

REIMAGINING JOHN DEWEY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: THE ART OF LIVING –
PRAXIS FOR SOCIAL UTILITY AND WELLBEING

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the rich parallels and connections between John Dewey's pragmatic theories involving aesthetics, education, and experience and the aspects of the Compassion Project that center upon participant's physical and imaginative engagement in the experience of creating an artifact expressive of their thoughts and feelings. As human beings inhabit the world, we participate in shared universes of meaning and value that have been realized through human activity. This transformation of the powers of nature into expressive media, or an "artifact", gives shape and significance to human life. Art, in other words, is nothing more than the quest for concretely embodied meaning and value in human existence. Embodied aesthetic experience fluidly incorporates thinking, feeling, and making which produces experiences of the most meaningful sort. This research realizes the importance of this type of mindful, creative, compassionate engagement in developing resilient communities for the Twenty-First Century. By reimagining John Dewey's ideas, I examine the importance of aesthetic experience for our everyday lives as a means for communication and unity across diverse perspectives. The artifact is iconic of that nexus of dynamical change and emblematic of Dewey's theories as they find expression in the Compassion Project. It is a retrofitting of theory to practice. In the process, both Dewey's theories and the Compassion Project's practices may be better illuminated. As this research has progressed, the notion of artifact creation has advanced into the idea of habit formation within ourselves, our actual bodies and minds becoming the artifact of our making, applying pragmatic intelligence as the art of living.

PREFACE

I am an artist, and I perceive, feel, and experience the world differently than others. Being an artist is not necessarily about the work I make but the way in which I move through the world. It has taken the act of writing this dissertation to understand this, for me to express the ways in which I came to know and create an artifact while I, too, became transformed in the practice. I began this research with an interest in visual literacy. My own education in fine art and art history informs how I understand the world – moving through history through art historical movements and having a visual representation of one's experience of that period engages a different type of thinking and ability for recall. As an artist and trained art historian I found that being able to understand aspects of formalism set within its proper historical context helps us understand so much about a thing, an object, an idea. My teaching experience has also shown that these exercises are worthy and develop a higher level of critical thinking. Understanding why an object is made or presented the way it is, is crucial in navigating our visually saturated world. Objects, symbolism, language have always been a part of the human experience as a means of communication, utility, expression. They are worthy of our attention and offer a dynamic way of understanding and interacting.

I was interested in education but not necessarily set in a classroom, rather an education for the purpose of driving a more engaged citizenship in a time when our country is divided. There is a democratic function of art; it is not about understanding via judgment but rather about the embodied experience; the dialectic between the viewer, object, the artist, and the environment. I am fascinated with perspective and the way in which we come to know something. Everyone we encounter has a unique way of seeing and understanding the world.

Individuals could experience the same musical performance, play, poem, or image and have a wildly different interpretations due to the history of their previous experiences. In sharing our experiences, we gain agency and having continued dialogue and reflection about such experiences creates more meaning, through shared language or artistic expression. What ultimately drives this research is how we honor individualized perspectives in a way that contributes to the greater whole of community?

Historian Michal Kammen refers to Americans as a “people of paradox” where we thrive on our rugged individualism yet want to demonstrate our integrity as the good neighbor.¹ How do we hold space for both characteristics as a community-engaged individual? How do we create an environment in which we can all dynamically grow and evolve together? The more experience we have, the more stories we accumulate, and the more knowledge we add to our memory banks to be able to pull from in each situation. This attunement to the habits of our everyday situations creates an embodiment in which we can get into the right relationship with ourselves, others, and the Earth. My work with Compassion Project has aided in my experience understanding the way habit formation is practiced through lived values and the importance of mindfulness and creativity for our journey, and the embodiment of our perceived and experienced beliefs. For Dewey, “Habit means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions, rather than bare recurrence of specific acts. It means will.”²

¹ Kammen, Michael G. *People of Paradox; an Inquiry Concerning the Origins of American Civilization*. New York: Knopf, 1972.

² Dewey, John. “Habits and Will.” *Human Nature and Conduct*. Middle Works: Volume 14, (1922): 21-32.

Compassion Project's workshops are simple. We begin with a mindfulness exercise to ground us into community within our space and share our community agreements that establish belonging and safety. We pose discussion questions and ask participants to visually represent what they experienced during their meditation, focusing on the process of creating rather than the outcome of the product. It's a way to express and process their experience in a way that doesn't require language. Creatively expressing oneself is a way to process our experience that we may not have the words for, and in this communal creative experience, we become vulnerable in a way that reminds us that we each have unique perspectives that contribute to the greater whole. We thrive for belonging, are imperfect, and are in it together. We continue to pose questions about compassion – what does it mean, how have you experienced it or not, how do we continue to practice it, and why is it important? We allow more time for reflection through journaling and sharing if participants feel inclined. This process of meditation, art-making, discussion, and reflection are the essential ingredients for our work. This process is successful because it is set within a safe container for non-judgment and belonging.

Compassion is a skill and practice that fosters deeper connections, leading to stronger and more resilient relationships –with ourselves, others, and the Earth. When these relationships are nurtured, they, in turn, promote more effective ways of dealing with conflict and stress, as well as lead to greater life fulfillment and satisfaction. Compassion Project defines compassion as mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and Mother Earth. Thinking about how I define the word often comes back to my interest in perspective; it's allowing yourself to sit within someone else's experience, meeting them where they are, and

listening, learning, and supporting them. The etymology of the word compassion is from the Latin *compati* to “suffer with” – it is turning our empathy into action and praxis.³

Our world is suffering and while it is the dynamic ebbs and flows (negative and/or positive) that give significance to our human experience – it should not have to be experienced in isolation. Humans are stronger in community.⁴ When we can show up as our complex and authentic selves, with purpose and a sense of belonging – this is where we thrive. Compassion Project is working to cultivate these relationships and teach skills that allow for wellbeing so that our habits, actions, our pragmatic intelligence can ripple to those we interact with in practice of a holistic way of living, an art, so we can show up and work towards systemic change.

Experience is essential because the non-cognitive remnants of such aesthetic experience transform us. Science itself is an art that requires novel thinking and imagination. As Ellen Dissanayake states “To claim that human beings need art is a proclamation of faith, not a scientific hypothesis.”⁵ I believe that this attunement to pragmatist aesthetics and moral imagination are necessary for the survival of our species. I will continue to practice being transactional with my creative, compassionate, communicative ripples with the faith that they will spread far and wide. This faith in the spirit of humanity has been lost and needs a revolutionary revival. Dewey states,

³ “Understanding the Meaning of Compassion.” What Is Compassion? Understanding The Meaning of Compassion. Accessed September 29, 2023.

⁴ Michalski, Camilla A., Lori M. Diemert, John F. Helliwell, Vivek Goel, and Laura C. Rosella. “Relationship between Sense of Community Belonging and Self-Rated Health across Life Stages.” *SSM - Population Health* 12 (2020): 100676–100676.

⁵ Dissanayake, Ellen. *What Is Art For?* Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, (2015): ix.

"The whole story of man shows that there are no objects that may not deeply stir engrossing emotion. One of the few experiments in the attachment of emotion to ends that mankind has not tried is that of devotion, so intense as to be religious, to intelligence as a force in social action."⁶

This project provides a pragmatic pedagogy for social action and presents theories that demonstrate the importance of aesthetic attunement and a call for action. These ideas are not new, but their application has been specific to the disciples they're generated from. Theory must be applied to praxis; experience, understanding, critique, reanalyzing and reflecting, aid in the practice pragmatic principles. Compassion Project's methods of mindfulness, reflection, creativity, and dialogue, and the conception that we, and the habits we form, are the ever-changing and dynamic artifacts of our making give us the agency for moral imagination to cultivate the futures we deserve.

⁶ Dewey, John. *A Common Faith*. New Haven: Yale University Press, (1991): 52–53.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Humans have an innate drive to understand their place in the universe.⁷ The scientific enterprises seek to reveal the natural processes, materials, and histories that dictate our existence. The arts and humanities provide the philosophical framework for humanity to observe, interpret, and reflect upon our role in the universe. The holistic intersection of the sciences, arts, and humanities and our observational and analytical skills integrated with interpretation and reflection define what it means to be human.⁸ John Dewey's theories take an ecological and holistic conception of nature, life, society, and education through his transactional views of experience, habit formation, inquiry, and the communicative and social self. Dewey was an antifoundationalist who always took into consideration the social and environmental conditions of applicable theory. He was a pragmatic public intellectual who believed in the optimal growth of humanity through an experimental, natural, dynamic interaction between culture and its environment.

American Studies, whether it claims so or not, relies on this same theory and praxis methodology. Dewey's conception of the scholar-practitioner is that of a public intellectual engaged in educational practice to transform society through fostering a learning environment for educators, students, and community that is balanced with the basic needs of daily living. This research is hermeneutical-phenomenological in that there is a general understanding of

⁷ Schweitzer, Robert D, Harriet Glab, and Eric Brymer. "The Human-Nature Experience: A Phenomenological-Psychoanalytic Perspective." *Frontiers in Psychology* 9 (2018): 969–969.

⁸ Robotham, D. Keith, et al. "anthropology." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, November 17, 2023.

experience, however, interpreting (not testing) the meaning of such experience must be anchored in lived experience and the dialectical process that aspires to understand the significance of such experience. Research within higher education occupies a difficult place in the twenty-first century where universities are at odds with the public they intend to serve.⁹

The humanities have operated under a culture of crisis within the institution as they were taken out of their original context in the liberal arts model and absorbed into the modern research university.¹⁰ Kathleen Fitzpatrick (2019) defines the humanities as;

a cluster of fields that focus on the careful study and analysis of cultures and their many modes of thought and forms of representation – writing, music, art, media, and so on—as they have developed and moved through time and across geographical boundaries, growing out of and adding to our senses of who we are as individuals, as groups, and as nations. The humanities are interested, then, in the ways that representations work, in the relationships between representations and social structures, and in all the ways that human ideas and their expression shape and are shaped by human culture.¹¹

⁹ Montana State University's land-grant mission is under scrutiny for receiving gifts from conservative donors which creates a disconnect between our diverse campus culture. For further readings please see;

Leland, Brian. "A Montana University Can't Resist a Great Big Gift." *High Country News – Know the West*, April 24, 2014.

Vowell, Sarah. "A University of, by and for the People." *The New York Times*, February 15, 2018.

¹⁰ For further reading on the "Crisis in the Humanities" please see;

Arndt, David. "The Two Cultures and the Crisis in the Humanities." *Forum on Public Policy* 2007, no. 1 (2007).

Cvejić, Žarko, Andrija Filipović, and Ana Petrov. *The Crisis in the Humanities : Transdisciplinary Solutions*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, (2016).

Reitter, Paul and Wellmon, Chad. *Permanent Crisis: The Humanities in a Disenchanted Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (2021).

¹¹ Fitzpatrick, Kathleen. *Generous Thinking: a Radical Approach to Saving the University*. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, (2019): 20.

In a time where our country is divided, often distracted and self-absorbed –many communities are craving more engagement, dialogue, creativity, and connection. This research is not a critique but rather an applicable model for community engagement. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the rich parallels and connections between John Dewey’s theories involving aesthetics, education, and experience, and the aspects of the Compassion Project that center upon participants’ physical and imaginative engagement in the experience of creating the artifact expressive of their thoughts and feelings. This thesis has been made possible by recent advances in the scholarship on Dewey’s work, some of which have undergone substantial rethinking. The focus of this dissertation is the reimagining of Dewey’s aesthetics for the twenty-first century, while the Compassion Project’s artifact creation process serves as an exemplar of that nexus of imagination, creativity, artifact creation, artifact, and cognitive-social-emotional change. The artifact is iconic of that nexus of dynamical change and emblematic of Dewey’s theories as they find expression in the Compassion Project. It is a retrofitting of theory to practice. In the process, both Dewey’s theories and the Compassion Project’s practices may be better illuminated. As this research has progressed, the notion of artifact creation has advanced into the idea of ourselves, our actual bodies and minds becoming the artifact of our making, a pragmatic aesthetic of living.

The goal of my dissertation is two-fold. First, I will look at John Dewey through a critical interdisciplinary lens in which American Studies allows a reinterpretation of his work for the early twenty-first century. Dewey’s work on aesthetics has been largely overlooked since it was written late in his career and it will shed light on the importance of aesthetic experience throughout all his work, specifically in the realm of American pragmatic philosophy. Secondly, I

am proposing that embodied aesthetic experience is a practice that can help navigate this age of anxiety and distraction. Using Dewey's theories as a model, I will analyze Compassion Project's methods as an example of what this type of praxis could look like applied in our contemporary culture. While it is understood what an American Studies analysis may look like, the varieties of methodologies and topics addressed call for thoughtful consideration. The history of the discipline itself shows the story of how we operate given the zeitgeist and multiplicities of culture. In this new era of transnationalism and concern for social justice, my work stands as an offering for a different means of communication, a means of embodied aesthetic experience and as a project in the applied humanities. This research considers the importance of mindfulness, creativity, and dialogue to communicate across diverse populations in a meaningful way and connection with the complexity of humanness in our experiences as a means of continuous growth. It is in the realm of pragmatist aesthetics and moral imagination as a multidisciplinary literature review establishing the importance of the arts and compassion for the historical present through a Deweyan lens.

As a scholar of American Studies, I am interested in social activism and compassionate pedagogies. This leads to intersections between American pragmatism, the democratizing of education, and the aesthetic experience; three philosophies that owe tribute to John Dewey. While Dewey is prioritized in the study, as the research progressed the intersectionality between Black feminist writers and Native American wisdom traditions became more evident. Intellectual lineages from Dewey's work, especially that of classical American Pragmatism, to liberation pedagogues like Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and adrienne maree brown demonstrate education as a

practice of freedom through varied methods within the context of the Americas.¹² While Dewey addresses the topic of freedom through education with his theory of experience and critique of liberalism, Freire, hooks, and brown approach is founded through inherent systems of oppression. In re-reading Dewey through a Black feminist lens, his work acts as a historical supplement to the work that is already being carried out.¹³ Dewey's work itself has been found lacking by feminist and other social theorists who have made many arguments about his position of power, race, and women.¹⁴ Dewey philosophy, which is a product of his time, is written from the unacknowledged white male perspective in which he is relatively silent about power structures in his published work.¹⁵ Dewey's experiential model of reality and inquiry can be valid

¹² bell hooks represents her name in lowercase as a tribute to her great-grandmother and to convey that the importance is her work, not the qualities of her identity. adrienne maree brown is represented in lowercase letters as an artistic choice.

¹³ For further reading on the intersectionality of Dewey's theories and Black Feminist visionaries please see;

Capps, John. "Pragmatism, Feminism, and the Sameness-Difference Debate." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 32, no. 1 (1996): 65–105.

JAMES, V. DENISE. "Theorizing Black Feminist Pragmatism: Forethoughts on the Practice and Purpose of Philosophy as Envisioned by Black Feminists and John Dewey." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (2009): 92–99.

McClain, Linda. "Experimental Meets Intersectional: Visionary Black Feminist Pragmatism and Practicing Constitutional Democracy." *Boston University School of Law Research Paper* no 22-12. 69 Drake L. Rev. 823 (2021).

Vorsino, Mary. "Re-Reading Dewey through a Feminist Lens." *Educational Perspectives* 47, no. 1–2 (2015): 50.

¹⁴ "Dewey as canonical figure interesting in relation to feminism is that Dewey's thinking about so-called women's issues and relationship to early women thinkers and practitioners, such as Jane Addams, Ella Flagg Young, and Alice Chippmen, were both complex and intentional."

JAMES, V. DENISE. "Theorizing Black Feminist Pragmatism: Forethoughts on the Practice and Purpose of Philosophy as Envisioned by Black Feminists and John Dewey." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (2009): 92–99.

resources to ground claims about oppression and concepts of gender and race, though Dewey himself does not state this application explicitly. In considering pragmatic philosophy Cornel West states,

A philosophy which was conscious of its own business and province would then perceive that it is an intellectualized wish, an aspiration subjected to rational discriminations and tests, a social hope reduced to a working program of action, a prophecy of the future, but one disciplined by serious thought and knowledge.¹⁶

Theory as social hope is an identifying marker of Black feminism and Dewey's investment in the ideal of democracy that is sensitive to the needs of both community and individual offers additional historical avenues for Black feminist interpretation.¹⁷

The impetus for this study was to understand how aesthetic experience has beneficial effects for human development and was positioned from my experience as an artist, educator, and my engagement with Compassion Project. I discovered more than I set out for. Theories of embodied cognition, moral imagination, and pragmatic philosophy guide my assumption that practices in mindfulness, creative expression, and dialogue that emerge in compassionate environments aid in human fulfillment and wellbeing. My argument is that embodied aesthetic experience matters, and that the arts, or creative types of engagement is for everyone, it's what makes us human.¹⁸ By embodying our aesthetic lived experience we discover our agency,

¹⁶ West, Cornel. *The American Evasion of Philosophy a Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, (1989): 86.

¹⁷ JAMES, V. DENISE. "Theorizing Black Feminist Pragmatism: Forethoughts on the Practice and Purpose of Philosophy as Envisioned by Black Feminists and John Dewey." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (2009): 92–99.

¹⁸ This creative type of engagement considers the way we dress ourselves, write our grocery list, make our food, the routes we chose to take. It's involved in any conscious decision-making process.

turning ourselves into the artifact. The function of inquiry and communication is the production of new artifacts. This notion of artifact is our authentic, dynamic, expressive human self, where the product of habits produced measures the development of our pragmatic intellect.

I am aware that notions of mindfulness, slow-living, inclusivity, and diversity have now been appropriated into a new marketable scheme in America's highly capitalistic endeavors, but there is a way to make this work authentic.¹⁹ This authenticity can be seen within the work of Compassion Project; a grassroots organization with a clear mission that values equity and people over profit.²⁰ Since 2017, Compassion Project has engaged nearly 8,000 individuals in school and community lessons and workshops.²¹ Their programs serve people of all ages and promote lifelong skills for strong relationships and wellbeing. Compassion Project was originally founded in the College of Education, Health, and Human Development at Montana State as a response to the rise of divisive language and bullying in elementary schools as a wellbeing focused project for K-12 students and teachers and received its non-profit status in 2019. Motivated by Dr. Richard J. Davidson's Center for Healthy Minds, Compassion Project was designed to bring the Bozeman community and the greater Gallatin County together through education in and outside the schools around compassion- what it means, how to recognize it, how to practice it, and why it

¹⁹ Authentic is an adjective meaning of undisputed origin; genuine. Put simply, authenticity means you're true to your own personality, values, and spirit, regardless of the pressure that you're under to act otherwise. You're honest with yourself and with others, and you take responsibility for your mistakes. Your values, ideals, and actions align.
Harter, S. "Authenticity" in Snyder, C.R. and Lopez, S.J. (eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, New York: OUP. (2002).

²⁰ See Chapter 5.

²¹ "Compassion Project," Compassion Project, accessed January 22, 2021.
<https://www.compassionproject.org/>.

is important.²² I became involved with Compassion Project in 2019 as a partner artist and facilitator, joined the board shortly after, and have served as Board President since 2022.

Compassion has long been regarded as a core part of our humanity by contemplative traditions, and in recent years, it has received growing research interest. Following a recent review of existing conceptualizations, compassion has been defined as consisting of the following five elements: (1) recognizing suffering, (2) understanding the universality of suffering in human experience, (3) feeling moved by the person suffering and emotionally connecting with their distress, (4) tolerating uncomfortable feelings aroused (e.g., fear, distress) so that we remain open to and accepting of the person suffering, and (5) acting or being motivated to act to alleviate suffering.²³ Compassion is a skill and practice that fosters deeper connections, leading to stronger and more resilient relationships –with ourselves, others, and the Earth. When these relationships are nurtured, they, in turn, promote more effective ways of dealing with conflict and stress, as well as lead to greater life fulfillment and satisfaction.²⁴

²² “The Compassion Project,” The Compassion Project - The Compassion Project | Montana State University, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.montana.edu/thecompassionproject/>.

²³ Gu, Jenny, Kate Cavanagh, Ruth Baer, and Clara Strauss. “An Empirical Examination of the Factor Structure of Compassion.” *PloS One* 12, no. 2 (2017): e0172471–e0172471.

²⁴ For further empirical research on the evolution of compassion studies please see; Goetz, Jennifer L, Dacher Keltner, and Emiliana Simon-Thomas. “Compassion: An Evolutionary Analysis and Empirical Review.” *Psychological Bulletin* 136, no. 3 (2010): 351–74. Khoury, Bassam. “Compassion: Embodied and Embedded.” *Mindfulness* 10, no. 11 (2019): 2363–74.

Mascaro, Jennifer S., Marianne P. Florian, Marcia J. Ash, Patricia K. Palmer, Tyralynn Frazier, Paul Condon, and Charles Raison. “Ways of Knowing Compassion: How Do We Come to Know, Understand, and Measure Compassion When We See It?” *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020): 547241–547241.

Roeser, Robert W, and Jacquelynne S Eccles. “Mindfulness and Compassion in Human Development: Introduction to the Special Section.” *Developmental Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2015): 1–6.

Compassion Project (CP) establishes an environment where people can show up as their complete, complex, and dynamic human-selves. In the anxiety-ridden culture we live in today, many have taken on the task of slowing down, and moving more mindfully through our day-to-day life. While notions of wellness, compassion, and neurally-inspired exercises have been co-opted by social media, it is necessary to understand these concepts through an academic lens. These concepts require experience, reflection, and practice to rewire our brains. It cannot be completed in an exercise but requires practice. It's about habit formation and the ways we choose to interact and respond within our environment, and within our communities. It is embodied authentic expression, a way of communication.

Individually and collectively, our mental health is suffering. Mental health support is critical, and a multi-pronged approach is necessary to provide pathways for intervention, as well as prevent suffering. Increasing access to counseling, medical treatment, support groups, peer support, and raising education and awareness are all ways to promote mental health. There is also the need to challenge the systemic inequities that got us here. People are in pain because division, isolation, and hopelessness are rampant, coded into us at younger and younger ages.²⁵ We don't have to become desensitized to violence, hate, and climate catastrophe, but we do have to practice being uncomfortable in community and turning towards each other, and love, together. Teaching compassion is both responsive and preventative because it reminds us of our

Stoewen, Debbie L. "Moving from Compassion Fatigue to Compassion Resilience Part 5: Building Personal Resilience." *Canadian Veterinary Journal* 62, no. 11 (2021): 1229–31.

²⁵ Child, Stephanie T., and Leora Lawton. "Loneliness and Social Isolation among Young and Late Middle-Age Adults: Associations of Personal Networks and Social Participation." *Aging & Mental Health* 23, no. 2 (2017): 196–204.

common humanity and our shared future. CP envisions a compassionate world where everyone has what they need to live a flourishing life, conflict is generative, everyone is free to be the fullest version of themselves, and humans live harmonious relationship with the natural world.

Dewey located every aspect of his thought within the general problem of the nature and purpose of the democratic life. His political and education theories reflect fundamental commitments about human nature and what constitutes a well-lived or meaningful life.²⁶ For Dewey, democracy is a conjoint communicated experience. Such experience, expressed as collaborative inquiry, requires the intellectual and emotional competencies necessary to tackle shared problems and negotiate value differences. Dewey has a positive account of experience in which experience is processual, transactional, socially mediated, and had a realist, naturalistic, non-reductive, emergentist, process-oriented metaphysics. We attempt to tap into these processual, social mediated, and emergent elements during CP's workshops to connect, in community, through our shared human experience.

Traditionally, art scholars have approached the understanding of art from the position that art exists in the 'real' world while the experience of art takes place inside the mind of the observer. Experienced art is subjective, and some subjective experiences are preferred over others.²⁷ Much of the interest in the cognition of art has been directed toward visual localization and the perception of depth. A large part of the problem deals with being able to see things 'in

²⁶ Alexander, Thomas M. "Educating the Democratic Heart: Pluralism, Traditions, and the Humanities." In *The Human Eros*, 207–24. New York, USA: Fordham University Press, (2020): 207.

²⁷ Solso, R. *The Psychology of Art and Evolution of the Conscious Brain*. Cambridge and London: The M.I.T. Press. (2003): 19.

depth'. Psychologists produced an impressive collection of data about how we humans perceive, process, and store information and, now that we have this data, I'm interested in how it relates to the artifacts that we experience or create on a daily basis. When we create or experience art, in a very real sense, we have the clearest view of the mind. Each of us sees the world in profoundly different ways because of the vast diversity in the way we humans develop individual mental structures of the world. Understanding art involves both the physical and psychological sides of the topic.²⁸

Dewey sees art as achieving the most that we can hope for, not just the transferring of information but at its highest form, it is a way in which people partake of something together at an emotional and intuitive level. It becomes, in Dewey's phrase, a *shared experience*. Not only is this a shared experience, but a *consummatory experience* in which it is conscious, deeply meaningful, and integrated as a whole. In Dewey's *Art As Experience* (1934) "art" denotes the *interaction* of (a) making (artist activity), (b) an event or thing (song, painting, etc.) and (c) an appreciator (listener, viewer, etc.). With this in mind, we also have a group share at the end of each CP workshop for those to share and discuss what they've created and the process in a non-judgmental space. Dewey's aesthetics examines arts' social role in presenting, reimagining, and projecting human identity and Dewey's philosophy always came back to the idea that we are living organisms who are dynamically and rhythmically interacting with our environments. Art is born in this middle ground of the dynamic rhythm of life as a means of expression and communication. Indeed, the role of tension in the experience of heightened vitality of meaning

²⁸ Ibid. 21.

often leads artists to cultivate their work, again as expression, communication, and a cathartic form of release. While I am primarily interested in aesthetics, Dewey's work on aesthetics came much later in his life and as such and has not been researched in the same depth as his other philosophical treatises.

Dewey did not write in a discipline-specific manner which results in many of the ongoing criticisms of his work. I also tend to write in this manner to explain the ways in which I came to know and understand this work, through varied advisors in different fields, in an applicable and engaging way. Adrienne maree brown is a poet, activist, facilitator, and healer who stylistically writes multidimensionally about application and practice that stems from liberation of colonial tradition rather than centralizing the cognitive elements. These stylistic differences add to the narrative of how and when this work is produced and received. The terminology used throughout this study such as authentic, wellbeing, holistic, consummatory experience or embodied aesthetic experience, habit, artifact, and to make special or the stylization of habit are not easily defined and better demonstrated the practice of embodiment rooted in democracy and communal growth.²⁹ The understanding of such terms has shifted between the pre-cognitive revolution in

²⁹ For further insight on each others' use of terms please see;
 brown, adrienne maree. "Authenticity Chant." adrienne maree brown, November 16, 2016. <https://adriennemareebrown.net/2014/11/06/authenticity-chant/>.
 brown, adrienne maree. "If You're Good, Say You're Good." adrienne maree brown, February 8, 2021. <https://adriennemareebrown.net/2021/02/08/if-youre-good-say-youre-good/>.
 brown, adrienne maree. "How We Liberate Ourselves." adrienne maree brown, September 25, 2012. <https://adriennemareebrown.net/2012/09/25/how-we-liberate-ourselves/>.
 Dewey, John. *Liberalism and Social Action*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1935.
 Dewey, John. *Human Nature and Conduct* "Middle Works: Volume 14, 1922, "Habits and Will", pp. 21-32
 hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress : Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

which Dewey was writing to now. Advances in the understanding of emotion within the field of psychology move from the fundamental approaches of basic emotion and appraisal traditions to the development of a third category within the literature called the psychological constructionist tradition.³⁰ This third model emphasizes the importance of arousal to emotion and has been characterized as a "neo-Jamesian arousal-based or peripheral nervous system approach to emotion."³¹ While Dewey and brown are both interested in the fulfillment of human experience, Dewey's method is based in his theory of experience and educational psychology while brown emerges through on-going social implications of liberation, and more specifically sexual liberation through pleasure. She is working to build new narratives about how politics can feel good and how what feels good has a complex politics of its own.³² Both conversations occur within the context of American culture and are important discussions for the field of American Studies.

Main, Paul. "John Dewey's Theory." Structural Learning, February 14, 2023.
<https://www.structural-learning.com/post/john-deweys-theory>.

³⁰ Gendron, Maria, and Lisa Feldman Barrett. "Reconstructing the Past: A Century of Ideas About Emotion in Psychology." *Emotion Review* 1, no. 4 (2009): 316–39.

³¹ Ibid. 316. For further reading please see;

Cornelius RR. *Research and tradition in the psychology of emotion: The science of emotion*. Upper Saddle River; NJ: Prentice Hall (1996).

Gleitman H, Fridlund AJ, Reisberg D. *Psychology*. 6th. New York: Norton; 1999.

Kappas A. Appraisals are direct, immediate, intuitive, and unwitting ... and some are reflective ... *Cognition & Emotion*. (2006): 952–975.

Mandler G. Emotion. In: Freedheim DK, Weiner IB, editors. *Handbook of psychology, Vol 1 History of psychology*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons; (2003):157–176.

³² brown, adrienne maree. *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2019).

The post-war period of American Studies treats America as Dewey has treated the individual in society, dynamic and ever-changing in correspondence with the environment in which pragmatic principles that continually test inquiry. Reflexivity as a methodology in looking at crisis culture in the humanities and issues with institutionalized angst, and my work gives us an applied praxis rather than a critique. A reflexive practice can enable researchers to learn from experience about themselves, their work, and the way they relate to others, society, and culture. It is an ongoing practice, not just a technique that gives strategies to bring things out into the open, and frame appropriate questions while exploring and expressing experiences otherwise difficult to communicate. It allows us to challenge personal assumptions, ideologies, biases, and behaviors.³³ Current research practices and methodologies indicate that reflexivity is a key feature in qualitative research. Activities such as free writing or an autobiographical narrative are helpful to probe and make visible perspectives that may impact knowledge production.³⁴ Reflexivity is an ‘in-the-moment’ and ongoing self-scrutiny, though variably defined. It is often described as the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researchers’ positionality.³⁵

We can find elements of reflexivity in Dewey’s work, especially in his writings on the nature of experience. Drawing on Dewey’s processes of ‘trying’ and ‘undergoing’, Julian Edge (2011) argues that reflexivity in qualitative research is concerned with the ongoing, mutually

³³ “Reflection and Reflexivity: What and Why?,” (Sage Publishing), accessed February 8, 2021.

³⁴ Koopman, Wilma J et al. “Autoethnography as a Strategy for Engaging in Reflexivity.” *Global qualitative nursing research* vol. 7. 19 Nov. 2020, accessed February 8, 2021.

³⁵ Ibid. See PREFACE for my positionality.

shaping interaction between the researcher and the research.³⁶ The concept of reflexivity involves a relationship of continuous interaction. This is demonstrated in Dewey's continual restructuring of his thinking.

The nature of experience can be understood only by noting that it includes an active and a passive element peculiarly combined. On the active hand, experience is trying – a meaning which is made explicit in the connected term, experiment. On the passive, it is undergoing. When we experience something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return. Such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness or value of the experience.³⁷

The relationship between researcher and their research is cyclical, often with no clear beginning where the researcher never returns to the same point again. Edge (2011) notes that although the awareness of the cycles of reflexivity can have valuable implications for personal and professional development, research often emphasizes the 'trying' elements of practice more than the 'undergoing'. Compassion Project reports foreground what we have learned and acquired, much more than that, they feature what changes we have undergone and what we have become. To that extent, they do not represent the emergent nature of our learning in the sense that the person entering the next experience is no longer the one who entered the last.³⁸ This idea of the emergent nature of our learning, an attention to the process not just the product, is yet another staple of John Dewey's work and that of Compassion Project. And for the sake of being reflexive throughout the process of this work, I will share personal experiences and questions that arose or

³⁶ This process of 'trying' and 'undergoing' will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Edge, J. *The reflexive teacher educator: Roots and wings*. New York: Routledge. (2011): 35.

³⁷ Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*. New York, Macmillan Company. (1916): 163.

³⁸ Edge, J. *The reflexive teacher educator: Roots and wings*. New York: Routledge. (2011): 42.

were answered with a view toward suggesting that the social work of American Studies represents the next frontier, or to use another word once popular in the field, paradigm.

