

Constructing a Safe Space Together: Community Art Education For
Women In A Re-Integration Program

Jennifer Wicks

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Art Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Art Education) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

November 2012

©Jennifer Wicks, 2012

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Jennifer Wicks

Entitled: Constructing a Safe Space Together: Community Art Education For Women In
A Re-Integration Program

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Art Education)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with
respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____ David Pariser	Chair
_____ Kathleen Vaughan	Examiner
_____ Lorrie Blair	Examiner
_____ Linda Szabad Smyth	Supervisor

Approved by

_____ Linda Szabad Smyth

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

_____ Lorrie Blair

ABSTRACT

Constructing a Safe Space Together: Community Art Education For
Women In A Re-Integration Program

Jennifer Wicks

This art education master's teaching thesis is a qualitative research study using grounded theory and action research, informed by participatory action research, to explore the notion of safe space. It examines different teaching methods and pedagogical strategies in conjunction with the aesthetics and design of the physical space, which can allow us to develop an atmosphere in the art classroom that allows students to feel more comfortable, and consequently create without restraint. This study was conducted over the course of five art classes with nine participants from a reintegration program for women who have recently experienced homelessness. Data was collected through audio-recorded focus groups, photographs, researcher's field notes and participants' journal entries.

Tags: Community, Art Education, Safe Space, Reintegration program, Women, Art.

Acknowledgments

It is with tremendous gratitude that I acknowledge the multitude of individuals who made the development of this thesis possible.

First and foremost, I am greatly indebted to my thesis supervisor, Linda Szabad-Smyth, who introduced me to the Lise Watier Pavilion and whose support, insight, encouragement and availability allowed me to complete this process under the tightest of schedules. I would also like to extend this gratitude to the other members of my thesis committee, Lorrie Blair, without whose motivation and words of wisdom I would most certainly would not have made it through this process, and Kathleen Vaughan who pushed me to deepen my scholarship and taught me the importance of an APA manual. It also gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the help of my future PhD supervisor, Anita Sinner, whose support and encouragement gave me the courage to continue.

I would like to thank the residents of the Lise Watier Pavilion, most notably those who participated in this project. Their strength, resilience and caring spirits are a constant source of inspiration for me. Without them and their creativity, drive and dedication, this research could not have been accomplished. This thesis is a testament to all that I have learned from them, to date. I look forward to continuing our art making journey together. My thanks are extended to the Old Brewery Mission and the staff at the Lise Watier Pavilion for their backing and their enthusiasm towards this project.

I am also grateful to my family, including my in-laws, for their ongoing encouragement and support. I've reserved my deepest gratitude for my fiancé and partner in crime, Chris Snelgrove, and our little family - Jax, Damon & Jasmine, who have shared with me an endless supply of solace and strength, and who have pushed me to make this dream a reality. Te amo, siempre.

Dedication

*I dedicate this master's thesis to the memory of my grandmother, Alice Dwinell,
who taught me the importance of community. You are deeply missed.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	x
The Introduction	1
The Question	2
The Literature - Safe Space	3
Community Art Education	11
The Method	12
The Theoretical Lens	14
The Population and Location	16
The Space	17
The Procedure	18
The Project	20
Focus Group Questions	21
The Art Lessons	22
Preparing the Fabric	22
Focus Group 1	24
The Art of Dyeing	24
Focus Group 2	27
Creating Stencils	27
Focus Group 3	29
Painting on Fabric	29
Focus Group 4	32
Finishing Up	33
Focus Group 5	34
Data Analysis	35
Building Community and Creating Safe Space	37

The Students	37
The Population	38
Intent	40
Self Perception	41
Fear	42
Age	43
Affirmations	44
Creativity	45
The Atmosphere	46
The Physical Space	47
Aurality	48
<i>Music</i>	48
<i>Noise Levels</i>	50
Building Community	51
<i>Defining the Group</i>	51
<i>Involvement & Decision Making</i>	52
<i>Sharing/Cooperation/Exchange</i>	53
<i>Teatime</i>	55
Pedagogy	56
Teaching Tools	57
<i>Motivational Materials</i>	57
<i>Demonstrations & Explanations</i>	59
<i>Timing</i>	60
The Teacher	61
<i>Approach</i>	61
<i>Values & Characteristics</i>	62

The Project	64
The Results	64
Success or Failure	65
Summary of Findings	67
Significance	72
References	73
Appendix A - Consent Form	76

List of Figures

Figure 1.	<i>Lise Watier leaving the Lise Watier Pavilion</i>	15
Figure 2.	<i>The art room</i>	16
Figure 3.	<i>The art room - northeast corner</i>	17
Figure 4.	<i>The invitation to participate</i>	19
Figure 5.	<i>Sewing the hem</i>	22
Figure 6.	<i>Pressing fabric</i>	23
Figure 7.	<i>Blue dye bath</i>	24
Figure 8.	<i>Yellow dye bath</i>	25
Figure 9.	<i>Gel glue resist</i>	26
Figure 10.	<i>Making stencils</i>	27
Figure 11.	<i>Source materials</i>	28
Figure 12.	<i>Relationships (still from video, Jennifer Wicks, 2012)</i>	30
Figure 13.	<i>Setting up on the wall</i>	31
Figure 14.	<i>Applying the stencil</i>	31
Figure 15.	<i>Louise's center design</i>	32
Figure 16.	<i>Fixing the dyes</i>	33
Figure 17.	<i>Sandra's finished work</i>	34
Figure 18.	<i>Map of themes</i>	36
Figure 19.	<i>Sandra's stencil - detail</i>	37
Figure 20.	<i>Participants' response chart 1</i>	38
Figure 21.	<i>Making stencils</i>	38
Figure 22.	<i>Drawing on fabric</i>	39
Figure 23.	<i>Louise's tablecloth</i>	40
Figure 24.	<i>Sandra's tablecloth and stencils</i>	41
Figure 25.	<i>Painting dye on fabric</i>	42
Figure 26.	<i>Fleur de lys stencil</i>	43

Figure 27.	<i>Applying stencils</i>	44
Figure 28.	<i>Participants' response chart 2</i>	46
Figure 29.	<i>The setup</i>	47
Figure 30.	<i>Christine's details</i>	48
Figure 31.	<i>Carole's star stencil</i>	49
Figure 32.	<i>Carole's planet</i>	50
Figure 33.	<i>Art materials</i>	51
Figure 34.	<i>Designing the edge</i>	52
Figure 35.	<i>Marie Ange's rose</i>	53
Figure 36.	<i>Tests</i>	54
Figure 37.	<i>Tea & cookies</i>	55
Figure 38.	<i>Participants' response chart 3</i>	56
Figure 39.	<i>Relationships (still from video, Jennifer Wicks, 2012)</i>	57
Figure 40.	<i>Louise's flowers</i>	59
Figure 41.	<i>Tests</i>	60
Figure 42.	<i>Fixing the dye</i>	61
Figure 43.	<i>Painting on a flat surface</i>	62
Figure 44.	<i>Emergence of Louise's design</i>	62
Figure 45.	<i>Natalie's final piece</i>	63
Figure 46.	<i>Participants' response chart 4</i>	64
Figure 47.	<i>Christine's edge</i>	65
Figure 48.	<i>Carole's planet</i>	66
Figure 49.	<i>Sandra's stencils</i>	66
Figure 50.	<i>Louise's stencils</i>	67
Figure 51.	<i>Sandra's dragonfly</i>	68
Figure 52.	<i>Sandra's butterfly</i>	70
Figure 53.	<i>Marie Ange's final piece</i>	71

THE INTRODUCTION

This master's teaching thesis explores the topic of safe space in a community art education context, and considers the importance of developing safe space in the art classroom as a method to enhance their art making practice. My research project, developed over a five week art course, allowed students to reflect on their comfort levels in the classroom environment and the subsequent effect on their process. In a focus group discussion following each class, students offered suggestions on how to improve the classroom environment, which I implemented in the weeks following, with the hope of creating a space in which my students could thrive.

My own experience as an artist, art teacher and art student greatly informed the desire to effectuate my research. I was a relatively timid child, not overly artistic, and always hesitant to share my creative endeavors with others. I had several unsavory experiences in art classes as a teenager, most notably with a teacher who would physically manipulate his students' art works to correct them, which eventually left me so insulted, I chose to push aside art learning and opted to focus my creative energies on literature and music instead. It was only after high school that I was reawakened to the visual arts through my community of friends, most of whom were extremely artistic. I pushed through my fear of art with the right mix of encouragement and support from both friends and community art teachers, and eventually built a career as a ceramic artist. Later, as I began to teach art classes out of my own studio, I

became exceedingly interested in finding that right mix of encouragement and support that allowed my students to create freely in my classroom and find true pleasure and release in art making. I could see that some of my students, in the community art classes I had been giving, were hindered by reticence, bashful about sharing their work and intimidated by my skills, as well as the developing skills of their fellow classmates. I felt that I could facilitate their artistic development by establishing an environment that promoted creative thought and action. I hoped that by including some of my students as participants in my research project, we could work together to build an atmosphere that allowed them to feel safe, and which would empower them to develop their art practice without holding back.

THE QUESTION

For this teaching thesis, I chose to study the concept of safe space because I feel it is an essential element in a classroom where artistic creation is present. I wanted to examine safety as a psychological construct and outline what methods community-based art educators could use to build an environment where students feel safe enough to be creative, vulnerable and genuine while having fun and learning different art techniques.

This thesis uses grounded theory and action research informed by participatory action research (PAR), and examines the concept of safe space

and its effects on the art making process. The research revolves around three main questions:

- What is safe space?
- Why is safe space important?
- How can I, as a community art educator, create safe space in my classroom?

THE LITERATURE – SAFE SPACE

The notion of safe space has been studied through many different facets of education, often focusing on minority or at risk groups, such as women, LGBTQ, people of color, and/or people from underprivileged back grounds (Batsleer, 2008; hooks, 1989; Holley& Steiner, 2005; Toynton, 2006; Al-Amin & Nasir, 2006; Fox, 2007). Discourse most often focuses on the teacher/educator’s perspective of safe space, and rarely equates the concept of safe space with its effects on learning (Toynton, 2006; Boost Rom, 1998; Yerichuk, 2010; Hunter, 2008). Although there are some studies done in art-based environments (Hunter, 2008; Yerichuk, 2010), few are done in a community-based visual arts context. The purpose of this study was to research the meaning of safe space in a community art education environment.

For my research project, I chose to work with residents of the Lise Watier Pavilion, a housing facility for women who had recently experienced homelessness. I had developed an art program at the Pavilion in January of

2011, and I wanted to see our art program grow, not only in size but also in the quality and meaning of the works created and experiences of the women who attended the classes. I saw great potential in the artistic practice of the women attending the art group, but felt that they were being held back due to lack of confidence and trust, both in themselves, and in each other as a group.

I felt the women at the Lise Watier Pavilion would benefit from the study in that it would enrich a program and activity in which they already enjoyed and participated. In their study on “The Role of Art for Homeless Women and Survivors of Domestic Violence,” Andrews, Saemundsdottir and Stokrocki (2004) found that art making enriched the lives of their participants by helping them to create meaningful projects that brought light to their unique life experience. Art also allowed them to explore the notion of doing and creating something for themselves, a new concept to many of their participants.

The experience of the women at the Lise Watier Pavilion differs from Andrews et al.’s study, in that they have begun this process of creating something for themselves, and now with help from this project and our already existing art program, they can create things to make their new space their own, through adorning with meaningful art works.

