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# Pathways to Transformative Learning: Disrupting Hierarchies of Gender, Class, and Race through Creative Expression and Artistic Imaginings

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**From the Editor's Desk:**

# Pathways to Transformative Learning: Disrupting Hierarchies of Gender, Class, and Race through Creative Expression and Artistic Imaginings

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"To tap into imagination is to become able to break with what is supposedly fixed and finished, objectively and independently real. It is to see beyond what the imaginer has called normal or 'common-sensible' and to carve out orders in new experience"(Maxine Greene, 1995, p. 19).

Imagination can be a catalyst to creativity, personal agency and social transformation. The contributions in this special themed double volume explore imaginative and creative potentialities in diverse learning contexts. For Greene (1995), "imagination is what… makes empathy possible" p.3). The arts (drama, visual art, storytelling, poetry, dance, music, and so on) can open multilayered points of entry for dialogue and transformative change. Eisner (2002) explains that the arts can lead to an exploration of "our own interior landscapes," providing "resources for experiencing a range of responsive capacities" (p. 11). The classroom can be viewed as an artist's atelier where educators and students are co-researchers, co-learners, designers, artists, and text makers. Art also has a restorative and healing function that can lead to greater understanding, compassion, and a deeper level of learning (Scher, 2007). Collectively, many of the articles in this special volume highlight the way that pedagogies of hope and possibility are rooted in the lived experiences of learners.



Eugene Hamel (1845-1932), *Clementine Picard (Akonessen*), 1906, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, Quebec City, Canada. Public Domain. By Eugène Hamel - Own work / Wilfredor / 2019-01-06, Public Domain. Creative Commons, Share-Alike International, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=75859077

In her groundbreaking book *Wendat women's arts*, Annette W. de Stecher (2022) explains that Indigenous women artists like Marguerite Vincent Lawinonké helped develop and secure the economy of the Huron-Wendat community in Quebec by teaching the skill of bead and quill work; as a result, a successful local economy developed around moccasin and snowshoe production and by 1879, de Stecher explains that at least sixty of the 76 families in Wendake (Huron Wendake Nation, La Haute-Saint-Charles, Quebec) made a living from local arts and crafts production. The Huron-Wendat and other Indigenous women had the skills and the tools pre-colonial contact to create works of art in pottery and textiles. Post-contact, de Stecher writes that these artisans and artists were able to adapt and integrate new techniques and embroidery stiches from their interactions with the settlers.



Unknown Huron Artist, 1850. *Huron Moccasins* [Native tanned skin, wool, cotton, silk, and glass]. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, NY, United States. Public Domain.
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/319047

The Wendat-Huron art reflected Indigenous cultural beliefs and a cosmology where non-human beings had a spirit and importance to life and wellbeing. de Stecher 2022) writes that in the Wendat worldview, "everything is animate and possesses a soul" (p. 35). Through oral traditions and ancestral knowledge, the Huron-Wendat women artists transformed material from the land into beautiful and useful objects. The symbols and motifs evident in the intricate embroidery were visual metaphors that "embodied the spiritual and animate qualities of their animal and plant sources, as well as family relationships and connections to the land" (de Stecher, 2022, p.16). The hourglass was a symbol of the sky world while the spiral symbol represented the underworld. Colours such as white and green were associated with life, vibrancy, knowledge, and cognitive powers while black related to death, mourning, and isolation. Red was associated with intense experience, emotion, and animation. Strawberries or "tichionte" (translated to mean "stars") were thought to be "heaven sent" and were connected to healing as well as spiritual and physical renewal, transformation, and rebirth. Blue represented the vast skies as well as purity and clarity. The divine and the earthly were interconnected. de Stecher notes that the myths of creation, and the legends passed down through generations all find their way into the symbols and motifs of animals, plants, trees, and the cosmos in the Wendat women's art:

> The Wendat creation story presents a worldview in which women were creators, humankind depended on cosmological forces and on the land, and sentient nonhuman persons—animals, plants, and the physical elements of the land—had souls or spirits and protected humans so that they could survive and thrive. Thus it was critically important to

maintain relations with all categories of beings. Women's arts were intermediaries that helped to achieve this aim. Dress embroidered with moose hair and quills connected the wearer with cosmological forces and with the animate natural world. Aataentsic (Sky Woman) was identified with the moon, and her grandson Tsestah, protector of the warriors, was identified with the sun. A pair of men's moccasins worked with rows of half-moons and circles related the wearer to Aataentsic and the Sky World's dome of heaven, as well as to Tsestah and the sun. Women transmitted the belief system through the motifs of their embroidered bark work…"(de Stecher, 2022, p. 3-4).

Artistic visions that inspire, protect and restore the grandeur of nature are more important than ever when we look at a planet in peril and the silence of wildlife and disappearance of the once- vast natural world (Stonechild, 2023). We can be inspired by many traditions of Indigenous art that reflect a cosmic pattern and deeper spiritual meaning within a planetary context. The articles featured in Part One document the way that artistic pedagogies have the potential to "create and sustain transformative power for social change" (Hayes & Yorks, 2007, p. 89). The landscape of emotions and reflective thought processes can be explored through visual art, poetry, storytelling, and embodied learning. Dirkx (2009) describes the emergence of "affective, imaginative, and unconsciously created representations in awareness" in transformative learning processes (Dirkx, 2009, p. 18). When educators integrate alternative pedagogies in varied educational contexts, expansive, enriched, and creative learning opportunities are present.

## Part one

Through qualitative interviews and objects- based research, Darlene Clover and Kathy Sanford conceptualize "the feminist imaginary" as "a way of seeing the world that is ignored or devalued. In their article "Imagining the Feminist Imaginary through Object-Based Research," Clover and Sanford assert that feminist imaginings have the potential to disrupt and transform gender hierarchies and inequities that are "embedded in all our institutions and organized structures" (this volume, p. 21). The authors feature vignettes of women's creative expressions that reflect memories, actions, emotions, and critical insights in personal and professional contexts. Clover and Sanford assert that the feminist imaginary is connected to personal agency and collective engagement. Artwork and artifacts can be a catalyst to creative and deeper level thinking. Citing Ricoeur (1979), Clover & Sanford explain that imagination is a critical cognitive power and that objects such as a painting, sculpture, dress, weavings, jewels, toys, and "everyday art" tell a powerful story about women's experiences. Moreover, each woman's visual art and personal story represents a "site of struggle" as well as a site of self-examination, critical insight, and a deeper level of learning. Clover and Sanford explain that too often, women's voices have been negated and that "the challenge, of course, is not that women lack imagination but that they have been excluded in imagining the world" (this volume, p. 22). To this point Jennifer Higgie (2021) writes:

> The museums of the world are filled with paintings of women—by men. Ask around and you'll find that most people struggle to name even one female artist from before the twentieth century. Yet women have always made art, even though, over the centuries, every discouragement was—and, as in many ways, still is—placed in their way (p.3).

In "Survivor tales: Feminist graphics bridging consciousness raising into reality," Kimberly Crosswell writes that "to assume that we live in a postfeminist word where patriarchy, sexism and misogyny supposedly no longer apply is to live a lie of privilege" (this volume. p. 60). Misogyny and gender-based violence impacts women psychologically, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Economic advancement, capacity building, self-realization, and talent development are eroded. Crosswell explores two feminist comic representations of violence against women that are grounded in the lived experiences of artists Sabrina Jones and Rebecca Migdal in the graphic anthology *World War 3*. Vivid illustrations from the comics complement her analysis. Integrating the observations of Susan Sontag, Crosswell highlights the way in which the visual and the written words inspire empowerment and empathy. This article demonstrates the unique potential of radical comics "to engage in their own consciousness-raising journeys, starting from wherever they may find themselves in relation to challenging feminist subjects" (Crossell, this volume, p. 60). Visual storytelling establishes a unique

relationship between the artist and read; self-directed, collaborative, and potentially transformative learning experiences can emerge.