Colin Koopman (2009) argues that contemporary pragmatism needs to move beyond both experiential and linguistic categories of the twentieth-century and revive an early Jamesian version of the nineteenth-century method of *conduct pragmatism*.³⁹ Conduct pragmatism revolves around a renewed constellation of categories; conduct, action, practice, habit, and will.⁴⁰ Given the zeitgeist of the 2016 election and of the American Studies scholarship that proceeded it, there has been a call for work in the applied humanities. Understanding that discussions of racism, and other prominent issues such as the growing wealth gap, are essential for restructuring our ways of thinking and advancing American Studies scholarship; we also need a structure that proposes a sense of hope. I acknowledge that the ability to conduct this research comes from a place of privilege, and I would like to suggest that by reexamining Dewey's work with a primary focus on aesthetics for the twenty-first century may propose an innovative way to emphasize the importance of community in considering our biological need for the arts and connection for an authenticity of the human experience.⁴¹ This dissertation will not be in the form of a self-help guide to a more consciously guided society, rather it will lay out evidence through the subtle

³⁹ Koopman, Colin. "Conduct Pragmatism: Pressing Beyond Experientialism and Lingualism." *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* VI, no. 2 (2015): 148.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 146.

⁴¹ The human experience is a term used to describe the intangible aspects of human existence. These include the physical, emotional, rational, volitional, and spiritual aspects of human life – offering insight into how each are interconnected. The human experience definition is to connect the mind, body, and spirit to tap into our higher selves with the self-awareness to live a life of purpose, calmness, kindness, confidence, and service.

transitions of intellectual culture and what we now understand of our cognition and neurobiology, that illustrate why these concepts, such as mindfulness, embodiment, and art matter and are important for the human development of our future; the evolution of our species. The collection of theories presented will then be demonstrated through a study of the Compassion Project, a local non-profit that I volunteer with that cultivates compassion through education of art and mindfulness. This research is presented as stepping-stones in the discipline of American Studies, the significance of the arts for our neurobiology, and John Dewey's work reimagined for the twenty-first century which opens the realms of the importance of the embodiment of our experiences to cultivate a continuous evolution of our moral imagination. The *so-what* moment that I hope encapsulate in the humanness of this project is the application to a real-time scenario with my work as an artist and facilitator with Compassion Project.

In the twenty-first century, we are constantly immersed in visual culture. Whether through advertisements on social media, billboards, magazines, newspapers, television, etc. – we are continuously bombarded by imagery. Explained by Lauren Berlant's use of Affect theory in our new age of anxiety, this excess spectacle of everyday life has created a culture of personal powerlessness and overstimulated numbness. Affect theory is an approach to culture, history, and politics that focuses on nonlinguistic forces, or affects. Affects make us what we are, but they are neither under our 'conscious' control nor even necessarily within our awareness—and they can only sometimes be captured in language.⁴² Berlant observes a particular sentimentality

⁴² Schaefer, Donovan. "What Is Affect Theory?" Donovan Schaefer, University of Pennsylvania, September 4, 2019. This concept of emotions with nonlinguistic attributes that are not controlled by our consciousness will be explored further in Chapter 3 through the work of Antonio Damasio.

in pop-culture; we have a commonality of heartstrings but over time we've become addicted to having them pulled, rather than focusing on what the mechanism of pulling could accomplish if turned into political action.⁴³ Inundated by the hustle and bustle of daily life, it's important that we learn to slow down, expand our minds, and appreciate the beauty in the mundane to add a sense of what Robert Pirsig calls *quality*, or John Dewey terms *experience*, into our everyday lives.

In learning to conduct more of everyday experience in an artful manner, we increase our ability to liberate and expand the potential meanings of things. When we succeed in doing so, it is claimed, our experiences are apt to possess a wholistic integrity typically lacking in our alternately hectic and humdrum workaday lives. The enhanced sense of attunement with people and things thereby created makes the world a much less forbidding and more fulfilling place to live in, thus nurturing the human eros.⁴⁴

There is much scholarship dedicated to the importance and impact of the arts on human development. The cognitive science, the ethnographic research, the history of art that physically presents us with the narrative of human consciousness are solid. What isn't clear is why, as a culture, we don't elevate the arts to the same status as that of the sciences, or why we must have this binary, or dualism created between the two. In attempting to study the arts from a scientific perspective, everything that gives art the special quality it has becomes lost. One can judge a work of art through formal analysis; observing how the artist makes a composition using the correct elements and principles or one could dive deep into Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and consider Bourdieu's *Distinction*. We could investigate art markets and see what sells because in our culture, capitalism seems to be the most important gauge of success. But what about art,

⁴³ Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Duke University Press (2011).

⁴⁴ Granger, David. *John Dewey, Robert Pirsig, and The Art Of Living: Revisioning Aesthetic Education*. New York, NY, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, (2006): 7.

specifically with a lower-case a?⁴⁵ Why do we need to pass judgement? What if art was a process to a different way of knowing something? Ellen Dissanayake argues that art was central to the emergence, adaptation, and survival of the human species, that aesthetic ability is innate in every human being, and that art is a need as fundamental to our species as food, warmth or shelter. She views art as the product of 'making things special' and that these things may be objects as well as behaviors. If we understand art as a behavior, what does this mean for the ways in which we understand the way we learn and interact with the world?⁴⁶

In considering art from this perspective, one that acknowledges the biological need for the arts, this project, in part, will explore what it means to live a life more aesthetically through engagement with mindfulness, creativity, and compassion. These concepts of living in the twenty-first century will be examined through contemporary interpretations of the work of John Dewey. Reimagining Dewey's pragmatic theories of embodied experience, reflection, and dialogue among community in mind leads us to moral imagination and the implications of cognitive science for ethics and how these pragmatic concepts work in action. Compassion Project, viewed as a project in the applied humanities gives us a modest representation of what this three-pronged approach of mindfulness, creativity, and dialogue can look like to build more resilient and compassionate communities. An essential component of this work is the act of doing, expressing, and making something in the process and I will examine the role of artifact

⁴⁵ This will be unpacked and defined further in the next chapter.

⁴⁶ In concluding what I have thus far through this research, I am interested in what the idea of art as behavior would mean for education. While continental Europe has followed ideas of phenomenology more close, American schooling has been based in behaviorism – what would behaviorism look like if we understood art and aesthetics as a behavior need to be nurtured within our students?

creation as an important element for individual and community growth.⁴⁷ I will demonstrate how Compassion Project is an organization that demonstrates Dewey's values and represents a praxis for social utility. Aesthetic experience is biologically embedded into our human nature, and it's important to understand and connect with for the survival of our species. Thanks to modern advances in cognitive science many assumptions that Dewey once made are now seen to be cognitively and socially beneficial. The prefrontal cortex in the human brain has enlarged over time with the cognitive capacities such as language, imagination, and complex decision-making.⁴⁸ Using MRI technology, the amygdala, which is involved in the initiation of the body's response to stress, shrinks and thickens the prefrontal cortex, after an eight-weeks of mindfulness practice.⁴⁹

There is undoubtedly a lot of information presented in the length of this paper, and I would like to provide the reader with a chapter roadmap. Chapter 2 focuses on a historical interpretation of Dewey's theories, especially those in relation to his development towards a *Common Faith*, pragmatist intelligence as the formation of habits, experience, and democracy. I begin with a short biography to gain perspective on how Dewey's ideas developed. His theory of experience is essential in understanding his work as a pragmatist in applying theory to praxis.

⁴⁷ As this work has progressed, the notion of artifact creation has advanced into the idea of ourselves, embodiment; our bodies and minds becoming the artifact of our making.

⁴⁸ Smaers, Jeroen B., Aida Gómez-Robles, Ashley N. Parks, and Chet C. Sherwood. "Exceptional Evolutionary Expansion of Prefrontal Cortex in Great Apes and Humans." *Current Biology* 27, no. 10 (2017): 1549.

⁴⁹ Ireland, Tom. "What Does Mindfulness Meditation Do to Your Brain?" Scientific American Blog Network, June 12, 2014.

Experience and Dewey's conception of inquiry are intended as a general model of reflective intelligence.

Chapter 3 establishes a generalized view of significance of art and the importance of aesthetic experience by looking at humans as innately symbolic creatures of feeling and form. I address the cognitive revolution, which allows us to see the benefits of many of Dewey's early theories and understand the significance of perception. I look at Ellen Dissanayake's ethnological view that considers art has human behavior. By making special, we place the activity or artifact in a category that is different from the everyday. While the cognitive benefits of understanding perspective and our experience are necessary, what becomes more illuminating in applying these selected theories is the non-cognitive benefits of art as a means of communication and resilient community building. I will conclude this chapter with Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934).

Chapter 4 reimagines Dewey's work for the twenty-first century and focuses more on embodiment and moral imagination. With the revival of Dewey's previously misinterpreted ideas, this chapter will demonstrate how *Art as Experience* can be interpreted and applied after a more systematic approach to Dewey's philosophy when aesthetics has been considered central. Chapter 5 dives deeper into the work of Compassion Project, within the context of American Education, as a method for social action and praxis. The experiential process of learning incorporates thought and reason that apply to an activity creating agency and ownership of the process. Knowing does not exist isolated from action, and participation is the connecting element between the psychological and social factors within the process of learning. Therefore, the creation of an artifact signals an emotional self-awareness in the ways in which we know

something. The visual arts process for Dewey was more than art production; it was a necessary human activity and intensified meaning that is felt as unifying the parts into a whole.

Dewey's ideas are manifest and embodied through Compassion Project's methods. We have three pillars of Dewey's work: pragmatism, democratizing education, and aesthetics, transferred to three essential ingredients for Compassion Project's methods: mindfulness, creativity, and compassion accompanied with a transformation practice of action, reflection, dialogue. A CP workshop begins with a mindfulness practice that allows participants to become present and embodied in their experience. It brings the individual into the collective space. Reflection, guided by journal prompts allows for self-awareness. The art-making portion of the workshop gives participants an avenue for expression and a visual means of communication of their experience. Dialogue then connects the individual participants with the community in practice and sharing each's experience allows understanding of multiple perspectives. The environment cultivated in these workshops allows participants to share communally in a joint embodied experience that embraces individual perspectives and gives participants agency in their understanding.

CHAPTER TWO

TWENTIETH-CENTURY JOHN DEWEY

John Dewey was an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer whose ideas have been influential in education and social reform. He is one of the primary figures associated with the philosophy of pragmatism and considered one of the founders of functional psychology.⁵⁰ Known as the philosopher of reconstruction, Dewey slowly and deliberately restructured himself throughout his career.⁵¹ His writings contain many reconstructions and redirections of his thinking.⁵² Dewey always connected his observations and reflections with experiences in the diverse and dynamic contexts of life. Dewey's philosophy points toward methodologies that cultivate a flexible and creative mind, responsive to changing times and striving for continuous growth.

⁵⁰ Pragmatism is a tradition that was founded in the United States in the 1870's whose origins are most contributed to William James, John Dewey, and Charles Sanders Peirce. It is a philosophical approach that assesses meaning, theories, or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application. Pragmatism considers words and thought as tools and instruments for prediction, problem solving and action, and rejects the idea that the function of thought is to describe, represent, or mirror reality. Functional psychology also known as functionalism refers to a psychological school of thought that was a direct outgrowth of Darwinian thinking which focuses attention on the utility and purpose of behavior that has been modified over years of human existence. Functionalism was developed in contrast to structuralism and denies the principle of introspection which attempted to investigate the inner workings of human thinking rather than focusing on the biological processes of human consciousness.

⁵¹ Dewey, John. *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. Enl. Ed. with a New Introd. by the Author. ed. Boston: Beacon Press, (1948).

⁵² I speculate that this is one of the primary reasons for many of his critiques. He was not interested in following guidelines of one specific discipline but rather took a very multidisciplinary approach as a pragmatic public intellectual who was able to speak to a broader audience, not just the field of academia.

The pragmatic method, described by William James, "is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable and is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences."⁵³ Pragmatism represents a familiar attitude in philosophy, the empiricist attitude, but it represents it, both in a more radical and in a less objectionable form that it has every yet assumed. James states;

Pragmatism unstiffens all our theories, limbers them up and sets each one at work. Being nothing essentially new, it harmonizes with many ancient philosophic tendencies. It agrees with nominalism for instance, in always appealing to particulars; with utilitarianism in emphasizing practical aspects; with positivism in its disdain for verbal solutions, unless questions, and metaphysical abstractions.⁵⁴

Dewey's attempt to understand whether the world was fundamentally biological, functional, and material or was it inherently creative and spiritual launched his career. In 1894, Dewey became the head of the Philosophy Department at the University of Chicago, which included both psychology and pedagogy. Dewey was engaged by the prospect of putting these disciplines into active collaboration as his experience with psychology redirected his philosophical insights. Dewey sought after a new science of self-consciousness that used methods by which experience could be understood as integrated and whole by merging experimental psychology with idealism. He began developing his own psychological theories and argued that existing accounts of behavior were flawed because they were based on outdated philosophical assumptions in which the mind was separate from the body. He offered new insights on components of human conduct such as instincts, perceptions, habits, acts, emotions,

⁵³ James, William. "Lecture II. — What Pragmatism Means." In *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. United States: True Sign Publishing House, (2023): 30.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 34.

and conscious thought. Larger questions about the meaning of human existence exceeded the resources of psychology reaching deeper into cultural practice, required philosophical investigations into art, ethics, politics, and religion. These deeper investigations between knowledge and society informed Dewey's lifelong contention that mind, contrary to longstanding tradition, is not fundamentally isolated but is social and interactive and formed through its natural and cultural environments. Dewey uses the term *the philosophical fallacy* as a catchall term to signify any instance where neglect of the situational context of experience results in a conversion of the eventual function of inquiry into antecedent existence.⁵⁵

His theories take an ecological and holistic conception of nature, life, society, and education through his transactional views of experience, habit formation, inquiry, and the communicative and social self. *The Collected Works of John Dewey 1882-1951* contains thirty-seven volumes organized by the Early (5 volumes), Middle (14 volumes), and Later (17 volumes) years. Electronically published by the Center for John Dewey Studies at Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 1996, his ideas have been revived, especially in contrast with post-modernism as Dewey is thought of as a proto-deconstructionist. Another reason for this resurgence is many academics neglect Dewey's later works on aesthetics. Scholars felt that Dewey's influential career as a philosopher had reached its end by the thirties and found his later writings inadequate and lacking the systematic precision and linguistic prerogatives of the growing analytic movement. Consequently, his turn to aesthetics went largely unnoticed. This

⁵⁵ Granger, David. *John Dewey, Robert Pirsig, and The Art Of Living: Revisioning Aesthetic Education*. New York, NY, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, (2006): 279.

dissertation aims to view Dewey's aesthetics as central to his previous theories regarding democratizing education, pragmatic habits, and experience.

This research looks to illustrate the importance of mindfulness, creativity, and dialogue (methods used by Compassion Project) to communicate across diverse populations in a meaningful way to foster connection with the humanness of our experiences as a means of continuous growth. As a scholar of American Studies, I am interested in social activism and compassionate pedagogies. The intersections between aesthetic experience, democratizing education, and American pragmatism owe tribute to John Dewey. One cannot reimagine his ideas for the twenty-first century or apply them without understanding the ways in which they came to be. Much of the work I do with Compassion Project is manifested from Dewey.

Dewey wrote very little in the form of autobiography, but on his 70th birthday, he published two essays that sketched his intellectual development and distilled his personal beliefs. "From Absolutism to Experimentalism" (1930), traces his intellectual journey from his childhood in Vermont to his retirement from Columbia University in 1930. "What I Believe" (1930) reflects Dewey's lifelong attempt to alter the language of traditional religious faith in terms of a new pragmatic faith of experimental intelligence. He wanted to employ the power of religion and religious experience that would be beneficial to all, a religion of social intelligence, a common faith:

Faith is a tendency towards action. According to such a view, faith is the matrix of formulated creeds and the inspiration of endeavor. Change from the one conception of faith to the other is indicative of a profound alteration. Adherence to any body of doctrines and dogmas based upon a specific authority signifies distrust in the power of experience to provide, in its own ongoing movement the needed principles of belief and

action. Faith in its newer sense signifies that experience itself is the sole ultimate authority.⁵⁶

Dewey's "faith" is a faith in the power of intelligence to act continually as new evidence becomes available. It is a faith in humanity, a faith for intelligent action, and a faith in the art of living. By analyzing Dewey's *Art As Experience* (1934), democratizing education, and the importance of experience and habit formation through the lens of Dewey's pragmatic faith for humanity, Dewey's earlier thoughts become fully realized. In 1879 Dewey wrote his first article, "The Metaphysical Assumptions of Materialism" that was published by the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Dewey recounts the experience of writing this first article as mystical. He compared it to the poetic pantheism of William Wordsworth and Walt Whitman as an undramatic yet blissful moment of oneness with the universe.⁵⁷ Dewey would never lose touch with this feeling, though his interpretation of its meaning and implications would change; this was potentially Dewey's first aesthetic experience that he had acknowledged and undergone himself and sparked is curiosity towards aesthetics and the feeling of embodiment.

John Dewey wrote *Art as Experience* in 1934 in which he observed that the more art is admired, the more it is isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life-experience.⁵⁸ Dewey's theory is an attempt to shift the understandings of what is important and characteristic about the art process from its physical manifestations in the expressive object to the process in its entirety, a process

⁵⁶ Dewey, John, Thomas M. Alexander, and Larry. Hickman. *The Essential Dewey*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press,)1998): 22.

⁵⁷ Dykhuizen, George. *The Life and Mind of John Dewey*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, (1973): 25-26.

⁵⁸ John Dewey. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 4.

whose fundamental element is no longer the material work of art but rather the development of an experience. An experience is something that personally affects your life. The rational should not be separated from the instinctual. Such a change in emphasis does not imply that the individual art object has lost significance; but rather its primacy is clarified: the object is recognized as the primary site for the dialectical processes of experience, as the unifying occasion of these experiences. Through the expressive object, the artist and the active observer encounter each other, their material and mental environments, and their culture at large.

Dewey wrote:

Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature. The intervention of consciousness adds regulation, power of selection, and re-disposition. Thus it varies the arts in ways without end. But its intervention also leads in time to the idea of art as a conscious idea—the greatest intellectual achievement in the history of humanity.⁵⁹

Compassion Project brings physical form to an abstract concept through artistic processes that attempts to express what participants experienced in their meditation and asks them to consider what compassion means to them.

Dewey's aesthetics has, arguably, four main objectives. First, it explicates art's ontology, the interrelated processes of making and appreciation, and specifies the functions of interpretation and criticism. Regarding ontology, Dewey's anti-essentialist answer to "What is art?" is that as experience, art is not simply locatable in an object, or event, or subject. Rather, "art" denotes the interaction of (a) making (artist activity), (b) an event or thing (song, painting, etc.) and (c) an appreciator (listener, viewer, etc.). He distinguishes (b) as "art products" (the

⁵⁹ Ibid. 31.

physical object) but says that “the real work of art” is (a)+(b)+(c): “the building up of an integral experience out of the interaction of organic and environmental conditions and energies”.⁶⁰

Regarding interpretation and criticism, their function complements the experiential definition of art; they are situational and fallible, never seeking definitive judgments about a work’s meaning or value. Their aim is to widen and deepen aesthetic experience. Dewey wrote,

The function of criticism is the reeducation of perception of works of art; it is an auxiliary in the process, a difficult process, of learning to see and hear.... The way to help [someone seeking to understand art] is through the expansion of his own experience by the work of art to which criticism is subsidiary.⁶¹

Second, Dewey’s aesthetics examines arts’ social role in presenting, reimagining, and projecting human identity as he refers to “the live creature”.⁶² Dewey’s philosophy always came back to the idea that we are living organisms who are dynamically and rhythmically interacting with our environments. We are not “things” and our bodily involvement with the world pervades our unconscious experience and appears on the dim horizon of consciousness as a pervasive qualitative tonality or mood.⁶³ Our relationship with the world is not stable; at one moment we may be thriving and at another suffering, this is the ebb and flow of our dynamic experience rhythmic to our environment. Dewey reminds us that life is precarious, and whenever order and stability have been achieved, values preserved, meaning attained, this experience is fraught with poignancy. This gives experience a vibrancy and tension in which “these biological commonplaces are something more than that; they reach to the roots of the esthetic in

⁶⁰ Ibid. 70; see also 167, 218, 223.

⁶¹ Ibid. 328.

⁶² Ibid. 21.

⁶³ Alexander, Thomas. “Dewey’s Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Experience”. *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1. Art 9. (2016): 64.

experience."⁶⁴ Art is born in this middle ground of dynamic rhythm of life as a means of expression and communication. Indeed, the role of tension in experience of heightened vitality of meaning often leads artists to cultivate their work, again as expression, communication, a cathartic form of release. It is the rhythmic highs and lows of our living experience that are essential for creative completeness.

Third, Dewey analyzes the communicative functions of art, especially in education and democratic life. One of the main reasons Dewey thought art important was that it was able to show, that at least in some instance, we were able to reorganize the world to embody the direct experience of meaning and value that by nature we seek. Art provides us a moral lesson.⁶⁵ For practical purposes Dewey defines the purpose of morals as "customs, folk-ways, established collective habits. They are a pattern into which individual activity must weave itself."⁶⁶ They are culturally relative customs that emerge almost exclusively from social encounters with minimal innate instincts and impulses. Language is not accurate enough to describe what is happening within ourselves throughout the experience of these encounters; that is why the arts are essential for communication and community. By using art to communicate an internal and personal experience, an abstract idea becomes visualized. Ultimately Dewey's vision is for a community in which the most optimal potential for human existence is cultivated itself as a work of art, our very own lives as a work of art, living morally conscious. As a mode of communication, Dewey

⁶⁴ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 14.

⁶⁵ Alexander, Thomas. "Dewey's Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Experience". *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1. Art 9. (2016): 66-67.

⁶⁶ Dewey, John. *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology*. Project Gutenberg (2012): 75.

sees art as achieving the most that we can hope for, not just the transferring of information but at its highest form, it is a way in which people partake of something together at an emotional and intuitive level. Thomas Alexander concludes in *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience & Nature: The Horizon's of Feeling* (1987):

Human beings inhabit a world. That is, we participate in shared universes of meaning and value which have been realized through human activity. This transformation of the powers of nature into expressive media giving shape and significance to human life is ultimately what Dewey means by "art." Art, in other words, is nothing else than the quest for concretely embodied meaning and value in human existence. The theme of art is life appropriated for its creative and expressive possibilities. The fine arts are but special instances of this fundamental human activity—special because they are highly successful. If the moral taught by the fine arts were applied to the entire range of our social and personal existence, the result would truly be "the light that never was on sea or land" to which Dewey frequently refers.⁶⁷

Finally, Dewey describes and analyzes the implications of art's expression as experience; such experience is so vivid and integrated as to be qualitatively distinct; experience as "consummatory". In Dewey's terminology, "an" or "consummatory" experience is conscious, deeply meaningful, and integrated as a whole. This wholeness is captured through embodiment with the mind, body, and spirit to be understood and consciously experienced. Its character is unique enough that we recognize it as distinct and special. The opposite kind of experience he

⁶⁷ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press. (1987): 269.

In *Art As Experience* (279) the line is from Wordsworth's poem, "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm";

Ah! *Then*, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express, what then I saw; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet's dream

called “anesthetic” and it is marked by a dispersed, inchoate, or even hum-drum quality.⁶⁸

Consummatory experience happens occasionally; sometimes it occurs not in an artistic context, such as at a concert or museum, but in unexpectedly mundane circumstances like the way the sun creates shadows, the sensation of food while you eat, or the way the air feels. Nevertheless, it is also life at its fullest. Determining how more of life’s experiences could become consummatory is the main purpose of Dewey’s aesthetics.

While much of the human experience is fragmentary and unfulfilling, there are instances that are considered a consummatory experience, which is the sort of experience that is inherently fulfilling. T. Alexander describes moments when, “the energies driving the experience are not dissipated but established as organization and reach closure.”⁶⁹ The highs and lows in the rhythm of life are what add to our experiences. The more we engage with objects, our bodies, our environments, and ultimately think about them – we create more organizational structures in our brain (schema), we have more data, more experience to pull from in each situation. Dewey uses a storm at sea, the rupture of friendship, or a nearby accident as examples. What they all have are intensified meaning that is felt as unifying the parts into a whole.

In such experiences, every successive part flows freely, without seem and without unfilled blanks, into what ensues. At the same time, there is no sacrifice of the self-identity of the parts. A river, as distinct from a pond, flows. But this flow gives a definiteness and interest to its successive portions greater than exist in the homogenous portions of a pond. In an experience, flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries what went on before, each gains distinctness itself. The enduring whole is diversified by successive phases that are emphases of varied colors.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 42, 47.

⁶⁹ Alexander, Thomas. “Dewey’s Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Experience”. *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1. Art 9. (2016): 65.

⁷⁰ Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 36.

These characteristics may be found in all types of experiences and Dewey identifies an experience, where the key thing is the felt underlying quality that emotionally pervades the whole and gives a sense of closure or resolution at the end. This experience of thinking Dewey cites as moral action. There are both doing and undergoing as in all experience, except here they are experienced in relation to each other. In *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey suggests a two-way transactional process where experience involves both 'trying' and 'undergoing'. 'Trying' refers to the outward expression of intention or action. It is the purposeful engagement of the individual with the environment or in Dewey's words, 'doing becomes trying; an experiment with the world to find out what it is like'.⁷¹ Through action an attempt is made to have an impact on the world. 'Undergoing', the other aspect of the 'transaction' in experience, refers to the consequences of experience on the individual. In turn, in attempting to have an impact, the experience also impacts on us. 'Undergoing' refers to the consequences of the experience for us. Thus, as Dewey suggests:

When we experience something we act upon it, we do something; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination. The connection of these two phases of experience measures the fruitfulness of experience. Mere activity does not constitute experience.⁷²

This method of aesthetic experience looks at the shared and communicative function of art as educational and highly democratic. Everything is an 'experience' but here Dewey is elaborating on how we make certain experiences more purposeful or 'consummatory'. Within the context of

⁷¹ Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, New York: Macmillan. Reprinted in MW9 (1916): 104.

⁷² Ibid.

Compassion Project's values, this is where the practice of mindfulness becomes essential. While a mindful practice allows us to become embodied, it also asks us to practice non-judgement. Our nervous systems are not built to experience all situations as consummatory, especially in the context of our crisis culture and 24/7 access to divisive news cycles. The act of slowing down and moving more mindfully within culture is critical for us to be able to show up and engage authentically within our communities.

For Dewey, democracy was much more than a political ideology or comprehensive form of government, rather democracy was a condition for optimal growth. He believed that learning is a social, communal process requiring students to construct their own understanding based on personal experience. Inherited knowledge and tradition relate and contribute to the learning experience. Dewey was engaged with how we don't just tolerate difference but benefit from it – we come to learn from differences, school becomes a place where experience is transformed into learning that enriches life. CP establishes conflict as generative where we can listen and work towards understanding perspectives that may be different from our own. “Dewey’s program means educating the whole person, fostering the virtues of love and faith, encouraging the pursuit of learning, and respecting the dignity and worth of every person.”⁷³ Dewey was foreseeing our multicultural society and what brings us together is the commonality of being human – he believed in a common humanity and that school is a place to prepare for these interactions.

⁷³ Hickman, Larry A. “PRAGMATISM AS POST-POSTMODERNISM.” In *Pragmatism As Post-Postmodernism*. United States: Fordham University Press, (2007): 198.

Dewey rejected the idea that logic, or the theory of inquiry, was a strictly formal discipline complete and devoid of relevance to public affairs. This is the philosophical fallacy of intellectualism that occurs when all of experience is conceived as a form of cognition.⁷⁴

“Education is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.”⁷⁵ David Hildebrand argues, “the engine of America’s political identity was creative experimentation; to fulfill their eventual roles as fully participating citizens, students needed education in habits (imaginative and empirical).”⁷⁶ Dewey called such attitudes and habits “intelligence” and preferred to speak of intelligence action rather than reason.

Intelligence is not the name of a special faculty. Rather, it designates a cluster of habits and dispositions that includes attentiveness to details, imagination, and passionate commitment. What is more essential for Dewey is the embodiment of intelligence in everyday practices.⁷⁷

The success or failure of democracy rests on education because education is most formative of whether citizens develop the habits needed to investigate problematic beliefs and situations and to communicate openly. While every culture aims to convey values and beliefs to the coming generation, Dewey thought it was critical to distinguish between education which instills collaborative and creative hypothesizing and education which incites respect to parochialism and dogma; and philosophy must apply this same standard to itself.

⁷⁴ Granger, David. *John Dewey, Robert Pirsig, and The Art Of Living: Revisioning Aesthetic Education*. New York, NY, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, (2006): 279.

⁷⁵ Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, New York: Macmillan. Reprinted in MW9 (1916): 82

⁷⁶ Hildebrand, David. “John Dewey.” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, November 1, 2018.

⁷⁷ Bernstein, Richard J. *The Pragmatic Turn*, Cambridge: Polity Press. (2010): 85.

Democracy as compared with other ways of life is the sole way of living which believes wholeheartedly in the process of experience as end and as means; as that which is capable of generating the science which is the sole dependable authority for the direction of further experience and which releases emotions, needs and desires so as to call into being the things that have not existed in the past.⁷⁸

For Dewey, the creation of intelligent and responsive habits is the essential condition of an educative experience since many of our habits develop involuntarily as part of sociocultural inheritance embodied through customs and traditions.

Dewey's notion of 'experience' evolved over the course of his career.⁷⁹ Experience is pivotal across Dewey's writings with a focus on philosophical method and metaphysics with three key influences. First, Darwin's idea of nature as a complex aggregate of changing, transactional processes without fixed ends; in this context, experience means the undergoing and doing of organisms-in-environments, "a matter of functions and habits, of active adjustments and readjustments, of coordination and activities, rather than of states of consciousness".⁸⁰ Secondly, James' radical empiricism and the insistence that perspectival experience, including that

⁷⁸Dewey, John, Thomas M. Alexander, and Larry. Hickman. "Creative Democracy" in *The Essential Dewey*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998): 343.

⁷⁹ Initially, experience contributed to his idealism and psychology when he developed instrumentalism in Chicago during the 1890's. After he moved to Columbia, he revised and expanded the concept in 1905 with a historically significant essay, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism". Further developments show up in the "The Subject-matter of Metaphysical Inquiry" (1915) and the "Introduction" to *Essays in Experimental Logic* (1916) which consolidated and advanced his view that "experience" was more than just a way to disprove subjectivism in psychology, but was also factored into metaphysical accounts of existence and nature.⁷⁹ Dewey advanced this account of experience in *Experience and Nature* (1925, revised 1929) with many significant elaborations on experience to follow such as *Art As Experience* (1934).

Hildebrand, David. "John Dewey." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, November 1, 2018.

⁸⁰ Dewey, John. "A Short Catechism Concerning Truth", in *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, New York: Henry Holt and Co., pp. 154–168. Reprinted in MW6 (1910): 5.

called personal, emotional, or temperamental, was philosophically relevant and worth factoring into abstract and logical theories. Finally, Dewey accepted from Hegel experience as manifested in social, historical, and cultural modes. Not only is the self-constituted through experiential transactions with the community, but this recognition challenges the Cartesian model of the simple, atomic self and methods based upon that presumption. Philosophy may start where we start, personally, with complex, symbolic, and cultural forms and then articulate further emergences from them.⁸¹ The further articulation of such experiences are demonstrated in Compassion Project's workshops through art-making and expressing abstract thought and sharing that process in community.

These three major influences, plus Dewey's own discoveries, had convinced him that "experience" was the key to a more cohesive theory of nature and humanity's place within it. Thinking about experience as more than just a system but as a metaphilosophical method, philosophy was not a rational bridge to transcend life, but rather equipment for living. Clarifying what experience meant then assumed the greatest importance for philosophy to gain back its wisdom which might aid survival, growth and flourishing.⁸² It should be noted that the term "experience", both as a term and a concept, has generated much confusion and on-going debate. Dewey recognized this and mentioned it toward the end of his life. In an early draft of a new introduction to *Experience and Nature* in 1951, He expressed a desire to substitute the term "culture" for "experience".

⁸¹ Hildebrand, David. "John Dewey." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, November 1, 2018.

⁸² Ibid.

My growing realization that the historical obstacles which prevented understanding of my use of “experience” are, for all practical purposes, insurmountable. I still believe that on theoretical, as distinct from historical, grounds there is much to be said in favor of using “experience” to designate the inclusive subject-matter which characteristically “modern” (post-medieval) philosophy breaks up into the dualism of subject and object, mind and the world, psychological and physical. If “experience” is to designate the inclusive subject-matter it must designate both what is experienced and the ways of experiencing it.⁸³

Dewey has a positive account of experience in which experience is processual, transactional, socially mediated, and not categorized as rational or emotional. Here there are three additional, positive characterizations; experience as experimental; experience as primary (“had”) vs. secondary (“known”); and experience as methodological for philosophy.⁸⁴ First, experience exhibits a fundamentally experimental character. Dewey observed this in a variety of his educational roles as children’s experiences involve alternating phases of acting and being acted upon. Such phases become “experimental” when agents consciously relate what is tried with what results and eventually understand which actions are significant for controlling future events. “Learning” is the name for the outcome of experience as experimental.