In his study on housing and social reintegration programs in Milan, Italy, Antonio Tosi (2005) legitimizes social reintegration and re housing in a normal housing environment by asserting that the benefits of such a program are

Largely related to the power of 'normality' and of the 'home' experience (as something distinct from just being housed). A home is normality. For the majority, the positiveness was connected with constructing that system of values that surrounds a home, comfort privacy and independence – the latter being a particularly meaningful value for many of those [...] who had a history of wandering and repeated institutionalization. (p.191)

Suzanne Lenon (2000) reinforces this hypothesis by insisting that homeless women with histories of dysfunctional families and abuse differentiate the concept of being housed from feeling safe. Lenon states that although homelessness may be a problem for women, it is also a strategy to elude violent living situations (p.125).

In order to understand the study of safe space in a community art education setting, it is important to define and explore what is meant by safe space. In this study I am not referring to physical safety, but a psychological, atmospheric and emotional space, which allows us to create and express ourselves to our utmost. I will be exploring the notion of safe space with my students, in terms of comfort and trust, amongst both the collective of students, and between the students and teacher. Robert Boost Rom interprets the concept of safe space as

An emerging metaphor for classroom life, according to which

- (a) We are all isolated,
- (b) Our isolation is both physical and psychic,
- (c) We can become less isolated by expressing our diverse individuality, and
- (d) Students thrive in a classroom in which individuality is freely expressed (Boost Rom, 1998, p.389)

In her study of safety within musical education, Deanna Yerichuk (2010) defines the establishment of safety as a commitment by the educator to keep his or her students' well being free from violation or the threat thereof, as would be determined by their students (p.20). Mary Ann Hunter (2008) describes her version of safe space as a space of messy negotiations that allow individual and group actions of representation to occur, as well as opportunities for students to see how the world could be a better place (p.5). Hunter describes several facets of safe space; a space that is free from danger, one that implies metaphorical safety in which intolerance or inequality are prohibited, a comfortable or familiar physical space, and a more conceptual form of safe space that Hunter uses for her performance based research, which maps out the creation of new work, and juxtaposes this with aesthetic risk for the creation of a space that is the product of the tension between the known and unknown (p.8). The result of her innovative look at space is a process of negotiations which allows individuals to reflect on themselves and their presence, allowing people in a collective environment to feel empowered negotiating the level of risk they wish to involve themselves in (p.19). Hunter insists, "cultivating safe space is therefore less about prescribing conditions and more about generating questions" (p.19). Alternately in their research, Groen & Kawaliak (2006) inform us that "safe space,

dialogue and oneness” are intertwined and that each aspect influenced and enlightened the other and are instrumental in the creation of an atmosphere of community (p. 63).

Approaches to the concept of safe space and how to create safe space differ. In her study on the deliberate creation of space for inclusive discussion, Christine Hockings (2011) maps out a few ways for educators to create such a space. She suggests we “set a code of conduct for inclusive and collaborative behavior” in which everyone’s contributions be considered valid, yet open to respectful and sensitive questioning or challenge (p.195). She suggests teachers model this behavior. She also states that teachers should take the time to get to know their students in order to address their needs and interests and should create open and flexible activities in order to allow students to interpret them with their own experiences in mind (p.196). And lastly, educators need to create a reflective teaching practice, be sensitive to the diversity and dynamics of the group, and be able to address inequalities and tensions as they arise (p.199).

Alternatively, Janet Batsleer (2008) suggests that when teaching in a queer youth environment, the most important aspect in an educator’s skill would be the facilitation of discussion, and within that framework, the recognition that “specific spaces can be created for” said discussions (p.86). Batsleer

encourages the creation of boundaried (identity specific¹) groups for the discussion/exploration of sensitive, culturally/ identity specific issues, stating

Such conversations, occurring within boundaried groups, become the “safe” spaces in which surprises can happen and conversations can take new and very different turns. They enable the old stories to be told with a new inflection, a new set of meanings. This in turn can shift and change the inherited constructed identities and boundaries of the wider society. (Batsleer 2008, p.89)

Chris Mayo (2010) approaches safe space in a social justice context, with humor. Mayo uses humor to create a space “not devoid of dramatic shifts or emotional response, but organized around those shifts as experiences that are moments apart from conflict” (p.509). Mayo recognizes the “unsafe” aspects of humor and its interpretations, but insists that humor allows us to test our peers by seeing what risks they are willing to take. “Are we invited to be in on the joke or are we the joke or do we just not get it?” A quick test of the humoristic waters can let us know if we can indeed forgo safety, and open up to a more in depth social and intellectual risk (p. 521).

What is clear is that, depending on interpretation and politics, the concept of creating a safe space is contentious for some. Boost Rom (1998) addresses his concerns with the creation of safe space in the classroom by noting that “when everyone’s voice is accepted, and no one’s voice can be criticized, then no one can grow,” and points out that responding, criticizing and challenging

¹ In an identity specific environment only those that identify with the demographic specified in the group would be welcome – i.e. Women-only, queer-only, etc.

helps us to change our own perspectives, and will in turn help us learn to be stronger and more brave in our own self expression (p.407). Betty Barrett (2010) critiques the notion of safe space stating that it has a negative impact on student intellectual development and asserts that it is impossible to create such a space for students of oppressed or marginalized populations. The notion of safe space offers challenges in the assessment of student learning, and the definition of safety is clouded in ambiguity (p.5).

Melissa Redmond (2010) conveys that in a learning environment each student brings his or her own histories, personal experiences and understanding, which then inform classroom interactions. Her concern is that when put into a classroom that claims safe space, students with a different experience may find themselves silenced when their opinions or experiences are unpopular (p.7). Redmond asserts that the main task of the critical educator is to name the obstacles that keep us from understanding the experiences of others (p.12).

The power of the university classroom, therefore, lies not in the facilitator's ability to create a false sense of security for students, as though a safe classroom can exist in a vacuum free of societal pressures, but instead for all classroom participants to refuse to engage in a collective delusion by constantly (re)problematizing the classroom's undemocratic nature, thus teaching subversively while undermining the "commonsense" nature of society's hegemonic influence. (Melissa Redmond, 2010, p.9)

In her book *Talking Back: Thinking Feminism, Thinking Black*, bell hooks (1989) addresses what she considers a "stereotypical feminist model" of space

where safety exists as a “kind and nurturing” atmosphere, by suggesting instead that students be encouraged to

Work at coming to voice in an atmosphere where they may be afraid or see themselves at risk. The goal is to enable all students, not just an assertive few, to feel empowered in a rigorous, critical discussion. Many students find this pedagogy difficult, frightening, and very demanding. They do not usually come away from my class talking about how much they enjoyed the experience. (hooks, 1989, p. 53)

Both Betty Barrett and Deanna Yerichuk offer additional alternatives to the concept of safe space. Barrett (2010) prefers the notion of civility because it is focused on behavior, whereas safety is concerned with the psychological state in the learning environment. Being that educators may not be able to observe or enforce intrapersonal states, they do have the capacity to affect student behavior in the classroom (p.9), beginning by modeling civility in their own behavior (p.11). Whereas Yerichuk (2010) who sees safe space as a place of comfort, which indicates the ease in which the learner experiences and processes content, prefers to push her students to feel some sense of discomfort, states that “the deepest learning occurs when safety is protected but a measure of discomfort is present” (p. 21). She lays out 3 strategies to move closer to equitable safe space – contextualizing materials (in her case songs), creating a more a self-reflective practice and shifting the focus from individual to collective learning in the classroom (p.23).

Although there are many opinions and theories about how to create safe space, and what safe space means for us as educators, there are few studies

that show us how safe space affects learners (Barrett, 2010). In an exploratory study in 2005, Lynn Holley and Sue Steiner surveyed 121 post secondary social work students from a western university on the student perspective of 'safe and unsafe' classroom environments. The study took into account the race, gender and level of education of the participants, and gauged how this affected their results (p.52). They found that 97% of participants felt that it was both very important to create safe space in the classroom and that a safe classroom affected their learning, and although the results varied, when asked about what characteristics an educator should have to facilitate the development of safe space 62% responded that the educator should be non judgmental and open, and 52% felt that educators should model participation, and develop ground rules (p.56).

COMMUNITY ART EDUCATION

Community art education is a particular art making and learning environment. In my experience as a community art educator, many of my students do not consider themselves artists, and are often taking classes as a leisure activity, out of an interest and appreciation for the arts. Their approach to art making is often timid, unsure, and reserved. In delving deeper into the construct of safe space, my intention is to offer technical instruction and reassuring notions to my students in their art making endeavors, while also providing them with a space or environment where they can feel comfortable letting go of artistic inhibitions, enabling them to create works that are raw and

sincere, without fear of reprove. Newer or less practiced artists are often cautious in a collective or communal art-making environment, for fear of feeling foolish, not getting it right, or creating works that aren't aesthetically pleasing or valued (Bayles & Orland, 1993, p.10). I would like to get past those self-deprecating moments, and encourage the creation of works that are significant and pivotal in the practices of our less experienced community art students.

THE METHOD

I chose to use a mixed method approach of grounded theory research and action research (informed by participatory action research) as a research method to examine the aforementioned queries. I've used the method of grounded theory², to develop a theory of the process related to the development of safe space within a community art education program. Action Research is generally defined as

A systematic inquiry conducted by teacher/researchers [...] to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach and how well their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved. (Mills, 2007, p. 5)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) involves the participation of community members as collaborators in the research process. By using action research informed by PAR as a research method the focus becomes on

² Creswell (2013) defines grounded theory as a “qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, an action or an interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants.

conducting research with people, and not conducting research on people, as well as learning and reflection between the researcher and the researched (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 51).

For the purpose of this study action research, informed by PAR, will be used in an attempt to remain inclusive, contribute the sense of community in the art program, as well as ensure an environment that is conducive to the concept of safe space by ensuring the participants experience empowerment during the study.

Contrary to PAR, where in most cases, the initial query is posed by the community of researchers, I have posed the initial questions for the study, which is not entirely unheard of (McRae 2006, p. 6; Kinden et al. 2007, p. 15). This type of PAR research study would be considered interactive participation, with the focus on co-learning and shared decision-making by both the participants and the researcher (Kinden et al., p. 16). In this case, as has been the case with many other studies, the participants will serve as a “community feedback committee,” enabling the project to go forward, without adding any extra burden of data collection and analysis on the participants (Hennick et al., 2011, p. 49).

I’ve chosen to focus on certain aspects from PAR to inform my research method. Particularly, the egalitarian treatment of participants, the focus on context and real life problems, the integration of core beliefs from the specific

community I am working with and the allowance and reflection on the heterogeneous experiences within the community to enhance the research process and outcome (Kinden et al., 2007), which I think is key in community art education research given the diversity of the population addressed.

Action research is most often seen as a cycle of action and reflection (Kinden et al., 2007; Buck & Trauth-Nare, 2011). It is a common practice for teachers to use action research to “enhance teaching practices, increase teachers’ awareness of decision-making regarding their own practice and improve the condition in which practice takes place” (Carr & Kemmis 1986, as cited in Buck & Trauth-Nare, 2011). To include the students as research participants should enhance the educator’s’ perception of the classroom to a more holistic viewpoint, through the use of reflective practice and implementation of suggestions made by students on the educator’s teaching practice.