In "Exploring women's transformative learning and community building through practicing martial arts to disrupt gendered and hetero-patriarchal norms," Emily Dobrich explores the connection between women's martial arts and the development of self-agency, community building, and gender justice. She explains that personal agency and empowerment emerge when women recognize their physical strengths and emotional capabilities. Dobrich integrates the literature on feminist new materialism, martial arts, gender studies, situated cognition, and transformative learning theory. Embodied learning through martial arts activities "establishes a connection between mind, body, and soul, and is conceptualized as a creative process rooted in artistic ways of knowing"(this volume, p. 63). Dobrich asserts that feelings, emotions, and affect can be important sources of knowledge and insight. She emphasizes that participation in martial arts may help some women transform internalized messages and self-narratives of perceived frailty and weakness to self-narratives of personal agency, confidence, and strength. Transformating self-narratives is a crucial step in standing against toxic patriarchal systems. Dobrich's article extends the lens of transformative learning theory in creative ways within a context of gender justice.

Emotions are also an important source of knowledge and creative inspiration. Emotions, writes Dei (2002), are a "source of human energy, information and influence…When trusted and respected, emotional intelligence provides a deeper, more fully formed understanding of oneself and those around us." (p.125). In "Sharing lived experiences: Women in academia remembering, reclaiming, and retelling stories of feminist imaginaries," Bev Hayward exemplifies the way creative writing can be used as a method of inquiry that can lead to social and gender justice. Hayward integrates a variety of artistic ways of knowing that include photobooks, poetry, reflections, embroidery, creative writing, and visual art. This article highlights the importance of active listening, empathy, community building, and creative expression as being vital to significant personal learning. Hayward writes that "it is important to remember, it is essential to search for what future (re) searching might become, as we imagine different ways of writing stories, telling stories, imagining a feminist aesthetic, as talents are developed in creative practices" (this volume, p. 79). New spaces of learning bring creativity, energy, and inspiration as women create their own tapestries of narratives. Hayward's ideas have implications for innovative teaching across educational levels and disciplines.

In "The feminine outsider: Resistance through the feminist imaginary," Maxine Chester describes the feminist imaginary as "a hotbed of strangulated voices, fractured body joints, and broken crushed minds." In her article, Chester explores gender stereotypes, tropes, and representations of older women. Too often gendered and misogynist tropes of older women are uncritically accepted in social spheres—work, mental and physical health care and education. Through visual art, Chester explores three tropes of older women—sick and in a state of decline, sexless and undesirable, and as the outsider being "othered." Chester demonstrates how creative art practices, and the feminist imaginary can disrupt oppressive stereotypes so that more empowered ways of being can emerge. She writes that "the feminist imaginary has given me a freedom through which to explore ideas and theories manifested in "Reach" and "The Pink Bonnet" (this volume, p. 99). Resistance through transformative visual art can be a catalyst to personal agency and social change.

In "The weaving is us: Decolonizing the tools for the feminist futures," Claudia Diaz-Diaz, Dorothea Harris, and Thea Harris explore the teachings of Indigenous women thinkers and artists within the context of decolonial pedagogies and gender justice. These researchers frame Coast Salish weaving "as an epistemic tool and aesthetic language for future-making that acts upon us as a mirror of our history and an antidote against the supremacy of rationality" (this volume, p. 103). Their research highlights the importance of artistic weaving as a foundation that can build alliances between Indigenous and settler women. Diaz Diaz, Harris, and Harris explain that an interrogation of the role of settler colonialism in heteropatriarchy is essential if transformative change is to occur. The researchers write that the weavings themselves are animated and are imbued with a spiritual energy that transcends time constraints. The designs and symbols in a weaving include ancestral knowledge and wisdom.