Mere activity does not constitute experience.... Experience as trying involves change, but change is meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with the return wave of consequences which flow from it. When an activity is continued into the undergoing of consequences, when the change made by action is reflected into a change made in us, the mere flux is loaded with significance. We learn something.⁸⁵

Secondly, Dewey did not think experience was primarily known or reflective but rather much is “felt” or “had”. Dewey called such experience direct, primary, or had. “Had” experience

⁸³ Dewey, John. *Experience and Nature*, Chicago: Open Court Publishing (1925): 361-62.

⁸⁴ Hildebrand, David. “John Dewey.” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, November 1, 2018.

⁸⁵ Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, New York: Macmillan. Reprinted in MW9 (1916): 146.

is barely regulated or reflected upon, whereas other experience is characterized by “knowing” or mediation-by-reflection. Dewey labels such experiences as “indirect”, “secondary”, or “known.”

"Known" experience abstracts away from "had" (or direct) experience in purposeful and selective ways because knowing isolates certain relations or connections. In the *Quest for Certainty* (1929), Dewey provides the following description:

Experienced situations come about in two ways and are of two distinct types. Some take place with only a minimum of regulation, with little foresight, preparation and intent. Others occur because, in part, of the prior occurrence of intelligent actions. Both kinds are had; they are undergone, enjoyed or suffered. The first are not known; they are not understood; they are dispensations of fortune or providence. The second have, as they are experienced, meanings that present the funded outcome of operations that substitute definite continuity for experienced discontinuity and for the fragmentary quality due to isolation.⁸⁶

The way Dewey makes the distinction between had/known shows the important step of self-reflection, awareness, and contributes to agency in future dialogue.

Dewey's suggestion of experience as method acts as a warning and a positive recommendation; warning philosophers to recognize that while intellectual terms may seem "original, primitive and simple" they should be understood as the historically and normatively situated "products of discrimination and classification".⁸⁷ "Knowing" is an activity with its own standpoint and qualitative character; it is not an activity standing beyond experience or nature. Intellectual products come from earlier inquiries which would have possessed their own parameters and purpose. To be clear, Dewey is not against theory; he believes that whatever

⁸⁶ Dewey, John. *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action*, New York: Minton, Balch and Co. Reprinted in LW4 (1929): 194.

⁸⁷ Dewey, John. *Experience and Nature*, Chicago: Open Court Publishing (1925): 386, see also 371-72, 375.

theory is eventually devised for a new situation must be checked against ordinary experience.⁸⁸

Dewey's proposed method—the experiential starting point—was a radical attempt to philosophize reflexively. Dewey wrote,

The experiential or denotative method tells us that we must go behind the refinements and elaborations of reflective experience to the gross and compulsory things of our doings, enjoyments and sufferings—to the things that force us to labor, that satisfy needs, that surprise us with beauty, that compel obedience under penalty.⁸⁹

Such a method is truly *critical*, because it forces inquirers to check previous interpretations and judgements against their live encounters in a new situation.⁹⁰ This entails that philosophy as a practice imposes a much more radical and dynamic model of theorizing, one that encounters a much closer transaction with existing practices and problems. This imposition then forces philosophy to engage with new subjects and theories beyond the traditional scope of "problems in philosophy" and to embrace the idea that "the starting point is the actually problematic".⁹¹

The Cartesian position wrongly contends that mind and body are two different sorts of things, and that although the mind is not a thing existing in space, it is enough like such a thing that we can fruitfully talk of mind-body relations, as we would talk of the relations between to different physical objects. Here the realm of mental is not just of inner things but a realm of observable traits, processes, habits, that must be reckoned with, leading to the practice of a type of authoritative reflexivity or agency.

New methods have, moreover, brought with them a radical change in our intellectual attitude and its attendant morale. the method we term "scientific" forms for the modern man the sole dependable means of disclosing the realities of existence. It is the sole

⁸⁸ Ibid. 26.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 375-76.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 364.

⁹¹ Ibid. 61.

authentic mode of revelation. This possession of a new method, to the use of which no limits can be put, signifies a new idea of the nature and possibilities of experience. It imports a new morale of confidence, control, and security.⁹²

This morale of confidence, control, and security is what I would call agency and requires an authoritative self-reflexiveness. Experience and learning from one another's experience give us agency. Dewey believed in a non-foundational agency, where individuals achieve agency by critically examining language's influential ways and places individuals and language in a transactional relationship, meaning a mutually influential interaction. For Dewey, language influences thought through discursive collaborations that occur even when another person is not immediately present. Every creative process involves both the productive activity and evaluative reception.⁹³ Discourse consists of influential ways of believing that individuals collaboratively use to make experiences meaningful. It is a dialogue. A dialogue that creates more ways of understanding through different perspectives and ways of knowing and acting. It requires a self-awareness and reflexiveness in coming to understand your beliefs. It is about the process rather than the product, just like a work of art -- it is about the transactional nature and the social and communitive practice. This type of communal expression, dialogue, and reflection is characteristic of what participants achieve in a CP workshop. Workshops are not a one-time

⁹² Dewey, John, Thomas M. Alexander, and Larry. Hickman. "What I Believe" from *The Essential Dewey*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (1998): 23.

⁹³ Jones, Donald C. "Beyond the Postmodern Impasse of Agency: The Resounding Relevance of John Dewey's Tacit Tradition." *JAC : a Journal of Composition Theory* 16, no. 1 (1996): 93.

event but an exercise that uplifts multiple modalities in practice for the way we interact in future situations. The practice becomes habitual.⁹⁴

Dewey integrates habit deeply into his philosophy. Habit helps explain various dimensions of human experience (biological, ethical, political, and aesthetic) as manifested in complex and social behaviors. Habits are composed of acts and acts unfold in time, beginning with instinct and need. To become a habit, an act-series must possess gradual and cumulative change; such change coalesces one act that leads to the next. When there is a cumulative linking of acts that structure experience, there forms a "habit." Dewey wrote that, "habit is acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response, not to particular acts".⁹⁵ Both past experience and individual perception shape these modes of response, especially through social and linguistic interactions; we call habits shared by groups "customs."

While habits may become routines, Dewey argued against the assumption that they were therefore automatic or insulated from conscious interventions. They cannot be automatic because new environments vary in which the same acts never repeat. Thus, unlike machines, organic habits have plasticity and remain changeable. Dewey argued that habits are "energetic and dominating ways of acting" determining what we do and who we are – "All habits are demands for certain kinds of activity; and they constitute self."⁹⁶ He criticized the notion that habits are like individual possessions, rather habits exist as transactions between organism and

⁹⁴ Gardner, Benjamin, Phillippa Lally, and Jane Wardle. "Making Health Habitual: The Psychology of 'habit-Formation' and General Practice." *British Journal of General Practice* 62, no. 605 (2012): 664–66.

⁹⁵ Dewey, John. *Human Nature and Conduct*, New York: Henry Holt and Co. Reprinted in MW14 (1922): 32.

⁹⁶Ibid. 21-22.

environments; they are not inner forces but functions which make adaptation and reconstruction possible. Habits exist as transactions between organisms and environments, which Dewey calls experience.

Larry Hickman argues that in regard to pragmatism, neither Peirce or Dewey thought that action is the end of inquiry. “The function of inquiry is instead the production of new artifacts, including new habits.”⁹⁷ The poetic and emergent self develops from the relationships and experiences through which is being constituted.⁹⁸ It is a gestalt-like approach to understanding the ways in which we come to know and continue to grow. Measuring human development and accomplishment comes from the habits produced, not merely just ideas or activities. The root of pragmatic metaphor goes beyond theory and practice all the way to production. It is action to praxis, as Compassion Project’s methods will demonstrate.

Pragmatic principles to consider are the primacy of experience, the experimental method of inquiry, the influence of language upon thought, and individual's discursive collaboration with others, and an individual's transactional relationship with language itself.⁹⁹ As this research has developed I am thinking of language, not just as words but as in the way we communicate in general, the habits that we create, and act upon our environments.¹⁰⁰ Experientialism and

⁹⁷ Hickman, Larry A. *Pragmatism As Post-Postmodernism*. United States: Fordham University Press, (2007): 9.

⁹⁸ Pearce, Richard. "The Emergent Self: An Existential--Gestalt Approach." *Existential Analysis* 22, no. 2 *Gale Literature Resource Center* (2011): 383.

⁹⁹ Jones, Donald C. “Beyond the Postmodern Impasse of Agency: The Resounding Relevance of John Dewey’s Tacit Tradition.” *JAC : a Journal of Composition Theory* 16, no. 1 (1996): 98.

¹⁰⁰ As this project develops the role of artifact creation becomes ourselves and the way we move through our ordinary environments. We become the work of art, in a dynamic and transactional relationship with others.

Lingualism have put pragmatism in a dichotomy in which the next generation should trade in our loyalties to classical pragmatism (experience) and/or neopragmatism (language) and attend to what has always been central; action or conduct as Koopman terms it.¹⁰¹ My goal is to reestablish art's roots in the biophysical rhythms of the lived body. This requires a pragmatic form of action. Larry Hickman states,

Pragmatic theory of meaning insists that we treat the whole meaning of a concept not just in terms of its use in a language, but in terms that are overtly experimental and behavioral and in ways that transcend language. The meaning of a concept is the difference it will make within and for our future experience; the meaning comes from action.¹⁰²

For Dewey, the pragmatist self is an individual that exists as an individual only in relation to the connections and communities that enable it to do so. It is an agent within a nexus of social behavior and morality. One aspect about culture that I find essential to understand to aid critical thinking is that by living in culture, we are always participants, observers, and agents simultaneously. This is the constructivist approach that puts emphasis on the necessary social and cultural dimensions of our learning. In the role of participant, we are constrained by the expectations, conventions, norms, and standards that are involved in cultural practices, routines, and institutions. It is necessary to understand that culture gets us before we get it. This involvement frames and often limits our experiences, opportunities of acting, and of observing. We are always participants in culture when we are observers, whether it may be from a distance or self-reflexive. As observers, we still have the freedom to choose between different

¹⁰¹ Colin Koopman's article, "Conduct Pragmatism: Pressing Beyond Experientialism and Lingualism" (2014): 146.

¹⁰²Hickman, Larry A. *Pragmatism As Post-Postmodernism*. United States: Fordham University Press, (2007): 36.

perspectives according to our selective interests. Therefore, the role of observers is always a diversity of perspectives and possible interpretations. However, even as the most deconstructive and constructive observers, we never cease being cultural agents that must respond to the challenges of diverse situations and realize our own intention in cooperation, communication, and conflict with other agents, groups, institutions, and so on. The role of the agent, therefore, refers to aspects of learning by doing in connection with cultural participation. Learning by doing in connection with cultural participation is the essence of schooling and democracy.¹⁰³

"The pragmatist self functions at the fullest when its activities are based on experimental methods and outcomes."¹⁰⁴ Therefore the aesthetic dimension of human experience plays such an important role within the pragmatist account of inquiry. "Dewey would have argued that aesthetic education will emerge as an essential component of global citizenship, as individual selves prepare themselves for broader participation in the new global publics."¹⁰⁵

In consider putting Dewey's theories into praxis, I want to introduce Black Mountain College. Black Mountain College was established in 1933 in rural North Carolina as a progressive liberal arts college. The college's curriculum, organizational structure, and social justice values based on Dewey's pragmatist philosophy.¹⁰⁶ Though short-lived, closing its doors

¹⁰³ Garrison, James W., Stefan Neubert, and Kersten Reich. *Democracy and Education Reconsidered: Dewey after One Hundred Years*, (2016): 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.38

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ While Dewey was not directly involved with the college's foundation and development, he did serve on the advisory council and was involved in the school's fundraising work. Dewey's interaction with the school is documented in 54 pieces of correspondence archived at North Carolina State Western Regional archives and indicates that Dewey's pragmatism was the dominant philosophical framework upon which the organization of Black Mountain College was built.

in 1956 due to financial reasons, Black Mountain gained an international reputation as a center for architecture, literature, music, and dance.

Black Mountain's founders, John Andrews Rice and Theodore Dreier, adhered to Dewey's ideologies of progressivism and educational philosophy by creating an "institution of higher education that would influence the larger community of the United States by preparing citizens for democratic participation in the politics of their nation."¹⁰⁷ They called for a more radically student-centered approach to education that understood learning in terms of "educative experiences" set within a finely tuned environment. Constant reflection, coupled with intelligently directed action was the basis for the general curriculum of Black Mountain College, and students had complete control over the courses they enrolled in. Black Mountain College was a center of study across disciplines from the social sciences to biology, physics, and mathematics though it gained its reputation from its artists such as Joseph and Anni Albers, John Cage, Ruth Asawa, Walter Gropius, and Willem and Elaine de Kooning to name a few.

The college was experimental in nature and committed to an interdisciplinary approach that prioritized art-making as a necessary component of education. The school operated using non-hierarchical methodologies that placed students and educators on the same plane, all participating in cooperative labor such as farm work, construction, and kitchen duties as part of a holistic method of education. The college community was uniquely self-conscious as students and teachers alike viewed their ideas and the decisions they made as relevant not only to their

¹⁰⁷ Fisher, Jonathan. "The Life and Work of an Institution of Progressive Higher Education: Towards a History of Black Mountain College, 1933-1949 by Jonathan Fisher." Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, November 18, 2022.

own small community but to American society more generally. Art continues to be viewed in a variety of fields and its important to consider as lenses to grasp the complexity of the topic.

The approach of Dewey's common faith intertwined with experimental inquiry—draws upon lived experience and constantly renews through open communication. It's a

. . . . passion for imaginative intelligence pursuing moral goods. If it could be appreciated how many celebrated accomplishments were due not to God but to intelligent, human collaboration, then perhaps the idea of community could inspire a non-sectarian, common faith.¹⁰⁸

Dewey's pragmatism, education, democracy, ethics, logic, and psychology all illustrate the importance of primacy of experience as social communicative beings. It's about being in community through the practice of mindfulness, creativity, and dialogue. Dewey believed deeply in the democratic practices of community dialogue and placed the highest value on aesthetic experience. "The idea of art as a conscious idea -- the greatest intellectual achievement in the history of humanity."¹⁰⁹ Art is an experience, not simply an object - it denotes the interaction of maker, object, and its appreciator - the real work of art is the building up of an integral experience out of the interaction of the organic and environmental conditions and energies. Art plays a social and communicative role; not just the transferring of information but at its highest form, it is a way in which people partake of something together at an emotional and intuitive level as a shared experience. Art is reconceived as a means to enhance our lived experience as social beings.

¹⁰⁸ Dewey, John. *A Common Faith*. New Haven: Yale University Press, (1991): 23.

¹⁰⁹ Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934).

The element that Dewey was grasping for is embodiment. He knew what embodiment was but didn't quite have the language for it. Thanks to advances in our understanding of the connection between mind and body, we now understand that they cannot be separated.¹¹⁰ Dewey's theory of experience, especially that of a consummatory experience coupled with pragmatism gives us a framework for an attuned, engaged, expressive, authentic way to go about our ordinary lives. A method for the art of living through critical self-awareness, communication, and embodiment shared in community of our dynamic and ever-evolving human experience. Ultimately Dewey's vision is for a community in which the most optimal potential for human existence is cultivated itself as a work of art, our very own lives as an art form of living morally conscious. Dewey gives us great thoughts about experience, habits, and art but we needed the cognitive sciences to help us understand how these theories are operating. The next chapter will look at the significance of art through many fields such as anthropology, psychology, neuroscience, art history, and philosophy.

¹¹⁰ Embodiment will be explored further in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ART, OUR BIOLOGICAL NEED TO MAKE SPECIAL, AND THE
IMPORTANCE OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Midcentury psychologists like Dewey argued that art was important to the history of humankind because it signaled the emergence of human consciousness.¹¹¹ Recently, advances in both science and the humanities have enhanced our understanding and appreciation of the fine arts. This chapter uses a cross-section of theories from anthropology, social science, psychology, neuroscience, art history, and philosophy to outline an interdisciplinary method for understanding the social role of art, art-making and art-experiencing. Art Education programs have never debated the importance of Dewey's book *Art as Experience* (AAE). Other disciplines would be served recognizing that AAE brings clarity to Dewey's earlier thought where knowledge, or the quest for certainty, is consummatory experience in which intensified meaning that is felt and understood (aesthetic and cognitive) as unifying the parts of the event into a whole. Dewey became my vector for discussing the art, educational psychology, and methods for cultivating a more engaged community. Through my own educational experience and teaching art history, it seemed there was something that could be discovered about the ways we learn through the study of visual literacy. To find that "something" I turned to educational psychology and neuroscience. While I am a humanities scholar, I gained a new understanding of the ways we learn and experience art.

¹¹¹ Solso, R. *The Psychology of Art and Evolution of the Conscious Brain*. Cambridge and London: The M.I.T. Press. (2003): 15.

In this chapter I argue that art is important to the ways we process, and express information and that aesthetic experience matters for the fulfillment of all human experience beyond the production of works of fine art. This chapter offers a history of scholarly interpretations of the art experience; organized thematically rather than chronologically.¹¹² The relationship between perception and how we process information is necessary for understanding what Rudolf Arnheim called “visual thinking.” Anthropological explorations of art and culture have allowed biological connections to be uncovered in the importance of art; here I will address the work of midcentury philosophers Ernst Carrier, Suzanne Langer, and contemporary scholar Ellen Dissanayake who investigated the role of the symbolic in human society. They claimed that humans are creatures who must express themselves through the act of making special or artification.

"Its [artification] origin is traced to proto-aesthetic elements of interactions that evolved in Middle Pleistocene mothers and infants: simplification or formalization, repetition, exaggeration, elaboration, and manipulation of expectation. These operations upon visual, vocal, and gestural modalities were subsequently used by individuals and cultures in creating and responding to their various arts. Artification is a broader human proclivity than art. Unlike other notions of art it does not imply beauty or skill although in its motivation to mark importance, the ordinary is made extraordinary. In its emphasis on preverbal, presymbolic, pancultural, participative, affective, and affinitive aspects of aesthetic cognition and behavior, the artification hypothesis provides further directions to cognitivist and neuroscientific studies in contemporary philosophical aesthetics."¹¹³

¹¹² This chapter discusses art in a very generalized way as there are many more specialized researchers who trace the nuances in art throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Most would agree that the arts are essential and beneficial so this argument itself is neither debatable nor supported by evidence-based research, though I will provide some more recent studies in concluding this chapter.

¹¹³ Dissanayake, Ellen. “Genesis and Development of «Making Special»: Is the Concept Relevant to Aesthetic Philosophy?” *Rivista Di Estetica* 54, no. 54 (2017): 83.

Dissanayanke argues that these proto-aesthetic operations are what artists also do in their various mediums to "attract attention from an audience, sustaining interest, and evoking and manipulating emotion."¹¹⁴

Today, the neuroscience of creativity is a widely accepted field of scholarly inquiry. Robert Solso and Arthur Shimamura's work has been transformative in the way I understand how art is experienced, beginning with the mechanisms of vision, how images are seen and then transmitted, how perception works in detail, and how these mechanisms have evolved our modern way of thinking. Arthur Danto, a philosopher-critic gives a simple, yet thorough account on the perennial question "What is Art".

Humans as Symbolic Creatures of Feeling and Form

Ernst Cassirer, Susanne Langer, Nelson Goodman, and Howard Gardner, to name a few, are thinkers interested in a cognitive, symbolic, approach to the ways in which individuals make meaning in relation to the artistic process. Their works have helped to inform research in the psychology of the arts and cognitive science. Ernst Cassirer was a prominent leader of the Neo-Kantian group who was interested in human cognition and the ways that humans create meaning from interactions with cultural artifacts and symbolic forms. In his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1923-29), Cassirer gives a lucid explanation of the ways the mind operates when exposed to artifacts and cultural forms and how individuals make meaning. He argues that it is not our interpretation of the forms or artifacts that determine our reality, but rather the so-called language they speak that creates our reality. In Cassirer's later work *Essay on Man* (1944) he

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 88.

describes man as a ‘symbolic animal’ who understands the world through the symbolic significance of forms that creates a type of narrative or myth, unlike animals who use their instinct and sensory perception. This interplay of the physical world and the human mind, with ideas, symbols, and concepts later became a source of the inspiration for cognitive scientists.

Suzanne Langer took Cassirer’s complex formulation and applied it to music. She was interested in how musical compositions manage to evoke a particular pattern of emotional responses and what music had in common with our emotions that one could elicit a correspondence between them. She did not have access to our current knowledge of physiology and cognitive neuroscience, but she explored the continuous process of meaning-making in the human mind through the power of seeing one thing in terms of another. In *Philosophy in a New Key* (1941) she put forth the idea that there is a basic and pervasive human need to symbolize, invent meanings, and to invest meanings in one’s world.¹¹⁵ In *Feeling and Form* (1953), Langer continues to develop these ideas into a theory of art in which works of art symbolize states of mind or feelings and the relation between them cannot be explained in terms of any point of reference such as written language. Art for Langer was the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling, rather than forms that refer to material objects or ideas. She distinguished between the open presentational symbols of art and the discursive representational symbols of language, which cannot directly reflect the subjective aspect of experience. Langer's view of language is not far from Ludwig Wittgenstein's logical theory developed in his *Tractatus Logico-*

¹¹⁵ Gardner, Howard. "Philosophy in a New Key Revisited: An Appreciation of Susanne Langer" *Art, Mind, and Brain: A Cognitive Approach to Creativity*, New York: Basic Books. (1982): 48.

Philosophicus (1922), but whereas Wittgenstein stopped on the threshold of the unsayable, Langer argued that “music articulates forms which language cannot set forth.” In other words, art shows what cannot be said.¹¹⁶

In *Feeling and Form*, Langer described a structural homology between the form of an emotion as a neuro-cognitive event and the significant form of the musical composition itself, composed of elements such as tone, pitch, and tempo. These patterns of rhythm, whether complex or simple musical phrases, are what we experience within human consciousness. The subtle contribution Langer made is to argue that, when we listen to a piece of music, we hear it, we have consciousness of its various elements, and we have consciousness of its evolving gestalt-like structure and coherence. But while our mind is paying attention to these sensory details and apprehending the overall structure of the composition within our consciousness, that music is forming a kind of iconic artifact more deeply within our subconscious, a cognitive image of that experience. The exhilaration of a direct aesthetic experience indicates the depth of the human psyche which that experience touches.¹¹⁷ Here Langer footnotes Dewey’s *Art as Experience*, discussing his division between creative imagination and responsiveness from the standpoint of the studio artist and the standpoint of the audience. As Langer describes it, for an authentic aesthetic experience to occur, we must absorb everything via sensory details while at the same time piecing all the various elements together into a symbolic experience – this is precisely what Dewey is after in describing *an experience*. Creative imagination and

¹¹⁶ “Langer's Understanding of Poetry, Music, and Other Forms of Art.” Accessed March 11, 2021.

¹¹⁷ Langer, Susanne. *Feeling and Form; a Theory of Art*. New York: Scribner. (1953): 397.

responsiveness are required from both the artist and audience; both contribute to the symbolic character of the artifact.

Langer's desire to study the mind and its connections with art was rooted in her theory that works of art are representations of human feeling and expression. In *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* (1982) Langer's last book, she constructed a biological theory of feeling which explains that feeling is an inherently biological concept that can be connected to evolutionary genetics. She connected the early evolution of man to how we perceive with the mind today. She explained how early organisms underwent refining through natural selection, in which certain behaviors and functions were developed for survival. Langer describes the body's organs as all operating within a specific rhythm and claimed that these rhythms must cooperate with one another to keep the organism alive. This development, Langer explains, was the beginning of the framework for the central nervous system, which Langer believed to be the heart of cognitive interactions among humans. This bodily element of the rhythm of our central nervous systems while experiencing art, or engagement of our bodies in our environments will be central to my argument linking these earlier theories of aesthetic experience by Langer and Dewey to new ones formed through somaesthetics and embodied cognition.

We are symbolic creatures – the human mind engages with cultural artifacts, symbols, language and various “tools of the mind” as Vygotsky would later call these things. Objects of this sort influence our cognition. We engage with art or objects, and they transform us through aesthetic experience. Langer indicates a semantic term for such an object or artifact of expression is unnecessary; the expression itself is its own form of articulation. This sentiment is a good reminder, as stated in the introduction, that in trying to decipher everything about what makes art

special, we lose that special ineffable quality and minimizes the authenticity of it as a product of human experience. As an art historian, I value exploring the socio-political contexts of the creation of a work, the materials, the conditions, so on and so forth – but as much as I value this type of awareness and critical thinking about an object, I equally value art as a form of expression that is a language all its own. We see a similar tension between the next two additional thinkers: Nelson Goodman and Rudolf Arnheim.

Nelson Goodman was another philosopher who followed the field of cognitivism. By using symbols, he argued, we discover and create the worlds in which we live. The interest humans have in symbols, including artworks, are distinctly cognitive (process oriented rather than experiential) and possess different functions and relations with the worlds in which they refer to. Hence, artworks require interpretation, and interpreting them amounts to understanding what they refer to, in which way, and within which systems of rules known as semiotics.¹¹⁸ Goodman rejects the classical question, “What is art?” in favor of the alluring formulation, “When is art?” In *Languages of Art* (1968) he declares;

Just as an object may be a symbol—for instance, a sample—at certain times and under certain circumstance and not in others, so an object may be a work of art at some times and not in others. Indeed, just by virtue of functioning as a symbol in a certain way does an object become, while so functioning, a work of art.¹¹⁹

Rudolf Arnheim criticized Goodman’s book claiming; “A theory limited to the representation of material objects excludes art totally; for art never denotes material things, although it employs

¹¹⁸ Giovannelli, Alessandro. “Goodman's Aesthetics.” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, August 9, 2017.

¹¹⁹ Arnheim, Rudolf. “Painted Skies and Unicorns: Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols.” *American Association for the Advancement of Science* 164, no. 3880 (Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis 1969): 697.

them at times.”¹²⁰ Here we can see the classic argument about art as imitation and art as beauty and pleasure, in comparison to the Modernist revolution in the twentieth century which I will breakdown further in an upcoming section. Arnheim takes issue with the idea of art as a denotative set of symbols. In Goodman’s theory, every piece of music is reducible to its score and every work of literature is reducible to its text, their notations allow for use to understand them but Arnheim understands that every work of art shares with every phenomenon of nature the property of being irreducible to a set of measurements.¹²¹ Arnheim was a psychologist coming from a European context in where phenomenology was important, whereas Goodman followed the analytical approach typical of the American philosophers at this time.

Phenomenology is an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience or phenomena whereas the analytic method approaches philosophical problems through analysis of the terms in which they are expressed. There is an interesting trend I’ve noticed where analytical philosophers are interested in transferring what they understand about the arts into arts education and production, and those who follow phenomenology seem to focus on reception and what the arts do for us. We also see this departure between philosophical methods in educational models between gestalt-like structuring of constructivism versus behaviorism in the United States that I will discuss further in Chapter 5.

Goodman and Arnheim give us clear examples of these regional differences. Goodman founded Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1976 to study and improve education in the arts. Goodman believed that arts learning should be studied as a serious

¹²⁰ Ibid: 698.

¹²¹ Ibid.

cognitive activity but found that the general communicable knowledge about arts education was zero. Goodman therefore gave the project its name “zero” since that’s where it was starting from. Project Zero took a cognitive view of the arts, viewing artistic activity as involving mental processes as powerful and subtle as those used in the sciences or public policy.¹²² Arnheim on the other hand, who initially shied away from trying to make the arts a scientific endeavor, became increasingly interested in the process of vision and perception. In *Art and Visual Perception* (1954), Arnheim uses science to better understand art, while keeping in mind the important aspects of personal bias, intuition, and expression. He describes the visual process that takes place when people create or look at works in the various arts and explains how the eye organizes visual material according to definite psychological laws. Here we are talking about gestalt-like structures organized through the act of an aesthetic experience. Instead of attempting to relate this work to arts education, Arnheim published *Visual Thinking* (1969) asserting that all thinking, not just thinking related to visual experiences, is basically perceptual in nature and that the ancient dichotomy between seeing and thinking or perceiving and reasoning is misleading. He critiques the assumption that language precedes perception and that words are the building blocks of thinking. It is sensory knowledge that allows for the possibility of language since the only access to reality we have is through our senses. Therefore, artistic expression becomes just one other way of reasoning, of thinking visually.

Though Arnheim’s review of Goodman’s book entitled “Painted Skies and Unicorns” has a somewhat satirical tone, Arnheim does note that he shares with Goodman an impatience for

¹²² “Our First 50 Years: Project Zero.” Project Zero. Harvard Graduate School of Education. Accessed March 11, 2021.

current theories of aesthetics that set a distinction between knowing and feeling, the cognitive and the emotive. While Goodman can see the difference between certain formal characteristics of ‘symbols’ employed, Arnheim reminds us that “works of art do not exemplify. They are statements, not objects. Just as science does, art denotes what it represents by constructs of the mind that reflect selected features of perceived reality by structural resemblance.”¹²³ Arnheim draws the distinction between himself and Goodman by concluding;

Perhaps one could begin by suggesting that science employs and consumes sensory data in order to arrive at the principles governing the operations of physical and mental forces. In art, the sensory data themselves are the ultimate statement because what we are made to see and hear lets us experience the play of forces that govern our existence.¹²⁴

In Goodman’s view, works of art can be viewed as samples of the world. Just a fabric swatch gives us an accurate depiction, certain works of art accurately reflect, literally or metaphorically, important forms, feelings, affinities, and contrasts from the fabric of life.¹²⁵ The function of works of art is to alter the way we conceive of experience and hence to change our attitudes about what is important and what feels right. Goodman himself is reluctant to designate certain artists or works inherently ‘fairer’ than others yet his writing indicates the kinds of criteria he would employ, which does provide us with ways of judging among versions fashioned within each creative domain.

Ernst Gombrich was an art historian in the late nineteenth early twentieth century that saw previous notions of visual style as being too narrow and formalistic in which the visual

¹²³ Arnheim, R. "Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols. Nelson Goodman." *American Association for the Advancement of Science* 164, no. 3880 (1969): 698.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Gardner, Howard. *Art, mind, and brain: A cognitive approach to creativity*. New York: Basic Books. (1982): 63.

properties had been isolated from the more complex human and historical context. While the socio-political context is important for our understanding of a work of art, it doesn't consider artistic creativeness and experimentation. The core of Gombrich's argument was focused on the role of illusion and his fundamental questions explored; how the imagination functions in painting, how it elicits or transforms our psychological urgencies and how aesthetic and moral awareness are related to each other.¹²⁶ Gombrich was less interested in the analysis of stylistic traditions or a longitudinal study of the evolution of a particular group, nation, or period. Rather he wanted to create a diachronic study that concerned itself with a particular moment in time. Gombrich looks at the development of style as cyclical. In Gombrich's view, the artist compares what he has created with what he is trying to create, and by a feedback loop gradually corrects his creation to look more like what he is seeing.¹²⁷ Schemata, designated by the artists' reality plus the techniques and works of previous masters, guide the process. These schemata are the starting points from which the artist begins the process of trial and error, falling into a current style or exhausting this style in the formation of a new one.

Rudolph Arnheim was a perceptual psychologist and art critic who believed artwork is a way of visually thinking and a means of expression to help people understand the world and how to see how the world changes, represented through patterns, shapes, and colors, in one's mind. Gombrich added to this theory of visually thinking through means of art historical analysis and understanding artistic practice and development. The ways in which artists' work changed had

¹²⁶ Podro, Michael. "Obituary: Sir Ernst Gombrich." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, November 5, 2001.

¹²⁷ This process only works for art that is representational.

to do with their environments, physically and socio-politically. Cassirer, Langer, Goodman, and many more began to make links between how human cognition works. These early philosophers asked questions to help define the subject matter and then cognitive psychologists began the process of figuring out ways to study them with a more empirical approach.

The Cognitive Revolution and Creativity

The research pertaining to cognition and the visual arts, the cognitive approach to creativity, and the neuroscience of creativity is vast. At this point, we understand much about vision, perception, cognition in relation to the arts and creativity. Connections between art, mind, and the brain are extensive and important to our understanding of our evolution as a species. Cognitive science has shown that human evolution that our brain has grown larger, expanding the distance neurons travel between our internal and external processing systems. We also have an enlarged prefrontal cortex in which allows for our imagination to explore and ask questions about these internal and external relations. So yes, we interact with art; and it transforms us. I want to use this section to break down what the actual act of experiencing art looks like and consider the role of art in the evolution of the conscious brain. The importance of this section is in understanding that creativity is not just for artists or the artist-type, but a function that humans are innately wired for which has been a part of our evolution.