THE THEORETICAL LENS

Due to the nature of the project, the population I’m working with (although I am reluctant to put gender as a central theme in my research) and my own political beliefs, I’ve approached this study through a feminist lens, with the focus on building community. Although it may seem elementary, I feel that being that feminism has such a wide scope, deep history and multitude of meanings for diverse populations, it would behoove me to clarify my own definition of feminism. My definition of feminism is derived from that of Estelle Freedman

(2003), who states that feminist belief is comprised of three main elements – firstly, women and men are of equal worth. Second, feminists strive to accommodate biological sexual differences, but reject the notion of differences in the societal construct of gender. Thirdly – feminists acknowledge that gender based oppression is deeply entangled with all forms of oppression – such as racism, classism and homophobia, amongst others (p. 7). Throughout this project, and in my teaching practice as a whole, my intention is to approach my practice as a caring educator (hooks, 2003). I am teaching in a community art education setting, and it is also my intention to establish a sense of community in the classroom through the building of trust with my students (Ron Scapp in hooks, 2003, p. 109). I’ve also been inspired by the work of Stephanie Springgay (2010) whose approach to collectivity in the classroom incorporates diversity of thought and experience (p.115).



Figure 1. *Lise Watier leaving the Lise Watier Pavilion* (Townsend, 2010)

THE POPULATION AND LOCATION

The specific community I worked with in this study represents residents of the Lise Watier Pavilion. The Lise Watier Pavilion, funded by the Lise Watier Foundation³, is a housing complex for women who have recently experienced homelessness and who are working to reintegrate into society. The pavilion opened its doors in October 2010. It houses up to 29 women, all whom have recently experienced homelessness, offering them apartments equipped with a small bathroom and kitchenette. There is also a communal kitchen on each of the Pavilions' three floors and a large communal dining area and living room on the main floor of the building. There are several social workers on site, to assist the residents not only in the process of paying bills, and balancing their budgets, but also with other issues, both personal and social, which come along with the incredible process of adjusting to living in a permanent residence. It is a part of the Lise Watier Pavilion's mandate to assist the residents in the development of stability and independence (CTV



Figure 2. *The art room*

³ The Lise Watier Foundation was founded by Quebecois businesswoman and cosmetics designer Lise Watier in order to provide funds to women in need, and in the case of the Lise Watier Pavilion, to support homeless women by providing safe and stable housing. It is important to note that the Lise Watier Pavilion is located in Lise Watier's former neighborhood, Hochelaga Maisonneuve.

Montreal, 2010). Eight residents participated in the project, as well as one non-resident, Christine, a social worker at the Lise Watier Pavilion. Christine took part in the art project, as well as the focus groups. She acted not only as a participant, but was also there to support the other participants during the study.

THE SPACE

The art room at the Lise Watier Pavilion is located in the semi-basement. It is a large room littered with structural posts, and houses a big conference table, with many chairs, in the middle of the room. The lighting is relatively dim. There is a piano in the corner, and one of the social workers' offices is adjacent. There



Figure 3. *The art room corner*

is an emergency exit door off to the southwest corner and three small north facing windows that give out to Ontario Street at street level. The art supplies are housed on a single bookshelf, and we keep the student's work, both in progress and completed, on a table beside it. There is a small apartment style bathroom with a toilet, sink, mirror and bathtub adjacent. Next to the art room is the

largest communal kitchen of four in the building, which is used by all the residents for big communal dinners, along side the one laundry facility in the

building. There are often items in the corners of the room belonging to residents who have been either evicted from the Lise Watier Pavilion or are moving out⁴.

THE PROCEDURE

Triangulation was used in order to insure the reliability and validity in data collection through the means of audio recorded focus groups, observational field notes and journal entries (taken both by me, the researcher, and my students, the participants), and photographs taken of the art works produced during the study and our process. To initiate the study, current students and interested residents were invited to join the study/art class through the means of a flyer posted in the Lise Watier Pavilion entranceway.

I began the project by meeting with some of the potential participants, asking them to sign consent forms, explaining the study, and talking about the artwork we would produce. I then conducted five art classes over the span of five weeks with the goal of creating a collective body of work exploring the theme of home and comfort. Students created fibers-based works, specifically tablecloths, with the intention of embellishing each participant's individual apartment in the Lise Watier Pavilion. Between each class, students and the instructor (myself) were encouraged to keep a journal about their experience during the previous session, noting suggestions for the following session. After

⁴ The women at the Lise Watier are obliged to follow certain rules to ensure the safety and well being of themselves and the other residents- Some of the rules of the Pavilion include: refrain from the abuse of drugs and alcohol, participating in illegal activities, and violent behavior. Residents are also required to pay for their own rent and bills.



Figure 4. *The invitation to participate*

each course I conducted a short, audio-recorded, semi-structured focus group to reflect on the lesson, how we felt, and what I, the instructor, could improve upon in terms of creating safe space and encouraging authentic art making. I then integrated suggestions made during the focus group into my following lessons, and in the subsequent focus groups we reflected on how the changes affected the class.

I transcribed the focus groups audio-recorded data following each session, and the journals when the study was concluded. When the data collection and transcription were completed, I compiled all the transcriptions, and as suggested by Cole & Knowles (2001), read through them numerous times to extract emerging themes. Then, inspired by Creswell's (2013) approach to data

analysis for grounded theory studies, I organized the data by creating a chart using four main categories, then from this drew several subcategories and within them additional subcategories. I then color coded the data and sorted it by my perceived categories.

THE PROJECT

Following the recruitment process, I met with two out of my six initially registered participants on the week prior to our first class. We discussed the teaching research project, they signed the consent forms, and we talked about the upcoming art project. The women present, Natalie and Carole, showed impartiality to the idea of creating curtains, my proposed art object, and instead put forward the idea of creating tablecloths, to which I wholeheartedly agreed⁵. The teaching project was split into four lessons of two hours each over five sessions. After each session I conducted a focus group where the participants were asked questions regarding the course matter, the art materials, the demonstration, teaching techniques and materials, the physical space, the music played, the atmosphere and their comfort levels. In subsequent sessions, I implemented the suggestions the students gave during the focus group to improve their comfort levels, learning and art making process. There were nine students who participated in the project, although on average there were four to six participants attending each class.

⁵ Serendipitously I had created an installation just a few months prior on the subject of romantic relationships, where I had made video documentation of my process of embroidery and applique on a 70"x120" tablecloth.

Focus group questions

Session 1

- How did you feel about the class before you arrived? What were your expectations?
- How did you find the art activity? Was the demonstration helpful?
- How did you feel about the possibility of making art in front of other people?
- How did you find the pace of the class?
- How would you describe the atmosphere of the class?
- What would you do to make the space more inviting?
- What did you think of your results?
- Is there something the instructor could have done to make you more comfortable?

Subsequent Sessions

- Did you notice anything different between this week's class and last week's class? How did this affect your comfort levels, or your artwork?
- Do you think that feeling that you are more adept at something changes your comfort level in the class? Would you feel more comfortable showing things, speaking up? How does that affect the atmosphere?

THE ART LESSONS

Preparing the fabric

In this first session, I took the time to introduce the entire project, explaining, in brief, the steps we would take to complete their tablecloths. We



Figure 5. *Sewing the hem*

looked at fiber-based art works by Joetta Maue (2008), Jane Selbie (2006) and the batik works of Cheryl Braganza (2012). I had three new participants interested in the project attend the first part of the workshop, but because they had not signed up

prior to the first class, I did not have enough materials for all of them to participate. One of the confirmed participants, Natalie, was over an hour late to the workshop, so the material I had set aside for her was given to one of our new participants.

I gave a brief physical demonstration on how to cut a square piece of fabric into a circle by folding it into four, and tracing, then cutting off the corner, based on the description from Jessica Broyles' (2011) website – Sew Homegrown in Japan. I also showed how to square up the fabric for a square tablecloth (Perkes, 2012). I went over the steps of folding and pressing and pinning the fabric to prepare the hem, and gave a brief demo of how to use the sewing machine to sew the hem.



Figure 6. *Pressing fabric*

I then handed out the fabric, and asked the students to pair up. They helped each other to fold, trace the arc and cut out their tablecloths; some of the students worked on the floor, as I had for my demo, and some worked on the table. Some chose to keep their tablecloth square. As they worked, I played jazz music, barely audible, in the background. I walked around the room, helping the students in their groups as they worked.

One of the students, Francine, struggled to accomplish the task due to her leg being in a brace, so I, along with one of the other participants Sandra, traced and cut her tablecloth for her, under her guidance and supervision.

Focus group 1

The focus group following this first teaching session was intense. There was a rather lively confrontation between two of the participants who were disagreeing about the impact visiting and curious non-participating residents had on the workshop⁶. Some of the participants felt that all the action and chatter of residents wandering in and out of the workshop disturbed their practice. They stated that they enjoyed working in pairs, and appreciated the help of their partners. The participants suggested that, in the future, the music playing be more audible, and that there be some limitation to who comes in and out of the workshop space during the sessions. They also suggested the workspace should be closer to the natural light source in the room, the windows.

The art of dyeing

In the second workshop I introduced the participants to a few basic fabric-dyeing methods. We were fewer participants this time; only five were present, of the expected nine. The techniques explored were simple shibori and batik; I gave a brief history, and



Figure 7. *Blue dye bath*

⁶ Non-participating residents had been wandering in and out of the workshop all afternoon, curious about all the action. At one point, Christine, the social worker participating in the workshops brought out a plate of Nachos and dip, which also drew more visitors. Some of the workshop participants were irritated by the visitors, and put off by their observations on their art work.

demonstrated some simple techniques using string, elastics and gel glue to create a resist effect. The motivational materials I used were printouts from the Internet. I set up four big dye baths in front of the windows (as was suggested by participants in the previous focus group). In the previous workshop, the residents had asked for specific colors as the base for their tablecloths, and so we had red, yellow, green and blue dye to choose from.



Figure 8. *Yellow dye bath*

The participants chose their colors, and went to work. All but one decided against intervening on their fabric, choosing to go with a single color background to their piece. In retrospect, and with more time in the workshops, I would have asked participants to test each dyeing method on a test swatch of

fabric, and then asked them to choose whether or not to intervene on their larger piece. Their reluctance to intervene on their work made me question their intentions – were they not decorating the base of their piece because they initially intended it to be one unified color, or because they were intimidated by the scale of the project? One participant, Marie Ange, was insistent on not dyeing her tablecloth at all, with the intention of keeping her background white. Due to the fact that there were quite a few missing participants, I put one tablecloth in the red dye bath for Francine, whom was at the doctor's and had let the other participants know that she wanted to dye her tablecloth red, and I put another tablecloth in the yellow dye bath, for any one of the missing participants to use.



Figure 9. *Gel glue resist*

Christine, the social worker who participated in the workshops, was the only participant to intervene on her tablecloth, using the glue resist method. While the participants dyed their fabric, I circulated, helping each one individually prepare and submerge

their fabric. Christine, intent on having the perfect design, initially began by tracing her design on the fabric in disappearing ink, but I convinced her to have a little more fun by free handing her designs. I chose to play no music during this

workshop, to keep the door to the art room partially closed, and to insist that no food or drinks be served to residents, or participants during the art workshop time, to discourage the appearances made by non-participating residents during the workshops.

Focus group 2

In the course of the subsequent focus group we discussed the participants preconceived notions of the activity, and their surprise at how simple, and not messy the process was. They were pleased and surprised by what they learned, but anxious to see the results. They viewed this workshop, which had fewer participants than our previous session, and few non-participating visitors, as calm and relaxing. They were glad to have no music during the explanations and demonstrations, but missed it during the activity. They suggested that more light would give the space a warmer feel and make it more functional for art making.

