Promoting Understanding of Self and Others Through Arts Activities

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Note: **PDFs of these slides** (without the photos) and the accompanying **references handout** are available for download from the OSU Academy of Teaching website, or you can request them from me at **goodyear.24@osu.edu**.

I hope these serve as rich resources for you and will give you many ideas for arts-based identity exploration activities for your students!
Learning Objectives

• **Understand** how arts activities, through engaging people in intrapersonal (internal) and interpersonal dialogue, can promote greater understanding of self and others

• **Experience** a short arts-based identity exploration activity

• **Gain ideas** for identity exploration activities from the arts-based inquiry field

• **Find out** how they can be used in higher education courses and programs, particularly those which emphasize the importance of developing **self-awareness** and **cultural sensitivity**
College Is a Time of Change

- Major **brain development** in the frontal lobes (Blimling, 2013)
- Moving from black-and-white thinking to **more nuanced ways of understanding** and addressing real-world issues
- **Evolving identity** spurred by sociocultural changes in experience
Students’ Evolving Identities

- Growing into adulthood
- Forging career and life goals
- Becoming mature partners in relationships
- Learning how membership in cultural groups impacts personal identity
Students’ Evolving Identities

- Developing more understanding of and empathy toward others with differing cultural backgrounds and experiences
- Becoming active, compassionate citizens in our pluralistic society
Identity Development Theories

• Chickering & Reisser’s (1993) **seven vectors of college student development**

• **Self-authorship** (Baxter Magolda, 1992, 2001, 2009)

• **Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) and Reconceptualized MMDI** (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & Abes, 2013)
Racial identity development:

- **African-American identity development** (Cross, 1991; Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991; Helms, 1993a)
- **White identity development** (Helms, 1993b; Tatum, 1992)
- **Multiracial/multiethnic identity development** (Root, 1990, 1996)
Sleeter & Grant (2009) state:

- “Multicultural Social Justice educators view learning as active, social, and *inextricably entwined with identity development*. . . . [T]hey see learning as a process of constructing knowledge through the interaction of mind and experience” (p. 209)

- “Advocates of Multicultural Social Justice Education recommend that schooling *help students analyze their own lives* in order to *develop their practical consciousness about real injustices in society* and to *develop constructive responses*” (p. 212)
1. How can engaging in the arts (visual artmaking, creative writing, music, theatre/improv, video creation, movement/dance, etc.) help undergraduate students explore and develop their personal and cultural identities?
2. How can artmaking, reflection, and sharing help students understand and develop empathy not only with themselves but with others with differing cultural backgrounds, experiences, and values?
# Four Ways of Knowing

Heron’s Model of Modes of Psyche and Ways of Knowing (1992)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modes of Psyche:</th>
<th>Ways of Knowing:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Affective (emotional)</td>
<td>1 Experiential</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Imaginal</td>
<td>2 Presentational (expressive)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Conceptual</td>
<td>(arts &amp; creative writing)</td>
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<td>4 Practical</td>
<td>3 Propositional (logical/explanatory)</td>
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<td>4 Practical</td>
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Knowing Through Collaborating

Heron & Reason’s Participatory Inquiry Paradigm (1997)

Creating knowledge is a **collaborative** process:

1. **Intrapsychically (internally)** through collaboration between the “voices” of our affective, imaginal, conceptual, and practical modes of psyche and their unique ways of knowing, both on conscious and subconscious levels; and
Knowing Through Collaborating

Heron & Reason’s Participatory Inquiry Paradigm (1997)

Creating knowledge is a **collaborative** process:

2. **Interpersonally and collectively** through dialogue, sharing, and creating and remembering together using these same modes of psyche and ways of knowing
Yorks & Kasl’s Taxonomy for Using Expressive Ways of Knowing to Foster Transformative Learning (2006) (based on Heron, 1992)

1. Intrapersonally (internally):
   - We encode and remember **experiential knowledge** via creating stories, images, etc. (**presentational/expressive/artistic knowledge**)
   - Through revisiting these stories, we can reaccess our experiences and learn more conceptually from them (**propositional/conceptual/logical knowledge**)
Expressive Knowing as a Bridge

Yorks & Kasl’s Taxonomy for Using Expressive Ways of Knowing to Foster Transformative Learning (2006) (based on Heron, 1992)

2. Interpersonally:

• By immersing ourselves in other people’s stories and artistic creations, we can to some extent relive their experiences, which can help us develop understanding of and empathy for their differing points of view.