Robert Solso is a cognitive psychologist whose books have been essential in my understanding of art and the rise of consciousness. *Cognition and the Visual Arts* (1994) is the first systematic study of the connection between the cognitive psychology and its importance to art. Solso reflects on the long relationship between humankind and art, observing that the mind and art are one. A major theme of this book is that the clearest view of the mind comes when we

create or experience art. He considers many topics, all with added pictorial lessons, about how the eye works, how the brain interprets visual art, and how each of us brings to the viewing of art his or her unique perspective.¹²⁸ Solso considers these topics through the evolution of the sensory systems, the relation to brain and vision, eye movements and art, perspective and art, and the perceptual/cognitive aspects of all art; which are topics that touch the human mind.¹²⁹

His second book, *The Psychology of Art and the Evolution of the Conscious Brain* (2003), investigates how the human brain evolved so that art and art appreciation could develop. Drawing on his earlier work, developments in cognitive research as well as anthropology and art history show that consciousness developed gradually with distinct components that evolved over time. Solso describes the neurological, perceptual, and cognitive sequence that occurs when we view art, and the often-inexpressible effect that a work of art has on us by showing us that there are two aspects to viewing art. Nativistic perception is the synchronicity of eye and brain that transforms electromagnetic energy into neurochemical codes which is hard-wired into the sensory-cognitive system. And then there is directed perception, which incorporates personal history and knowledge to the set of our expectations and past experiences. When looking at art through an empirical lens, art is physical material that affects a physical eye and conscious brain. The brain interprets what it sees considering socialized experiences and a long evolutionary history.¹³⁰ Solso suggests four main qualities for the perception of a work of art; (1) Sensory

¹²⁸ I would have liked to include more images in this research project to illustrate certain concepts to the reader/viewer but did not have the time to fully execute this idea.

¹²⁹ Solso, R. *Cognition and the Visual Arts*. Cambridge and London: The M.I.T. Press. (1997): 1.

¹³⁰ Solso, R. *The Psychology of Art and Evolution of the Conscious Brain*. Cambridge and London: The M.I.T. Press. (2003): 13.

(perceptual) characteristics: *What are the physical attributes of this piece?* (2) Psychological characteristics: *What are the psychological aspects of the art?* (3) Scheme-story relationships: *How do I understand this piece through my own point of view?* (4) “Level 3” comprehension of art: *Does this piece touch me in some profound way?*¹³¹ By understanding our perceptions in this way, we begin to understand works and the experience of them in a more meaningful way.

Understanding art is dynamic and can involve all these characteristics and can be quite personal. What I want to illustrate through Solso’s work is that the modern brain, with its specialized processing modules and elaborate networks of neural pathways, evolved over a very long period for the purpose of adapting to a changeable world. The importance in doing this is to emphasize the fact that we are currently evolving. In a culture that is overly saturated with visual imagery, some meaningful, most distracting – we must understand the repercussions that this will have on our future species.¹³² These imperative statements may seem grand in the scope of this study, but the reality is that we have some cultural habits that progress us in a trend of anti-intellectualism compounded by social media and conspiracy theories. We must engage with our surroundings regularly and learn to think more critically. Each time we do, when we experience something, it adds to our memory bank of knowledge.

Arthur Shimamura, was a psychologist who explored the relationships between art and cognitive neuroscience. In *Experiencing Art: In the Brain of the Beholder* (2013), he argues that

¹³¹ Solso defines Level 3 in his concluding chapter that goes well beyond the elementary interpretation of art features and what they mean. Level 3 is a feeling, a cognition. I interpret level 3 as a full aesthetic experience.

¹³² There is a study that I have no longer been able to find that children are learning better, or retaining more information, but repeated scrolls rather from reading left to right. Also thinking about the body image issues that photographic filters are causing for our youth.

there are various ways to approach art, and we can capture the essence of these approaches by evaluating the art of seeing, knowing, and feeling. “The more we understand these aspects of our psyche, the more we gain from our experiences with art. Thus, knowledge—of art, of life, and of ourselves—enables us to break out of our usual way of looking.”¹³³ Shimamura takes the approach that both artists and brains manufacture an experience that is composed of sensations, thoughts, and feelings. As we stroll around a museum, we may ask; *Why do I like this artwork? What makes it interesting? What is the artist trying to say?* While these questions pertain to our aesthetic response to art, Shimamura argues that our brains have co-opted psychological processes used in everyday experiences in the service of driving our experiences to be more aesthetic.¹³⁴ This is what this study is after; How do we turn our attention more in-tune with aesthetic experience of everyday life?

Shimamura provides us with a conceptual framework for experiencing art. In considering the philosophical and scientific approaches to art, he identifies four approaches. (1) a mimetic approach – *How well does an artwork portray realistic scenes?* (2) an expressionist approach – *How well does an artwork evoke emotional responses?* (3) a formalist approach – *How well does an artwork highlight sensations?* (4) a conceptual approach – *How well does an artwork represent thoughts or conceptual statements?* The beholder, as he names them, may consider one or multiple of these approaches, again this process is personal and dynamic. Shimamura argues that if our essential concern is how we experience art, it must be through the beholder’s

¹³³ Shimamura, A. *Experiencing Art in the Brain of the Beholder*. New York: Oxford UP (2013): 255.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

experience which is best understood by considering the way an artwork enhances sensation, knowledge, and emotion (SKE).¹³⁵

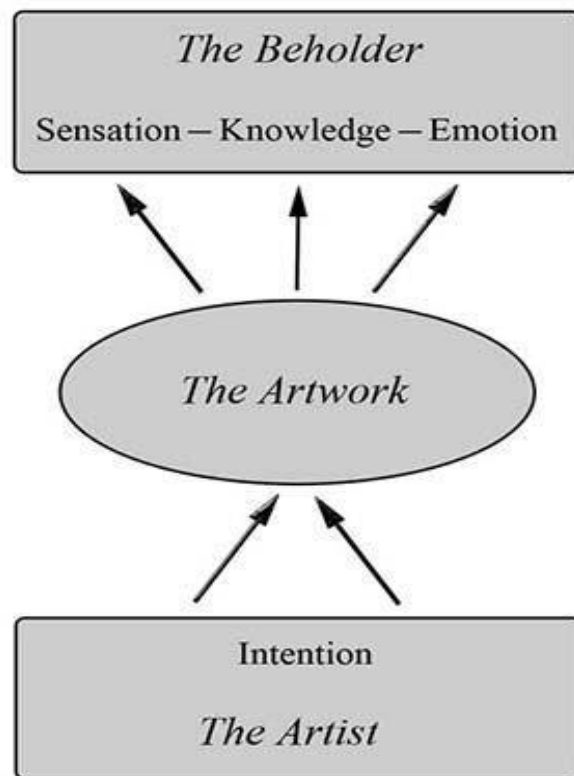


Figure 1. The I-SKE Model of our art experience (adapted from Shimamura, 2012).

¹³⁵ Ibid. 24.

Here I'd like to summarize Shimamura's art of seeing, knowing, and feeling as an approach for understanding our experience of art. Seeing allows us to create a coherent spatial world from an ever-moving jumble of images. Despite the erratic input, our brains can recognize objects, perceive depth, and move about. Our brains, and artists for that matter, learn to create this world by applying the geometry of optics (linear perspective) and rendering shape from shading (chiaroscuro). Our perceptions are not simply impressions of the world as is, we accentuate edges, alter colors, and attend selectively to pertinent objects and locations. Artists do the same in developing the point of view of their compositions. A rather large portion of our brain is geared toward sharpening the retinal image and highlight pertinent features of our visual world.¹³⁶ The art of knowing is guided by our prior experience that guides our perceptions and emotions. Often, we are not even aware that such top-down processing is engaged as our brain apply highly overlearned knowledge in an implicit or unconscious manner.¹³⁷ Our brains know very well how the retinal image changes when we move, how shadows are cast, and what familiar objects look like at various distances.¹³⁸ We also know that a painting is typically on a two-dimensional surface even though it may try and trick us into the illusion of realistic scene. We also know that artworks are created by an individual and our experience is heightened by such semantic knowledge, particularly about the context in which a work was created. From our personal experiences, we apply implicit, semantic, episodic, and cultural knowledge – thus, the more we know, the better we see. I would just like to emphasize this type of critical thinking in

¹³⁶Ibid. 256-57.

¹³⁷ This makes the mind/body dualism that I will discuss later believable, as we don't have to think about the function of many of our bodily systems. Our brains just do it for us.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 257.

terms of understanding the ways in which we come to know something. Almost everyone will have a different experience with a work of art, and it's worthwhile in understanding where that comes from, it helps to create a more authentic aesthetic experience. In the art of feeling, sensations and knowledge intermingle and drive our emotional response.¹³⁹ Experiencing art is a whole brain phenomenon. There is no art center in the brain though there is a division of labor for different brain regions and functions.

Another scholar to consider on this topic is Howard Gardner. Gardner comes from the same school of thought Cassirer and Goodman and works with Harvard's Project Zero previously mentioned. Gardner is a leading cognitive psychologist who has written extensively about human creative processes, particularly those that are manifested in the arts. His book *Art, Mind, & Brain – A Cognitive Approach to Creativity* (1982) pays tribute to the masters that came before him and then applies their thinking into substantial experiments from analyzing a young child ability to learn a new song, Mozart's conceiving of a complete symphony, to the implications for creativity of studies of the brain, brain injury, and the effects of television on a child's imagination. Being that this research project is interested in making the arts more accessible or rather experiences more aesthetic – I will not be diving in this work in depth, but it is worth noting. I would also like to provide further resources here on the neuroscience of creativity as the research is extensive. Anna Abraham disentangles the complex field that is the

¹³⁹ Ibid.

neuroscience of creativity and describes it in an accessible manner, balancing what is known along with critical issues that are yet to be resolved.¹⁴⁰

There are a multitude of books that use affective neuroscience for the purpose of providing the reader with neurally-inspired exercises to change emotional style or engage in more productivity, creativity, etc. While the research in these books is sound, coming from neuroscientists from Stanford and Harvard themselves, they have been written in a less scientific language for the common reader to understand and ultimately come under attack by fellow scientists. This speaks to the difficulties when working blindly in a specific discipline. Two authors to highlight are Shelley Carson, PhD who wrote *Your Creative Brain: Seven Steps to Maximize Imagination, Productivity, and Innovation in Your Life* (2010) and Tara Swart, MD, PhD, who wrote *The Source: The Secrets of the Universe, The Secrets of the Brain* (2019). These women tap into the neuroscience between creativity and illustrate just how we can train our brains to think more creatively or rather unlearn to follow the path of least resistance.¹⁴¹

Biological Need to Make Special

Ellen Dissanayake provides an ethnological point of view by considering art as a behavior. She also refers to this as a bio-evolutionary approach that is concerned with the evolution and development of behavior in the human animal, specifically whether one can identify a general behavior of art that is as characteristic of humankind as tool making,

¹⁴⁰ For further reading see *The Neuroscience of Creativity* (2018) by Anna Abraham and the *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity* (2019).

¹⁴¹ I will discuss these authors in Chapter 5 in relation to the work done in Compassion Project.

symbolization, language and the development of culture.¹⁴² Dissanayanke cites her lived experience as being the primary impetus for her research as she conceived *What is Art for?* while she lived in several non-Western countries including Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and Papua New Guinea isolated away from the Western scholarly milieu. “My life for fifteen years in the “Third World” was the source of many ideas that found their way into my scholarly interests and my activities outside academia.”¹⁴³ She acknowledges the same mystery I have mentioned about art – its indefinability, its multiformity, its intimations of transcendence, that make scientific methods inadequate for understanding it. With its mechanical reductionist rigor, scientific method makes the artist and lover the arts suspicious of grand pronouncements.¹⁴⁴ I am interested in what we’ve learned from science that can aid advocating for the significance art to non-believers.

Dissanayanke reminds us of authentic aesthetic experience in which art seems to speak in ineffable but deeply affecting ways – one should be moved to silence, not explication. “To claim that human beings need art is a proclamation of faith, not a scientific hypothesis.”¹⁴⁵

Dissanayanke has much to criticize about the concept of art that developed during the eighties in Western society. The art world of the nineteen-eighties was a place of artistic diversity and aesthetic contention with a proliferation of approaches that departed from the Minimalism and Conceptualism of the previous decade. Dissanayake believes that we can simply make better sense of understanding art by substituting biology for metaphysics. The goal here is

¹⁴² Dissanayake, E. *What Is Art For?* 1st University of Washington Press ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press. (1988): 6.

¹⁴³ Ibid. xiii.

¹⁴⁴ I would just like to note here that I am guilty of these grand pronouncements. I’m an artist, not a scientist.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. ix.

not to understand a single object alone but to gather knowledge of art as a realm of human activity and experience in relation to one another. This ‘behavior of art’ should compromise both making and experiencing art, making art something people do, and feel. This is considered a universal and characteristic in all human beings, not just the rare or special province of those called ‘artists.’ By calling art a behavior, Dissanayanke suggests that it is a kind of phenomenon whose nature, origin, and history can be made a subject of inquiry without assuming that its products are good or bad.¹⁴⁶

Dissanayanke’s notion of art as a behavior rest on the recognition of a behavioral tendency that she claims lies behind all the arts, in their diverse and dissimilar manifestations.¹⁴⁷ It can be the result of artifacts and activities in people without expressed ‘aesthetic’ motivations as well as the most highly self-conscious creations of contemporary art. This tendency she terms as *making special* is as distinguishing and universal in humankind as speech or the skillful manufacture and use of tools.¹⁴⁸ “Making special” requires intent and deliberateness. One acknowledges a specialness in the expression of a creative idea, embellishing an object, or recognizing that an idea or object is artistic. By making special, we place the activity or artifact in a category that is different from the everyday.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 9.

¹⁴⁷ In the early 20th Century, French evolutionary philosopher Henri Bergson associated the *Homo faber* with “the faculty of making artificial objects”. *Homo Faber* is latin for “man the maker”, *Homo faber* stands for the idea that creativity is an inherent human trait that leads us to make tools, and that we use these to control our environment.

Sharma, K. *An ode to the homo faber*. mint. (2017).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 92.

Dissanayanke takes this concept further in her study of *Homo Aestheticus* (1992) offering three keys to understanding where art comes from and why. The most noticeable is that individuals and cultures vary concerning what they practice and admire. The second key is often called the ‘natural’ (the given) and the ‘cultural’ (the humanly imposed) that has characterized our human species for at least several hundred thousand years. The third important key is the attraction that humans, more than any other species, seem to find in what is unusual and extraordinary, that is, outside the ordinary or everyday routine, so that we tend to go out of our way not just to experience but even to fabricate it deliberately.¹⁴⁹ The arts are one of the most interesting features of human societies; even nomadic people who had very few material possessions usually decorated what they did own, embellish themselves, create languages through symbols, make music, sing, and dance. The universality of making and enjoying art suggests that an important desire or need is being expressed.¹⁵⁰

Dissanayanke claims that by refocusing our perspective to a species-centered theory of art, we can comprehend the predicament of the arts today and “rescue them from all their assailants, those who, variously, would falsely idolize, cynically trivialize, self-righteously limit, philosophically vaporize, or—worst of all—ignorantly dismiss them as frivolous and dispensable pastimes.”¹⁵¹ She is not subtle in her feeling towards the current theories of art and understandably so. Despite the fresh air that postmodernist challenges have provided, she states,

Elitist snobbery and privileged Western chauvinism remain. While one might concur broadly with their diagnosis, that “high” or “fine” art repudiates or

¹⁴⁹ Dissanayake, E. *Homo aestheticus: Where art comes from and why* (1st University of Washington Press ed.). Seattle: University of Washington Press. (1995): xii.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid: xiii.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. xvii.

disregards much that is valuable in human imaginative and expressive activity, one must also agree that those who have found sustenance and even transcendence in their experiences of fine arts have good reason to remain convinced that these sources and occasions are real and valuable. Repudiating the whole of Western civilization is a harsh and rash response to admitted social inequities, so that postmodernist remedies that recommend flushing away the baby with the bathwater can well seem even more misguided than the malady.¹⁵²

The reason I bring this mention of postmodern thought and deciphering art with a “A” or not is because I often find myself conflicted. As a trained artist and art historian, I understand the practice of art, I understand formalism, the elements and principles of art, but what I’m interested in, while at the same time validating a fine art practice, is how an attention to aesthetics, an awareness of art can make us more fulfilled beings. Contemporary theories, like pragmatist aesthetics which I will discuss in the next chapter suggest that an embodied aesthetic way of living as a more humanistic option between analytical and continental philosophies.

At this point in this research, I have provided the reader with a more evolutionary cognitive approach to the arts and creativity but it is also necessary to examine philosophy’s role in providing theories of art. Behavioral definitions may fail to recognize art as universal and biological because, like the larger society which they inhabit, they consider art to be ‘useless’ or created in the service of sociopolitical ends. In comparison, the opposite camp of art lovers may recoil from biological and universalities explanation of art as a result of their own mistaken adherence to a now untenable tradition of considering the mind and body to be separate, art as the spirit of the soul, that distorts science into something mechanistic and reductionist.¹⁵³ These arguments encapsulate a larger debate occurring in the late twentieth-century America between

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid. xiii.

those who wish to preserve the heritage of philosophy from a Greco-Roman, Western Civilization or those who consider it inadequate.

John Dewey also questioned the nineteenth century conception of the museum, finding museums an elitist symbol of nationalist empire. This research is not about fine art, or who decides what objects are worthy of display – it is about that fact that these objects have significant meaning in the human experience. Arthur Danto states, “We have entered a period of art so absolute in its freedom that art seems but a name for an infinite play with its own concept.”¹⁵⁴

What Art Is

The art question is one that has been a constant topic of intrigue dating back to ancient Athens. I’ve discussed Goodman’s ideas of *When is Art?* and Dissanayanke’s *What is Art for?* but I have yet to address the question of *What is Art?* While I will use this section to lay out basic trends – it is impossible to give a comprehensive account of art and aesthetics. The truth is artistic theories have been an accepted part of the western tradition for a long time based on speculations by those interested in trying to tackle the topic. As we enter the twenty-first century we know far more about the functions of perception and cognition than ever before. I am weaving together the information that has led me to understand the ways in which I know art and aesthetics and will conclude this chapter with the theory, Dewey’s theory that seems the most applicable to modern life. John Dewey moves away from notions of German Idealism and expresses that we no longer have to spiritualize the notion of art, it is a part of our everyday

¹⁵⁴ Danto, Arthur C. *What Art Is*. (2013): 209.

lives. All in all, these aesthetic theories tend to isolate art from life and what I'm interested in is the fulfillment of life through aesthetic experience.

It is widely accepted that Plato defined art as imitation, whether this is a theory of mimesis or merely an observation is hard to say. In attempting to develop his ideal society, Plato was eager to get rid of the artists on the grounds that art was of minimal practical use. In the platonic map of human knowledge, art was placed at the lowest possible level along with reflections, shadows, dreams, and illusions.¹⁵⁵ The study of aesthetics was not developed until the eighteenth century and the thought here was that art contributed to beauty and as such gave pleasure to those with taste. Beauty, pleasure, and taste can be attributed to Kant in *The Critique of Judgment*. After Kant, and David Hume before him – there were Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and John Dewey, all delivering admirable but conflicting theses. While we can agree that there is some art that still exists as imitation, the advent of Modernism and photography revolutionized the way in which we think about art. The twentieth century saw many transitions in the ways in which we begin to understand cognition and artistic traditions. Sparking the movement into Modernism, artists no longer wanted to create an illusionary space to trick the eye into a three-dimensional world but rather they acknowledged their materials at hand, paint on canvas. The Impressionists were the first to shake up the standard of art; with pigments now available in tubes they were able to move outside the studio and paint outdoors. In effect, their works began to focus on the ways in which light reflected the atmosphere and with advancements in color theory, began to paint the feeling of seeing.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. ix.

Art historians have typically addressed art primarily from political and social points of view thinking about change over time, while philosophers speak of art as an essential category and have focused almost exclusively on how we define a work of art and the role played by art in world institutions in that definition as to what is valuable about art.¹⁵⁶ Postwar social critic Theodor Adorno's theory of art centers on the idea of artworks as social monads, that occur between the categories of import and function. Adorno's account of these categories distinguishes his sociology of art from both hermeneutical and empirical approaches. A hermeneutical approach would emphasize the artwork's inherent meaning or its cultural significance and downplay the artwork's political or economic functions. An empirical approach would investigate causal connections between the artwork and various social factors without asking hermeneutical questions about its meaning or significance. Adorno argues that, both as categories and as phenomena, import and function need to be understood in terms of each other.¹⁵⁷ Danto describes philosophy as almost immune to the impact of what, since the work of Derrida and Foucault, is called Theory—a body of largely deconstructionist strategies that has impacted nearly every branch of the humanities. With deconstruction being a method for demonstrating the way in which society has advanced and reinforced the interests of special groups, often driven by activist agendas we now see aesthetics separated into more specialized

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 136.

¹⁵⁷ Zuidervaat, Lambert. "Theodor W. Adorno." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, October 26, 2015.

areas. Ultimately this turned those interested in art that was largely defined by identity politics.

We see this further developed in *Art and Aesthetics After Adorno* (2010).¹⁵⁸

In *The Art Question* (2003) Nigel Warburton states, “The most plausible hypothesis is the ‘art’ is indefinable not just at the exhibited level, but at the relational non-exhibited level, too.”¹⁵⁹ He follows the analytical trend of aesthetics beginning with Clive Bell’s formalism, R.G. Collingwood’s expressionism, Wittgensteinian denials of the possibility of definition, George Dickie’s Institutional Theory, and Jerrod Levinson’s intentional-historical definitions. While all flawed theories, they are intimately tied to the period in which they were written. This does not preclude learning from insights which may be relevant and important in understanding historical context and art historical analysis. Bell gives us the common denominator of art as significant form, Collingwood argued that this common core of art was its peculiar emotional expression, drawing on Wittgenstein’s insights into the nature of language, art is a term that cannot be defined by a common denominator, and Institutional Theory begins to define art historically.

Danto argues that despite varied approaches, a work of art is always defined by two essential criteria: meaning and embodiment, as well as one additional criterion contributed by the viewer: interpretation. I’m fine with this. The concept of embodiment is crucial as this research progresses and I’m not here to create a new theory. I also agree with Solso and Shimamura’s breakdown mentioned previously. Ultimately aesthetic experience is personal and dynamic and there are many aspects to consider in the process, none of which are exact. Most of these

¹⁵⁸ For further reading see Bernstein, J. M. *Art and Aesthetics after Adorno*. Townsend Papers in the Humanities; No. 3. Berkeley: Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California, 2010.

¹⁵⁹ Warburton, Nigel. *The Art Question*. London; New York: Routledge, (2003): 121.

theoretical notions of art, separate art from existing in real life. That is why Dewey's thoughts seem so profound.

Art as Experience

John Dewey wrote *Art as Experience* in 1934 in which he observed that the more art is admired, the more it is isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life-experience.¹⁶⁰ Dewey's theory is an attempt to shift the understandings of what is important and characteristic about the art process from its physical manifestations in the expressive object to the process in its entirety, a process whose fundamental element is no longer the material work of art but rather the development of an experience. An experience is something that personally affects your life. The rational should not be separated from the instinctual. Such a change in emphasis does not imply, though, that the individual art object has lost significance; far from it, its primacy is clarified: the object is recognized as the primary site for the dialectical processes of experience, as the unifying occasion of these experiences. Through the expressive object, the artist and the active observer encounter each other, their material and mental environments, and their culture at large.

When Dewey wrote *Art as Experience*, the prominent aesthetic theories could be described as formalism and expressionism; formalism found its origins from Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790) that said art aspired to pure form and it didn't have any purpose. Aesthetic here

¹⁶⁰ John Dewey. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 4.

means without ulterior purpose, or I would say function.¹⁶¹ In this conception, art was ultimately about only itself as a play of imagination; “art for art’s sake” as some would say. Here art functioned to lift one’s daily existence into an aesthetic cloud of contemplation.¹⁶²

Expressionism by contrast saw art as the outpouring of the inner vision of the genius, especially in terms of communicating. Dewey’s aesthetics offers an alternative view, one broad enough to accommodate the insights of formalism and expressionism. Here I’d like to breakdown some key features of Dewey’s *Art as Experience* into the following topics; (1) approaching art without the “museum attitude”, (2) the roots of art in “the live creature”, (3) consummatory experience, (4) the work of art versus the art product, and (5) the role of art in society.

Dewey clearly indicates in his opening pages that the growth of capitalism has been a powerful influence in the development of the museum as the proper home for works of art and that these museums are, among other things, memorials of the rise of nationalism and imperialism.¹⁶³ However, Dewey’s purpose is not to engage in an economic interpretation of the history of the arts, much less to argue that economic conditions are either invariably or directly relevant to the perception and enjoyment of works of art. He has no quibble with museums, they are appreciated because that is where we can go to see works of art. Dewey played an important role on the board of The Barnes Foundation and pays much gratitude to his relationship with

¹⁶¹ I believe all art has a function, we may not need to call it utilitarian, but it functions even if it is a form of expression, it’s function as a method of release that creates its own mysterious language in its experience.

¹⁶² Alexander, Thomas. “Dewey’s Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Experience”. *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1. Art 9. (2016): 63.

¹⁶³ Dewey, *Art as Experience*. New York: Penguin, (1934): 6-8.

Albert C. Barnes, even dedicating *Art as Experience* to him.¹⁶⁴ It is not the museum that is a problem to Dewey, it is the manner in which the whole definition, sense of, and meaning of ‘art’ versus ‘Art’ has been appropriated by those who want to point to artwork in a museum and proclaim it to be of greater value. Dewey’s argument is “to indicate that theories which isolate art and its appreciation by placing them in a realm of their own, disconnected from other modes of experience, are not inherent in subject-matter but arise because of specifiable extraneous conditions.”¹⁶⁵ His point here is about the danger of aesthetic theories that inclines us to think of art as a collection of physical things. The real work of art is the way the art object, or product using Dewey’s terminology, interacts with its audience. Heidegger makes this same point, that art lies in the “working of the work” more than simply being a “thing” as a physical thing.¹⁶⁶

Another objection that Dewey takes up with the museum conception of art is that objects filling museums were not originally intended to be seen there. They were artifacts in the life of a culture, not dead and lifeless but charged with meaning and a part of a community’s shared way of existence.¹⁶⁷ Dewey thinks these contexts, of how an object initially functioned, are important in grasping the nature of art. Art historians would agree – function, materials, technique, are essential elements for understanding a work’s historical context. ‘Art’ arises in the way human

¹⁶⁴ For further reading on Dewey’s relation to Barnes and the museum see Margaret Hess Johnson. "John Dewey's Socially Instrumental Practice at the Barnes Foundation and the Role of "Transferred Values" in Aesthetic Experience." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 46, no. 2 (2012): 43-57.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 9.

¹⁶⁶ For further reading see Martin Heidegger’s essay “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1935-37, published 1950, and revised 1960).

¹⁶⁷ Alexander, Thomas. “Dewey’s Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Experience”. *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1. Art 9. (2016): 64.

beings express what gives meaning and value to their lives, even where the culture does not have either the idea or a word for ‘art’.¹⁶⁸ Aesthetics, in Dewey’s sense, is in the lived experience that the product of art has, both for the artist and for those who are able to interact with those works of art in order to achieve a meaningful experience. This moves us to Dewey’s concept of “the live creature.”

Dewey’s philosophy always came back to the idea that we are living organisms who are dynamically and rhythmically interacting with our environments. We, are also not “things.” Our bodily involvement with the world pervades our unconscious experience and appears on the dim horizon of consciousness as a pervasive qualitative tonality or mood.¹⁶⁹ Our relationship with the world is not stable; at one moment we may be thriving and at another suffering, this is the ebb and flow of our dynamic experience rhythmic to our environment. Dewey reminds us that life is precarious, and whenever order and stability have been achieved, values preserved, meaning attained, this experience is fraught with poignancy.¹⁷⁰ This gives experience a vibrancy and tension in which “these biological commonplaces are something more than that; they reach to the roots of the esthetic in experience.¹⁷¹ Art is born in this middle ground of dynamic rhythm of life as a means of expression and communication. Indeed, the role of tension in experience of heightened vitality of meaning often leads artists to cultivate their work, again as expression,

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. Bodily involvement will be an important aspect of Somaesthetics in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁰ Dewey has close personal knowledge of this having lost two of his children to disease and his older brother in a tragic accident involving scalding water. For further reading here see Robert Westbrook’s biography on Dewey *John Dewey and American Democracy* (1991). This information also links to notions of compassion, which is an essential element of this project as one of the applied humanities with Compassion Project.

¹⁷¹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 14.

communication, a cathartic form of release. It is the rhythmic highs and lows of our living experience that are essential for creative completeness. Of course, the counterpart to this in human existence is that a great deal of modern life is compartmentalized so that the fundamental need for the aesthetic experience is not fully realized, hence the impetus for this research. Art itself is proof that human beings can deliberately organize material in order produce aesthetic experience, and my argument is that we need to take notice and appreciate this heightened vitality of aesthetics more frequently to embrace the evolutionary biology of our being as aesthetic creatures. This leads us to then ask, what is aesthetic—or, in Dewey’s terminology, a consummatory experience?

While much of the human experience is fragmentary and unfulfilling, there are instances that are considered a consummatory experience, which is the sort of experience that is inherently fulfilling. T. Alexander describes this as, “the energies driving the experience are not dissipated but established as organization and reach closure.”¹⁷² I’d like to take a moment here to ground this concept into the overall framework of this dissertation. The basis of my argument is that aesthetic experience matters and if we acknowledge that we are biologically geared to be aesthetic beings and bring aesthetic appreciation and awareness into our everyday lives – we will ultimately have more fulfilling experiences, or as Dewey would say, a consummatory experience. This is not to say that every experience must be happily harmonious, but quite the opposite. The highs and lows in the rhythm of life are what add to our experiences. The more we engage with objects, our bodies, our environments, and ultimately think about them – we create

¹⁷² Alexander, Thomas. “Dewey’s Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Experience”. *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1. Art 9. (2016): 65.

more organizational structures in our brain, we have more data, more experience to pull from in a given situation. Dewey uses a storm at sea, the rupture of friendship, or a nearby accident as examples of consummatory experiences. What they all have in common is intensified meaning that is felt as unifying the parts if the event into a whole.

In such experiences, every successive part flows freely, without seam and without unfilled blanks, into what ensues. At the same time, there is no sacrifice of the self-identity of the parts. A river, as distinct from a pond, flows. But this flow gives a definiteness and interest to its successive portions greater than exist in the homogenous portions of a pond. In an experience, flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries what went on before, each gains distinctness itself. The enduring whole is diversified by successive phases that are emphases of varied colors.¹⁷³

These characteristics may be found in all types of experiences and Dewey identifies an experience, where the key thing is the underlying quality that emotionally pervades the whole and gives a sense of closure or resolution at the end. This experience of thinking Dewey cites as moral action where the function of value judgments is to guide human conduct.¹⁷⁴ There are both doing and undergoing as in all experience, except here they are experienced in relation to each other.

Dewey's terminology of an "art product", reserving "art work" for the actual "working of the work." He says, "The actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience."¹⁷⁵ In making this claim, Dewey finds a way to accommodate both residing notions of aesthetics, formalism and expression. Expression is not to be thought of as something internal being

¹⁷³ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 36.

¹⁷⁴ The next chapter will be dedicated to this topic; moral imagination, understood broadly to include conscious and unconscious bodily motion, observation, reflection, imagination, judgment, and affective responses. There are three levels of conduct: impulse, habit, and reflective action.

¹⁷⁵ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 1.

expressed of the artist but rather expression is an interactive process in which the actual medium of the work must come to embody and transmit a perceptual process. This medium, whether its words, paint, clay, or what have you, communicates a process of tension, resistance, resolution, structure. Much of artmaking is about problem solving, it always has been. Even a work that claims an expressive nature went through a process in which the final product shows a resolution. Once this product is made it either becomes a basis for consummatory experience or not, that is in the eye of the beholder as it were, and the artist now becomes a member of the audience. We can see here that form for Dewey is linked with the idea of process. It is not some static underlying structure that we are supposed to somehow discern. Form is rather how the art product organizes its energies to lead to an experience, it's how the various components work together toward the end of an experience.