Creating stencils



This third workshop focused on the art of stencil making, and using stencils to transfer images onto fabric. Using bigger books as motivational materials, I presented a multitude of approaches to stencil making, from

Figure 10. *Making stencils*

street art to craft and design based stencil work. I showed how to trace an image and cut the stencil out of Mylar using X-Acto knives. We also began the exploration of some of the different dyes and pigments we would use to transfer our images onto the fabric. I spoke about adding meaning to their work by suggesting they explore the notion of comfort and home, which we had discussed in our meeting prior to the beginning of the workshops.

Participants chose a multitude of source materials for their stencil designs, and were heavily influenced by nature. They used imagery of flowers, foliage, insects and the cosmos. I found it interesting that even though I had suggested they explore



Figure 11. *Source materials*

the notion of home and comfort, they chose imagery linked to the outdoors. I chose not to insist that they follow the theme, in order to respect their artistic license. Following suggestions from our previous focus groups, I brought in standing lamps from my house and placed them around the room to give more light. I played music, mainly Quebecois and Francophone artists such as Daniel Belanger and Jaques Brel. Given that the majority of the participants were francophone, I had hoped that I had chosen something to which they could relate. Once the students began working, I surveyed the room, and visited with each one of them separately to assist them in their endeavors.

Focus group 3

In the ensuing focus group we discussed the atmosphere, the music and the motivational materials. The group loved the extra lighting, and the use of books as motivation. They found the books inspiring, visually interesting and informative, and enjoyed leafing through them as they mulled over their ideas. We discussed the music selection at length and the students were all in agreement that music without lyrics, or heavy cultural associations would be preferred. When asked what they thought might improve the atmosphere, it was suggested that I serve tea during the course. Students also noted that their results from the previous session had encouraged and motivated them this week in their efforts. For the next session we decided we would install the tablecloths on the wall for painting.

Painting on fabric

During this fourth lesson, students applied their stencils and designs, created in our previous session, to the tablecloths. This session was three hours long, in comparison to the earlier sessions, which were two hours each. In an attempt to share my own art practice with the group, I brought in an in-progress fabric-based art piece that I had begun months earlier, accompanied by a video documenting the process, both physical and emotional, driving the piece. My tablecloth was embellished using embroidery and applique, and adorned with many birds, the word siempre along the edge, and the numbers 83/23 in the centre. It is a testimony to my relationship with my fiancé. The accompanying

video shows the physical process of the creation of the piece, and includes a medley of audio recordings and clips of discussions on the topic of love and relationships between several friends and myself.



Figure 12. *Relationships* (still from video, Jennifer Wicks, 2012)

When the participants had put forward the idea of creating tablecloths (instead of my initial proposition of curtains) at our first meeting, I had begun to consider presenting my own work as motivation for one of the workshops. This particular workshop seemed fitting as we were beginning on the surface treatment for their work, which I knew from previous conversations, they were anxious about. The work I presented stressed the importance of creating meaningful works, both as a means of presenting something that is of great significance to the maker, but also as a means of motivation. The meaning in the work gives the maker a reason to keep working on, and remain interested in, a more involved art project, such as the project they had embarked upon. We began the workshop one hour earlier, to give us time to watch the 8-minute

video and examine my tablecloth. I explained how I made it and what the designs meant to me.



Figure 13. *Setting up on the wall*

For the art making activity, we installed each participant's tablecloth on the wall, save for Natalie, who insisted on working at the table. Participants had their own stations to work at. I set up all the art materials in one place, and left many scraps of material out for participants to test out

their ideas before applying them to their pieces. The students worked quickly. Once everyone was situated, I put on John Coltrane, music without lyrics as was suggested in our last focus group., which was quickly refuted by Christine, who felt overwhelmed by the jazz music. I promptly changed the music, opting for mellow, ambient contemporary independent artists like LAL and the Rachels. Much to my surprise, the participants loved the music, and asked to borrow some of the cd's at the end of the workshop. I served tea and cookies mid session, as was suggested in the previous focus group, which allowed the students to take a moment to step back from their work and explore the work of the other participants. I spent most of the session walking



Figure 14. *Applying the stencil*

between the stations, offering advice, answering questions, and calming the nerves of my anxious and excited art students.

Focus group 4

As the project progressed, the focus groups grew more and more profound and intimate. Participants talked about their growing confidence and attachment to both the project and the group. In our fourth focus group session, we talked at length about the anticipation that was building between each session, and the incredible progress the students were making. We began to delve deeper into the role of the teacher, and teacher qualities and values that contribute to the comfort and confidence of the group, along that of the individual students.

The students conveyed their appreciation of the element of intimacy brought to the group through the viewing of my art practice. They also appreciated seeing the process of creation for such a large, long-term project. They were able to connect their own work to my own, and they found that encouraging and reassuring.



Figure 15. *Louise's center design*

The participants expressed mixed emotions when made aware that this particular art making session was one hour longer than the previous sessions. Most participants were not aware of the time, but one participant began to feel



Figure 16. *Fixing the dyes*

agitated by the end of the class. The students appreciated the addition of a tea break to the session, concluding that it gave them a necessary break, and a chance to step back and explore all the works being created. Participants had no suggestions for improvement in the next session.

Finishing up

In this final session, several of the participants finished their projects. There was barely any time to speak when they arrived, as they all jumped on their projects, anxious to get started (and finished). Two participants, who had been absent in the last one or two workshops, materialized for the last workshop of the project, and to the astonishment of everyone in attendance, completed their artworks. This led me to reflect on the notion of the deadline as one of our greatest motivators⁷. I began the workshop by getting everyone set up, and then spent some time with the latecomers, giving quick demonstrations of the art materials and their different uses. I then spent most of the class visiting each student individually, discussing their work, what they needed to do to finish or

⁷ In her 2009 master's thesis study on the impact of art workshops on secondary art educators, Jessica Guiragossian's participants named the deadline as one of their prime motivators to complete their art projects.

embellish it. Four out of the six participants present completed their project, and took the time to iron and fix the designs on their tablecloths. Two participants did not complete their projects within the timeline of the study, but continued to work on their tablecloths after the study was over. We also got a chance to view the works as they were intended to be seen, on a table, which changed the visual impact of the of the work considerably.

Focus group 5

Our final focus group was an emotional one, as we discussed the completion of the project and the views of the participants on the entire process – of both the study and the undertaking of such a long and involved art project. Spirits were high as the participants congratulated each other and praised the work produced, and affirmed their pride in their own accomplishments. We



Figure 17. *Sandra's finished work*

discussed the dynamics of the group, and

how close this process had brought us. The students elaborated on their previous comments concerning pedagogical approaches, and teacher qualities and values. We discussed the importance of trust between students, and of students to their instructors as a big contributor to comfort in the classroom setting. Participants spoke of their desire to complete the project motivated by past results (both positive and less positive). Students also affirmed that their positive results and experience in the class had increased their confidence in themselves and their art making abilities, and they were all encouraged to continue making art in the future.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to analyze all of the data collected, including focus group transcripts, field notes and journal entries, and the photographs, I chose to approach the analysis by following the steps of Creswell's (2013) data analysis spiral, and chose an open coding method.

I began by collecting all the data, and began the organization. I slowly perused all of the data systematically by date, beginning with the transcripts, then the field notes and journals, and then finally the photographs. I read through everything once, and then on my second and third reading I set about making notes in the margins. On the fourth examination I began extracting umbrella themes and sub themes on the fifth examination I coded the themes by using different colors for each sub theme, as is suggested by Cole and Knowles

(2001). I extracted four umbrella themes from the data, and from those themes, I separated the data into themes and sub themes, as is demonstrated in the chart below.



■ Umbrella Themes ■ Themes ■ Sub Themes

Figure 18. *Map of themes*

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND CREATING SAFE SPACE

“I loved the atmosphere, and everybody, and how we all got behind everybody. And just the music, everything. It was exciting” (Sandra, focus group, October 18, 2012).



Figure 19. Sandra's stencil - detail

THE STUDENTS

To begin, I will describe the specifics of the students I have worked with on this project, what is particular to this population, as well as their intentions for taking the class and participating in the study. I will also discuss several hurdles these students faced and issues they had including their self perception, their fears towards art making, their preconceived notions about age, along with their affirmations concerning themselves and their progress, and their observations on their own art making process.

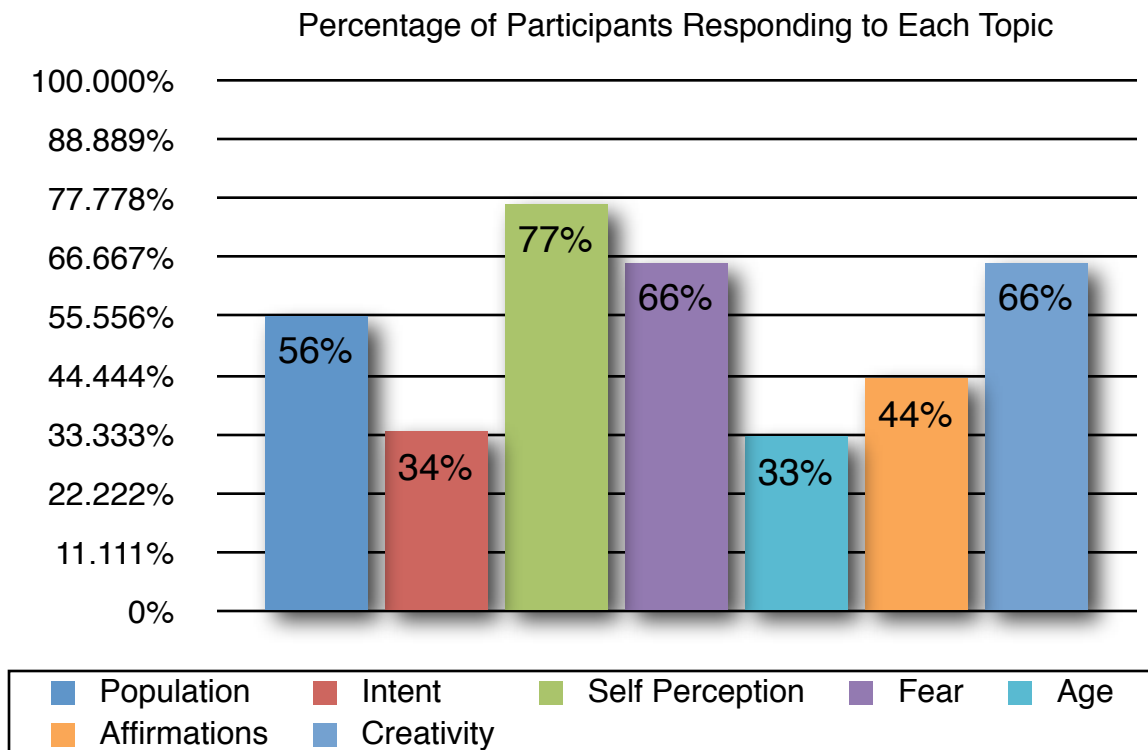


Figure 20. *Participants response chart 1*

The Population

“Often I’ve come to your classes, not just these workshops, just to see you” (Natalie, focus group, October 11, 2012).

Teaching art with women in a homeless rehabilitation program is a particular environment, and there are several key elements that set us apart from other community art education environments.