Energy is channeled to imagining a decolonial future. "The art and symbolism in the weaving became a literal metaphor for the weaving together of past, present, and future and the weaving together of a feminist collective" (this volume, p. 108). This article speaks to the power and possibility of imaginative learning and artistic expression.

Elliot Eisner (2002) writes that "all art is in part about the world in which it emerged" (p. 198). In "Conducting arts-based research with rural women in Columbia, South America: A Tool for Community Empowerment and Gender Justice" Lady Johanna Peñaloza-Farfán and Irma A. Flores-Hinojos explore the transformative potential of arts-based research with rural women in Columbia, South America. These researchers envision a dynamic learning climate where women's voices are heard and where their dreams, capacities, and talents are realized. The potential of the arts as a catalyst for community empowerment and gender justice is reflected in the varied examples provided throughout their article. Personal agency and collective action are expressed in the production of handicrafts, food, theatrical performances, and other community activities. Peñaloza-Farfán and Flores-Hinojos write that "art is used as a tool to highlight reflections around the history of the territory, including environmental care and complex community volumes" (this volume, p. 111). Key themes that emerged through the women's creative expressions included: conceptions of women, sustainability, forgiveness, peace, and harvest. These themes were connected to the women's roles and responsibilities in the community. The women's experiences reflect dimensions of transformative learning processes which include self-awareness, self-examination, dialogue, perspectives taking, creative self-expression, and working individually and collectively to transcend oppressive patriarchal hierarchies. This study echoes the observation from Hayes and Yorks (2007) who write that "the arts seem to create this kind of liberating space by assisting people in seeing past the psychological, social, and culturally imposed boundaries of their life worlds" (p.91). They further note:

> The arts promote alternative, and powerful, methods for bridging boundaries and enabling learners to expand their experience by accessing those of highly diverse others. The arts are also a way of bringing into consciousness, and finding expression for, experiences and insights that heretofore a learner has not had the capacity to express (p.96).

In their article "Examining feminist pedagogy from the perspective of transformative learning: Do race and gender matter in feminist classrooms?" Mitsunori Misawa and Juanita Johnson Bailey explore the potential and limits of feminist pedagogies in higher education context. Feminist pedagogies encourage inclusion, diversity, motivation, gender and racial equity. Misawa and Johnson Bailey write that "the classroom is rarely a safe space for People of Color, as students or teachers, because the classroom is merely a microcosm of our larger society and is therefore representative of the hierarchical systems that order the nonacademic world" (this volume, p. 123). Using their own subjective experiences as an Asian male-pre-tenured professor and a Black woman tenured full professor, the researchers used transformative learning theory as an interpretive lens to illuminate teaching and learning interchanges. Teaching logs/journal entries, critical incidents, and other reflective notes were used to track students' perceptions and experiences of the researchers' teaching. Misawa and Johnson Bailey found that efforts to encourage democratic discourse, self-examination, and perspectives taking through readings and discussion do not necessarily result in a "paradigm shift in thinking" to more inclusive meaning structures (Mezirow, 2012).

While a climate to work toward transformative learning can be established, it is the *readiness* of the learner to embark on significant personal learning (potential transformative learning) that warrants more careful analysis (Cranton, 2016; Taylor, 2007). For example, learners do not necessarily possess emotional and social intelligence skills such as empathy, awareness, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation (Goleman, 1995). These skills are often viewed as vital precursors to transformative learning. Misawa and Johnson Bailey found that many adult learners in their classes were not open to diverse and alternative teaching styles, curriculum content, and learning strategies. Some students were openly disrespectful; some strongly objected to the readings and the teaching style of the professors. Their research findings support the assertion that "students who see professors who do not fit the accepted stereotype as inferior and judge professors with different positionalities as 'liabilities' (Baker and Copp. 1997, this volume, p. 124). Misawa and Johnson Bailey further discuss

entrenched discriminatory perspectives and existing systemic barriers that impede teaching-learning dynamics. Important insights into the potential and limits of transformative learning theory are highlighted in this timely article.