Yorks & Kasl have used Heron’s 1992 model, Heron & Reason’s participatory inquiry paradigm (1997), and their own taxonomy as a basis for facilitating transformative learning through the arts (Yorks & Kasl, 2002, 2006; Kasl & Yorks, 2012, 2016)

Other adult educators are also using arts-based activities to facilitate transformative learning (see, e.g., Lawrence, 2005, 2009, 2012; Dirkx, 2001)
Interactive Activity

Shortened Version of “My Life’s Musical Playlist”

1. **Jot down the name of one song** that has meant a great deal to you, and **make a few notes** about why and how it has been important to you, including how and with whom it has served as a bonding agent with others.

2. **Share with a partner**

3. **As a group, reflect** on your process and what you learned about yourself, your partner, and others.
Philosophical Foundations

• Dewey’s view of the “live creature” making meaning out of experience through creating (Art as Experience, 1934/2005)

• Conrad & Beck (2015) use Heron’s modes of psyche and ways of knowing (1992), Heron & Reason’s participatory inquiry paradigm (1997), and Yorks & Kasl’s “Expressive Knowing Is a Pathway” taxonomy (2006) in their arts-based research paradigm
Who Does Arts-Based Inquiry

- **Artists** conducting inquiry through artmaking
- **Social scientists** using artmaking themselves and/or with research participants for (1) data generation, (2) data analysis, and/or (3) data presentation
- **Educators** using arts-based inquiry for pedagogical purposes
- **Community members** creating together, often seeking insights about shared issues
- **Anyone!**
Arts-Based Inquiry Approaches

• **Personal inquiry**

• **Autoethnography**: Exploring aspects of culture(s) through one’s own lived experience (Ellis, 2004; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013; Denzin, 2014; Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2015)
Arts-Based Inquiry Approaches

- **Collaborative inquiry** in pairs or groups (Reason & Hawkins, 1988; Conrad & Campbell, 2008; Linds & Vettraino, 2008; Gubrium & Harper, 2013; Conrad & Sinner, 2015)

- **Duoethnography**: Exploring aspects of culture(s) through dialogue with a partner comparing and contrasting experiences (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012; Sawyer & Liggett, 2012; Sawyer & Norris, 2013; Norris & Sawyer, 2015)
Types of Arts-Based Inquiry

- **Narrative inquiry/storytelling** (Reason & Hawkins, 1988; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Richardson, 1994; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Clandinin, 2013; Kim, 2016)

- **Poetry** (Faulkner, 2009; Richardson, 1997)

- **Fiction**—short stories, novels (Leavy, 2013, 2015)

Types of Arts-Based Inquiry


- **Video** (Harris, 2016)

- **Music** (Manovski, 2014; Leavy, 2009, 2015)

Examples of Arts-Based Identity Exploration Activities With Undergraduates From My In-Class Dissertation Research Project
The Course

• At Ohio State, Spring 2016 semester

• Research done within ARTEDUC 2367.01, “Visual Culture: Investigating Diversity and Social Justice”

• Undergraduate general education course taken by students from a wide variety of majors

• Course satisfies (1) visual and performing arts, (2) diversity and social justice, and (3) second-semester writing requirements

• 50 students total (2 sections @ 25), including both US and international students and, in my Spring 2016 sections, sophomores through seniors (freshmen have been in my prior sections)
Culture and Identity

Early in the course, students explore:

- How culture is comprised of stories, experiences, communication, and values shared by two or more people
- How their own identities have been influenced by the cultures of their families, friend groups, relationships, school groups, racial/ethnic heritage, religion, gender and sexual preference, etc.
- How a society’s power structure tends to favor dominant cultures (privilege) and discriminate against others
- How the intersectionality of multiple layers of non-dominant culture membership can result in the compounding of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991)
The arts-based identity exploration activities already in the course curriculum are:

- A simple **personal cultural identity map**
- A **self-portrait** with an artist’s statement
- A **personal cultural identity narrative**

For my dissertation research, I used a more complex identity map model and added five other arts-based identity exploration activities.
Personal Cultural Identity Map

Used the version of the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) (Jones & McEwen, 2000; Jones & Abes, 2013, pp. 79 & 87) which includes:

• **Individual core** identity elements
• **Cultural identities**
• **Context**, including conditions in one’s environment
• Societal **privilege and difference issues** and how they filter what enters and does not enter our environment