Women who have been homeless have often



Figure 21. *Making stencils*

been victims of domestic abuse and or/violence, and many suffer from mental illness or are burdened with substance addictions (Hagen, 1987). The reintegration process can be complex, and for many, loneliness and social



Figure 22. *Drawing on fabric*

isolation can be a real problem (Tosi, 2005). For some of the students, the art program serves as a social event, or an opportunity to make a connection with someone outside their social circle in the pavilion. Some of the participants in the art class stated that they were coming to the art class because of the social aspect and the action in the room (Sandra, focus group, October 4, 2012), or simply to interact with me (Natalie, focus group, October 11, 2012).

There were other things that emerged during the study, that I also felt differed from a more privileged community art education program, such as the concept of security. Due to previous experiences at the pavilion, such as the theft of art materials and equipment⁸, the art room was often off limits when I or the social workers weren't there, and this limited the amount of commitment some of the participants would have liked to have put



Figure 23. Louise's tablecloth

into the project, such as Carole, who attempted to tend to the fabric in the dye baths, but couldn't because the doors to the art room were locked (Carole, focus group, October 4, 2012). Students also expressed a lack of trust with regards to the art materials towards the other non-participating residents (Christine & Carole, focus groups, September 20 & 27, 2012).

Intent

"I was telling myself that if I'm going to go to the class, then I have to get involved. I have to come to the class, and I can't give up. I can't quit, even if it's hard or not hard" (Francine, focus group, September 20, 2012).

⁸ "Got to Lise Watier to find a lot of my art materials and books gone. I guess it was a long summer. Even one of the sewing machines is gone!" (Jennifer Wicks, field notes, September 20, 2012).

The participants expressed several reasons for participating in the art program, and the study, most notably for distraction, to have fun, and as a personal challenge (Francine, Sandra, & Carole, focus group, September 20, 2012). It was clear right from the start that those that committed to participate were serious about it.

Self Perception

“I’m rotten at art. I’m a zero at art, but I think we can make something really special and have some fun too” (Carole, September 20, 2012).

The women arrived in the workshops with an enormous amount of baggage towards themselves and their art making abilities. Self proclaimed perfectionists with no talent, or art making skills (Sandra, Gaby, Francine & Carole, September 20, 2012), they made it clear that self deprecation, and a lack of confidence was going to be an issue right from the start. What they did let me know, though, was that they were there regardless, and wanted to put the focus on fun.



Figure 24. Sandra's tablecloth and stencils

Fear

“They both expressed some apprehension and Carole repeated several times that ‘she was not an artist’. What is an artist anyways?” (Jen, field notes, September 13, 2012).

Fear also permeated the participants – fear of not being good enough, fear of “fucking up” (Sandra, focus group, September 27, 2012), fear of failure, and the overwhelming fear that things just weren’t going to work out. On several occasions students’ expressed that they were worried about the more technical aspects of the work, and demonstrated apprehension when faced with the

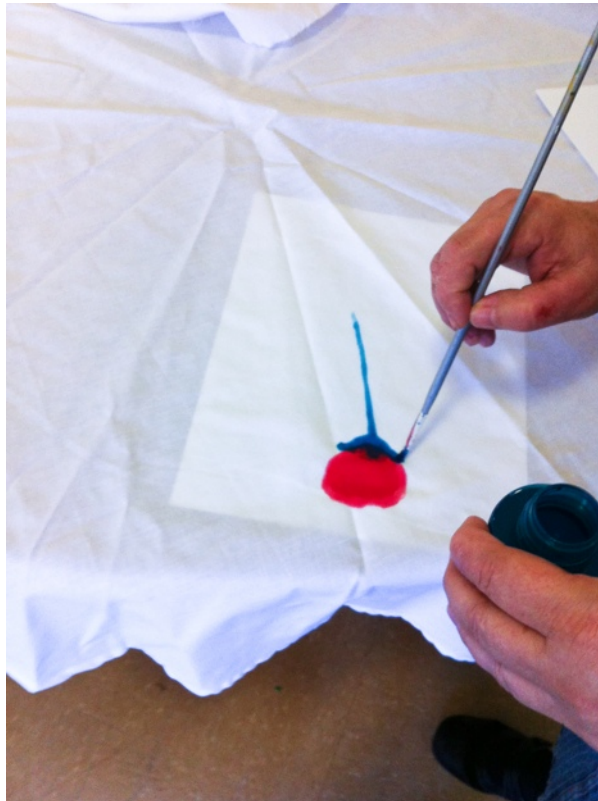


Figure 25. *Painting dye on fabric*

notion of spreading themselves out, and working big (Carole, Natalie, Marie Ange & Louise, focus group, October 4, 2012). Students repeatedly expressed that they felt apprehensive before coming to the workshops – worried that they would be uninspired, that they would ruin the work they had already done, or be unable to come back and fix mistakes (Carole & Sandra, focus group, October 11, 2012).

Age

“I’m going to be 60, and I think for my age, you gave me a good push, because I didn’t know where I was going, and I think that even though it’s not perfect, I don’t ever do anything precise. It’s ‘art naif’. There’s nothing precise about it, and that’s what I like” (Carole, focus group, October 18, 2012).



Figure 26. *Fleur de lys stencil*

The participants of the workshop spanned over several generations, and were between the ages of 28 and 65. Age came up time and time again during the focus groups. Some participants felt that the younger participants were able to work longer than those who were older (Sandra & Carole, focus group, October 4, 2012). Others were astonished that they were able to learn new things and discover new talents later on in life (Sandra, focus group, October 18, 2012).

Affirmations

“What I did today gave me confidence in myself to continue in art making” (Marie Ange, focus group, October 18, 2012).

As the workshops persisted I found the participants started to shed some of their preconceived notions about their art making abilities and celebrate their skills, and accomplishments.

Students expressed that they were learning to let go of their inhibitions, and have fun with the project. They had taken my advice, and decided to forget about mistakes, keeping in mind that they could always come back and fix things, and manipulate the work until they found a result they appreciated. They were learning to appreciate the process as



Figure 27. *Applying stencils*

much as the product (Sandra & Christine, October 4, 2012).

Creativity

“Looking forward to the next one. More people, more ideas, making my creativity (which I have little of) a little easier” (Sandra, journal entry, September 20, 2012)

The participants approached the creative process in a number of ways. They often arrived with an idea of what they'd hoped to create, expressing anticipation for the coming workshop, and then it would change as they worked. They learned to bend their expectations, and work with what they had (Carole, focus group, September 27, 2012), or manipulate their work to overcome obstacles they had encountered (Christine, October 4, 2012). Many felt that the music played during the art making sessions influenced their art making practice (Francine, focus group, September 20, 2012; Christine & Natalie, focus group, September 27, 2012; Carole, Christine, Natalie & Sandra, focus group, October 11, 2012). Others were encouraged and surprised by the diversity of works created with the same materials under the same theme (Sandra & Carole, focus group, October 11, 2012).

THE ATMOSPHERE

Developing the atmosphere in the art making space was a huge part of this project. The following section explores the participants' views on the physical space, the sounds in the room, including the noise levels, and the types of music they preferred for art making. We explored strategies for building a sense of community in the classroom by defining the group, their involvement in the development of the class and the relationships built between students. We also explored the effects that a designated tea break had on the classroom environment.

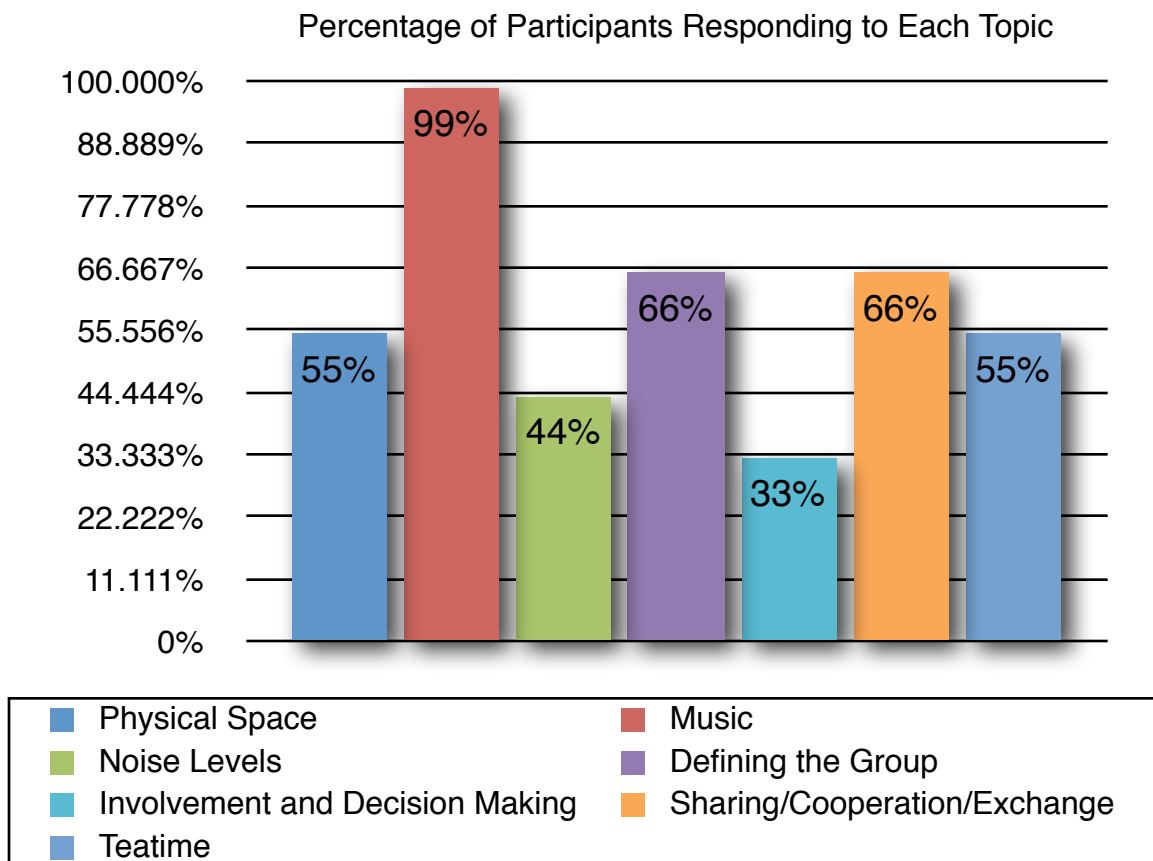


Figure 28. *Participants' response chart 2*

The Physical Space

“When we’re thinking about painting, maybe we should make separate stations, to make sure that everyone is not all around the same table, on top of one another” (Christine, focus group, September 27, 2012).



Figure 29. *The setup*

The layout and the lighting in the room had a significant effect on the comfort levels of the participants. Over the course of the project I worked with the lighting in the room, adding extra lamps and moving the participants work stations around to see what made them most comfortable. What became clear to me was that I needed to be flexible, and sensitive to the needs of the students. Some students preferred to be sitting and working at the table, and some were more comfortable working with their pieces affixed vertically on the



Figure 30. Christine's details

wall. Some students were unable to work on the floor because of physical limitations. My approach was to ask individuals where they felt most comfortable before setting them up, and to ensure that everyone had ample room to move around. I kept all the art

making materials and motivational materials (books, images, source materials) in one area for students to take what they needed, when they needed. The students preferred to have ample light (Carole, Christine & Natalie, focus group, October 4, 2012), with a mix with natural light (Carole, Christine & Natalie, focus group, October 11, 2012). I attempted to give demonstrations close to a light source, so that students could see well.

AURALITY

Music

"In terms of music, I liked what we listened to, and I liked what you had us discover too [...] It really put me in the mood to create" (Natalie, focus group, October 11, 2012).