"Teaching for creativity and fostering creative learning all involve an elevated level of pedagogical sensitivity and skillfulness in being alert to the meld of environment, learner engagement and experience, moment, domain, and so on, as well as adopting appropriate strategies to support creative learning engagement. To be able to do this implies a level of personal artistry, whatever the context (Anna Craft, 2005, p.49).

## Part two

A number of the articles in this volume explore innovative pedagogies and the importance of learning contexts that nurture imagination and creativity. Creativity involves "shaping new knowledge" through multiple points of entry or interdisciplinary approaches where two or more disciplines are brought together to form new knowledge (Craft, 2005, p.37). In "#creativeworkplace: a virtual ethnographic case study of creative climates in an innovative London design agency," Melanie Smith provides valuable insights into the importance of creating spaces and places where innovative thinking can occur. Her paper explores important questions that include: How inspirational and inviting are the architectural and interior spaces for neurodivergent learners? To what extent are students' unique individual potential impacted by the physical climates of their classroom? What connection is there between school and classroom architecture and wellbeing? To what extent do our learning places and spaces encourage a sense of inclusion, belonging, and imagination? In reflecting on her own journeys of learning, Smith writes "the climate I found myself in always felt conducive to my creativity and enabled my mind to wander freely enough beyond the conditioned self" (this volume, p. 137). In 2020, Smith conducted a virtual ethnographic case study to understand how four creative professionals responded to their workspaces as a central phenomenon to the creative climate being studied. Smith explores the factors that hindered or enhanced the creative process. Looking at the way that architectural and interior spaces impact mood, emotion, creativity, and motivation have important practical implications for educators and educational program planners. A creative climate refers to "an attribute of the organization, a conglomerate of attitudes, feelings, and behaviors which characterize the organizational life" (Ekvall, 1996, p. 105 cited in Smith, this volume). Smith provides vital insights into key dimensions of creativity, learning, and wellbeing.

In "Artistic, visual thought processes supporting high achievement," Don Ambrose applies an interdisciplinary lens to highlight the way visual-spatial thinking can enrich critical thinking, creative expression, and transdisciplinary learning. Integrating artistic ways of knowing with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEAM) can lead to new possibilities for creative design in many professions. Ambrose challenges educators to think of the promise and possibility of visual thinking and creative expression at all levels of education. Visual imagery, metaphor, symbol, juxtaposition, and narrative can be a catalyst to imaginative engagement which, in turn, can lead to self-examination and expansive understandings of experience and knowledge (Egan, 2012; Eisner, 2002). Ambrose presents an intriguing array of visual examples to complement his observations.

In "The experiences of three teachers using body biographies for multimodal literature study," Cynthia M. Morawski and Jessica Sokolowki highlight written- visual modalities of learning in English language arts education. Using response journals and audio-recorded conversations, these researchers explore the way three secondary English language arts teachers used body biographies to encourage creative learning with texts such as William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Othello* and John Wyndham's science fiction novel *The Chrysalids*. After drawing a life-size outline of a body shape, students can draw specific colors, symbols, and quotations that illuminate a character's personality. "The possibilities for portraying both internal and external factors that shape the ongoing emergence of characterization in a work are endless" (Morawski and Sokolowski, this volume, p. 161). Visual thinking and multimodal literacy development exemplify the potential of creative and imaginative

teaching. The authors conclude that "the three teachers appreciated the multiple means of expression which expanded their students' capacity to analyze a character in preparation for writing a formal essay" (this volume). Morawski and Sokolowski highlight the creative potential of multimodal literacies and the process of transmediation which supports learners' opportunities for reflective, imaginative, and critical thinking.

In" Tides that Connect: A Photo Documentary in Haiku about a Writing Teacher conference themed Teaching in a Tidal Space: Navigating the Ebb and Flow of Student Learning," Helen Lepp Friesen highlights the value of art, poetry, contemplation, and creativity. Lepp Friesen documents her experiences in the form of haiku poetry and photography. Her publication emphasizes the importance of educators' own professional development as a journey of learning. The conference provided Lepp Friesen with an opportunity to learn new strategies and pedagogical tools that she will implement in her own writing courses.