In concluding Dewey's *Art as Experience*, we must acknowledge his conception of art and democratic life. One of the main reasons Dewey thought art was important was that it could show that we were able to reorganize the world to embody the direct experience of meaning and value that by nature we seek.¹⁷⁶ It thus provides a moral lesson to anyone who says that fatalistic acceptance of our generally alienated and unfulfilled existence is the only wisdom. Ultimately Dewey's vision was for a community in which the most optimal potential for human existence is cultivated itself as a work of art, our very own lives as an art form of living morally conscious. This is yet another reason why the museum conception of art conceived during Dewey's time, is problematic as it sees art as an escape from life, rather than viewing it as a revolutionary form

¹⁷⁶ Alexander, Thomas. "Dewey's Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Experience". *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1. Art 9. (2016): 66.

that calls us to restructure the ways in which we know. As a mode of communication, Dewey says art as achieving the most that we can hope for; not just the transferring of information but at its highest form, it is a way in which people partake of something together at an emotional and intuitive level. It becomes, in Dewey's phrase, a shared experience.¹⁷⁷

In concluding this chapter, I'd like to remind the reader that I am looking at many theories across multiple disciplines to layout the ways in which I have come to understand the significance of art, visual thinking, perception, interpretation, and overall aesthetic experience. The theories that strengthen my argument are that we are symbolic creatures, we have the biological need to want to make special, perception and cognitive science have exposed us to many wonders of the interrelationships between art, mind, and brain throughout our evolution, we are currently evolving and embodied skills of experience to help us do so. Theories for the significance of art and the importance of aesthetics for our human experience that are generally accepted though not easily supported with evidence. I have discussed art in a very general way as art has looked very differently across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Chapter 5 will provide more evidence-based research on such topics.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 67.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEWEY'S AESTHETICS REINTERPRETED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The purpose of this chapter is to reestablish John Dewey's ideas within the realm of the twenty-first century. With the revival of Dewey's previously misinterpreted ideas, this chapter will demonstrate how *Art as Experience* can be interpreted and applied after a more systematic approach to Dewey's philosophy when aesthetics has been considered central. It is necessary to state some liberties I am taking here. Given the extensiveness of Dewey's work, it would be a herculean task to try and cover it all, especially within the context that I'm already presenting in terms of the significance of art and the evolution of the conscious brain. The *Collected Works of John Dewey 1882-1951* contains thirty-seven volumes organized by the Early (5 volumes), Middle (14 volumes), and Later (17 volumes) years. Electronically published by the Center for John Dewey Studies at Southern Illinois University Carbondale in 1996, there has been a revival of his ideas, especially in contrast with post-modernism. While the publication of these works has much to do with this revival, Dewey's thought was also given another outlook by the work of neopragmatist philosopher, Richard Rorty.

I mention Rorty's work, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) and *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), as it sparked a renewed interest in Dewey, along with Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger, to invoke a crusade against foundationalism. This created a new conception of Dewey as a proto-deconstructionist. While one can be thankful of this resurgence of Dewey's ideas, Rorty played fast and loose with what he knew of Dewey and his

ultimate goal was to critique the whole project of analytical philosophy.¹⁷⁸ This did not include any mention of Dewey's aesthetics which is central to understanding his work. In a way, Rorty took Dewey out of the realm of classical American philosophy and opened his work to scholars working beyond those analytical limits, though Rorty's analysis was deeply bifurcated. He presented the "two Dewey reading" that there was the 'good Dewey' who engaged in cultural criticism and the 'bad Dewey' who frequently succumbed to his roots in Hegelian metaphysics.¹⁷⁹ While Rorty can claim responsibility for the development of neopragmatism in response to the postmodern ideas of Derrida, it is analytical in nature and infers that the meaning of words is a function of how they are used, rather than the meaning of what people intend to describe. Where pragmatism moves through experience, neopragmatism moves through language, and experience is my focus here.

Another reason for this resurgence of Dewey's work is the neglect of his later works on aesthetics by many academics. Scholars felt that Dewey's effective career as a philosopher had reached its end by the nineteen-thirties and found his writings inadequate and lacking the systematic precision and linguistic prerogatives of the growing analytic movement. Consequently, his turn to aesthetics in his later career went largely unnoticed. The work that is imperative for this research has been done by Thomas Alexander. Alexander contends that the role that *Art as Experience* and Dewey's treatment of aesthetic experience is essential in understanding what Dewey was after in much of his work and challenges the "two Dewey

¹⁷⁸ Alexander, Thomas M. *The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*, (2013): 2.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 3.

reading” by going back to Dewey’s primary concern, the philosophy of experience and understanding it in terms of aesthetic experience.

As a man who could be considered the most actively involved and widely read professional philosophers in early twentieth century, it is a shame that Dewey was basically written off as the scapegoat for the failures of the progressive education movement. It’s ironic as much as Dewey warns of the limitations of binary thinking, all those who have looked at Dewey’s work have compartmentalized his thoughts within their own agenda. As such, much of Dewey’s work has been misread and applied haphazardly. Dewey was a pragmatist who lived those values. He was constantly restructuring his belief systems with what he was learning and experiencing from his environments. Dewey had foreseen issues with technology, multiculturalism, and threats to democracy.¹⁸⁰ Democracy, for Dewey, was not the state of our republic but the means of continual growth.

Dewey also looked to reconstruct an existing language then develop a new one. He wanted his philosophy to transform the culture itself, and so he attempted to co-opt its language. In doing so, Dewey’s genuinely novel ideas were translated back into the preestablished habits of

¹⁸⁰ Threats to our democracy can be seen today in examples of the insurrection on the capitol on January 6, 2021, and the 2020 election fraud deliberations. For further reading see; Dave, Dhaval, Drew McNichols, and Joseph J. Sabia. “Political Violence, Risk Aversion, and Population Health: Evidence from the US Capitol Riot.” *Journal of Population Economics* 35, no. 4 (2022): 1345–84.

Pennycook, Gordon, D.G. Rand. "Examining false beliefs about voter fraud in the wake of the 2020 Presidential Election." *The Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review* 2, no. 1 (2021).

understanding, where they were deemed false or trivial.¹⁸¹ A prime example is “*experience*” at the core of all Dewey’s thought. Experience to Dewey meant, “a process situated in a natural environment, mediated by a socially shared symbolic system, actively exploring and responding to the ambiguities of the world by seeking to render the most problematic of them determinate.”¹⁸² In its simplified Deweyan sense, experience is our shared cultural inhabitation of the world. Here, art and aesthetic, which are typically on the fringes of philosophical inquiry become central and customary.

When this research began, I was determined to coin a term ‘dynamic evolutionary naturalism’ as to what it was that Dewey was after. This term is really just another word for culture, which Dewey later mentions as the term he should’ve used instead of experience.¹⁸³ This a strong term with the addition of my analysis of the biological need for the arts and what it has done and is doing for us neurobiologically, though my purpose here is not to theorize but rather to lay out why aesthetic experience matters for our human nature.¹⁸⁴ A collection of essays in Thomas Alexander’s latest work *The Human Eros Eco-Ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*

¹⁸¹ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, (1987): xiii.

It seems important to mention here that I’ve been unintentionally defining my use of some terms such as: creativity, imagination, aesthetics, art, experience, holistic – this study should show that they can’t be limited to a linguistic definitions. In the same manner, I know that this could be a serious criticism, but in Dewey-fashion. I am not committed to a certain discipline that demands the isolation of a term.

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³ Alexander, Thomas M. *The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*, (2013): 5.

¹⁸⁴ This project merely scrapes the surface of the work to be done here. As Ellen Dissanayake states “To claim that human beings need art is a proclamation of faith, not a scientific hypothesis.”

(2013), attempts to explore what he calls ‘aesthetics of human existence’ in terms of an ecological, humanistic naturalism.¹⁸⁵ This includes his interpretations of Dewey’s philosophy, with aesthetic experience as its central theme, with the thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson and George Santayana. In this work Alexander also establishes connections with Asian philosophy, especially Buddhism, and with Native American wisdom traditions with an overall trajectory of contextualizing ideas of pragmatism and naturalism within a broader and deeper philosophy of experience. While this work is exhilarating, for my purposes of prioritizing Dewey’s aesthetics through an American Studies lens, it has come to much later in this research and is much broader than the scope of this project. It also may shed light on my assumption that what we’re beginning to see in philosophical trends is a myriad of beliefs from eastern philosophy about the mind and body translated into the western tradition.¹⁸⁶

This chapter aims to demystify Dewey and understand his ideas in a way that is applicable to our contemporary culture. Scholars frequently note that Dewey was ahead of his time in his thinking though he couldn’t quite articulate it. I will move through the work of Thomas Alexander centralizing aesthetic experience in Dewey’s work and discuss a new field of interdisciplinary study developed by Richard Shusterman called somaesthetics. Somaesthetics, as a discipline, combines Dewey’s pragmatist ideals with aesthetic experience into an embodied art

¹⁸⁵ “Aesthetics of existence” is also a phrase used by Foucault.
Alexander, Thomas M. *The Human Eros : Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*, (2013): 1.

¹⁸⁶ For further reading see He, Ming Fang. "Exploring an East-West Epistemological Convergence of Embodied Democracy in Education through Cultural Humanism in Confucius-Makiguchi-Dewey." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 48, no. 1 (2016): 36-57.
Also, Jim Garrison, Larry Hickman, and Daisaku Ikeda. *Living as Learning: John Dewey in the 21st Century*. Cambridge, MA: Dialogue Path Press, (2014).

of living. This element of embodiment is essential in moving forward as I introduce the work of Antonio Damasio. As a project in the applied humanities, it must be reminded that I want to make this work applicable. What does an embodied art of living look like? Much of this work gets into ethics and imagination and will be discussed within the context that aesthetic experience is important and necessary in our everyday lives. I believe that attention to aesthetics in the ordinary, a critical art historical analysis, can help us understand and communicate across diversity. Understanding that we have a biological need to make things special and acknowledging that, we can understand the vast realities of everyone's unique experience and learn from it. Continuous growth and life-long learning; embodied aesthetic experience.

There is a tendency to simply dissect the meaning of Dewey's words without really knowing the man himself. Robert Westbrook provides the most comprehensive intellectual biography of John Dewey. Rorty claims, "This book will do a great deal to make Dewey more available and plausible, and to help his writing shape the imagination of a new generation of Americans."¹⁸⁷ Westbrook provides an in-depth analysis of major episodes in Dewey's career including his conflicts with other prominent intellectuals of his time. I've already stated that Dewey is a complicated and elusive figure, this dissertation will not be a comprehensive study of all things Dewey but rather a reimagining of his work regarding aesthetics. In applying what I've illustrated in the previous chapters, it is important to understand how our histories, what is stored

¹⁸⁷ Westbrook, Robert B., and American Council of Learned Societies. *John Dewey and American Democracy*. ACLS Humanities E-Book. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, (1991): back of book. Rorty quoted in *New Leader*.

in our memory bank of experience conscious or subconscious, plays a role in how one understands something.

Thomas Alexander

The primary task of Thomas Alexander's work in *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience & Nature: The Horizons of Feeling* (1987) is to undertake a systematic approach to Dewey's philosophy. Instead of providing a survey of the numerous topics of his thought such as ethics, inquiry, education, and so on, Alexander investigates the aesthetic dimension of experience, which he considers the central guiding thought to all Dewey's philosophy. In short, Alexander claims; "That when we explore experience which has been shaped into an aesthetically funded process, into "*an* experience," we will discover Dewey's paradigmatic understanding of experience. And this, in turn, may lead to a more coherent understanding of the rest of Dewey's philosophy."¹⁸⁸ In considering experience as artistically shaped and aesthetically funded also gives us Dewey's paradigmatic understanding of meaning. Instead of taking scientific discourse or formal logic as constituting the paradigms of meaning and communication, Dewey selects art and the aesthetic. Alexander claims that this is radical and relatively ignored theme in treatments of Dewey's philosophy.

By focusing on instrumentalism, Dewey was read as a proto-positivist who sought to reduce meaning to scientific procedure. Set within this framework, not only was Dewey not saying much differently from his fellow philosophers of the time, but he wasn't saying it nearly

¹⁸⁸ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, (1987): xiii.

as well. Dewey does give emphasis to the idea of experimental inquiry when he comes to treat the problem of knowledge, but it must be noted that Dewey located the problem of human knowledge within a richer context of the project of human life. His treatment of knowledge is a process of learning rather than a body of facts which indicates his understanding of science as an artistic and creative enterprise.¹⁸⁹ Dewey explicitly selects art and aesthetics as constituting the paradigms of meaning and communication over scientific discourse and formal logic.

To the aesthetic experience, then, the philosopher must go to understand what experience is. For this reason, the theory of esthetics put forward by a philosopher is a test of the capacity of the system he puts for to grasp the nature of experience itself. There is no test that so surely reveals the one-sidedness of a philosophy as its treatment of art and esthetic perception.¹⁹⁰

The first task that Alexander undertakes in developing his argument attempts to lay, what he calls the Pepper-Croce thesis to rest.¹⁹¹ Dewey's aesthetics have been subject to much criticism and the main premise being that he relied more on keeping up with idealism rather than his professed naturalistic empiricism.¹⁹² He insists that critics such as Pepper, Croce, and Douglas have misunderstood Dewey, and that Dewey himself contributed to this misunderstanding by his vague, stylistic untidiness, and tendency to use common sense language

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. xiv.

¹⁹⁰ Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 274.

¹⁹¹ This comes from the work of Stephen Pepper (1939) who complained that it was not truly pragmatist and that Dewey had reverted to an earlier Hegelianism and Benedetto Croce (1948) who was a Hegelian and saw many similarities between in his work and accused Dewey of lifting his ideas.

¹⁹² Alexander notes here that the term 'idealism' is an obviously a name for a group of family resemblances rather than a precisely defined concept. The same holds true of 'naturalism'. By idealism he means any philosophical position which interprets reality ultimately in terms of the category of self, through a self-activity of perceiving or knowing. Naturalism is taken to mean any philosophy which attempts to connect phenomena of human existence to larger processes in the universe.

in expressing hard and complex philosophical insight. Dewey's ideas of aesthetic experience as it is developed in *Art as Experience* is not a "confused welter of pragmatist and idealist notions."¹⁹³ The issues exposed by the Pepper-Croce thesis are two-fold; one with respect to the development of Dewey's ideas and the other with the systematic nature of his mature philosophy. The first claim that Dewey's aesthetics relies subversively upon certain idealist assumptions is not farfetched considering Dewey began philosophizing in the Hegelian mode and continued to do so until his mid-thirties. Dewey began to abandon this sort of absolute idealism as he focused on developing his instrumentalism without further thought about the higher stages of Spirit.¹⁹⁴ From the start of his career, Dewey was concerned with developing a philosophy which would treat experience in all its richness, complexity, and ambiguity without forcing it into a reductionistic schema. This is what had initially attracted Dewey to idealism rather than the scientism of British empiricism or the dogmatic moralism of Scottish realism.¹⁹⁵ In his original concern for articulating a theory of experience, Dewey realized his Hegelian roots would not be satisfactory though there is ultimately still a Hegelian essence to his mature thought. Alexander argues that because similarities exist between Dewey's early idealist writing, it is here that we see the

¹⁹³ Mitias, Michael H. "BOOK REVIEWS: Alexander, Thomas M. "John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling" (Book Review)." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46, no. 4 (1988): 526.

¹⁹⁴ When referring to instrumentalism, I mean pragmatism. Dewey preferences the term instrumentalism in his own work, therefore that is the terminology that Alexander follows. Pragmatism considers words and thought as tools and instruments for prediction, problem solving and action, and rejects the idea that the function of thought is to describe, represent, or mirror reality. These instruments of thought = instrumentalism.

¹⁹⁵ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, (1987): xvi.

original demand for a theory that could treat experience as fully as possible and illustrates the importance of interpreting Dewey's mature thought.¹⁹⁶ The search for an adequate aesthetics of experience is what drives the development of Dewey's philosophy.

The other issue that the Pepper-Croce thesis exposed is a more wide-ranging problem of whether Dewey's mature philosophy is troubled with a double allegiance to idealism and naturalism. Dewey's metaphysics of experience is an area of his thought that does involve several issues in terms of the relation of experience to nature, the status of knowledge, and the proposed aims and methods of metaphysics. Here, once again, if we turn towards the importance of aesthetic experience as Alexander reiterates over and over, Dewey's metaphysics articulates a philosophical theory that attempts to give a comprehensive and critical view of the human project of making sense. The principle of continuity is the key to Dewey's metaphysics and the underlying idea in his conception of "*an* experience." In connecting this with naturalism, Dewey successfully allowed for the realization of human meanings, values, and ideals as genuine possibilities of nature, avoiding a reductionistic naturalism by promoting emergentism.¹⁹⁷

In short, Alexander explains that Dewey came to see that idealism does not capture the wholeness of experience, and so betrays the logic of life leading Dewey to develop his mature theory of experience. He restates Dewey's position; experience is neither subjective nor objective. It is both immediate and mediated where knowing is not the only mode of experience

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ This concept of emergence will be necessary as this study unfolds looking at adrienne maree brown's *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (2017) as a praxis of moral imagination in the next section.

and the act of knowing transforms its object.¹⁹⁸ Dewey replaces the attempt to ground metaphysical dualisms with the task of describing the generic and pervasive traits of existence.¹⁹⁹ Here Alexander concentrates on explicating Dewey's account of the continuity of experience and nature, and the qualitative uniqueness of all experience/nature transactions. Commitment to the continuity and the intrinsic interpretation of experience and nature allows Dewey to escape traditional metaphysical labels and problems, though many critics do not agree. The qualitative uniqueness and immediacy of experience allows Dewey to point to how experience outstrips knowledge, and to how the development of a method of experience makes possible the qualitative enrichment of experience.²⁰⁰

Based on this discussion, Alexander considers at length Dewey's theory of meaning. It is this theory that is a "vital link connecting [Dewey's] aesthetics to his general philosophy of experience" but oddly an aspect of Dewey's thought that has received relatively little attention.²⁰¹ Alexander begins by locating Dewey's position between the admittedly distant extremes of mechanism, wherein meaning is an exact code of signals; conventionally adopted and imposed upon nature, and idealism; wherein communication is the concretization and self-

¹⁹⁸ Here I would like to remind the reader of what was learned about perspective in the previous chapter from Robert Solso's work. We have a nativistic perspective and a directed perspective. This is essentially what Dewey is speaking of here before this type of cognitive science existed.

¹⁹⁹ Stuhr, John J. "Thomas M. Alexander, "John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling" (Book Review)." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 2, no. 3 (1988): 238.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 239.

²⁰¹ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, (1987): 119.

realization of Spirit.²⁰² Alexander tries to point out the middle ground of these positions in discussion several key components of this view. He begins by explaining that for Dewey the act is the irreducible unit of meaning.²⁰³ An act involves habit, impulse, and emotion, and is always an embodied act. The precondition and medium of this action is culture.

Ultimately culture is nothing else than all those symbolic modes of shared participation which constitutes the world. In one respect, culture simply is a general body of shared habits which make coexistence possible. Culture is rooted in the lived body. But it reflects powerful generalized habits which appropriate the body and make it a part of a complete event, the traditions which bind the community.²⁰⁴

When members of this community succeed through language-permeated practices in realizing shared meanings in conscious experience, aesthetic experience is possible. In this sense, Dewey views art as the process of experience civilizing itself or making itself meaningful.²⁰⁵

It should be taken into serious consideration that *Art as Experience* is a book about life and looking at Dewey's account of 'experience' in the larger corpus of his work, especially in *Experience and Nature* (1925) where Dewey provides a detailed and profound treatment of experience and how it reveals the nature of man and the world. Alexander admits that the main

²⁰² Stuhr, John J. "Thomas M. Alexander, "John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling" (Book Review)." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 2, no. 3 (1988): 240.

²⁰³ This is what Dewey inherits from fellow pragmatists like Charles S. Peirce and William James who offer pragmatist accounts of meaning, defining the meaning of a belief in terms of action, conduct or practice.

²⁰⁴ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, (1987): 151.

²⁰⁵ Stuhr, John J. "Thomas M. Alexander, "John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling" (Book Review)." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 2, no. 3 (1988): 239. This insight will be important in relating Dewey to the applied humanities in the next chapter where community action demonstrated in the Compassion Project allows for an aesthetic experience.

ideas of Dewey's early aesthetics concerning experience, meaning, feeling, imagination, perception, and the end of art were fundamentally Hegelian in their conception but this conception, however, underwent a radical change after Dewey formally broke away from Hegelianism in 1903.²⁰⁶ Philosophers such as George Santayana, Richard Bernstein, and many others explored how Dewey could escape the charge of naive empiricism or absolute idealism. To meet this charge directly, Alexander argues that experience, for Dewey, is not composed of discrete data or categories obtained prior to or during the event of experiencing nature; it is a functional whole. The fundamental character of this whole is growth and development.²⁰⁷ Nature and experience are not identical; they are continuous, and the concrete structure of this continuity is perspective: "a perspective is simply the focused realization of articulation of an organized general, an interpretive stance of activity, or a 'compartment' toward the situation; it is a seeing-as, the dawning of a significant aspect within the field of meaning."²⁰⁸

Mitias claims that unfortunately, neither Dewey nor Alexander shows how this concept explains the meaning and possibility of continuity between experience and nature. We are instead given the idea of situation as an example of how continuity works in action. "Situations are *ousiai*" Alexander states.²⁰⁹ Ousia is a Greek term that means true being, entity, essence,

²⁰⁶ Ibid. 526. For further reading on Dewey's Hegelian departure see Alexander's chapter "Logic of Life" page 40, Dewey's Shift Away from Idealism. To see how Dewey uses Hegel's dialectic as a form of problem solving and for his pragmatist analysis of Hegel see Christophe Point, and Jean-Baptiste Vuillerod. "Thinking the Problem: From Dewey to Hegel." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 55, no. 4 (2019): 415-28.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. 527-27.

²⁰⁸ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, (1987): 98.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 104.

substance. As such, situations are the fundamental realities which are the ultimate basis of philosophical understanding. My immediate thought here is since when does philosophy give us a sense of understanding?²¹⁰ Anyways, they [situations], are moreover “the basis for understanding aesthetic meaning.” Aesthetic quality emerges from “the qualitative aspect of situations.”²¹¹ A situation is essentially a developing whole in which a human being participates in, or experiences, the world in a certain way. Every element of experience is transactional in character, whether it is thought, emotion, self, sensation, body, or any part of the natural environment is dynamically and organically interrelated. This organic interrelatedness is the basis of the qualitative whole which distinguishes the situation as “*an* experience”. Accordingly, a situation is not a monad but a creative and developing whole essentially related to the larger environment within which it takes place.²¹²

There are numerous criticisms to Dewey’s work which I do not find necessary to exhaust. If we must claim philosophical allegiance to one -ism for the extent of our careers, the criticisms

²¹⁰ Much of this argument gets into the notions between an ‘act’ versus a ‘situation’ versus an experience. It’s awful, philosophically dense, uninteresting, and incredibly irrelevant to Alexander’s argument or Dewey’s for that matter. Mitias writes in a very arrogant tone and it is clear from his conclusions he has no awareness of art or the aesthetic. The second defect that Matias identifies is that Alexander has not elucidated Dewey’s explanation of the ontological statue or essential identity of the artwork. He asks, “if in the aesthetic situation the artwork is a dynamic process, and if the perceiver and this work form a dynamic, organic, and developmental whole, what happens to the artwork itself? A distinction is made between the finished product and the artwork – what is the essential identity of the artwork? Is Dewey forced into a sophisticated form of cultural relativism?”

²¹¹ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, (1987): 104.

²¹² Mitias, Michael H. "BOOK REVIEWS: Alexander, Thomas M. "John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling" (Book Review)." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46, no. 4 (1988): 527.

stand relevant, but for the most part just adds to the evidence that most scholars felt that Dewey's effective career as a philosopher had reached its end by the nineteen-thirties and, consequently, his turn to aesthetics in his later career went largely unnoticed. The classification and compartmentalization of culture into isolated disciplines or subjects routinely takes place in educational discourse. This compartmentalization produces an under-examined representation of the complex and dynamic relationships between the arts and sciences, and between the humanness in the development of knowledge and culture. Basically, the criticism is that *Art as Experience* was not truly pragmatist and that Dewey reverted to an earlier Hegelianism. Pragmatism emphasizes that experience is dependent on the environmental context while idealist aesthetics is committed to a harmonious theory of beauty grounded in the subjective. As a scholar of American Studies, I immediately see the parochialism of these compartmentalized structures of thought confined to the boundaries of their -isms. It's problematic and has led to an incredibly narrow understanding of John Dewey. This is yet another reason why Dewey is a prime candidate for American Studies analysis. Rather than labeling him as a philosopher, I consider him a public intellectual who was working in a variety of domains that allowed him to put theories to the test, adapt, and evolve. He infused public issues with lessons found in philosophy and integrated discoveries made via public inquiry back into his academic theory. This practice-theory-practice rhythm powered every area of Dewey's intellectual enterprise and perhaps explains why his philosophical theories are still discussed, criticized, adapted, and deployed in many academic domains today.²¹³

²¹³ Hildebrand, David. "John Dewey." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, November 1, 2018.

In chapter four, “The Embodied Mind,” Alexander presents a reasoned and insightful analysis of the ground of meaning. He begins by stating, “Although our century has been preoccupied with the question of meaning, perhaps because so much of modern life threatens to be meaningless, many of the dominant theories would have done well to begin where Dewey did and reflect deeply about the nature of experience and the relation of human beings to the world before elaborating their conceptual refinements.”²¹⁴ The threat to modern life being meaningless is further explicated in Berlant's work *Cruel Optimism* (2011).

A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. It might rest on something simpler, too, like a new habit that promises to induce in you an improved way of being. These kinds of optimistic relation are not inherently cruel. They become cruel only when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially. All attachment is optimistic, if we describe optimism as the force that moves you out of yourself and into the world in order to bring closer the satisfying something that you cannot generate on your own but sense in the wake of a person, a way of life, an object, project, concept, or scene. But optimism might not feel optimistic. Because optimism is ambitious, at any moment it might feel like anything, including nothing: dread, anxiety, hunger, curiosity, the whole gamut from the sly neutrality of browsing the aisles to excitement at the prospect of "the change that's gonna come." Or, the change that is not going to come: one of optimism's ordinary pleasures is to induce conventionality, that place where appetites find a shape in the predictable comforts of the good-life genres that a person or a world has seen fit to formulate. But optimism doesn't just manifest an aim to become stupid or simple - often the risk of attachment taken in its throes manifests an intelligence beyond rational calculation.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, (1987): 119.

²¹⁵ Berlant, Lauren Gail. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, (2011): 1-2.

In this chapter we are told that the locus of meaning is act, and by ‘act’ we should understand the “concrete, functional, transactional whole through which the various phases are understood as integral organic parts and which, in turn, is realized by them.”²¹⁶ Meaning is the realization of the pervasive quality which dominates a situation and gives its identity as a particular experience. The intuition of the meaning which emerges from this whole situation is what distinguishes aesthetic experience from other type of experience. Herein lies the significance of Dewey’s claim that philosophers must go to aesthetic experience if they seek to understand experience as such, mainly because it is in this sort of experience that we discover the largest number of possibilities which constitutes the structure of experience as such.²¹⁷

Alexander concludes:

Human beings inhabit a world. That is, we participate in shared universes of meaning and value which have been realized through human activity. This transformation of the powers of nature into expressive media giving shape and significance to human life is ultimately what Dewey means by ‘art’. Art, in other words, is nothing else than the quest for concretely embodied meaning and value in human existence. The theme of art is life appropriated for its creative and expressive possibilities. The fine arts are but special instances of this fundamental human activity – special because they are highly successful if the moral taught by the fine arts were applied to the entire range of our social and personal existence, the result would truly be “the light that never was on sea or land” to which Dewey frequently refers.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Ibid. 124.

²¹⁷ Mitias, Michael H. "BOOK REVIEWS: Alexander, Thomas M. "John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling" (Book Review)." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46, no. 4 (1988): 527.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 269. Poem quoted in footnotes on page 27.

I have presented cognitive elements into this study because they inform the ways in which I could visualize and come to understand particular functions. From a Deweyan standpoint, it is important to keep experience from always being treated as a form of cognition, or even primarily as a form of cognition. One needs to articulate a position where the larger issues of human meaning and value contextualize the pursuit of knowledge – it is not an individual pursuit but understanding how these individualized congruencies fit within the whole, the community. Knowledge is only possible because we can respond to the world as an enacted project in which meanings and values can be won, lost, and shared. This is the fundamental impulse of human beings engaging with the world, with a heightened sense of meaning and the realization of value that Dewey is illuminating by aesthetic experience. The primary demand is for experience to grow in a dynamic but coherent way. The aesthetic marks the realization of the impulse for wholeness rendered conscious through the expressiveness of a medium transformed through human activity. Therefore, when one comes to treat aesthetic experience for Dewey, the tendency of philosophy is to displace aesthetics for epistemology and reflects the dualistic nature of culture that displaces art from life. Because of this, the search of aesthetic experience initially must ignore works of fine art and consider that the origin of art is not to be found in the desire to be housed in a museum but instead, that art originates when life becomes fulfilled in moments of intelligently heightened vitality. This is the consummation of the event, when the potentialities of experience are intentionally utilized toward such a complete end and the sense of its own meaning becomes intrinsically present. This is what Dewey calls “*an* experience.” In “*an*

experience”, we genuinely come to inhabit the world; we dwell within the world and appropriate it in its meaning. The human impulsion for meaning and value is manifestly fulfilled.²¹⁹

The next set of research that develops from Alexander’s analysis and considers the body in relation to Dewey’s instrumentalism. Dewey criticizes the sort of behaviorism which sees the live body as a passive or reactive stimulus-response mechanism. The body is better regarded as the center of life activity, as a developer of experience, the medium of exploration within an environment. Because human beings are social, we require a shared world that allows for common ends to be articulated and for cooperative activity to be regulated so that may be attained. Symbolic interaction arises from this need and meaning originates in the act of communication. Communication is a process involving members as participants who understand their role as such; individuals only become aware of their individuality through a social context. Each contributes to the communal whole and the theory of meaning is the struggle to make the world coherent. It is an on-going process of trying to make sense and the activity of communication is a constant process of interaction, adjustment, determination, and development. Rather than meaning existing in fixed categorical structures and syntax laws, Dewey looks toward the narrative and expressive modes of communication. Here the body is trained to become a medium for expressive activity; the body becomes cultured or so-called civilized by the education of its talents. As the body becomes encultured, as Alexander coins the term, culture

²¹⁹ Alexander, Thomas M., and John Dewey. *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature : The Horizons of Feeling*. SUNY Series in Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, (1987): xix.

becomes embodied. The body is the event of meaning, consciousness and must be understood functionally within this transactional process.

Moral Imagination and Emergent Strategy

Pragmatism originated as a movement in the eighteen-seventies which sought to clarify meaning in terms of action. While there was a tendency in pragmatism to interpret consequentialism in a positivistic sense, it was systematically avoided by its main developers, Peirce, James, Mead, and Dewey, because they were sensitive to the creative, the temporal, and the experimental dimensions of experience.²²⁰ As a result, the meaning of action in pragmatism involved a recognition of the important mode of understanding whereby the actual was reinterpreted and reconstructed in the light of the possible. Pragmatism treats imagination as the capacity to understand the actual in light of the possible which is intrinsically linked to the view of experience and action temporally on-going, transformative events. Imagination is a creative exploration of structures inherited from past experience which thereby allow the future as a horizon of possible actions, meanings, to guide and interpret the present.²²¹ Imagination is manifest as the growth and continuity of meaning. It is the transformation or reconstruction of experience in a changing world which nevertheless admits of general stable features. As a phase of action, imagination is an essential feature of environmentally engaged rationality or intelligence, as Dewey would term it. This concept of imagination had immense consequences

²²⁰ Alexander, Thomas M. "Pragmatic Imagination." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 26, no. 3 (1990): 326.

²²¹ Alexander, Thomas M. "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rorty toward a Postmodern Ethics." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 29, no. 3 (1993): 372.

for any theory of knowledge and in effect, changed the “theory of knowing” into a “theory of learning.”²²² This also had a fundamental influence on what would constitute moral reason and the aims of ethical theory.

Moral imagination can be conceived as a process of aesthetic perception and artistic creativity in the pragmatist conception of ethics. It is impossible to ignore ethics in this study; ethics matter and more importantly, they’re conceived creatively and imaginatively. Ragain (2021) argues that a new aesthetics of environment “reorients critical discourse away from aesthetic autonomy, transforming questions about judgment into questions about ethics, and specifically about an ethical relationship to environment.”²²³ Additionally, the continued work of Thomas Alexander and Steven Fesmire convey why all of this is necessary for the fulfillment of our human experience.