Music became a big part of our discussions on how to build an atmosphere that participants found pleasant, calming, inspiring and yet kept them concentrated on the task at hand. Each week I experimented with different

styles of music and played with the volume levels of music. Some weeks I kept the levels very low (during one session I played no music at all), and some weeks I played more lively music; other weeks I stuck to music that was more subdued. The students had very strong opinions when it came to the levels and styles of music played, yet in most circumstances were unified in their opinions. By the end of the



Figure 31. *Carole's star stencil*

project, I had narrowed it down to a short list of criteria. The participants liked the music to be played at a lower level, but not so low that it wasn't audible (Francine, focus group, September 20, 2012). They preferred that the music overshadow the sound of other (participants, or non-participants) conversations (Carole, focus group, October 4, 2012).

The participants all agreed that no music should be played during teacher demonstrations or explanations (focus group, October 4, 2012). They stated that they preferred music that was either without or with very few lyrics. Music that was too familiar, too upbeat (like rock and roll) or that they related to on a personal or cultural level was also discouraged (Carole & Christine, focus group, October 12, 2012)⁹. One student was exceptionally put off by jazz music, stating

⁹ During one particular art-making workshop, I played a variety of French & Quebecois song writers (Jaques Brel, Daniel Belanger, Les Coloqs). My intention was to play something that I felt everyone would recognize and relate to, but instead the students found it distracting.

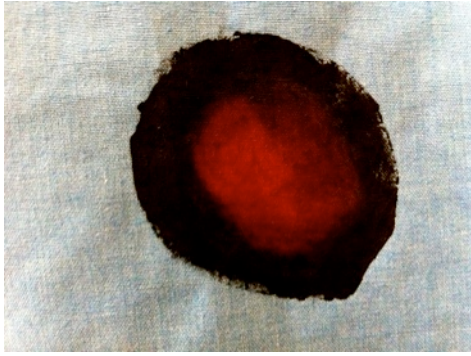


Figure 32. *Carole's planet*

that she found it “too aggressive” (Christine, focus group, October 11, 2012). The music the students responded to best was ambient, less well-known bands, with little to no lyrical content¹⁰. They stated that they found the music soothing, and enjoyed discovering

new bands. My interpretation of this is that they needed something that they weren't going to recognize and pick up, which allowed them to drift off into a different state of consciousness while they created.

Noise Levels

“People were talking too loud. When people are talking too loud, we cannot be inspired. It's impossible” (Carole, focus group, September 20, 2012).

In the consideration of the classroom atmosphere, the participants made it remarkably clear that the noise levels in the room were key to their ability to feel comfortable, concentrate and create during the workshops. They preferred quiet music, and when participants were talking during the workshops, they preferred it to be in lowered, calm voices (Carole, Gaby & Marie Ange, focus group, September 20, 2012).

¹⁰ Bands the students enjoyed the most included LaL, Dirty Three, the Rachels, Portishead and Muse.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Defining the group

“If they aren’t implicated in the class, then they have no business being here” (Gaby, focus group, September 20, 2012).

One aspect of comfort that came up in a rather heated discussion¹¹ during our first focus group was the notion of non-participants wandering in and out of the workshop, observing, speaking with participants, and occasionally commenting on the work. Although some participants were comfortable with non-participants coming into the space (Francine & Sandra, focus group, September 20, 2012), others found



Figure 33. *Art materials*

the presence of non-participants disturbing, and became visibly upset by the notion of inviting non-participants into the room (Carole, Gaby & Marie Ange, focus group, September 20, 2012). In subsequent sessions I kept the door to

¹¹ Although at the time, I found this altercation distressing, in retrospect I found the conflict, and our ability to acknowledge conflict as a group drew our group closer together, and sent a message to participants that all opinions would be valued and considered during the focus groups.

the room slightly closed, to create a more intimate atmosphere, and discourage visitors from coming in. This was an effective method of quelling the number of visitors we had in the space. In future workshops the participants who had so vehemently opposed having non-participants in the room, felt that the odd visitor was fine (Carole, focus group, October 18, 2012).

Involvement & Decision Making

“I was happy to have expressed myself at the beginning of class [...] I didn’t know if it was going to upset anyone that I asked for different music, because I don’t like this, but finally it was fine, and we all got along” (Christine, focus group, October 11, 2012).



Figure 34. *Designing the edge*

In the spirit of PAR and in the hopes of creating a sense of community, and autonomy in the classroom, I gave the students as much artistic license, decision-making power, and control over the workshops as possible. They determined the object that we would be making during the workshops (Jen's field notes, September 13, 2012). They also took the initiative to tend to the dye baths in my absence (Carole, focus group, October 4, 2012) as well as clean and prepare them for other uses (Sandra, focus group, October 4, 2012). Students were encouraged to speak up during the workshops, and eventually showed confidence in expressing their opinions to me concerning the class and environment.

Sharing/Cooperation/Exchange

"Others can help you, and give you ideas. So by doing this with others you can have more ideas. We can really help each other, we are many people" (Francine, focus group, September 20, 2012).

In our first session, I had students pair up to facilitate the preparation of their pieces. This set a tone for mutual aid, and camaraderie in the group. The student pairs often came back together, without being directed to do so, to assist and support each other (Carole, focus group, September 27, 2012). Several of the students noted their appreciation of the other students' presence,



Figure 35. Marie Ange's rose

support, encouragement and even constructive critiques of their work (Sandra, focus group, October 4, 2012; Christine & Marie Ange, focus group, September 20, 2012; Carole, focus group, October 11, 2012). Students were encouraged to share all the materials I brought to the group. They organized themselves so that when one was done with a material that someone else needed; they would pass it along (Carole, focus group, October 11, 2012).



Figure 36. *Tests*

Key also to the development of the group was the informal time we took to respond and celebrate the work of each participant, offering suggestions and our praise for the uniqueness of each creation. Students found that watching others work, and observing their progress was inspiring and motivating (Carole, Christine, Natalie & Sandra, focus group, October 11, 2012).

Teatime

“What did you think of having tea and cookies? I thought it was a really nice touch, a nice gesture” (Jen to Natalie, focus group, October 11, 2012).

Following the suggestion of the participants, I began serving tea mid session. Students felt that this gesture created an opportunity to take a step back, and explore their work from a far, as well as take a moment to view what the other participants had been working on¹².



Figure 37. *Tea & cookies*

¹² Interestingly enough my pilot study for this research was on the topic of serving tea as a mid way break in a community art class. Participants in that project also welcomed the gesture, and felt it allowed them to gain an immediate perspective on their work, as well as the work of others in the class.

PEDAGOGY

During the focus groups we discussed at length the different teaching methods used during the class time, and teacher qualities that encouraged the students' art making process. In this section I will discuss the students' view on motivational materials and methods, the timing of the class as well as their insight regarding the teaching approach used, and teacher qualities that they felt assisted them in their creative process.

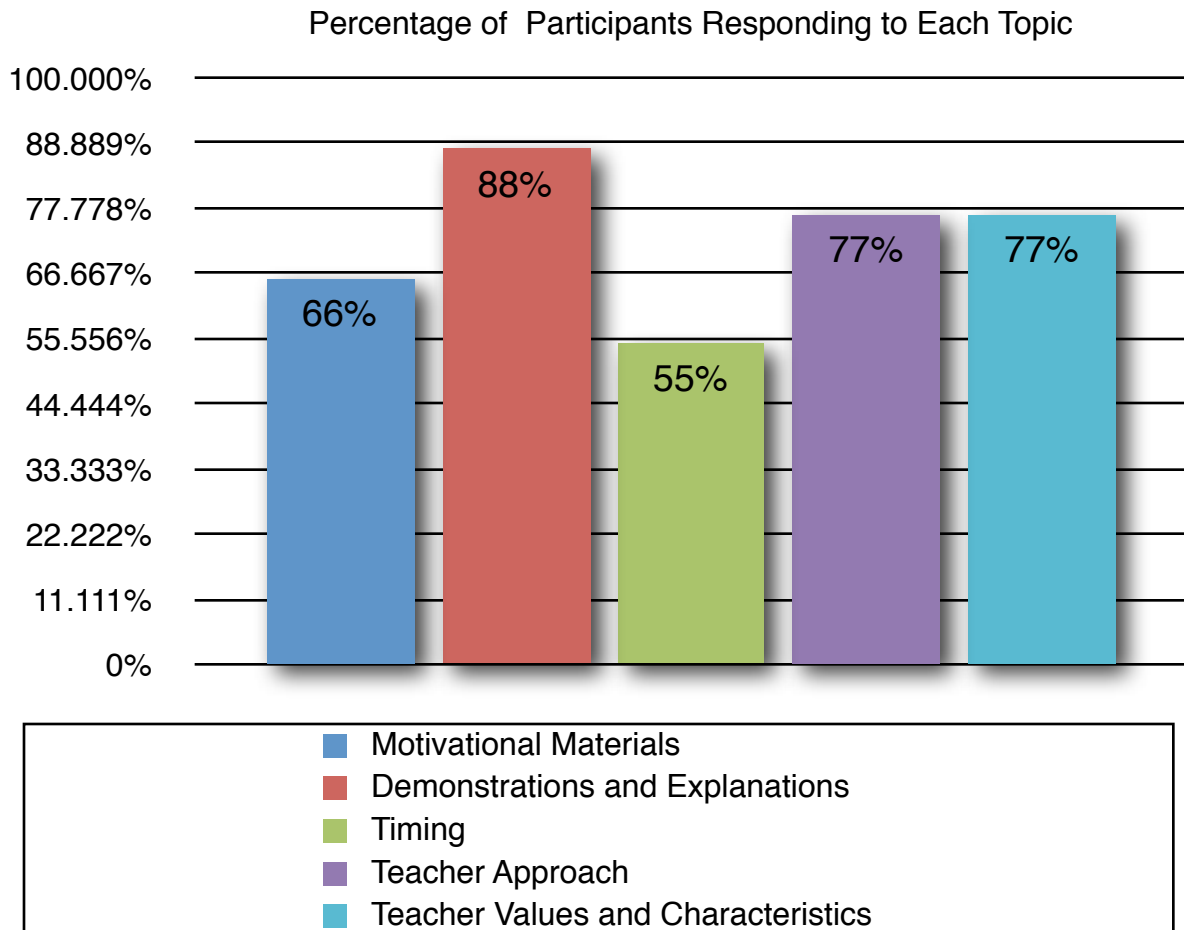


Figure 38. Participants' response chart 3

TEACHING TOOLS

“It helped me to be patient” (Natalie on watching the video, focus group, October 11, 2012)

Motivational Materials

Throughout the study, I made a concerted effort to change the types of motivational materials I brought in, from black and white to color photocopies, to books, video, and actual artworks. Students’ opinions of the materials presented were harmonious. They all preferred books to photocopies, and found the video depicting the process of a fibers based art project, to be informative and encouraging (Carole & Sandra, focus group, October 4, 2012; Natalie & Sandra, focus group, October 11, 2012).



Figure 39. *Relationships* (still from video, Jennifer Wicks, 2012)

Leading up to our second to last art making session, I introduced the students to my own fibers based art project, a tablecloth project with accompanying video on the topic of relationships that documented my own art making process,

as motivation for the next two sessions. A departure from my standard motivational materials and process of presenting the work of artists or works that demonstrate the technique being used in the workshop being taught, I chose to let the students experience my work. Even though it wasn't exactly what they were doing in their projects, the theme was similar, and the base of the project was the same. A tablecloth. My intent was to increase the intimacy in the group, and create a bond between the students and myself, and demonstrate the importance of meaning making in a long-term art project.