A close observation into the psychology of teaching and learning highlights that role that emotion and motivation play in learning. Divergent thinking, an openness to new possibilities, intrinsic motivation, curiosity, imaginative thinking, a spirit of play and adventure, and problem finding are components of creativity (Sternberg, 2019). Interdisciplinary thinking and integrating different disciplines to develop greater depth and breadth to theory, research, and practice are also vital. We can apply these ideas to teaching and learning contexts throughout all educational levels. In "Emotions Matter in Learning: The Development of a Training Package for Teachers in Higher Education," Joanne Irving-Walton, Douglas P. Newton, and Lynn D. Newton weave dimensions of transformative learning theory in developing a professional development training resource for teachers of adult learners in higher education. Their research explores the way in which educators conceptualize and understand the role emotions play in adult learning dynamics.

Theorists like Mezirow (2012) and Taylor and Cranton (2012) assert that educators can create a climate for deeper level learning by encouraging reflective and critical thinking, dialogue, perspectives taking, and authentic and experiential learning opportunities. Dirkx (2002; 2008; 2012) has written extensively about the potential of emotions and creative expression as a way of knowing; embodied learning poetry, music, and visual art are "alternative languages" that can encourage self-examination, critical thinking, dialogue, and collaborative learning. Emotions impact thinking processes, motivation, and memory and engaging emotions through creative expression and imaginative learning can lead to new ways of understanding. The ideas presented by Irving-Walton, Newton, and Newton have important implications for teaching and learning in higher education. Learning involves not only the development of new knowledge or problem -solving skills but rather, learning involves a dramatic paradigm shift in the way individuals feel, think, and ultimately act.

In "Developing Talent Not Privilege: An Exploration of the Vulnerable-resilient Vessel with the Everyday Study Journey at an English Arts University," Bev Hayward presents a personal narrative that highlights the importance of access, opportunity, and the importance of encouraging talent in all learners. Hayward asserts that talent is often overlooked in pedagogies of neoliberalism that value competition, exclusion, quantifiable outcomes, rigid conception of "success." The community and context that conceptualize talent is complex in university settings, for example, where study skills support workers help talented students who have been marginalized and disadvantaged. Integrating her own poetry and visual art, Hayward reflects on her own personal journey of healing, creative expression, and transformation. She writes: "I lay bare small pieces of my story to you, the reader, as I weave the intersection of vulnerability and resilience with a neurodiverse (dyslexic), working class learner identity" (this volume, p. 194). Hayward's life experiences helped her develop deep empathy for the learners she continues to work with as a study skills tutor in a university. Hayward advocates for greater inclusion and communities of support within educational systems (at all levels). Her article explores innovative practices and learning strategies that can build on the creative potentialities of all learners. Mentoring, coaching, creative programs, and individualized educational planning can assist in maximizing learner potential and talent.

In "The Implementation of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model in Italy: A Three-Year Study," Lara Milan, Sally M. Reis, Sukru Murad Cebeci, and Paola Maraschi describe the positive outcomes emerging from a three-year implementation of the Joseph Renzulli's (1976/2021) Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) in the first Italian implementation of the model. The SEM highlights the importance of understanding and building upon learners' unique interests, learning styles, motivational capacities, talents, and skills. Teaching and learning strategies as well as curricular resources provide rich resources that encourage success for all learners. This article also describes two important assessment tools that can help facilitate learning and creativity: The Renzulli SEM profiler which helps identify individual students' strengths, interests, learning styles, and preferred modes of expression. (https://renzullilearning.com) and the Cebeci Test of Creativity (CTC). The CTC can help learners explore their own creative capacities such as fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. Milan, Reis, Cebeci, and Maraschi provides practical applications for supporting, advancing, and enriching learning potential and creativity.