The work of *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (2017) written by adrienne maree brown stands as an example of how these imaginative moral ethics function as a practice. Emergent Strategy was initially a way of describing the adaptive and relational leadership model found in the work of black science fiction writer Octavia Butler and others. Inspired by Butler’s explorations of our human relationships to change, this book is a radical self-help, society-help, and plant-help designed to shape the future we want to live. Change is

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ragain, Melissa. *Domesticating the Invisible: Form and Environmental Anxiety in Postwar America*. University of California Press, Oakland, CA. (2021): 7.

Aesthetic autonomy means the freedom to choose between the values of “the message of form” or “the message of content” creating a place for Art for art’s sake and art with a social message to both exist.

constant. The world is in a continuous state of flux; a stream of every-mutating, emergent patterns. Whether brown knows this or not, this is much of what Dewey's theory is based on. The principle of continuity is the key to Dewey's metaphysics and the underlying idea in his conception of "*an experience*." In connecting this with naturalism, Dewey successfully allowed for the realization of human meanings, values, and ideals as genuine possibilities of nature, avoiding a reductionistic naturalism by promoting emergentism.

Brown's book invites us to feel, map, assess, and learn from the swirling patterns around us to better understand and influence them as they happen. She claims it to be a "resolutely materialist 'spirituality' based equally on science and science fiction, a visionary incantation to transform that which ultimately transforms us."²²⁴ The book itself is creatively formed through essays, bulleted points, definitions, links to nature, poetry, and spell work. Emergent strategy then grew into plans of action, personal practice and collective organizing tools that account for constant change and rely on the strength of relationship for adaptation with an attention to biomimicry and permaculture.²²⁵ This evolved into strategies for organizers building movements for justice and liberation that leverage relatively simple interaction to create complex patterns, systems, and transformations—including adaptation, interdependence and decentralization, fractal awareness, resilience and transformative justice, nonlinear and iterative change, creating more possibilities.

²²⁴ Brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2017): back of book cover.

²²⁵ Biomimetics is the imitation of the models, systems, and elements of nature for the purpose of solving complex human problems. Permaculture is a system of agricultural and social design principles centered around simulating or directly utilizing the patterns and features observed in natural ecosystems. Ibid. 23.

In describing these elements in relation to nature, fractals are the relationship between small and large – how our miniscule actions have ripple effects out into the large whole, practicing what we preach by living our values.²²⁶ The ripple of compassion that is practiced from CP's workshops outwards into the greater community is our highest hope in achieving the organizations goals. A fractal is a never-ending pattern, infinitely complex that are self-similar across different scales. They are created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing feedback loop – a process in which Dewey would consider the forming of a habit. Intentional adaptation is how we change; how we live and grow and stay purposeful in the face of constant change does determine both the quality of our lives, and the impact that we can have when we move into action together.²²⁷ Interdependence and decentralization define who we are and how we share. There are many definitions of interdependence, but brown chooses a reciprocal relation between interdependent entities (objects of individual groups).²²⁸ We see this all the time, biologically in relationships between plants and animals in which they are mutually reliant on each other. Decentralization is the dispersion or distribution of functions or powers. The delegation of power is an important tool considering the nature of competition in our capitalist society. When we separate our individualized ego out of the process, we can use intelligence gathered from multiple sources for solutions and decisions, this is collaboration, and ultimately where ideas are generated. We must embrace our complexities – Dewey would agree

²²⁶ This is a guiding principle of Compassion Project that will be better illuminated in the next chapter.

²²⁷ Brown, adrienne maree *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2017): 69.

²²⁸ Ibid. 83.

here. The nonlinear and iterative are the pace and pathways to change. Transformation doesn't happen in a linear way but rather in cycles, convergences, and explosions.²²⁹ Resilience discusses how we recover and transform – how do we shift into a culture in which conflict and difference is generative?

There is much to unpack from this work about liberating relationships, radical honesty, the practice of authenticity, acknowledgement of dynamics and continual growth, and in understanding ecosystems rather than monocultures. More than a book, it is a practice and strategy for an authentic way of life that creates more possibilities. And from everything I understand about Dewey and his beliefs on aesthetic experience and continuity of naturalism – it aligns wholeheartedly with his concept of emergentism.²³⁰

brown describes the current iteration of emergent strategy as:

. . . . ways for humans to practice being in right relations to our home and each other, to practice complexity, and grow a compelling future together through fairly simple interactions. Emergent strategy is how we intentionally change in what's that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated world we long for. And maybe, if I'm honest, it's a philosophy for how to be in harmony and love, in and with the world.²³¹

For Dewey, human beings are cultural creatures caught up in a dynamic interplay with their organic surroundings and their communicative systems. These latter are the cultural symbols and

²²⁹ Ibid. 105.

²³⁰ I know that terms like 'align' and 'wholeheartedly' are not objectively academic and do not hold much ground in such a study, but as this research progresses, you will see it's not just an objective study of experience but it holistic in nature, meaning its authenticity and the heart behind it matters.

²³¹ Brown, adrienne maree *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2017): 24.

habits which are passed on and developed from generation to generation which radically transform human existence. brown explains:

At this point, we have all of the information we need to create a change; it isn't a matter of facts. It's a matter of longing, having the will to imagine and implement something else. We are living in the ancestral imagination of others, with their longing for safety and abundance, a longing that didn't include us, of included us as enemy, fright, other.²³²

It is the human capacity to learn rather than know which so impressed Dewey.

Furthermore, the quest for knowledge and for cognitive certainty is not, in his view, the ultimate agenda for human living. We act to realize on a deeper, aesthetic level a sense of meaning and value in our very existence. Knowledge may play a crucial role in this, but in the last analysis, for Dewey, we are creatures seeking a kind of dynamic, embodied fulfillment which goes far beyond generating mere propositional attitudes and other abstractive cognitive needs. As active beings, we are in constant touch with the possibilities of our situations. Indeed, this is Dewey's definition of intelligence: to see the actual in light of the possible. This is also his definition of imagination. Imagination is rooted in the organic embodiment of our existence and flowers in our highest consciously articulate moments.²³³

This is why action was such a fundamental issue for the pragmatists. It was not that they wished to glorify utilitarian "practical" activity over against theory; rather it was through understanding action as a temporally complex event, an event with actualized past and possible future interweaving in the transitional points of present, that one managed to show the integration of theory and practice in the process of existence itself. In this analysis, the role of

²³² Ibid. 21.

²³³ Ibid. 384-5.

imagination becomes pivotal, for it is a phase of activity, that phase in which possible activities are envisaged in relation to our own situations, thereby amplifying the meaning of the present and creating the context from which present values may be criticized, thus liberating the course of action itself.

Meaning becomes consciously embodied when action undergoes reconstruction through the art of imagination.²³⁴ This is why art is such a significant form of activity for Dewey. The artist strives to make each moment of the creation of their work meaningful selected option which contributes toward the meaning of the whole. A great work of art exhibits 'choices' in terms of being especially meaningful; other choices simply would not have done so well.

Alexander states that both the analytic and the phenomenological trends of thought were destined not only to supplant pragmatism but to shape the areas of concern and emphasis of those continuing to develop pragmatism so that where it survived it dwindled to being mainly a theory of cognition and scientific method or was only regarded as a meager approach to the 'lived experience' in comparison what that taken up by continental theories.²³⁵ Due to Dewey's maddening vagueness and sweeping vistas, his ideas are often left unsubstantiated and confused and the frontiers opened up by the pragmatic movement soon became forgotten and ignored.

Alexander proposes, largely because of the sense of failure of the 'Anglo-American' tradition, to reduce human experience to a logical or narrowly cognitive procedure, and the story of phenomenology seems to be ending up with that intellectual house of mirrors known as

²³⁴ Alexander, Thomas M. "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rorty toward a Postmodern Ethics." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 29, no. 3 (1993): 339.

²³⁵ Ibid. 327.

deconstructionism, that a more adequate theory of understanding is still available through pragmatism, though it's in need of development.²³⁶

Imagination was often conceived of as a spontaneous, undisciplined faculty at odds with the fixed rules laid down by reason. Because of this assumption, those philosophies which sought to extend beyond the traditional view of rationality and truth, were inclined to look toward transcendental interpretations of reason and to develop dialectical or unexperimental methodologies. We see Kant's critical philosophy and its idealist inheritors take this path, which led to Husserlian phenomenology, Heidegger's phenomenological ontology, and Gadamer's hermeneutics. Alexander poses the question, "What if imagination establishes continuity with existing habits, revealing their capacities to grow meaningfully and give fulfillment and direction to them?"²³⁷ Intelligence would be an art of seeing the actual in light of the possible and of discerning possibilities by developing dynamic structures in experience. It would be imaginative, and imagination would be primarily exhibited in the dynamics of social communication and cultural expression than in a private, internal subjectivity. This, of course, is exactly what Dewey's theory of experience offers.

To clarify the connection of imagination with the previous research on the significance of art from Chapter 3, I want to stress the importance of understanding Shimamura's understanding of perspective through the art of seeing, remembering that we have nativistic and directed perceptions. While the first is our initial response, keeping in mind that it is not a mirror image of the object we're viewing as it is in the world, but a rendering of that object given the

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid. 384.

interworking of our cones and rods that accentuate edges, alter colors, and attend to selectively pertinent objects and locations. And our direct perception pulls from our previous experiences and memories to make sense and reorganize this new input into our memory bank of experience. When imagination occurs, in the simplest sense, the neural pathways are extended into more complex networks allowing for more webs of interconnectedness in our ways of knowing. Understanding the way perception works is not the only element to emphasize here but also the importance of art historical practice. Taking notice of the materials used, the techniques used to render, the formal elements and principles of the design, the overall content, and the socio-political context in which the object was made and now presented. By implementing this cognizance, we have more clarity about the ways in which we come to know something and an awareness that it may be experienced completely differently the next time considering our bodies placed within the context of a different environment. Imagination emerges as the need for habit to expand and integrate itself with the whole body of behavior and uses educated habits developed in the domain of social interaction. As Alexander reminds us:

It is important to note here that imagination is intimately connected to perception, action, and intelligence. Imagination is not the negation of the perceptual present for a fictitious image. It symbolizes for us the meaning of possible activity. The capacity to interpret a situation in terms of possibilities in turn requires an organized body of experience upon which to draw. The richness of background of habits is, the more nuanced and complex our perception of the world is.²³⁸

Imagination can generate new values integrated through social activity therefore the primary aim of moral imagination is the discovery of new integrative values. Morality is concerned with the

²³⁸ Alexander, Thomas M. "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rorty toward a Postmodern Ethics." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 29, no. 3 (1993): 387.

growth of meaning through action which is the core of Dewey's theory of ethics as a continuous process of integration. This process is not one which can be guided merely by duty, pleasure, self-interest, or any other single end but must consider a plurality of values, however incommensurate, must be integrated. That dynamic integration is character.

A moral imagination requires experience, a body of developing habits, education, and ability to understand the way other people think and live, and the ideal of discovering through cooperative action solutions to conflicts. It is the ability to see the meanings at issue in a given situation, it is the moral imagination which thus continually strives to create those ideals which offer the possibility of directing situations towards ends which are most fulfilling. This is what it is to have a moral character.²³⁹

Alexander concludes this discussion by applying Dewey's idea of love as the ultimate integration of the growth of character to the classical virtues of temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice:

Love realizes temperance by paying attention to the whole range of interests rather than just an immediate pressing desire. It promotes courage by evaluating obstacles in light of the ultimate ends we seek. It embraces wisdom as the consideration generated by sympathy for those affected by our conduct. This complete interest is the only means to bring about justice insofar as justice impartially concerned with common welfare. Love is the ability to guide the self in light of the ideal of those complete, integrated interests which is not so much as is. Love is the virtue of character itself.²⁴⁰

Emergent strategy focuses on radical love:

Imagination is one of the spoils of colonization, which in many ways is claiming who gets to imagine the future for a given geography. Losing our imagination is a symptom of trauma. Reclaiming the right to dream the future, strengthening the muscle to imagine together as black people, is a revolutionary decolonizing activity.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Ibid. 390.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 395.

²⁴¹ Brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2017): 164.

The key to moral conduct for Dewey is the capacity to discover the aesthetic dimension of human existence. Aesthetics and ethics become the same, in a constant state of continuous growth and human development. Moral imagination allows pragmatic principles to inform the creation of habit.

Pragmatist Aesthetics and Pleasure Activism

Richard Shusterman *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (2000) emerged as neopragmatism's most significant and systematic contribution to contemporary aesthetics. By articulating a deeply embodied notion of aesthetic experience and the art of living, Shusterman reorients aesthetics towards a more middle-of-the-road position between continental and analytic trends. He uses a selective overview of Dewey's aesthetics, comparing it with mainstream analytic and continental aesthetics. This overview establishes art's roots in the biophysical rhythms of the lived body and conditioning by socio-historical forces, investigating the more significant consequences of pragmatist holistic thinking, delineating the practical functionality and philosophical importance of the arts, and explicating the radical thesis of art as experience. Pragmatist aesthetics is new term introduced as the embodied art of living.

In theorizing about art and aesthetics I've attempted to take the art object out of the confines set by the museum and fine art categories into the experience of everyday life. This is not directed as an attack on the fine arts or museum practices, but I am interested in tapping into the innate creativity in every individual through an awareness of our biological need to make special and draw attention to the aesthetics of our everyday lives. As I have illustrated the task here is not to capture the truth or knowledge of our current understanding of art but to reconceive art as a pragmatic tool to enhance our lived experience as social beings.

Brown shares her experience in seeing the connection between tuning into what brings aliveness into our systems and being able to access personal, relational, and communal power.²⁴² Conversely, she's seen how denying our full, complex selves –denying our aliveness and our needs as living, sensual beings – increases the chance that we will be at odds with ourselves, our loved ones, our coworkers, and our neighbors on this planet.²⁴³ Her work bases connection in trust, freedom, change, and honest communication. Brown believes that all organizing work is science fiction – that we are shaping the future we long for and have not yet experienced.

We are in an imagination battle, and almost everything about how we orient toward our bodies is shaped by fearful imaginations. Imaginations that fear Blackness, brownness, fatness, queerness, disability, difference. Our radical imagination is a tool for decolonization, for reclaiming our right to shape our lived reality. We are part of the natural world that is constantly changing, and we need to learn to adapt together and stay in relationship if we hope to survive as a species.²⁴⁴

Dewey was intent on making connections rather than distinctions. He was keen to connect aspects of the human experience and activity which had been compartmentalized in to specialized thought categories and institutionalized into disciplinary thinking.²⁴⁵ His aesthetic naturalism aimed at “recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living.” This was his attempt to break the hold of “the compartmental conception of fine art” that institutionally entrenched philosophical ideology of the aesthetic which separates art from real life and places it “to a special realm” in the museum, theater, or concert hall.²⁴⁶ This aesthetics of

²⁴² I see this notion of "systems" as Melissa Ragain's "scientific formalism" that recast compositional expectations in nonvisual formal concepts within environmental aesthetics.

²⁴³ brown, adrienne maree. *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2019): 6.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. 10.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 12.

²⁴⁶ Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 9, 14, 16.

continuity connects more than just art and life but is really the basis for Dewey's pragmatism and insists that this continuity be applied to all traditions of binary thinking. Dichotomous thinking, while important in the analytic tradition, reinforces the sequestration and fragmentation of our experience. Dewey accepted the analytic traditions necessity of making distinctions because without distinctions to structure discourse no productive inquiry is possible. Dewey willingly accepted distinctions and definitions as flexible and provisional tools which marked tendencies and provided insight, his only rejection was to them as inviolable principles of classification or evaluation as marking necessary and unbridgeable gaps between things that are (or could be) deeply and fruitfully connected in concrete experience.²⁴⁷ Dewey distinguished aesthetic experience from other experience, aesthetic emotion from ordinary emotion, and distinguished the different arts through their different media.²⁴⁸ But in contrast to the analytic approach which looked for a single *fundamentum divisionis*, Dewey's distinctions were in terms prominent of significant tendencies through complex constellations of connected features.²⁴⁹ Aesthetic experience is differentiated not by its unique possession of a particular element but by its consummate integration of all the elements of ordinary experience, "making a whole of them in their variety" and giving the experiencer, or beholder to use Shimamura's term, a feeling of wholeness and order in their sense of the world.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 15.

²⁴⁸ Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 61, 85, 111, 231.

²⁴⁹ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 15.

²⁵⁰ Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 199, 278.

This study's aim does not address Dewey's extensive critique of all dualisms but shows how his emphasis on continuity contrasts with that of the analytic approach.²⁵¹ While his critique of dichotomous and binary thinking is extensive, his arguments against classical distinctions are not as strong.²⁵² One seems to be that by separating the study of experience into what is the salient whole, we tend to distort and impoverish our understanding of that experienced whole as whole. Here Dewey subscribes of organic unity and that any aesthetic whole is more than the sum of the properties of its parts isolated. Indeed, the parts themselves would not appear as they do if were not for their integration into the whole.²⁵³ Shusterman suggests that a related argument seems to be that seeing things as unified rather than divided is simply more enriching and satisfying and this can perhaps be explained by the idea that in dividing the human faculties, interests, and objects in any rigid way, we are dividing the human creature against itself and forcing them to choose between capacities (emotional, intellectual, sensory) which are naturally at work together, thus creating inner conflict and a sense of self-alienation from part of oneself.²⁵⁴ Dewey's most important argument against classificatory distinctions is that they

²⁵¹ For further reading on Dewey's critique of dualism in *Art as Experience* (1934), 26-8, 267 for body/mind; 34, 38, 109 for material/ideal; 40, 125, 161, 251-2, 263 for thought/feeling; 112-14, 123, 133 for form/substance; 152-5, 163, 190, 336, 34 for man/nature; 109, 252, 254, 274-5, 286 for self/world; 251, 281, 292 for subject/object; and 201-2 for means/ends.

²⁵² For further reading on distinctions, see Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979) based on empirical research conducted on the state of French culture between 1963 to 1968.

²⁵³ Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, New York: Penguin, (1934): 43-4, 140-1, 166, 196). I'd also like to mention here that notions of organic unity tie into the Romantic tradition. There is quite a bit of this research that does, but it will have to be a connection that is explored another time.

²⁵⁴ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 16. Here Shusterman cites this argument from *Art As Experience* 26-8, 34, 252-3.

harden thinking and perception into fixed routines and encourage a standardized and automatic channel of predetermined paths and familiar limits. This ultimately impedes the range and richness of perception and inhibits creativity and constrains the openness to experience in which Dewey sees as the necessity for discovery and the enhancement of life.

A major aspect of Shusterman's aesthetics is his emphasis on the element of pleasure in art reception and other human activities. He stresses that to enhance our experience, to shape our lives successfully into a work of art, and to lead what he calls a philosophical life, we need to work on our capacity to experience pleasure to a greater extent than most contemporary philosophies of aesthetics suggest. adrienne maree brown defines *pleasure activism* as many things; pleasure is a feeling of happy satisfaction and enjoyment, and activism consists of efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic, or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society. Therefore, *pleasure activism* is the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy.²⁵⁵ Pleasure activism is about learning what it means to be satisfiable, to generate, from within and from between us, and abundance from which we can all have enough. A central aspect to this type of learning is tapping into the natural abundance that exists within and between us, and between our species and this planet.

Shusterman refers to himself as a hedonist and denounces the puritanism of deconstructionists who refuse to read for aesthetic richness rather than epistemological and

²⁵⁵ brown, adrienne maree. *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2019): 13.

enlightenment aims.²⁵⁶ He believes that Rorty's vision of aesthetic living is the product of a puritan and capitalist America since the body is only mentioned in connection with cruelty and not with sensual bodily pleasures. Shusterman takes issues with Rorty's "breathless production of new vocabularies" labeling his theory of "industrious making rather than an aesthetics of full-bodied enjoying."²⁵⁷ As I have mentioned previously, I am not considering much of Rorty's thought in this dissertation other than the fact he can be given credit for a revival of Dewey's ideas as a proto-deconstructionist and responsible for the neopragmatist movement. He had no concept of Dewey's aesthetics and was focused on linguistics over experience.

Shusterman indicates that there is a deep-rooted academic puritanism to be overcome and is visible in his assertion that the academic resistance towards popular art stems from a "prolonged habit of inhibiting emotional excitement" and an "inhibition regarding the rapid surrender of self to strong emotions" an incapability, therefore, to experience pleasure which is instilled in academics by their social and professional training.²⁵⁸ While this is debatable, or even potentially controversial, as many of Shusterman's provocative theses seem to be, there can be no doubt that his highly original reworking of postmodernist and pragmatist aesthetics constitutes one of the most intriguing contemporary philosophies of art.²⁵⁹ My purposes here are not to create some dramatic controversy and place attacks between aesthetics, postmodernist thought, and academic institutions. These provocative theses, while interesting and imaginative, do not do

²⁵⁶ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 76.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. 259.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 226.

²⁵⁹ "The Pragmatist Aesthetics of Richard Shusterman: A Conversation." FAU. Accessed March 29, 2021.

much to advance pragmatic scholarship by making sweeping generalizations about groups as a whole. As someone who bases their theories off Dewey's *Art as Experience*, I would think Shusterman would concur but maybe his hedonism creates a veil for the continuity of dynamic culture. In stating that pragmatism is a middle-of-the-road option of analysis, I find it important to keep it that way.²⁶⁰ My only real issue lies within the parochialism of disciplined studies of topics like John Dewey, experience, art, and aesthetics that require a wide range in their analysis as this research demonstrates.

In his chapter "Rethinking Art", Shusterman discusses that the justification of art has always endured lengthy debates with no satisfactory solution. I've discussed this at length in chapter 3. For our purposes here, I want to illustrate that the pragmatist project in aesthetics is not to abolish the institution of art but transform it. The goal here is to rethink art in a way that integrates it into the realities of our everyday lives. The aim, to adapt Dewey's museum metaphor, is not to close or destroy art's museums but to open and enlarge them.²⁶¹ The tradition of high art can often be seen to serve established and oppressive social orders in its promotion of pious respect for the past through a certain type of nostalgia that's achieved through the mystifying beauty of past works. While one could argue this point, as philosophical ramblings in aesthetics are often fonder of argumentation than interpretation, I would present the case that we can learn a lot from high art's masterpieces. Of course, this is the art historian naturally in me but

²⁶⁰ This is not to say that I do not want to push up against boundaries. I absolutely do, I thrive in doing so, but to make this work impactful and significant I feel like I need to be more objective in my expressions rather than being direct that I think American culture has no interest in our genuine human activity but only give us our value as another cog in the capitalist wheel.

²⁶¹ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 140.

to Shusterman's point of a pragmatic inquiry into aesthetics— we can't merely conclude that high art implicitly endorses or reinforces the status quo. Art history effectively provides the raising of consciousness necessary for more explicit social critique and change by allowing artworks, how they're made, their content, their context to move us through history visually. Yes, art movements themselves have been schematically categorized and classified into stylistic trends but those trends do emerge from their historical context. Take this notion back to the discussion of Gombrich in Chapter 3 – as humans we are geared to organize, classify, and compartmentalize but taking note from Dewey and pragmatism's continuity of experience, we can also continue to develop these initial classifications. One of the greatest contributions of feminist and Marxist critique has been to show how art and the aesthetic are deeply political. Women's bodies depicted often cater towards the male's gaze. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972) was a foundational text and later television series that shed light on these constructs. As art history and theory has advanced, so does its criticism which Adorno claims is essential and necessary complement of art works.²⁶²

It's important that the socio-ethical criticism of high art should not only consider the artworks themselves but beyond, into the institutional framework of art which structures their reception. The high art tradition, which includes not only the canonized works but also canonized modes of appreciation, has been typically inaccessible to the culturally underprivileged who remain so largely through socio-economic and political domination.²⁶³ It's admirable to think

²⁶² Adorno, T.W. *Aesthetic Theory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, (1984): 131.

²⁶³ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 144.

that the practice of criticism itself could provide some leverage to break high art's exclusionary dominance but it follows an institutionalized ideology. It is Dewey and the work of pragmatist aesthetics that are striving for an alternative cultural base from which to argue and nourish their critique. "Art's liberation and reintegration into the praxis or ordinary life cannot be achieved only through the agency of high art's own attempts at radical reform."²⁶⁴ We see the attempts here with art history pedagogies and museums attempting to decolonialize art. We can see this with Dewey's influence on Albert Barnes and his collection in Philadelphia. Surely but slowly these subtle transitions are occurring but the culture itself has not changed. When you speak of museums, art history, the arts – they are typically categorized as an elitist pastime. Again, this is what pragmatist aesthetics is interested in changing. How do we make the arts more accessible?

I want to note here that even though I am interested in art's social essence and function it must be noted that art itself can neither save the world nor provide personal salvation. It is simply a tool, an instrument, in which oneself or rather communities, will have to incorporate and navigate themselves. Shusterman states:

Indeed, even when art portrays and protests social misery and loneliness, such protest is aesthetically reappropriated and satisfyingly discharged in the individual's imaginative experience as part of his enjoyment of the work, rather than generating real critique and desire to change the world.²⁶⁵

While the tradition of art has the power to educate and edify, it equally has the power to deceive and corrupt. This is why I strongly advocate for critically thinking through objects of our everyday experience. This practice allows us to appreciate the aesthetic and to criticize its

²⁶⁴ Ibid. 145.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. 147.

function giving us a holistic, or should I say pragmatic approach in understanding aesthetics. The moral paradox of art seems to be this:

We need to bring our criticism of artworks and their moral content to a critical awareness of the social role of art itself, and further to the wider criticism of our social world where high art can be so foreign to life and human sympathy. Such critical awareness [of] art can stimulate but not in itself provide. Our socio-cultural fragmentation finds expression and support in the sharp separation of high art from popular forms of artistic expression which are even denied the status of art. In our culture, to achieve full aesthetic legitimacy, one must mount the steep staircase of spiritualization and elitist refinement.²⁶⁶

This sentiment, and the lamentable cultural dichotomy between what is deemed high art versus the illegitimacy of pop culture seems to leave us with an unacceptable aesthetic dilemma, a dilemma in which this research has attempted to uncover and decipher. This is the dilemma between the artificiality of high art and the dehumanizing primitivism of the popular. Popular art is any dance, literature, music, theater, or any other form of art intended to be received and appreciated by ordinary people in a literate, technologically advanced society dominated by urban culture.²⁶⁷ It must be noted here that when I am discussing culture as a whole, I'm referring to American culture. Ellen Dissanayake's work clearly lays out the importance of objects of culture and artifacts among many other nations that emphasize our biological need for aesthetics, not capitalizing on the oppressive systems of the institution of art as we've seen has compartmentalized our ways of thinking about the arts in the United States, or Western culture for that matter. The question now becomes, can we do this? Is it about elevating the popular arts?

²⁶⁶ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 167.

²⁶⁷ "Popular Art." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed March 30, 2021.

Is it about access?²⁶⁸ Is it about awareness? Shusterman challenges this sort of aesthetic analysis typical of elitist aesthetics in his pragmatism by analyzing the fine art of Rap. While he gives us a worthy example and analysis, ultimately, he admits that this involves a great deal of philosophical abstraction and simplification. What does develop out of this exercise is the continuity of nature in our experience. The embodiment of our beliefs, analysis, interpretation, the awareness of our physical presence in a physical environment. This leads us to Shusterman's theory of Somaesthetics that develops from the idea of postmodern ethics and the art of living in which ethics and aesthetics are one.²⁶⁹

Somaesthetics

Somaesthetics is a body-centered discipline proposed by Shusterman to understand the role of our bodies within aesthetic experience more systematically. Somaesthetics can be provisionally defined as “the critical, meliorative study of experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation and creative self-fashioning.”²⁷⁰ Shusterman addresses the rationalist tradition that Baumgarten inherited from Descartes where the body is just a mere machine. He had three goals within his somaesthetics which, in Deweyian fashion, is

²⁶⁸ This is such an important question. Compassion Project's curriculums are available for free, and workshops are based on a sliding scale. I also think the benefits of public art for communities' sense of belonging, safety, economic growth, and wellbeing contribute to this discussion.

²⁶⁹ I have intentionally left out most of the discussion of postmodern ethics and the art of living. While the relevance to this study is important, this dissertation itself cannot act as a guide to the poetics of living a meaningful life. It is my hope that aesthetic awareness will ultimately shed light on ethical issues and morality, but it is not something I want to argue. I simply want to lay out evidence for why it's real and tangible rather than prescribing it as a solution; though Compassion Project does allude to a meaningful way of application, seen in the next chapter.

²⁷⁰ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 267.

reconstructive rather than historical. He sees these as three different dimensions. The first, “analytic somaesthetics,” explores the nature of the “bodily perceptions and practices” and their relations to “our knowledge and construction of reality.”²⁷¹ This first dimension is to revive Baumgarten’s idea of aesthetics as a life-improving cognitive discipline that extends far beyond questions of beauty and fine arts and that involves both theory and practical exercise.²⁷² Second is to end the neglect of the body that Baumgarten disastrously introduced into aesthetics, a neglect that only intensified throughout the idealist tradition. This second dimension is “pragmatic somaesthetics” and its role is to propose various approaches to somatic improvement and provide a comparative critique.²⁷³ And lastly, Shusterman wants to propose an enlarged, somatically centered field, somaesthetics that can contribute significantly to many crucial philosophical concerns, thus enabling philosophy to more successfully redeem its original role as the art of living.²⁷⁴ This is “practical somaesthetics” and is concerned with the actual practice of

²⁷¹ Ibid. 271.

²⁷² I’d like to note that Baumgarten, who coined the term aesthetics in 1750 has not come into the discussion until now. He did not initially inform the ways in which I knew of art and aesthetics. His theory is revisited by Shusterman who argues that his work in aesthetics has far greater scope and practical import than we have given him credit for. In Baumgarten’s theory there is an emphasis on the importance of feeling and much attention is given to the creative act. He believed it was necessary to modify the traditional claim that art imitates nature, (mimesis) by asserting that artist must deliberately alter nature by adding elements of feeling to perceived reality. In this way, the creative process of the world is mirror in their own activity. “Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten.” Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed March 29, 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-Gottlieb-Baumgarten>.

²⁷³ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 272.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. 267.

I find it necessary to point out here that in attempt to take a more broaden stance at considering pragmatist aesthetics, Shusterman now narrows the discipline towards attention to the body. While it is an essential feature, we’re now looking again through a particular lens.

somatic care through representational (outward appearance), experiential ('inner' experience), or performative (functionality) body work.²⁷⁵ Shusterman claims that this practical dimension is the most neglected by academic philosophers of the body.²⁷⁶

For adrienne maree brown *Somatics* is:

A path, a methodology, a change theory, by which we can embody transformation, individually and collectively. Embodied transformation is foundational change that shows our actions, ways of being, relating, and perceiving. It is transformation that sustains over time. Somatics pragmatically supports our values and actions becoming aligned. It helps us to develop depth and the capacity to feel ourselves, each other and life around us. Somatics builds in us the ability to act from strategy and empathy, and teaches us to be able to assess conditions and 'what is' clearly. Somatics is a practice-able theory of change that can move us toward individual, community and collective liberation. Somatics works through the body, engaging us in our thinking, emotions, commitments, vision and action.²⁷⁷

Thinking about Shusterman's practical somaesthetics that must get us beyond the philosophical tendency of merely textualizing the body is a central point to this work given the regularity with which it is over-looked. In synthesizing human activity through flexible adaptation to the environment, the body's natural structuring agencies are highly subject to the sense-making structures of the culture that it inherits, which is one way of saying that culture, with its complexity of symbol systems, ideas, values, believes, and customs, has its roots in the lived body.²⁷⁸ By living in a culture, we are always participants, observers, and agents

²⁷⁵ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 276.

²⁷⁶ I'd like to raise awareness here in the notion of the 'good life' - Berlant warns us in trying to get to the 'good life' we may actually cause harm to ourselves in reaching an unattainable goal which is cruelly optimistic.

²⁷⁷ Brown, adrienne maree. *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2019): 17.