Students responded in numerous ways, expressing their appreciation for the work (Natalie & Carole, focus group, October 11, 2012), and stating they felt the work informed and encouraged them to push their work further (Carole, Natalie & Sandra, focus group, October 11, 2012). Most importantly the students felt that by experiencing my art practice, they knew me better, had a better understanding of where I was coming from. They felt sharing this brought us closer together as a group (Natalie, Carole & Sandra, focus group, October 11, 2012).

“It just made everything more personal. Brought us together, more personal. Kind of attached a personal... it's all I can do to describe it. An attachment; a personal feeling” (Sandra, focus group, October 11, 2012).

The participants also named anticipation and positive results as part of their own motivation to continue the project, and push themselves further in their art making (Christine & Sandra, focus group, October 4, 2012; Natalie, focus group, September 27, 2012; Sandra, focus group, October 18, 2012). At the end of each workshop I was careful to inform and prepare the students



Figure 40. *Louise's flowers* for what we would be doing the following week.

Some students expressed that this built anticipation for the workshops to come (Natalie, focus group, September 27, 2012; Sandra & Christine, focus group, October 4, 2012; Carole, focus group, October 11, 2012).

Demonstrations & Explanations

"The demonstrations helped a lot. It showed us that it wasn't that hard. And I really liked the activity." (Natalie, focus group, October 4, 2012)

The demonstrations and explanations at the beginning of the workshops were always key to the success of the works created. I found that keeping

things simple and focusing on technique and materials allowed me to transmit the concept of ease to the students (Jen, field notes, September 20, 2012). The students expressed appreciation for physical demonstrations, stating they found them to be helpful, informative and key to their success in that days' workshop (Carole et al., focus group, September 20, 2012).

Timing

Each class was a total of two hours, including the opening motivation and demonstration, and usually gave students an hour and thirty or forty minutes to work. Some students (Christine, focus group, October 4, 2012), felt that two hours wasn't long enough, but most expressed that two hours was about as



Figure 41. *Tests*

much as they could handle (Sandra & Natalie, focus group, October 4, 2012). Students agreed that they preferred that the course material be explained calmly, and that they felt more comfortable when there was ample time to work at their own pace (Natalie, focus group,

September 27, 2012; Carole & Gaby, focus group, September 20, 2012). Although it should be noted that when the students were deeply engrossed in their work they didn't see the time pass, and most did not notice that I increased the time of one of their workshops by an entire hour (Carole, Christine, Natalie & Sandra, focus group, October 11, 2012).

THE TEACHER

Approach

“I let myself be guided by you. You are a really experienced teacher and it shows. You really take your place; you don’t let other people make decisions for you. When the teacher’s here, we know it. We have confidence in you, and therefore, in ourselves.” (Marie Ange, focus group, October 18, 2012)

When it came to teaching approaches and what made them feel most comfortable, most of the students had a unified opinion: EASYGOING (Sandra & Carole, focus group, October 11, 2012; Carol, Natalie, Marie Ange & Sandra, focus group, October 18, 2012). Students noted the following things that they appreciated in my approach to teaching the workshops: I offered a lot of encouragement



Figure 42. *Fixing the dye*

(Carole, Christine & Natalie, focus group, October 11, 2012), but was careful not to push students to go further if they appeared to be content with their work or seemed overwhelmed by the task (Jen, field notes, October 11, 2012). I insisted on and enforced an environment of mutual respect in the classroom, intervening if I felt boundaries were being crossed (Carole & Marie Ange, focus group, October 18, 2012). I was well informed about the subject material, and experienced with the materials and techniques used,

which allowed me to answer questions with ease, and aid students in their own attempts to understand the materials (Carole & Christine, focus group, October



Figure 43. *Painting on a flat surface*

11, 2012). I was confident in the classroom, and took a leadership role. I asserted myself as the teacher, by owning the curriculum, and handling any conflicts or uncomfortable situations as they arose, and sent the message that

everything was taken care of, allowing them the students the space to relax and create (Carole & Marie Ange, focus group, October 18, 2012).

Values & Characteristics

“You have the patience, encouragement... I don’t know there’s just something about you that.... You make us do things, especially me, that I would never attempt.” (Sandra, focus group, October 11, 2012)

When we began the discussion of teacher qualities in the focus groups it was hard to get the students to separate my personal qualities and characteristics from qualities they appreciated in a teacher, and methods that pushed them to work harder and develop their art practice. Through careful perusal of our focus group



Figure 44. *Emergence of Louise’s design*

transcripts, and some of the participants' journal entries, I was able to decipher the following list of teacher characteristics and qualities appreciated by the participants.

Is patient, encouraging, calm and relaxed. Puts the emphasis on a stress free environment. Confident. Has a positive and open-minded attitude. Is stimulating and motivating. Gives good (accurate) advice. Is respectful. Passionate. Motivational. Easy going. Inspired. Practices transparency. Not severe or intimidating. Has a good grasp on course materials, and is able to answer questions. Is friendly, inviting, conscientious and compassionate.



Figure 45. *Natalie's final piece*

THE PROJECT

“I love it. I’m boasting about my own shit, but I don’t care. I love it” (Sandra, focus group, October 18, 2012).

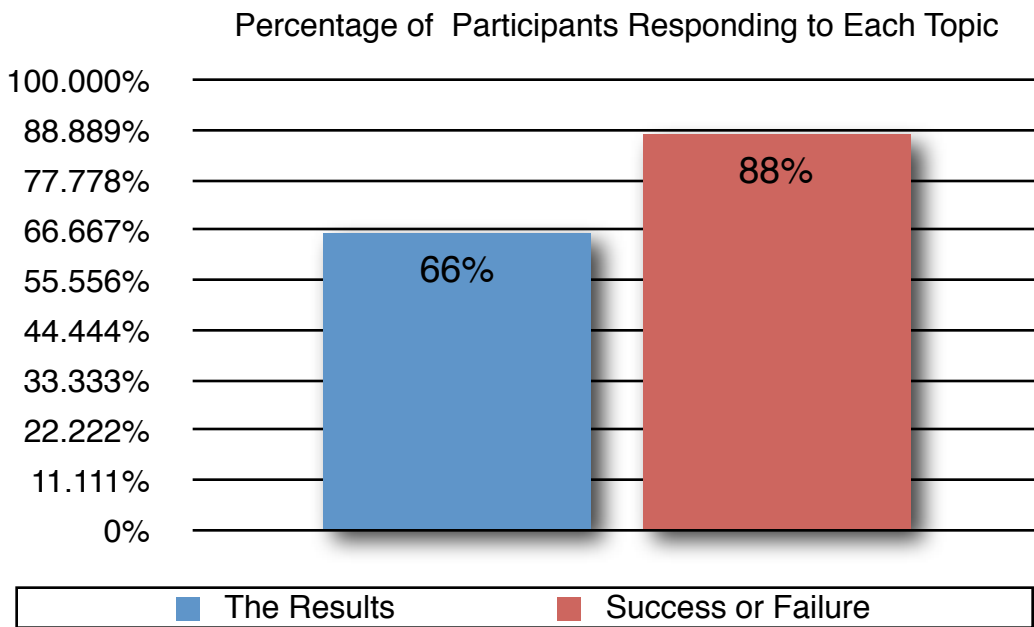


Figure 46. *Participants’ response chart 4*

The Results

“I think it’s going to be a really nice surprise. Seeing the results of the dyeing process will allow us to realize what we can do afterwards” (Carole, focus group, September 27, 2012).

As the project progressed, the participants saw the results they were getting in many different respects. They were able to watch their own progression, and learn from mistakes they felt they had made (Carole & Natalie,

focus group, October 4, 2012), such as leaving their work soaking in the dye baths for too long, and subsequently dissolving the resist glue (Christine, focus group, October 4, 2012). They started to see beauty in the unexpected, or unplanned aspects of their work, and used this as inspiration in their next steps



Figure 47. *Christine's edge*

(Carole & Christine, focus group, October 4, 2012; Sandra, focus group, October 18, 2012). Many of the participants used their positive results as a motivator, and acknowledged that seeing results as they progressed created anticipation in between

the art making sessions (Sandra & Natalie, focus group, October 18, 2012; Christine, focus group, October 11, 2012).

Success or Failure

"My tablecloth was fucked up in the beginning [...] and that result could've really discouraged me, but I just told myself, I'm going to find another way to do it [...] I'm happy with the rest, so I'll find a way to fix it [...] The fact that the results are good, I know that encourages me, but when the results are bad, I'm encouraged to find a different solution" (Christine, focus group, October 4, 2012).

One of the most noted things that came out of our discussions was the effect that perceived success or failure at any given task had on the outcome of the work, the self-perception of the artist, and the atmosphere in the room. I was surprised to find



Figure 48. *Carole's planet*

that students were learning to alter their “mistakes” to make them a positive (Carole, Christine & Natalie, focus group, October 4, 2012; Carole, focus group, October 11, 2012). They were unanimous in feeling that as they experienced their perceived success, both as a group and on their own, they were encouraged to continue and this in turn inspired them to push their ideas further (Carole, Christine & Natalie, focus group, October 4, 2012; Sandra, focus group, October 18, 2012).



Figure 49. *Sandra's stencils*

“Now it's onward to other surprises of my hidden talents” (Sandra, journal entry, October 18, 2012)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The notion of safe space, as it is addressed here, refers to a psychological, emotional and atmospheric space of comfort and ease, that was constructed through the development of confidence in, and trust between students as well as between students and teacher, in this particular community art education program.

One of the topics that came up in the data was the notion that students felt more comfortable when I took a role of authority in the classroom, and asserted myself as the teacher by owning the curriculum and having an in depth knowledge of the methods



Figure 50. *Louise's stencil*

being taught (Carole & Christine,

focus group, October 11, 2012) as well as insisting on mutual respect in the classroom, and putting myself forward as a mediator in times of conflict (Carole & Marie Ange, focus group, October 18, 2012). bell hooks (2010) substantiates this concept in her work on teaching critical thinking by proclaiming that if we can "think of safety as knowing how to cope in situations of risk, then we open up the possibility that we can be safe even in situations where there is disagreement and even conflict (p.87)."

In the context of community art education, creating a 'safe space', or a space where students feel confident letting their guard down, enhances their ability to think and express themselves more freely, in turn opening them up to



Figure 51. *Sandra's dragonfly*

weeks progressed, they really began to feel supported by me, and by their fellow students, and that this really allowed them to push their work further than they had thought possible (Sandra & Natalie, focus group, October 18, 2012).

hear and contemplate new ideas, and new ways of seeing (Aprill & Townsell, 2007). Finding the space in where we can build trust, most notably with more vulnerable populations, and establish a sense of true community will foster the development of artistic skills and allow an artistic sense of identity to emerge amongst participants (Clover, 2011). The participants in this project expressed that as the

The development of safe space, and a trusting environment in the community art education classroom depends on a concerted effort put forth by the educator to ensure that all participants feel comfortable, protected and valued. Stephanie Springgay (2010) teaches us that to build community in our

classrooms, we must favor classrooms that foster listening and critical dialogue. I feel for this to be the case we must first begin by developing the practice of a caring teacher¹³ (hooks, 2003). With the participants in the Lise Watier Pavilion art program, I was able to explore how to begin to develop such a practice, and in turn, such a space.