"In Teaching strategies and the role of creativity in gifted education: Perceptions of students, families, and education professionals," Fernanda Hellen Ribeiro Piske, Kristina Henry Collins, and Tatiana Cassia Nakano present a qualitative study that explores the perspectives on dimensions of a creativity and creative learning spaces from the viewpoint of gifted students, mothers, teachers, and principals. Reflective, authentic, and experiential learning opportunities can tap into learners' creative and imaginative learning capacities. Drawing from theorists such as Joseph Renzulli, Robert J. Sternberg, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, these researchers explore essential characteristics of creativity, giftedness within a context of innovative teaching and learning practices. Piske, Collins, and Nakano write that "projects, robotics, research and challenges, playful and artistic activities" as well as a flexible curriculum can encourage the development of learners' creative potential (this volume, p. 225). Greater communication between all educational stakeholders is also needed. While the researchers' focus is on gifted learners, their study has important implications for inclusive education, creative learning strategies, and the success of all learners.

In "Talent Development at the Voice of Holland," Karin Manuel explores talent identification and talent development in the field of performing arts. Specifically, she explores coaching styles at the Voice of Holland (TVOH). She explains that talent identification and talent development interface and that "transformational coaching" is an essential part of performance coaching and the voice talent development. Manuel explores different perspectives about talent development that involve creative personality traits (e.g. risk taking, intrinsic motivation, persistence, etc.), innate abilities, supportive communities of practice, and skill development. She describes the interpersonal and intrapsychic dynamics of different coaching approaches and their potential impact of coachees. Manuel explains that effective coaching in terms of musical talent development goes beyond "task performance" and focuses more deeply on contextual and psychosocial factors.

In "Understanding stakeholders' attitudes and views on inclusive education has dominated research," Kishi Anderson Leachman used a qualitative single case study with an embedded unit of analysis to explore dimensions of inclusive education of non-teaching stakeholders in a private school in Jamaica. Individual interviews and focus group discussions were used to establish recurring themes and overall findings. Anderson Leachman emphasizes the importance of a strong reciprocal communication between parents, students, teachers, principals, teaching assistants, and school board members if an inclusive learning climate is to thrive. She writes that "an inclusive orientation is the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building a global inclusive society, and achieving education for all" (this volume, p. 253). Her research has important implications for revisioning educational leadership from a transformative "systems" perspective.

In their empirical study that explores the role that public servants play in supporting the emergence of talent environments for young artists, Jacob Nørlem and Nikolaj Stegeager provide important research that will add to the literature about developing strong talent infrastructure across communities. The four organizational markers that Nørlem and Stegeager identified (Organizing,

Strategizing, A license to operate, and creative places) have the potential for the improvement of artistic talent environments. Their study included fieldwork, participant observation, and qualitative interviews with seven public servants from different municipalities in the western part of Jutland (Denmark). The authors write that "across the four organizational markers a new and interesting pattern of interaction emerged in the symmathesies in focus. It was as if the relation between the young artists and the public servants invited a new quality into the relationships. We call this quality the talent steward" (this volume, p. 274). Nølem and Stegeager explore the importance of symmathesy (contextual mutual learning through interaction) and building mutual communities of practice that facilitate creative learning and talent development.

In "The Psychometric Properties of the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking" Süreyya Yörük presents a quantitative study of the psychometric properties of the TTCT. The Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) has been used in education to assess the potentialities of learners. Torrance (1966) developed his test based on J.P. Guildford's (1967) model of intelligence and in particular, Guilford's analysis of convergent and divergent thinking. Traits such as curiosity, imaginative thinking, open mindedness, adaptive flexibility, originality, lateral thinking, an analytical experimentation, and the ability to solve problems are traits and capabilities often associated with creative individuals (Sternberg, 2012; Torrance, 1966/2017). Paul Torrance (1966/1998) measured these skills based on four scales: fluence, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Yörük's detailed analytical study has important implications for psychologists and educational specialists. The participants in his study included 157 second-grade students from a school in northwestern Turkey. Yörük's study also challenges educators to think of teaching and learning strategies that can establish a climate for imaginative and creative thinking. Craft (2005) emphasizes that creativity involves learners in "questioning and challenges; making connections, seeing relationships; envisaging what might be; exploring ideas, keeping options open; and, reflecting critically on ideas, actions, and outcomes" (p. 13).