First created map on a 2D form and then as a 3D mobile
“My Life’s Musical Playlist”

Adapted from Steven Aragon’s “Name That Tune” and “Identifying the Soundtrack of Your Life” (2015)

• Created “My Life’s Musical Playlist” containing links to 5-10 songs that have meant a lot to them over the years

• Wrote a narrative reflecting on what those songs had meant to them, the roles the songs had played in their lives, and shared experiences revolving around the songs with parents, significant others, friends, and high school classmates

Several students suggested also making and sharing lists of favorite movies and books
Creative Writing

• Wrote a poem, song lyrics, or a short story (fiction or nonfiction) (see Leavy, 2013, 2015), followed by writing a one-page reflection on how they experienced the process and the insights it produced

• For people who were inexperienced in doing creative writing, I included in the instructions suggested scaffolded approaches to follow if they found them helpful; otherwise, I deliberately kept the directions open-ended

A number of students found this deeply meaningful; one even later told me in an interview that she had recommended this and the “musical playlist” activity to a friend who was going through a hard time, telling her that they had helped her a lot.
Duoethnographic Reader’s Theatre

• **Dialogued** with a partner re their similar and differing experiences

• Crafted a short **script** either (1) interweaving their stories or (2) re-enacting a conversation with each other

• Presented a **dramatic reading** of the script sitting on high wooden bar stools a là reader’s theatre

Students reported being quite surprised at how **people from similar cultural backgrounds had different experiences** and **people from different cultural backgrounds had similar experiences**
Body-Sculpting

From Tami Spry (2011, 2015); this is the version she used during her 2015 ICQI preconference workshop

• Did warmup theatre exercises with a partner (see Spry, 2011)

• Wrote down three “I am a _____________” metaphors

• **Sculpted one metaphor** onto their partners’ “clay” bodies

• Wrote a **reflection** on the experience and what they learned about themselves and their partners
Shadow/Dream Boxes

Inspired by the shadow boxes of the artist Joseph Cornell (see, e.g., Pioch & Harden, 2002)

- Created a diorama in a small papier mâché box expressing their hopes and dreams

For many, this activity and the personal cultural identity narrative paper were their favorite arts-based identity activities the whole semester
Potential Uses in the Classroom

• Multicultural/diversity/social justice, citizenship, and global awareness general education courses

• Professional programs emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness and empathy for self and others, e.g., teacher education, social work, counseling, and healthcare
Potential Uses in High-Impact Practices

- HIP programs emphasizing the importance of developing cultural awareness and empathy for self and others such as service-learning, study abroad, and undergraduate qualitative research
- First-year experiences (FYE)
- Sophomore programs such as Ohio State’s Second-Year Transformational Experience Program (STEP)—Schaller (2005, 2010) discusses the intense identity exploration sophomores frequently go through, particularly those who have not yet decided on a major
Potential Uses in Student Life Programs

In residence halls, student unions, multicultural centers, and student wellness centers:

• **Narrative/creative writing sharing circles**
  (stories, poetry, journal entries, fiction/nonfiction short stories)

• **Theatre/improv sessions** collaboratively exploring students’ shared experiences a la Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed (1985, 2002) and Norris’s playbuilding (2002, 2009)
Potential Uses in Student Life Programs

In residence halls, student unions, multicultural centers, and student wellness centers:

• **Visual artmaking** sessions exploring identity

• **Photo-elicitation and photovoice** projects

• **Song-sharing** evenings

• **Sharing sessions** and/or **public exhibitions** of students’ individual and group artistic creations (visual artwork, videos/multimedia, skits, dance, music)
Potential Uses in Student Life Programs

In career centers:

• **Visual artmaking sessions** exploring identity

• **Narrative/creative writing sharing circles**, e.g., sharing journal entries about what they hope to accomplish in life

• **Theatre/improv sessions** collaboratively exploring (1) how to express one’s identity appropriately in job interviews and (2) what it might be like working in various environments
Facilitating Identity Work

- Vitally important when facilitating identity exploration activities to **maintain a psychologically and physically safe space**
- These activities **do not constitute therapy but may be therapeutic**
- Most educators are **not therapists**
- Important to let students know that **identity work can sometimes activate deep psychological issues**
- Let them know **how to contact the campus student counseling center** if needed
Discussion/Q&A

Thank you!

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