietly for longer. Occasionally, my knitting validates knitting for others – one woman decided to bring her knitting to a professional conference

because I did, and she realized that it helped her to manage her agoraphobia in the meetings.

Knitting is subversive enough that I feel less compelled to be subversive in other ways. So – perhaps it absorbs my contrariness? Many times that is a good thing: if I knit while waiting for my kids to get on with their tasks, I am less likely to explode at them out of frustration at their long delays. This is highly valuable. On the other hand, it seems that my knitting conveys to them that all is calm and peaceful, and there is no need to hustle along. If I am knitting, then surely they can continue to read and ignore their chores.

In addition to my improved behavior, and the personal joy I find in creating gifts, I believe that recognizing and validating the wide reach of our interests, delights and abilities can result in unanticipated synergy. One of my favorite examples of this is the story of Margaret and Christine Wertheim, twin sisters from Queensland, Australia. Margaret is currently a science writer, and Christine is an art teacher at the California Institute for the Arts. Together they founded the Institute for Figuring, a nonprofit educational organization where they explore with others their particular intersections of science, mathematics, art, feminism, handicrafts, and social activism (Cohen, 2008).

One of their invited speakers was Daina Taimina, a mathematics researcher at Cornell, who discovered that with crochet, she could create three-dimensional models of hyperbolic geometry. Margaret Wertheim recognized that these enabled mathematicians “to hold theorems in their hands” for the first time (Cohen, 2008: 2). The Wertheim sisters took this method of creating crenellated and undulating shapes to ultimately build a fabulous traveling road show called the Hyperbolic Crochet Coral Reef, with which they are raising awareness of the Great Barrier Reef, its richness of life forms, and the damage it is sustaining under current environmental trends. At each stop along their tour, knitters and crocheters gather in auditoriums and class rooms to add on with ribbon, yarn, thread, videotape, and tinsel to the evolving Crochet Reef. The woven organisms sprout rapidly and the contributors become invested in its evolution and by extension, they grasp the fragility and importance of the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest natural wonder.

Business schools and management development programs around the world are incorporating artistic experiences, poetry workshops, coaching by improvisational actors and jazz musicians, into leadership training. Nancy Adler argues that several



trends are behind this shift away from constrained pragmatism and toward innovation inspired by the arts, including an increasingly turbulent and complex market environment, the scarcity of dreamers in traditionally structured organizations, and the longing for significance and meaning at work (Adler, 2006). Leading institutions in all sectors, academic, corporate, and nonprofit, are turning to arts-based learning to inspire creative solutions to unimagined market challenges and chaotic social issues (Nissley, 2002; Adler, 2006). Although there is a growing body of literature on the relevance of arts-based learning for leaders and corporate managers (Taylor and Ladkin, 2009; Wicks and Rippin, 2010), there is little discussion of how business school professors will make the transition to being able to contribute to this kind of education. We could continue to import artists to provide these learning experiences, because so often we only allow ourselves to teach and research on the cognitive level. We would cover the theories, the secondhand art, while the artists would offer access to sense-making and art directly experienced. Or we could acknowledge that we too might benefit in our learning, teaching and research by acknowledging and experiencing the value of sense-based activities as a vital component of ourselves. We could stretch beyond our familiar reliance on two by two matrices and Venn diagrams to map our research imaginations. Turning to art, to craft, to nature, shapes, colors, textures, tastes, creative imagery, and metaphors, we could enrich our communications and our constructs far beyond current norms for scholarship.

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