²⁷⁸ Granger, David A. "A Review of Richard Shusterman, 2000, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22, no. 5 (2003): 398. For further

simultaneously. This is the constructivist approach, Deweyian in its methods, that puts emphasis on the necessary social and cultural dimensions of our learning. In the role of participant, we are constrained by the expectations, conventions, norms, and standards that are involved in cultural practices, routines, and institutions. It is necessary to understand that culture gets us before we get it. This involvement frames and often limits our experiences, opportunities of acting, and of observing. We are always participants in culture when we are observers, whether it may be from a distance or self-reflexive. As observers, we still have the freedom to choose between different perspectives according to our selective interests. Therefore, the role of observers is always a diversity of perspectives and possible interpretations. However, even as the most deconstructive and constructive observers, we never cease being cultural agents that must respond to the challenges of diverse situations and realize our own intention in cooperation, communication, and conflict with other agents, groups, institutions, and so on. The role of the agent, therefore, refers to aspects of learning by doing in connection with cultural participation. Learning by doing in connection with cultural participation is the essence of Dewey's schooling and democracy, not as a political ideology but as a condition for optimal growth.²⁷⁹

Shusterman's later book *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics* (2008), opens with the statement that contemporary culture increasingly suffers from problems of attention, overstimulation, and stress, and that we are further plagued by a

reading see Menakem, Resmaa. *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*. 2017. Or Van Der Kolk, Bessel A. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, 2014.

²⁷⁹ Garrison, James W., Stefan Neubert, and Kersten Reich. *Democracy and Education Reconsidered: Dewey after One Hundred Years*, (2016): 5.

growing variety of personal and social discontents generated by deceptive body images. He argues that improved body consciousness can help relieve these problems and enhance one's knowledge, performance, and pleasure.²⁸⁰ Shusterman discusses many earlier thinkers in this text through descriptive and theoretical accounts of embodiment of Foucault, the phenomenology and ontology of Merleau-Ponty, de Beauvoir on gender and aging, Wittgenstein on the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, James's early psychology and later radical empiricism, and Dewey's naturalism and concept of body-mind. Shusterman goes on to demonstrate that the analysis of both analytic and practical somaesthetics discloses a relationship between theoretical accounts of embodiment and the way one inhabits the body. Dewey, for example, was an advocate for and practiced the Alexander Technique. The Alexander Technique is a method that works to change movement habits in our everyday activities. It sheds light on inefficient habits of movement patterns of accumulated tension and teaches the use of the appropriate amount of effort for a particular activity that ultimately gives you more energy for all activities.²⁸¹

The technique of Mr. Alexander gives to the educator a standard of psycho-physical health—in which what we call morality is included. It supplies also the 'means whereby' this standard may be progressively and endlessly achieved, becoming a conscious possession of the one educated . . . It bears the same relation to education that education itself bears to all other human activities.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Shusterman, Richard. *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, (2008): ix.

There are many studies that show consumerism as an issue here, making us feel inadequate and that we need some sort of beauty or self-help product.

²⁸¹ "What Is the Alexander Technique and What Are Its Benefits?" The Complete Guide to the Alexander Technique, January 25, 2021.

²⁸² Dewey, John, Introduction to *The Use of the Self* by Alexander, F.M. (London: Orion Books Ltd., reprinted in 2001): 12.

The pragmatism that Shusterman advocates puts experience at the heart of philosophy and celebrates the living, sentient body as the organizing core of experience, underlining the body's formative role in the creation and appreciation of art. The body is not only the crucial site where one's ethos and values can be physically displayed and developed, but it is also where one's skills of perception and performance can be honed to improve one's cognition and capacities of virtue and happiness.²⁸³ Shusterman argues that an enhanced awareness of somaesthetic feelings can provide individuals with the tools necessary for embodied self-awareness, which can in turn facilitate the pursuit of moral goodness.²⁸⁴ Body consciousness entails an awareness of not just the joys of embodiment but also being aware of emotional states and the unconscious physical state habits that keep individuals from executing voluntary actions.²⁸⁵ Here Shusterman right points out that racism and homophobia are often deeply rooted visceral feelings and suggest that becoming aware of such feelings is the first step in remedying them: "Disciplines of somaesthetics training can reconstruct our attitudes or habits of feeling and also give us greater flexibility and tolerance to difference kinds of somaesthetic feeling and behavior."²⁸⁶ While

²⁸³ I keep finding tension here because I'm not necessarily advocating for a more fulfilled and happy life. I simply want to acknowledge that embodied aesthetic experience is good and necessary for our species. I really don't want to place judgment on it as virtuous fulfillment, purpose, beautiful, etc.

²⁸⁴ The next section on Embodied Cognition through Antonio Damasio's work will explain the mechanics of this process. I will also get into mindfulness in the next chapter in relationship to Compassion Project.

²⁸⁵ Shusterman, Richard. *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, (2008): 122.

²⁸⁶ Ibid. 130. For further reading on racism and homophobia on the rise and implicit versus explicit biases see;

Medina, Caroline, and Lindsay Mahowald. "Discrimination and Barriers to Well-Being: The State of the LGBTQI+ Community in 2022." January 12, 2023.

breathing techniques, mindfulness, and meditation are introduced as somatic practices, what remains vague is how exactly the development of body consciousness can contribute to one's moral cultivation. While these practices offer the means to recognize and control visceral reactions and therefore facilitate tolerance, there is still a question between purity and impurity.²⁸⁷ These practical application of embodiment relate much of their practice to Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism and Daoism that emphasize that cultivating the body is both a moral and somaesthetic process, however these traditions are also vague about the relationship between ethics and the body and ultimately seem to take it as a given.²⁸⁸

Shusterman says:

The blindness of culture critics to the somatics of experience is understandable and still widespread. For the somatics of representation remains far more dominant in our culture, a culture largely built on the division of body from spirit, and economically driven by the capitalism of conspicuous consumption that is fueled by the marking of body images.²⁸⁹

I bring this quote in because it relates back to my initial argument, about how art historical analysis about objects we engage with every day, is important. It allows for a deeper sense of critical thinking. If we can understand surveillance capitalism and that nearly everything we are

Duncan, Dustin T., et al. "Structural Racism and Homophobia Evaluated through Social Media Sentiment Combined with Activity Spaces and Associations with Mental Health among Young Sexual Minority Men." *Social Science & Medicine* (1982) 320 (2023): 115755–115755
 Reihl, Kristina M, Robin A Hurley, and Katherine H Taber. "Neurobiology of Implicit and Explicit Bias: Implications for Clinicians." *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 27, no. 4 (2015): A6-253.

²⁸⁷ Mullis, Eric C. "Shusterman, Richard. Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics. Cambridge University Press, 2012." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 71, no. 4 (2013): 126.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. 127.

²⁸⁹ Shusterman, Richard. *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*. Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, USA: B. Blackwell, (1992): 274.

presented is typically for some market value, then maybe we can understand that we don't really need that item. Maybe we can understand our worth for what it is, rather than being told we need these products and services to be better.

Dewey & Damasio – Embodied Cognition

American pragmatist philosophy is the most scientifically and philosophically sophisticated naturalistic, non-dualistic approach to the mind available to use, even today.²⁹⁰ Pragmatic naturalism indicates that the mind is an emergent process, in which everything we contribute to the mind like perceiving, conceptualizing, imagining, reasoning, desiring, willing, dreaming, continues to develop as part of an ongoing evolutionary process in which organisms seek to survive, grow, and flourish within various environments. The mind is never separate from the body, thus experience, is a series of purposive bodily activities immersed in the ongoing flow of organism-environment interactions. Dewey's principles of continuity, previously discussed, understands that more complex levels of organic functioning are just that, levels. Though each level will arise emergent properties of higher levels of functioning, there is a connectedness between all cognition that denies any ontological gaps between various levels of functional complexity. According to Dewey, "There is no breach of continuity between operations of inquiry and biological operations and physical operations. Continuity means that rational operations grow out of organic activities, without being identical with that from which

²⁹⁰ Johnson, Mark. "Mind Incarnate: From Dewey to Damasio." *Daedalus* (Cambridge, Mass.) 135, no. 3 (2006): 48.

they emerge.”²⁹¹ Damasio’s work shows how this conception of mind is compatible with recent empirical research in the neuroscience of emotions, consciousness, and thought.

“The doctrine of embodied cognition is very much of ‘this-worldly’ orientation –a philosophical perspective grounded in the experience, thoughts, values, and actions of an intrinsically embodied consciousness that appears to be a tiny part of a sweeping and continual (if somewhat slow) evolutionary process.”²⁹²

Antonio Damasio has made use of recent development in cognitive neuroscience to examine the role of the body and emotion in thought and to explore the nature and working of human consciousness. Damasio is not simply concerned with the sensation in general, it is the issue of self and knowing, which he considers to be at the heart of consciousness. “Being conscious goes beyond being awake and attentive: it requires an inner self in the act of knowing.”²⁹³ In *Descartes’ Error* (1994), Damasio argued that various kind of practical and social reasoning depend upon our capacity to experience emotions and feelings. He begins with the fundamental claim that, to survive, an organism must maintain within itself a certain homeostatic balance. Damasio’s argument that the body is working in the mind, just as much as the mind is in the body. His grounding hypothesis is as follows:

. . . the body, as represented in the brain, may constitute the indispensable form of reference for the neural processes that we experience as the mind. The apparatus of rationality, traditionally presumed to be neocortical, does not seem to work without that of biological regulation, traditionally presumed to be subcortical. Nature appears to have built the apparatus of rationality not just on top of the apparatus of biological regulation, but also from it and with it. The lower levels in the neural edifice or reason are the same ones that regulate the processing of emotions and feelings, along with the body functions necessary for an organism’s survival. In turn, these lower levels maintain direct and mutual relationships with virtually

²⁹¹ Ibid. 49.

²⁹² Johnson, Mark. "Mind Incarnate: From Dewey to Damasio." *Daedalus*. 135, no. 3 (Cambridge, Mass, 2006): 50.

²⁹³ Damasio, Antonio R. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace, (1999): 250.

every bodily organ, thus placing the body directly within the chain of operations that generate the highest reaches of reasoning, decision making, and by extension, social behavior and creativity.²⁹⁴

The challenge for ‘embodied cognition’ theories is thus to explain how all our most marvelous acts of language, communication, abstract conceptualization and reasoning, and creativity involve the recruiting of sensory-motor functions for ‘higher’ cognitive functions.²⁹⁵ Art and aesthetic experience can get us to those higher cognitive functions. The body is the medium for action.²⁹⁶

It should be clear from these developing accounts that the mind cannot be reduced to the brain, likewise, the body is never just merely skin and bones. The bodily aspect of body-mind shows itself as the medium of experience. First, there is the body as a physiological organism made of flesh, bones, blood, muscles, nerves, and many other organs of perception and life-maintenance, all organized into complex interacting and functional systems that we never even have to spend time thinking about. Because of this fact, it often makes it reasonable that previous thinkers, such as Descartes, considered the body and the mind as separate entities.²⁹⁷ Secondly,

²⁹⁴ Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. (1994): xvi.

²⁹⁵ Johnson, Mark. "Mind Incarnate: From Dewey to Damasio." *Daedalus* (Cambridge, Mass.) 135, no. 3 (2006): 52.

²⁹⁶ Preminger, Son. "Transformative Art: Art as Means for Long-Term Neurocognitive Change." *Frontiers*. Frontiers, April 2, 2012.

²⁹⁷ The appeal of the disembodied mind appears to be based on three considerations; first, if the mind exists apart from the body, then life after death might be metaphysically possible through our soul. Secondly, the mind-body dualism seems to explain how human freedom and moral responsibility might be possible in a world governed by cause and effect. This idea underlies the great appeal of Kant's assumption of a transcendent ego. Thirdly, our everyday experience appears to confirm the disembodied character of our thinking as one may think they need to control themselves, where the I who does the controlling is different from the self that is controlled.

we understand that there is the body that the brain and central nervous system permit us to experience, to monitor and modify as we interact with our environment. Lastly, and quite importantly, there is the body that extends out into its environment, such that organism and environment are not independent, but rather interdependent aspects of the basic flow of experience.²⁹⁸ Remember interdependence was introduced in the practice of emergent strategies. As a practice, interdependence can look like vulnerability and is not always equitable in real time.²⁹⁹

In Damasio's book *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (1999), he extends his inquiries beyond the role of feeling in thought to take up the problem of what makes it possible for us to experience a sense of ownership of our experiences and thoughts—to have what we call “consciousness.”³⁰⁰ He addresses the two major problems concerning consciousness; the first is to learn how the brain, operating within an embodied organism that is interacting with its environment, gives rise to mental images like objects, events, thoughts feelings, and actions; and the second is “how, in parallel with engendering mental patterns for an object, the brain also engenders a sense of self in the act of knowing.”³⁰¹ This sense of self is our sense that our experiences and ideas are ours, that is that they are owned by us. The solution to this first problem requires an understanding of how the images of an object and the complex matrix of relations, reactions, and plans related to it are

²⁹⁸Ibid. 48.

²⁹⁹ brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2017): 95. For further reading on vulnerability see the work of Brene Brown.

³⁰⁰ Damasio, Antonio R. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace, (1999): 324.

³⁰¹ Ibid. 9.

sensed as the unmistakable mental property of an automatic owner; observing, perceiving, knowing, thinking, acting – this is the same idea as the beholder in Shimamura’s I-SKE model.³⁰² The second problem is a bit more complicated and requires discovering the biological underpinnings for the curious ability we humans have of construction, not just the mental patterns of an object “but also the mental pattern which convey(s?), automatically and naturally, the sense of a self in the act of knowing. Consciousness, as we commonly think of it, from its basic levels to its most complex, is the unified mental pattern that brings together the object and the self.”³⁰³ Damasio explains his most significant breakthrough on this difficult problem occurred when he

[b]egan seeing consciousness in terms of two players, the organism and the object, and in terms of the relationships those players hold. All of a sudden, consciousness consisted of constructing knowledge about two facts; that the organism is involved in relating to some object, and that the object in relation is causing change in the organism.³⁰⁴

This idea was discussed in Chapter 3; we interact with art, it transforms us. However, Damasio explains this through his explorations in brain anatomy, neural functioning, the neurochemical basis of emotions, brain lesion studies, philosophy, and psychology.

Damasio’s work is complex and the non-linguistic and emotional elements is worthy of our attention. Consciousness is a set of real phenomena that cannot be reduced to memory, wakefulness, low-level attention, language, or reasoning, even though it is intimately connected

³⁰² See Figure 1

³⁰³ Damasio, Antonio R. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace, (1999): 11.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.133.

to all of these functions at the level of extended consciousness.³⁰⁵ Damasio's theory operates under three types of consciousness in relation to the self. The "proto-self," which is "a coherent collection of neural patterns which map, moment by moment the state of the physical structure of the organism in its many dimensions."³⁰⁶ This proto-self represents our current physical state but is not associated with consciousness and is in no way dependent on language. It is not a single entity but "emerges dynamically and continuously out of multifarious interaction signals that span varied orders of the nervous system."³⁰⁷ "Core Consciousness" adds to the proto-self a consciousness of how we are being affected by aspects of our environment at a present point in time. It gives rise to our feeling that certain present experiences are ours, they belong to our core self in which we have the sense of feeling "here and now."³⁰⁸

Core consciousness occurs when the brain's representation devices generate an imaged, nonverbal account of how the organism's own state is affected by the organism's processing of an object, and when this process enhances the image of the causative object, thus placing it saliently in a spatial and temporal context.³⁰⁹

The core self does this by using the proto-self's body-state mapping to become aware of how it is being affected by objects and internal images. Damasio describes this "nonverbal account" as a nonlinguistic awareness of the "act of representing its own changing state as it goes about representing something else."³¹⁰ It is the feeling of what is happening to us at the present moment however, our experience of the present moment is not an isolated event. "Extended

³⁰⁵ Ibid. 326. This picture of consciousness that gradually emerges is highly reminiscent, as James explicitly acknowledges, of William James' earlier observations of what he called the stream of consciousness. James' work was very influential to Dewey.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. 154.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ The mindfulness practice of "here and now" is foundational in Compassion Project's methods.

³⁰⁹ Ibid. 169.

³¹⁰ Ibid. 170.

consciousness” is our capacity to connect the present with a remembered past and an anticipated future. Damasio examines the complex relations of core and extended consciousness, the critical role played by emotion in both types, and through his clinical experience and experimental experience with brain lesion patients, has evidence to confirm Damasio’s distinction between two types of consciousness. These patients have lost what he terms their “autobiographical self”, their sense of themselves as extended continuously over a span of time, even though they retain core consciousness. He also discusses cases where patients lose the sense of owning their experiences and destroys the possibility to an autobiographical self.

There is no single self that is the locus of consciousness; it is a vast orchestration of processes at several levels that conjointly give rise to “the feeling of what happens.”³¹¹

Damasio’s work is extensive but what I want to move forward with here is that there is an emphasis on the bodily basis of self, we have a multilevel dynamic sense of self-identity, emotion is necessary and a key component of consciousness, and he argues that language is not necessary for the proto and core selves, nor even for much of our autobiographical sense of self.³¹²

The goal of this chapter is to put Dewey's theories into practice for the twenty-first century. By considering *Art As Experience* (1932) central to Dewey's previous writing, aesthetic experience examines the paradigms of meaning and communication over scientific discourse and formal logic by testing the capacity of systems in light of all possibilities. Action is the irreducible unit of meaning that involves habit, impulse, and emotion which is embodied. The

³¹¹ Ibid. 326.

³¹² Ibid.

precondition of such action is culture, which is rooted in the lived body and binds community. Members of this community succeed through language-permeated practices in realizing shared meanings through embodied aesthetic experience. Philosophy tends to displace aesthetics for epistemology and reflects the dualistic nature of culture displacing art from life. Art originates when life becomes fulfilled in moments of intelligently heightened vitality where the body is the center of life activity as the developer of experience and the medium of exploration within an environment. Embodied cognition is a philosophical perspective grounded in the experience, thoughts, values, and actions of an intrinsically embodied consciousness that is a continual evolutionary process. It is an on-going process of trying to make sense and the activity of communication is a constant process of interaction, adjustment, determination, and development. Imagination is a creative exploration of structures inherited from past experience which thereby allow the future as a horizon of possible actions, meanings, to guide and interpret the present. Our bodily involvement with the world encompasses our unconscious experience and recognizes our relationship with the world is not stable; at one moment we may be thriving and at another suffering, this is the ebb and flow of our dynamic experience rhythmic to our environment. Moral imagination is embodied and is manifest as the growth and continuity of meaning. It is the transformation or reconstruction of experience in a changing world. The method of emergent strategy offers a pragmatic approach to the ways in which we learn and grow, and its application should be considered in educational praxis.

CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATIONAL IDEAS AND AN EXERCISE IN THE APPLIED HUMANITIES

The purpose of this chapter is to center this research within the context of social action and praxis. I have not discussed education in terms of schooling throughout the progression of this dissertation. Learning, knowledge, and intelligence are not based on solely on formal education, but rather on one's continual and self-reflective relationship with their environments and communities to engage in the natural continuity of our ever-changing world.³¹³

Understanding requires an ability to reconstruct what it is we think we know with the realities of our experiences and those experiences of others. These realities are our embodied aesthetic experience. There are a plethora of educators and theorists who are revising Dewey's work in education for the twenty-first century. Dewey's ideas have longevity and are applicable to our modern world. Larry Hickman, who is the director of the Center for Dewey Studies, has been a major contributor in reengaging with Dewey's ideas for the 21st Century, along with Jim

³¹³ For further reading please see;

Moshman, David. "Rationality as a Goal of Education." *Educational Psychology Review* 2, no. 4 (1990): 335–64.

Darling-Hammond, Linda, and Channa M Cook-Harvey. "Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success." *Learning Policy Institute*. Learning Policy Institute, 2018.

Gamage, Kelum A. et al. "The Role of Personal Values in Learning Approaches and Student Achievements." *Behavioral Sciences* 11, no. 7 (2021): 102.

Garrison, Stefan Neubert, Kersten Reich, David Granger, and Philip Jackson. These scholars break down Dewey's complicated philosophical disputes and demonstrate their worth in real-world issues like global citizenship, religious differences, and cultural conflict as Dewey had always intended.

The trends I have recognized through this study include a clear departure between cognitive discoveries of the arts being applied more specifically to arts and aesthetic education rather than formal education. It seems that what we know about the benefits of creativity, visual thinking, and visual literacy, along with more holistic learning models, that we'd see these more aesthetic programming implemented across disciplines.³¹⁴ There is also a trend where continental European tradition of thinking and schooling followed along the lines of phenomenology whereas American education followed the model of behaviorism.³¹⁵ If we follow Dissanayake's ethological view of art, in which art is a human behavior – what does this mean for behaviorism as a practice in education? Lastly, there seems to be an integration between eastern traditions such as meditation and mindfulness in considering somaesthetics and

³¹⁴ Dr. Robert Carson's *Ourstory* model is a great example of a holistic approach to teaching different topics that focus on the epic narrative of intellectual culture through discoveries, innovations decisions, and events that illustrate the aesthetic appreciate of culture through the development of cultural tools.

Carson, R. (2008). *Ourstory: The epic narrative of intellectual culture* [presentation]. EDCI 557 Course Pack, Montana State University.

³¹⁵ There is much more to this departure of traditions of Western Civilization. German institutions had much influence on early American Universities, and so did Puritanism. Germany, and eastern Europe has closer contact with the Eastern cultures in the exchanging of ideas. With the introduction of somaesthetics the element of mindfulness becomes incredibly important and so does feeling for embodied cognition. There seems to be a trend happening where some eastern philosophy is meeting western – first in Europe and now maybe making its way over to the United States.

embodied cognition. We also see this with research that compares Dewey's pragmatic philosophy to humanistic Buddhism. This research does not answer these questions, rather lays out the narrative to understand this type of cognitive, aesthetic, cultural research and gives evidence as to why aesthetic experience matters for the fulfillment of our overall human experience. The research also proposes a program, Compassion Project, as a suggestion for what an embodied aesthetic revisioning of schooling could look like.

American Education

Clarence Karier provides the most insightful history of education in *The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas*, originally published in 1967 with an added preface in 1986. I find it necessary to quote his ode to Dewey's perceptiveness when it came to this addition;

The slightest reflection shows that the conceptual material employed in writing history is that of the period in which a history is written. There is no material available for leading principles and hypotheses save that of the historic present. As a culture changes, the conceptions that are dominant in a culture change. Of necessity new standpoints for viewing, appraising, and ordering date arise, history is then rewritten.³¹⁶

Karier's history of education differs from most because rather than placing emphasis on what happens within schools, he focuses his attention on concepts of human nature and community. He assumes that school emerges in the context as only one among other social agencies that educate and focuses his study between 1865 and 1965. While this history is important in understanding the full historical narrative from early Puritan ideals to now, the Cold War had the

³¹⁶ Karier, Clarence J. *The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas*. 2nd ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986): preface. Cited from Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, (1938): 253.

most profound effects on American education. We see this within the history of American Studies as well. We have the phrase “under God” added to the pledge of allegiance, the fear of Communism was rampant and in effect, a major reason why American liberal social and educational philosophy, that of which Dewey subscribed, has never been reconstructed in a meaningful way since the postwar period.³¹⁷ Karrier goes on to show this struggle to reform American social and educational institutions within the context of the Cold War conditions and the picture portrayed is not very optimistic.

Kieran Egan’s work in *The Educated Mind: How Cognitive Tools Shape Our Understanding* (1997) proposes that fundamentally there is an incoherent concept of education. Generally, our schools are not highly regarded today and as Egan suggests, it is not the fault of a specific group.³¹⁸ Typical of social unease, there is always someone to blame – much of popular literature in the sixties blames the Platonists and academic curricula that was disconnected from students’ experience, the critics of the eighties blamed Rousseauians, such as John Dewey for the condition of our schools. Egan presents that the problem here is not with the school necessarily, but with the way we conceive what the school is supposed to do. He identifies three significant educational ideas; (1) to shape the young to the current norms and conventions of adult society – *Is the purpose of education to make good citizens and indoctrinate socially relevant skills and values?* (2) to teach them knowledge that ensures their thinking conforms with what is real and true about the world – *Or is the purpose of education to master certain bodies of knowledge?* (3)

³¹⁷ Ibid. xi.

³¹⁸ Egan, Kieran. *The Educated Mind : How Cognitive Tools Shape Our Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (1997): 31.

to encourage development of individual potential – *Or is the purpose of education to fulfill each students' unique potential?* I am not here to lay claim to any particular purpose, but I do want to present Egan's theory that describes education in sequences of understanding, intricately tied with life, society, and culture that it becomes a theory of western cultural development. Egan characterizes five distinctive kinds of understanding in which the modern mind is a composite of these developed by intellectual tools. He argues that our individual development can and should recapitulate our larger cultural history through the somatic, mythic, romantic, philosophic, and ironic.

His work gets further into understanding that our purposes of education are incompatible. While socialization may be at the forefront we run into issues with Platonic ideas, which are time-related, epistemological processes; that learning particular forms of knowledge carries the educational process forward, where knowledge drives development; versus Rousseauian ideas of age-related psychological processes where education results from an internal, developmental process unfolding within a supportive environment, where development drives knowledge and determines what knowledge is learnable, meaningful, and relevant. Egan's new idea addresses the aspect of socialization and questions why must this relate to society's norms and values? Whose society? As such he proposes a theory that integrates Vygotsky's work with recapitulation, this theory plus its application for curriculums and implication for teaching can be found in his book.³¹⁹ For my purposes here, I to inform the incongruencies with our modern

³¹⁹ I will introduce Vygotsky in the next section. For further reading on Egan's theory see *The Educated Mind: How Cognitive Tools Shape Our Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (1997).

notion of American education and propose that Egan's framework of the five ways of understanding (somatic, mythic, romantic, philosophic, and ironic) places art as the basis for education, for we begin as poets.³²⁰

Constructivism, Pragmatism, and Experiential Education

Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky are psychologists' work that is essential for understanding the way cognitive development has been applied to education. The element that these men share is constructivism but has been applied in different ways. Piaget is considered the founder of constructivism and was interested in how humans make meaning through the interaction between their experiences and their ideas. Piaget was a cognitive constructivist concerned with child development. He suggested that children sort the knowledge they acquire through their experiences and interactions into schema.³²¹ He believed that cognitive development is mostly universal across cultures and stems from independent explorations, is an egocentric process that then becomes social. Vygotsky developed social constructivism, rejecting Piaget's assumption that learning was separate from social function. He believed that cognitive development varies across cultures and stems from social interactions where social processes become individual-physiological processes. He conceptualized the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which

³²⁰ Egan, Kieran. "The Arts as 'the Basics' of Education." Arts as Basics. Accessed April 3, 2021.

³²¹ When new information is acquired, it can be either assimilated into existing schemas (categories) or accommodated through revising an existing schema or creating an entirely new category of information. I've already discussed notion of this gestalt-like schematic structuring in Chapter 2 in conjunction with our symbolic nature of creating meaning and through the stylistic developments of the arts.

looks at what a learner can accomplish without help and what he/she can do with help.³²² Today there seems to be a more blended approach to constructivism including the earlier philosophical tenets of John Dewey.

Dewey's theories pull knowledge away from certainty into the domain of possibilities and rejected the idea that logic, or the theory of inquiry, is a strictly formal discipline complete in itself and devoid of relevance to public affairs. Dewey believed that moral judgement is our paradigm for knowing rather than epistemology – all of this comes out of what he calls a crisis of modern culture where science is responsible for the rational and that a scientific rationality as a worldview as the only type of legitimate knowledge is a scary place to be and he wants a broad range of rationality.³²³

Modern preoccupation with science and with industry based on science has been disastrous; our education has followed the model that they have set. It has been concerned with intellectual analysis and formularized information . . . [This] outcome is disastrous because it leads men to take abstractions as if they were realities. The social effects are seen in traditional political economy with its abstractions from concrete individual human lives, the theory only reflecting, however, the actual abstraction which reign practically in industry. It is disastrous because it has fixed attention upon competition for control and possession of fixed environment rather than upon what art can do to *create* an environment . . . Its disastrous because civilization built upon these principles cannot supply the demand of the soul for joy, or freshness of experience; only attention through art to the vivid but transient values of things can effect such refreshment.³²⁴

³²² The concept of ZPD has been expanded, modified, and changed into new concepts since Vygotsky's original conception. The concept of scaffolding is closely related to the ZPD. Scaffolding was developed by other sociocultural theorists applying Vygotsky's ZPD to educational contexts. Scaffolding is a process through which a teacher or more competent peer gives aid to the student in her/his ZPD as necessary and tapers off this aid as it becomes unnecessary.

³²³ Here I want to be cautious not discredit the sciences but illustrate how the humanities can strengthen the field. For example, in consideration of aesthetics, engineers need to take into account visual experience not simply function.

³²⁴ Dewey, John. "Art in Education—and Education in Art," 1926, *LW* 2: 112.

Decades before the publication of *Art As Experience* (1934), Dewey was trying to convince his readers that art, conceived as a certain quality of experience, helps frame and direct scientific inquiries. This quality of experience is more engaged when advanced in an artful manner and is the basis for experiential learning. Experiential learning and the transmission of knowledge must consider how inherited knowledge and tradition relates and adds to the learning experience. Dewey came to the realization that most experience is culturally mediated by many previous trips around the learning cycle;

Experience is already overlaid and saturated with the products of the reflection of past generations and by-gone ages. It is filled with interpretations, classifications, due to sophisticated thought, which have become incorporated into what seems to be free naïve empirical material. It would take more wisdom than is possessed by the wisest historical scholar to track all of these absorbed borrowings to their original sources.³²⁵

Dewey called this “empirical experience” which was conservative, tradition bound, and prone to conformity and dogmatism. He emphasized that this traditional flow of experience must be interrupted to initiate reflection and learning. This emphasizes the importance of living in a more artful manner. This formulation echoes Dewey’s collaborator William James, whose radical empiricism was foundational for the later development of the philosophy of pragmatism. The influence of culture on experience and the acknowledgement to push back against traditional notions of conformity are the important aspects to take from pragmatism. It is important to point out traditions of experiential learning emphasize development toward a life of purpose and self-direction as the organizing principle for education.

³²⁵ Dewey, John. *Experience and Nature*. Paul Carus Lectures; Ser. 1, 1925. La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing, 1958. pg. 40. This is also a good note for me as I constantly struggle with limiting the scope of my research.

Like pragmatism, interactive constructivism values the constructive side of human knowledge and provides a model for explaining interrelations between observing, acting, and participating in lived culture. This is a necessary for the quality of a lived experience. Both fields have very broad approaches to experience and education, taking account of discursive diversity and the singularity of events, along with social and cultural contexts of constructions that steadily undergo transformation in response to social and cultural changes.³²⁶ It is necessary to link the contexts of both pragmatism and constructivism because it gives us an applicable model for navigating the multicultural dimensions of today's society. Recent work within the realm of Dewey scholars has been to link Dewey's pragmatism with current constructivist approaches as well as using elements of pragmatism to solve some of the ambiguities of postmodernism. These scholars propose avenues for revising Dewey's thought in light of the challenges facing contemporary education and society and address other themes not heavily touched upon in Dewey's work such as racism, feminism, post-industrial capitalism, and what they refer to as, liquid modernity.³²⁷ Classical pragmatism directly relates to postmodernism as a rejection of epistemological foundationalism, objectivity, and metaphysical realism, as an affirmation of self-reflexiveness and relativism as an attempt to have meaning without transcendent value and action without absolute truth.

In his book *Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism* (2007), Larry Hickman concludes that Dewey's (and Peirce's) views on habit offer post-postmodern solutions to postmodern problems.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ It seems like liquid modernity would reject post-modernism but I am not quite certain on this as of now. For further reading see; Bauman, Zygmunt. "Education in Liquid Modernity." *The Review of Education/pedagogy/cultural Studies* 27, no. 4 (2005): 303–17.

These philosophers bridge the gap between cognitive science and praxis by measuring human development and accomplishment in terms of neither ideas, nor activities, but in terms of habits produced. Dewey's *Experience and Education* (1938) offers an outline for human development, an authentic philosophy for living. The central theme of the book is Dewey's own theory of experience.

Experience is an interplay of objective and internal conditions and so requires a proper fit between them. This is his *principle of interaction*. [E]very experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects ... the quality of subsequent experiences.³²⁸

His principle of the continuity of experience is said to rest upon a biological construal of habit and, in concert with the former principle, suggests that experience lives on as much in one's social and physical environment as it does inside a person.

The insights of Dewey and Peirce, both viewed from a slightly different angle, into the nature and function of habits provides support for classical pragmatic to post-postmodern solutions for two difficulties of postmodernism. Hickman states,

First, because of the ways in which Peirce and Dewey link the experimentalism of the technosciences to the quotidian production of habits, they can account of objectivity. Second, because of their arguments on behalf of what Peirce termed the final, veritable, logical interpretant of a sign, they have the means to terminate the processes of infinite self-referentiality, re-description, and reinterpretation in ways that can produce reliable habits which can serve as platforms for action, should need arise.³²⁹

³²⁸ Dewey, John. *Experience and Education* (1938) LW 13:18.