It was clear that the physical environment was the place to begin – proper lighting, room to breathe, and different work areas that met the individual needs, both physical and emotional, of each student. Students needed to feel a sense of privacy in the group, in order to concentrate and feel ready to make art. Limiting the amount of non-participating visitors was paramount in creating this type of atmosphere. Students were bothered by conversation and chatter while they were creating, so ensuring that the noise level was kept to a minimum, and outsider conversations were masked by the playing of relatively soft, nondescript music that had limited lyrics and wasn't outwardly recognizable by the students. A impromptu mid class break brought forth by the serving of tea was appreciated and allowed students a chance to gain perspective on their work, as well as check out some of their peers' work. This also added to the laid back atmosphere in the space.

¹³ bell hooks (2003) describes the caring teacher as one who “allow students to embrace a world of knowing that is always subject to change and challenge” (p. 92). She claims that “teachers who do the best work are always willing to serve the needs of their students” (p. 83).

In terms of participation, students were encouraged to be autonomous, and to get involved in the class' activities. Asking students to work in pairs aided in the forming of bonds between certain participants, which remained a constant throughout the study¹⁴. Participant suggestions for changes to the course plans, the space or the atmosphere were received with enthusiasm.

Regarding motivational materials, the introduction of the instructors art practice proved to bring the group closer together and encourage an environment of mutual sharing and trust. In general, students preferred motivational materials in the form of books, video or tangible art works. Photocopies were not as well received.

With respect to teacher attributes, students found the following traits



Figure 52. *Sandra's butterfly*

contributed to their ability to perform well in the course: easygoing, relaxed, knowledgeable, confident, positive, open-minded, stimulating, encouraging, calm, resourceful, transparent, inspired, passionate, inviting, friendly, conscientious, compassionate,

respectful, and not severe or intimidating.

¹⁴ It should be noted that students chose their own partners.

Students felt the demonstrations should be simple and explained well. I found, in terms of the timing of the class, that as long as the participants were inspired and engulfed in their work, the class could last anywhere between two and three hours comfortably.

In order to stimulate anticipation for the upcoming art lessons, I would give a brief introduction at the end of each workshop. This allowed the participants a chance to reflect on and gather inspiration for the next step. Students were encouraged, not only by myself, but by the other participants in the group, to continue and push themselves further. They found themselves motivated not only by positive results, but due to their investment in the project, they were also motivated to find solutions when things didn't go as planned.



Figure 53. *Marie Ange's final piece*

SIGNIFICANCE

The study of safe space has been conducted in many different aspects in the field of education, focusing most frequently on minority, or at risk groups, such as women, LGBTQ, people of color, and people from underprivileged backgrounds. Studies have tended to focus on the teacher/educator's perspective of safe space, and seldom equate the notion of safe space with its ramifications on learning. Although there are some studies done in art-based environments, few are done in a community-based visual arts context. The purpose of this study was to find concrete methods to create safe space in a community art education environment. The findings are meant to assist or add to the community art educator's efforts in creating an environment in which their ever changing student base can feel comfortable developing their art making process and producing significant works of art. Creating a safe space within the community art making classroom will enable students and educators to grow together, and develop an environment which enables them to explore deeper meaning in their art making, and feel comfortable experimenting with new art techniques and mediums. This study will be beneficial to new as well as seasoned community art educators in the conscious development of safe space in the art class room, enabling them to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages their students to create without fear of reprisal, as well as develop an authentic sense of community in their classrooms, empowering students to take part in both the art learning, making and sharing processes.

REFERENCES

- Al-Amin, J. & Nasir, N.S. (2006). Creating identity-safe spaces on college campuses for Muslim students. *Change*, 38(2), 22-27.
- Andrews, S. S., Saemundsdottir, S., & Stokrocki, M. (2004). The role of art for homeless women and survivors of domestic violence. *Visual Arts Research*, 30(1), 73-82.
- Aprill, A. & Townsell, R. (2007). The arts as an occasion for collective adult learning as authentic community development. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 116, 51-63.
- Barrett, B.J. (2010). Is "safety" dangerous? A critical examination of the classroom as safe space. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1). Retrieved from: http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cjsotl_rcacea/vol1/iss1/9
- Batsleer, J.R. (2008). *Informal learning in youth work*. SAGE Publications. Retrieved 15 November 2011, from <http://0-lib.myilibrary.com/mercury.concordia.ca?ID=233719>
- Boost Rom, R (1998). 'Safe spaces': Reflections on an educational metaphor. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 30(4), 397-408.
- Bayles, D. & Orland, T. (1993). *Art & fear: Observations on the perils (and rewards) of artmaking*. United States of America: Image Continuum Press.
- Braganza, C. (2012). *Marriage and children*. Retrieved from <http://www.picturetrail.com/sfx/album/view/518757>
- Broyles, J. (2011, February 2). *DIY round tablecloth* [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.sewhomegrown.com/2011/02/diy-round-tablecloth.html>
- Buck, G. & Trauth-Nare, A. (2011). Using reflective practice to incorporate formative assessment in a middle school science classroom: A participatory action research study. *Educational Action Research*, 19(3), 379-398.
- Clover, D. (2007). Feminist aesthetic practice of community development: The case of myths and mirrors community arts. *Community Development Journal*, 42(4), 512-522.
- Cole, A.L. & Knowles, J.G. (2001). *Lives in context: The art of life history research*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

CTV Montreal (2010). Long-term housing centre for women inaugurated. Retrieved from: http://montreal.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20101213/MTL_housing_101213/20101213/CTV%20Movie:%20IT'S%20A%20WONDERFUL%20LIFE

Fox, C. (2007). From transaction to transformation: (En)countering white heteronormativity in “safe spaces.” *College English*, (69)5, 496-511.

Freedman, E. (2002). *No turning back: The history of feminism and the future of women*. New York: Ballantine books.

Groen, J & Kawalilak, C. (2006). Creating community: A ‘new’ faculty perspective. *Organization Development Journal*, 24(1), 57-67.

Guiragossian, J.J. (2009). *Making art and teaching art: The impact of art workshops on secondary art teachers* (Master’s thesis). Retrieved on November 5, 2012 from <http://gradworks.umi.com/1481618.pdf>

Hagen, J.L. (1987). Gender and homelessness. *Social work*, 32(4), 312-316.

Hennick, M., Hutter, I. & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative research methods*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Hockings, Christine (2011). Hearing voices, creating spaces: The craft of the ‘artisan teacher’ in a mass higher education system. *Critical Studies in Education*, 52(2), 191-205.

Holley, L. & Steiner, S. (2005). Safe space: Student perspectives on classroom environment. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 41(1), 49 -64.

hooks, b. (2010). *Teaching critical thinking: Practical wisdom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*. Great Britain: Routledge.

hooks, b. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Toronto, On: Between the Lines.

Hunter, M.A. (2008). Cultivating the art of safe space, Research in drama education. *The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 13(1), 5-21.

Kindon, S., Pain, R. & Kesby, M. (2007). *Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation and place*. Taylor & Francis. Retrieved 19 November 2011, from <http://0-lib.myilibrary.com/mercury.concordia.ca?ID=110231>

- Lenon, S. (2000). Living on the edge: Women, poverty and homelessness in Canada. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 20(3), 123-126.
- Mayo, C. (2010). Incongruity and provisional safety: Thinking through humor. *Studies in philosophy and education*, 29(6), 509 – 52.
- Maue, J. (2008). Fiber...Retrieved from <http://www.joettamaue.com/mixed%20media/lovely/index2.html>
- McRae, D. (2006). *Make it real: Participatory action research with adult learners*. Vancouver, BC: Research in Practice in Adult Literacy.
- Mills, G.E. (2007). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Perkes, G. (2012). *Mastering the art of longarm quilting: 40 original designs step by step instructions takes you from novice to expert*. Lafayette, CA: C&T Publishing.
- Redmond, M. (2010). Safe space oddity: Revisiting critical pedagogy. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 30(1), 1-14.
- Selbie, J. (2006). Fall landscape gallery. Retrieved from <http://home.interhop.net/jselbie/html/fall.html>
- Springgay, S. (2010). Knitting as an aesthetic of civic engagement: Re-conceptualizing feminist pedagogy through touch. *Feminist Teacher*, 20(2), 111-123.
- Tosi, A. (2005). Re-Housing and social reintegration of homeless people: A case study from Milan. *Innovation*, 18(2), 183-190.
- Townsend, M. (2010). [Photograph of Lise Watier leaving the Lise Watier Pavilion]. *The Montreal Gazette*. Retrieved from <http://www.montrealgazette.com/news/montreal/Video+Lise+Watier+Pavilion/3971564/story.html>
- Toynton, R. (2006). 'Invisible other': Understanding safe spaces for queer learners and teachers in adult education. *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 38 (2), 178-194.
- Yerichuk, D. (2010). Learning as a troubling prospect: Considerations of safety and risk in community singing. *Canadian Music Educator*, 52(2), 20-24.

Appendix A - Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *Developing an Atmosphere Conducive to Creativity*

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research being conducted by Jennifer Wicks, Department of Art Education, Concordia University. jenwicks@yahoo.ca
514-791-0950

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is as follows ... This research is to be used primarily for Jennifer Wicks' Master's thesis. Jennifer wishes to investigate how community art educators can work to develop safe space, or an atmosphere conducive to creative art making in a community art program. Over the course of 6-8 art classes we will create works of art, to be displayed in our own apartments. Following each art class I will participate in a short focus group, along with the other participants. I am aware that the focus group will be audio recorded and that there will be photographs taken of my artwork. I understand that I will be encouraged to keep a journal of my experience, and that this journal will also be used as data for the study. I am also aware that the information and photos collected and analyzed, will be used for educational purposes, ie. conference presentations and journal publications.

B. PROCEDURES

I understand that the research will be conducted at the Lise Watier Pavillion, in the art class given by Jennifer Wicks. Participants will create works of art in the class of 2-3 hours each, once a week for up to 2 months. I understand that my works of art may be displayed in and around the Lise Watier Pavillion, or in the participants' apartments. I understand that photos may be taken of my artwork. I have the right to refuse to have any photos taken of my artwork. I recognize that I have the right to not participate and also to withdraw my consent to be part of this study (up until Jennifer begins the final write up of the project) without negative consequences. In order to withdraw my consent I will speak to Jennifer to let her know I will no longer be participating in the research part of the project.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

I understand that there are no foreseen risks in the participation the study. I understand, however, that if for any reason I experience discomfort, there is a social worker on site to help out. Should I feel any discomfort, the social worker will be act as a resource for me, in order to address any issues that have arisen.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences. I understand that I can also choose to withdraw any data collected from me at any point (up until Jennifer begins the final write up of the project) such as art work, journal entries, and any verbal/recorded data collected during the focus group sessions. I understand that if I chose to withdraw that none of this data will be used in the research findings.

- I understand that my participation in this study is by choice, and I choose to be represented in the findings by
 - Pseudonym
 - Real Name
 - Anonymous

I wish my artwork to be credited by

- Pseudonym
- Real Name
- Anonymous

I consent to having my artwork photographed

- yes
- no

I consent to having my focus group contributions audio-recorded

- yes
- no

I consent to writing journal entries about the class, and having them used towards the study's data

- yes
- no

- I understand that the data from this study may be published.
- I understand that the information and photos collected and analyzed will be used for educational purposes, ie. conference presentations and journal publications.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator –
Linda Szabad-Smyth, Department of Art Education, Concordia, University, 514-848-2424 ext. 4644, lsmyth@alcor.concordia.ca

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor of Concordia University, at 514.848.2424.x 7481 or ethics@alcor.concordia.ca".