Academic, social, and emotional skills are vital to encourage, particularly for young adolescent learners. In "Between two worlds: Promoting identity development in middle school," Kenneth J. Reimer interviewed four teachers to better understand the specific strategies they used to engage learners and promote personal and social development. Reimer found that identity development was encouraged with teaching and learning strategies that encouraged introspection and extrospection. Opportunities for students to explore local and global events can help students' cognitive and emotional development. It is through relationship building that teachers can establish trust and meaningful rapport. "Adolescents' socio-emotional health and motivation is highly influenced by the relationships they have with their peers; their relationships with adult figures…become secondary in this development stage" (Carlisle, 2011, p.20 cited in Reimer, this volume, p. 300). Learners at this stage are searching for an identity: "Who am I? Where am I going and Who will I become?" The process of individuation and self-actualization is enriched when teachers have empathy and an awareness of learners' unique life worlds. Building meaningful relationships within a holistic and inclusive learning context takes time and commitment. Reimer's research also cautions against the proliferation of social media forum which can contribute adversely to students' personality and social development. Reimer's article is important in its focus on the psychology of teaching and learning within the context of the middle grades. Implications for creative learning strategies are provided.

It is helpful to situate this kind of "listening" within larger discussions of artistic ways of knowing. Perceptual awareness and the ability to learn from all our senses if vital to creative learning. Thinking like an artist involves close observation and active listening. In "Textiles and Creative Possibilities of Assemblage Thinking in Early Childhood, "Catherine Laura-Dunnington describes the importance of close listening skills in her qualitative research study. Her research provides a critical awareness and insight into textile literacy within the context of sustainability as children are "positioned as saviors of the planet" (this volume, p. 311). In this sociomaterial narrative, Dunnington explores the importance of "assemblage thinking" in early years research that "decenters humans" and foregrounds relationships that children have with everyday objects, nonhuman beings, and

materialities. Based on the findings of a larger study. Dunnington's paper highlights the way creative expression in young children can be encouraged when adults listen deeply to the way children express their ideas and interpret the world around them. She explains that her research is a project in "textile-listening" and that a central focus was given to "the entire engagement of children" (this volume, p. 312). Vivid illustrations of themes from the children's narratives that include *connect, know*, and *perceive* complement Dunnington's analysis.

Federica Liberti's "Dreaming Possibilities: Reshaping Imaginaries with Feminism and Social Change." highlights the potential for educational institutions to be a site of creativity and transformative change. Liberti's own personal journey is complemented with vivid photographs and illustrations.

A tribute to Dr. Joan Freeman and her exceptional life and legacy is written by Sandra Linke.

Collectively, the contributions that form this special volume reflect the potential for creating a more equitable, vibrant, and life affirming future. The embodied arts, visual art, music, dance, and storytelling are forms of knowledge and creative expression that can encourage "pedagogies of hope" (Freire 1992/2021). We need to encourage such innovative pedagogies, particularly in a world that continues to be polarized and fragmented. Creative teaching and mentoring require individual and social imagination. This includes the "continuous creation of new categories, openness to new information, and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective" (Langer, 1997, in Mezirow, 2012, p. 76). The unique contributions in this volume provide many avenues of possibility for re-visioning relationships in teaching and learning across many educational contexts. My appreciation extends to expertise and insight of the peer reviewers who helped with the editorial process. I would like to thank Drs. Darlene Clover and Kathy Sanford from the University of Victoria for their contributions and support with this special volume.

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