³²⁹ Hickman, Larry A., and American Council of Learned Societies. *Pragmatism as Post-postmodernism: Lessons from John Dewey*. 1st ed. American Philosophy Series. New York: Fordham University Press, (2007): 254.

I see the notion of experience as common component between the work of Vygotsky and Dewey in the fact that social interactions constitute a major part of learning. Piaget was also interested in experiential learning but from a cognitive development standpoint, not social interaction. For Dewey, all knowledge is in the domain of actions and consequences. As quoted in my introduction;

Mere activity does not constitute experience. Experience as trying involves change, but change is meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with the return wave of consequences which flow from it. When activity is continued into the undergoing of consequences, when the change made by action is reflected back into a change made in us, the mere flux is loaded with significance. We learn something.³³⁰

David Kolb offers a theory of experiential learning and its modern applications in education, work, and adult development. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) helps explain how experience is transformed into learning and reliable knowledge.³³¹ Truth is not manifest in experience; it must be inferred by a process of learning that questions preconceptions of direct experience, tempers the vividness and emotion of experience with critical reflection, and extracts the correct lessons from consequences of action.³³²

³³⁰ Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. Project Gutenberg, (2013): 146.

³³¹ See Figure 1.

³³² Kolb, David A. *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Second ed. (2015): xxi.

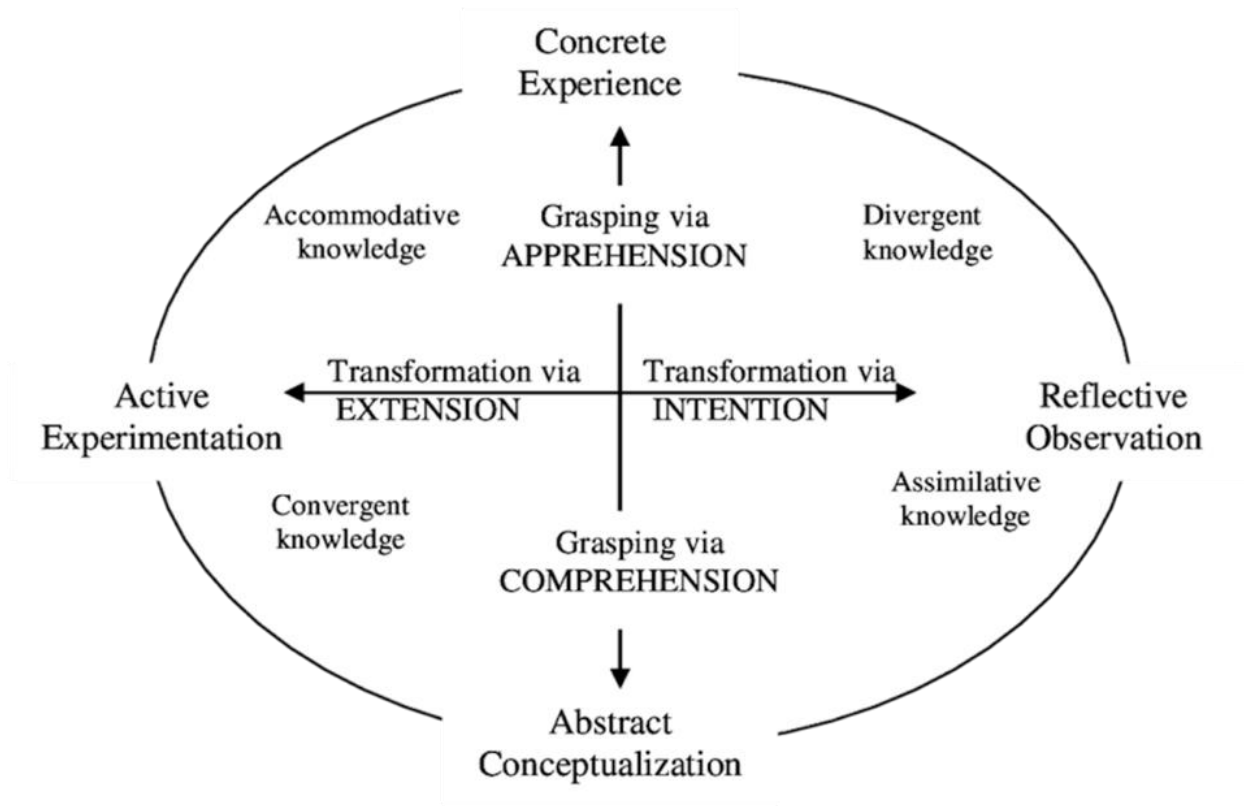


Figure 2. David Kolb's updated model for Experiential Learning (1984).

In his experiential learning theory, Kolb argued that learning is “the process by which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience, [and] knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience.”³³³ As learning research continues to develop, biological correlates have increasingly been uncovered, pushing to reinstate a separation of the tools of education from the goal of education.³³⁴ There is great variability in every individual, every brain, every context, and every learning event therefore, further research

³³³ Ibid. 41.

³³⁴ Schenck, J. *Teaching and the adolescent brain: An educator's guide*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton. (2011).

has been conducted to propose a theory of teaching rather than one of learning. The neuroscience supports Kolb's ELT in areas of novelty, holistic learning, active learning, and emotional connection where evidence demonstrates that certain types of learning involve both pre-frontal lobes and brain stem activity.³³⁵ Experiential learning integrates different neural networks during the learning event, resulting in multiple memory pathways and connections between abstract concepts. For example, having students provide personal explanation or demonstration of the concepts through multiple modalities produces higher retention and the elaboration through a number of modalities creates more lineages.³³⁶ Experiential learning also addresses the student's need for an emotive connection with the physical world, which triggers a release of dopamine that is significant for memory formation.³³⁷ The cognitive foundations that Kolb's work neglects are salience, the hierarchical shape of learning abstractions, cognitive load theory, and priming. The brain cannot manage the deluge of information from the environment therefore the learner's need for salience, or determining what information is important is an essential step. This is why a theory for teaching, rather than learning is proposed because students do not naturally identify all the lesson's salient points, hence the need for review and guided reflection. A new model has been created that integrates student engagement (the non-conscious systems, front-end of

³³⁵ Immordino-Yang, M. H., et al. "Neural correlates of admiration and compassion." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 106, (2009): 8021-8026.

³³⁶ Craik, F. I., & Tulving, E. "Depth of processing and the retention of words in episodic memory". *Journal of Experimental Psychology-General*, 104, (1975): 268-294.

³³⁷ Gazzaniga, M. S., Ivry, R. B., & Mangun, G. R. *Cognitive Neuroscience*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton. (2002).

learning) with experience learning's focus on reflection to build understanding (the conscious systems or the back-end of learning).³³⁸

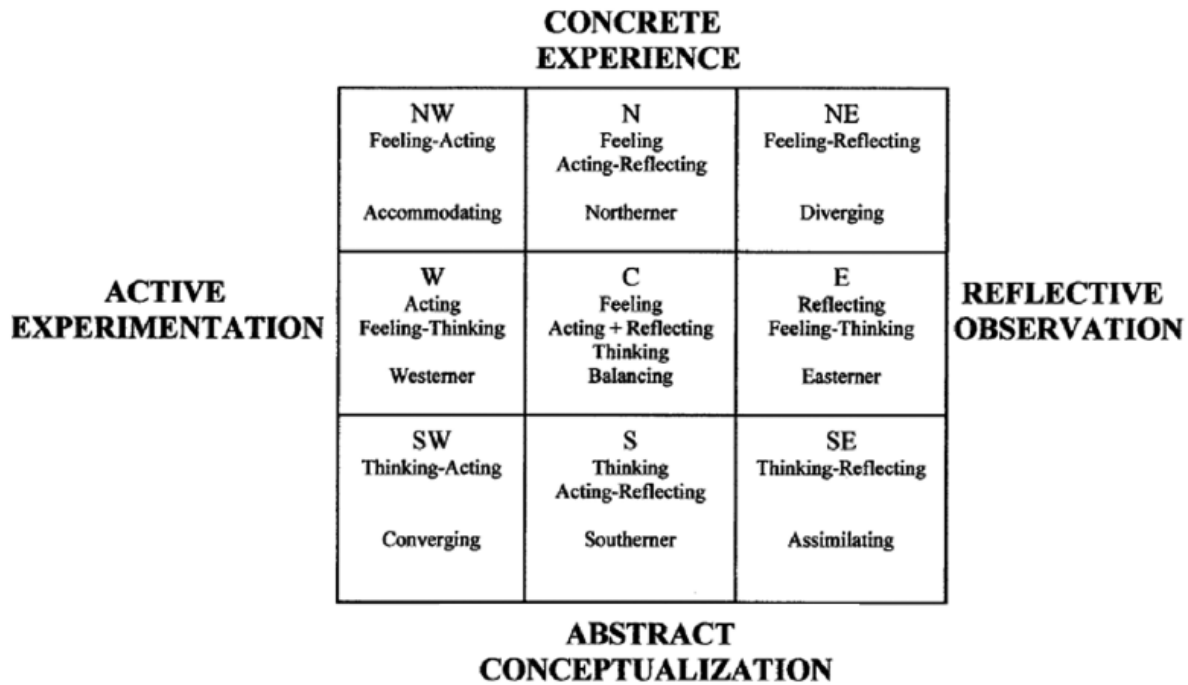


Figure 3. The nine regions of experiential learning theory learning space. Adapted from A. Y. Kolb and Kolb (2005).

Constructivism, as I've previously discussed, is a well-established theory for educational neuroscience, experiential education, social-emotional learning, and is now finding considerable neurobiological support through the work of Antonio Damasio. New research uncovering the interdependent brain processes of social, situational, and cultural interaction has led to the

³³⁸ Schenck, Jeb, and Cruickshank, Jessie. "Evolving Kolb." *The Journal of Experiential Education* 38, no. 1 (2015): 78.

reformation of the theory into neuroconstructivism where learning is embodied, enculturated, contextual, conscious as well as non-conscious, developmentally independent, and dynamic.³³⁹ This new approach relies heavily on past and current life experience of all participants (including the teacher) to facilitate instruction through the learning event. Those experiences are foundational for the inherent feedback loops which manifest both neurobiologically and psychologically. Therefore, learning is conceived as based on relationships; between all parties in the room, the individual's relationship with themselves, the environment, with the context of learning, and relationships with the content. This type of dynamic awareness is a key component in the work that Compassion Project cultivates by creating a compassionate environment that practices mindfulness, reflection, art-making, and dialogue.

The front-end of learning involves non-conscious systems of appraisal, attention, and affect. The appraisal system used peripheral vision and the body's relationship with the environment to evaluate a situation. The attention system manages all the incoming stimuli, identifies and directs your attention to what is important. The affect system is the ebb and flow of emotional states that course through you right now in a milieu of electrical signals and neurochemicals. Thoughts and sensations are encoded with emotion as they come and go, meaning that a person's emotional state is emergent and fluid.³⁴⁰

Using a biological approach and understanding that even social and psychological processes have neurobiological correlates, one can uncover processes that are ubiquitous to learning. The Co-Constructed Developmental Teaching Theory (CDTT) – figure 4, is a new model that incorporates theories capable of reflecting a learner's multiple dynamic states, in different contexts, at different scales in a re-iterative fractal-like process. CDTT starts and finishes with

³³⁹ Mareschal, D., et al. *Neuroconstructivism* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Oxford University Press (2007).

³⁴⁰ Schenck, Jeb, and Cruickshank, Jessie. "Evolving Kolb." *The Journal of Experiential Education* 38, no. 1 (2015): 83-84.

the whole person and purports learning as an embodied process between the learner and facilitator. Differences in learners are seriously considered, not by identifying each persona's attention and motivation but by tapping into the mind/brain's goal orientation to engage learners.³⁴¹

³⁴¹ This idea has been borrowed from gaming research and seems to be more efficient than individual tailoring. The mind is goal-oriented and when the goal is achieved, it will stop "learning" efficiently to preserve energy. Schenck, Jeb, and Cruickshank, Jessie. "Evolving Kolb." *The Journal of Experiential Education* 38, no. 1 (2015): 86.

Note that this process is re-iterative at different scales producing a fractal spiral. Not shown are the feedback loops that connect the different phases at different scales in times and place, or sub-iterations of the CDTT cycle that occur as part of a larger iteration. The spacing of point along the spiral is variable and not to scale. The spacing does not infer a set of measure of time. Fractals are extremely common throughout nature, occurring from the molecular level upward to galaxies.

Compassion Project

While volunteering with Compassion Project (CP), I noticed some initial similarities and compatibilities between what the organization is trying to achieve and some of Dewey's theories. Both are reflective of pedagogies for social change and the democratizing of education through community and transactional processes. Described more vividly in the preface, CP's workshops begin with a grounding exercise in the form of a land acknowledgment followed by a meditation. This allows for individuals, showing up as the fullest version of themselves, to come together and set the tone for working together in community and shared experience. Then, there is an opportunity for a free draw/paint where participants do not have an artistic outcome in mind but simply play, often to music or sometimes attempt to re-create, visually, the experience of their mediation. This step allows participants to get out of their heads with preconceived notions about what something should look like and simply experiment with materials as a means of communication. The workshops are structured so that body breaks (i.e., getting out of your seat, stretching, using the restroom freely) are encouraged. We also encourage dialogue and pose questions to spark meaningful conversation such as, what is a compassionate act you've witnessed or been a part of? What is something that you've been struggling with lately and how did you feel supported?

For Dewey, democracy is a conjoint communicated experience. Such experience, expressed as collaborative inquiry, requires the intellectual and emotional competencies necessary to tackle shared problems and negotiate value differences. Dewey has a positive account of experience in which experience is processual, transactional, socially mediated, and had a realist, naturalistic, non-reductive, emergentist, process-oriented metaphysics. We attempt

to tap into these processual, social mediated, and emergent elements during CP's workshops to connect, in community, through our shared human experience. The final element of a workshop is time spent creating a work of art that encapsulates what participants have experienced during their time together. Dewey sees art as achieving the most that we can hope for, not just the transferring of information but at its highest form, it is a way in which people partake of something together at an emotional and intuitive level. It becomes, in Dewey's phrase, a shared experience. Not only is this a shared experience, but a consummatory experience in which it is conscious, deeply meaningful, and integrated as a whole. Remember that "art" denotes the *interaction* of (a) making (artist activity), (b) an event or thing (song, painting, etc.) and (c) an appreciator (listener, viewer, etc.). With this in mind, we also have a group share at the end of each workshop for those to share and discuss their works in a non-judgmental space.

Dewey's aesthetics examines arts' social role in presenting, reimagining, and projecting human identity and Dewey's philosophy always came back to the idea that we are living organisms who are dynamically and rhythmically interacting with our environments. Art is born in this middle ground of the dynamic rhythm of life as a means of expression and communication. Indeed, the role of tension in the experience of heightened vitality of meaning often leads artists to cultivate their work, again as expression, communication, and a cathartic form of release.

Comparison Between Dewey and Freire

While theorizing in distinctly different times, cultures, and circumstances, there are notable philosophical similarities between the work of John Dewey and Paulo Freire. Comparing these two is important for this study because while Compassion Project uses Freire's *Pedagogies*

of the Oppressed as a guiding text, John Dewey can help translate that work within the context of American education. Though Dewey, in the context of progressive education, is often considered a failure, his ideas about democratizing education have longevity and deserve to be revisited. Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian educator and philosopher whose work in adult literacy has led to critical pedagogies that help us “read” and think about the society around us.

Dewey and Freire each presented trends to support a new means of critical awareness, inclusion, and the centrality of democratic citizenship in learning situations.³⁴² They understood the importance of both pedagogy as well as content, specifically with its connection to the democratic ideal and both propagated the notion that the connection between democratic culture and democratic politics are facilitated in the process of democratic education. Each concerned with similar problems of a class-based society which threatens to submerge and miseducate individuals in the lower classes, the drive for informed, critical citizenship is where Dewey and Freire meet to focus on informed, culturally sensitive, and democratically oriented systems of education that emphasize the attainment of critical citizenship.

Both Dewey and Freire emphasize the essentiality of interaction between human beings as a basis for action and growth. If it were not for this interaction, society would likely remain oppressive and individualistic, concerned much less with communal growth than individual aptitude, thus dissolving the significance and purpose of community.³⁴³ This is an essential feature for Compassion Project’s Transformation Praxis, action and growth through reflection

³⁴² Shyman, Eric. “A Comparison of the Concepts of Democracy and Experience in a Sample of Major Works by Dewey and Freire.” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, (2010): 2.

³⁴³ Ibid. 4.

and dialogue. Freire states that, “[the] world and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction.”³⁴⁴ Here Freire is getting to the point that our interactions and ways of knowing are a dynamic process. Essentially, experience has no predetermined value one way or the other, but the value can only be appraised in terms of the extent to which that individual contributes to the democratic ideal of the society. Dewey posits that democracy is not simply defined as shared common interest, but reliance upon the social recognition and implications of mutual interests with its moral and idea being the opportunity for all to develop their distinctive capacities.³⁴⁵ The basis and success of democracy is not in education alone but in society’s ability to dialogue with one another, thus preserving mutual benefit and awareness of the communal necessity. For Dewey democracy is more thoroughly defined as a means of associated living made up of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer one’s own action to that of others and consider the action of others to give important direction to his own.³⁴⁶ This roots democracy not only in dialogue but also equality, such that democracy is equivalent to the breaking down the barriers of class, race, and national territory which has kept us from the liberation of greater diversity.

Freire and Dewey both believe in the dynamic and transformative process of schooling and knowledge. They emphasize the notion of inquiring about the foundations of pedagogical knowledge, but to do so in the context of practical application and its ultimate effect on advancing democratic society and transforming the world. The student must redefine and re-

³⁴⁴ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder, (1970): 50.

³⁴⁵ Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*. New York, Macmillan Company. (1916).

³⁴⁶ Ibid. 87.

establish their relationship to knowledge and understand both the social and political power such knowledge not only possesses but demands while still maintaining and connecting the knowledge that student already possesses from previous experience in the world. Thus, resulting transformed relation to knowledge requires beginning the learning process with preexisting academic, political, and experiential knowledge leading to an ‘act of knowing’ (Freire) or warranted assertions (Dewey).³⁴⁷

Compassion Project’s process in understanding Freire’s Transformation Praxis (described in detail in an upcoming section), the “banking education” model, in which students are empty of knowledge and teachers are gifters of knowledge, reinforces an oppressive structure and immobilizes people from building a world that works for them. This type of teaching, where the students are not called upon to know, but to memorize the contents narrated by the teacher, regulates the students to the role of containers or receptacles to be filled by the teacher, the better students are the ones who more complacently permits themselves to be filled.³⁴⁸ This does not facilitate true learning and dialogue and equitable student-teacher relationships. Dewey also cites that the threat to the role of experience by traditional schools is the preservation of the teacher-student dichotomy. He describes this “Method of Imposition” in which the teacher teaches, and the student absorbs. He cautions that education is not a process of ‘telling’ and ‘being told’, but rather an active and constructive process involving both the teacher and the student.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Shyman, Eric. “A Comparison of the Concepts of Democracy and Experience in a Sample of Major Works by Dewey and Freire.” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, (2010): 5.

³⁴⁸ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder, (1970): 72.

³⁴⁹ Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*. New York, Macmillan Company. (1916): 38.

For Dewey, the teacher operates not as a magistrate set on high and marked by arbitrary authority, but as a co-partner and guide in a common enterprise.³⁵⁰ Freire posits a similar contention in that the fact that the student needs the teacher's help, as in any pedagogical situation does not mean that the teacher's help nullifies the student's creativity and responsibility for constructing his or her own written language and for reading this language.³⁵¹ Freire suggests that learning insists on a pedagogy of asking questions. This pedagogy is essentially democratic and for that very reason anti-authoritarian.³⁵² There are many similarities that continue between Dewey and Freire's ideas on subject matter that need to be presented in its human context and setting because only experience that has human value and function is concrete and usable. Though this resonates with CP's pedagogies, it is not a substantial enough point to extract for the purposes of this paper. The emphasis on experience and context is contiguous with Dewey and Freire's goal of education. Ultimately, the teacher must engage the student in the context of his or her own perception and experience, and nurture that perception unwaveringly until it gives way to a new perception to be further nurtured, beginning, and continuing with the context of genuine human experience.

In considering the movement towards a meaningful pedagogy for a democratic and liberated society, fundamentally Dewey and Freire take issue with the formality that traditional schooling often imposes, resulting in a devaluing of individual experience and its connection to critical awareness through curricular and pedagogical experiences. The belief that the

³⁵⁰Ibid. 10.

³⁵¹ Freire & Macedo, (1978): 35.

³⁵² Shyman, Eric. "A Comparison of the Concepts of Democracy and Experience in a Sample of Major Works by Dewey and Freire." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, (2010): 5.

fundamental flaw in the traditionalist approach to schooling is the persistent and pervasive dualist nature, to see students as ‘illiterate or literate’ (Freire) or ‘bright or dull’ (Dewey) negates the existence of any learning or growth process, sacrificing the process of ‘becoming literate’ or ‘becoming knowledgeable’ for the totality of being one of the other invariably.³⁵³ Any democratic or progressive system of education must be inherently non-dualistic, as its purpose is dependent on a continuum of learning and experience that is not to be categorized, stagnant, and subtractive, but rather variable, developmental, and additive. These philosophers claim that democratic education is the correct framework in which to educate, and both offer imperatives as an alternative to traditional schooling, both citing the importance of students not being filled by a teacher as a receptacle but rather the notion of development as a continual process and cornerstone of legitimate education. Traditional school fails to account for the diversity of capacities and needs that exist in different human beings creating an automatic dualism that facilitates the supremacy of one and the inferiority of the other.³⁵⁴

The purpose of education from the perspectives of both Dewey and Freire is to afford all individuals the right to full development. They want to create and preserve a society based on a truly democratic ideal in which there is no division of power based on access to knowledge and in which the members refer consistently to one another’s well being as a standard for their own actions. This aligns with CP’s mission, values, and vision wholeheartedly and will be broken down in the next section. The societies envisioned by both Dewey and Freire are rooted heavily

³⁵³ Ibid. 6.

³⁵⁴ This type of dualist, hierarchal thinking is presumably the reason I have felt so inclined to try and justify the importance of the arts scientifically. This is something that I need to unlearn.

in the concept of reality. Neither one takes a utopian position but rather a firm, realistic interest in veridical change and societal progression through continuing social action. This equally aligns with the work done by Compassion Project in acknowledging we have the tools in our toolbox, we just need to embrace, uplift, and honor them. Adrienne maree brown who continually inspires CP's work through *Emergent Strategy* (2017) states;

At this point, we have all of the information we need to create a change; it isn't a matter of facts. It's a matter of longing, having the will to imagine and implement something else. We are living in the ancestral imagination of others, with their longing for safety and abundance.³⁵⁵

While I've illustrated many of Dewey and Freire's commonalities, I do think it's important to conclude by grounding them each in distinctly different philosophical traditions. Dewey operated largely from the perspective of progressive education while Freire was a deep proponent of radical humanism. While the radical humanist tradition does draw much of its basis from the progressive education tradition such as the importance of transformation and the social significance of education, and an anti-positivist approach, there are distinct differences in the resulting ideologies and approaches between each perspective. While the progressive tradition was founded firmly in educational practices to restructure experience to promote a democratic world, in essence focusing on schooling being the most significant agency of democratic societies. While the principles of respecting diversity and promotion critical and socially engaged intelligence were central to progressive ideologies, its significant proponents were still largely white, traditionally educated males. Here Dewey can be seen as not fulfilling the 'action'

³⁵⁵ brown, adrienne maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2017): 21.

step of Freire's transformation praxis as he rarely incorporated specific cultural issues in his work and merely alluded to their existence in the context of progressive education's benefits of 'all the people' and 'respect for diversity' as the result of such 'broken down barriers'.³⁵⁶

Radical humanism, as our other perspective is by nature a participatory tradition based on political action and unrest. Heavily influenced by the tenets of radical liberation theology, the praxis relies on taking overt participatory action to change oppressive traditions. They are not implemented on behalf of the oppressed class by a sympathizer, but by the oppressed class themselves to disrupt extant power relationships based on hegemonic principles and actions and overthrow the resulting oppressive social arrangements.³⁵⁷ This approach is far more crucial than progressives have been and connects directly not only to social action but also the actual engagement in political action. For Freire, the purpose of education goes far beyond promoting a democratic system of education, it is about the genuine liberation of peoples which, in turn will create a balanced society where there is not only respect for, but a necessity of, multiple cultural ways of knowing.

What Dewey and Freire teach is that humans rely on one another for their own betterment which results not only in greater social betterment but social and political justice. Interaction and communication must embody one's experience with the world to facilitate democracy and liberation as a basis for the society that is created and recreated through each successive generation. While schooling is the beginning avenue of access for this type of engagement, for

³⁵⁶ Shyman, Eric. "A Comparison of the Concepts of Democracy and Experience in a Sample of Major Works by Dewey and Freire." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, (2010): 9.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

both philosophers, it must be taken further, outside of the classroom for complete equitable action. Another important difference between these two is the notion of who is to be educated.

In Freire's pedagogical technique, the learners are most often adults without much previous formal education. While Dewey believes utmost in a commitment to life-long learning, his pedagogical work regarding progressive education is primarily set within adolescent learners within public school systems. Dewey does hold a strong belief that philosophy is tainted by its origins in ancient Greece as the slave was educated in the empirical knowledge needed to perform efficiently the physical labor of society and in contrast the freeman was educated in speculative pursuits and lead to believe in the right to control the slave's labor.³⁵⁸

Compassion Project's Conception and Historical Background

Compassion Project is a non-partisan, non-religious, 501(c)3 grassroots organization based in Bozeman, Montana dedicated to teaching and spreading compassion through art and mindfulness.³⁵⁹ Since 2017 they have engaged over 8,000 individuals in school and community lessons and workshops. Their programs serve people of all ages and promote lifelong skills for strong relationships and wellbeing. Compassion Project was originally founded in the College of Education, Health and Human Development at Montana State University as an anti-bullying campaign in 2017 and received its non-profit status in 2019. Inspired by Dr. Richard J. Davidson's Center for Healthy Minds, Compassion Project was designed to bring the Bozeman community and the greater Gallatin County together through education in and outside the

³⁵⁸ Betz, Joseph. "John Dewey and Paulo Freire". *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 28(1992): 113.

³⁵⁹ "Compassion Project," Compassion Project, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.compassionproject.org/>.

schools around compassion- what it means, how to recognize it, how to practice it, and why it is important.³⁶⁰ While Davidson's work gives us some information on the research that has been essential for Compassion Project, equally important is the story from its founder, Dr. Kayte Kaminski.

To me, this project was alive from the moment I stepped inside the gallery in my hometown in La Crosse, Wisconsin and I knew I had to be a part of it at some point in my life. Too often, we as humans contribute to sadness, divisiveness, and negativity in the world. My goal in bringing Compassion Project to Bozeman was to help bring positivity, kindness, empathy, and compassion to all individuals that may interact with the project- either through participating or experiencing the final installation. We constantly are being told what not to do growing up. Instead of going from that deficit mindset, let's teach children and adults alike what to do, what it feels like to give and receive kindness and compassion, how to recognize compassion and the opportunities to practice it, and then how to integrate it into our daily lives. Compassion to me is not about changing in the world in one day. It's about being present with and holding space for someone who needs it, remembering to be present with and kind to yourself, and even more simply- choosing kindness and listening when it may be the most difficult thing you do all day. Hold the door, hold a hand, practice true empathy, make another being feel safe, be intentional, be kind, be willing comfortable in your own discomfort when learning, and practice compassion-- because you never know the difference you might be making for the better.³⁶¹

This gallery that Dr. Kaminski mentions was covered with six-by-six-inch panels covered in artwork created by the surrounding area school districts. A unique collaborative project through the merger of the sciences and arts that considers the ways in which we consider compassion and what it means to be human that asks; What does the word compassion mean to you? If you had to draw a picture of it, could you? The inspiration for this project came in 2008 when Trout Museum of Art executive director Tim Riley saw a "Brain to Five" series

³⁶⁰ "The Compassion Project," The Compassion Project - The Compassion Project | Montana State University, accessed January 22, 2021, <https://www.montana.edu/thecompassionproject/>.

³⁶¹ Kaminski, Kayte. <https://www.montana.edu/thecompassionproject/thecrew/index.html>. Accessed January 28, 2021.

presentation on the science of compassion by Dr. Richard Davidson.³⁶² Davidson's presentation highlighted research indicating those who exhibit compassionate behavior are generally happier people and that compassion can be learned and practiced as a skill. Davidson's words sparked an idea in Riley, who envisioned a way to facilitate the understanding and perhaps enhance the practice of the rather complex emotion creatively within the community. In the fall of 2010, he teamed up with Jim Heiks, the visual arts coordinator for the Appleton Area School District and began distributing the panels to K-12 art students with an invitation to draw or paint their concept of compassion.

While Dr. Kaminski's experience was truly the impetus for this project, it is necessary to break down Dr. Davidson's work and its criticisms to describe the cognitive function of mindfulness, meditation, and emotional awareness in our development. Davidson is best known for his groundbreaking work studying emotion and the brain. Davidson is a highly sought-after expert and speaker, leading conversations on wellbeing on international stages. We've used modern tools of neuroscience for negative effects of fear, anxiety, and depression and the Dalai Lama has challenged Dr. Davidson to look at the positive effects of the brain such as kindness and compassion.³⁶³ Compassion is a learned and practiced skill that is essential for the sustainable practice of wellbeing and for building harmonious relationships.

³⁶² "The Appleton Compassion Project." We produce programs and publications that explore, explain, and sustain Wisconsin thought and culture, February 24, 2016.

³⁶³ Many of the scholars that I will introduce in terms of mindfulness and wellbeing work on combining ancient Eastern wisdom with Western psychology and multiple programs and centers such as Davidson's Center for Healthy Minds and Sandford's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education have been supported by the Dalai Lama.

The science behind Davidson's work suggests that this sort of contemplation is good for our brains and contributes to better neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the ability of neural networks in the brain to change through growth and reorganization. These changes range from individual neuron pathways making new connections from experience. Examples include circuit and network changes that result from learning a new ability, influences of the environment, practice, and psychological stress. While neuroplasticity does develop at a higher degree in developing brains (childhood), it does occur in the adult brain and can have significant implications for healthy development, learning, memory, and recovery from brain damage. The idea that the brain and its function are not fixed throughout adulthood was proposed in William James' 1890 *The Principles of Psychology*.³⁶⁴ Interestingly enough, this text has been said to be the most influential in Dewey's life and is also one of the first to use the term "plasticity".³⁶⁵

Dr. Davidson's experiments on the effects of meditation on the brain suggest that long-term or short-term practice of meditation can lead to different levels of activities in the brain regions associated with attention, anxiety, depression, fear, anger, and compassion as well as the body to heal itself.³⁶⁶ These studies have suggested functional changes may be caused by changes in the physical structure of the brain in differences in cortical thickness or density of

³⁶⁴ James, William. *The Principles of Psychology*. Chapter IV, Habits. (1890): 220.

³⁶⁵ Alexander, Thomas. "Dewey's Philosophy of Art and Aesthetic Experience". *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1. Art 9. (2016): 60.

³⁶⁶ Davidson R, Lutz A. "Buddha's Brain: Neuroplasticity and Meditation". *IEEE Signal Processing Magazine*. 25. no. 1. (January 2008): 176–174. doi:10.1109/MSP.2008.4431873
Lutz A, Greischar LL, Rawlings NB, Ricard M, Davidson RJ. "Long-term meditators self-induce high-amplitude gamma synchrony during mental practice". *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. 101. no. 46. (November 2014): 16369–73.

gray matter.³⁶⁷ Gray matter contains most of the brain's neuronal cell bodies and is involved in muscle control and sensory perception such as seeing, hearing, memory, emotions, speech, decision making, and self-control.³⁶⁸

Christopher Shaw and Jill McEachern in *Toward a theory of Neuroplasticity* (2001), state that there is no all-inclusive theory that overarches different frameworks and systems in the study of neuroplasticity.³⁶⁹ However, researchers often describe neuroplasticity as the ability to make adaptive changes related to the structure and function of the nervous system.³⁷⁰ Two types of neuroplasticity are often discussed are structural neuroplasticity and functional neuroplasticity. Structural plasticity is often understood as the brain's ability to change its neuronal connections.³⁷¹ New neurons are constantly produced and integrated into the central nervous

³⁶⁷ Luders E, Toga AW, Lepore N, Gaser C. "The underlying anatomical correlates of long-term meditation: larger hippocampal and frontal volumes of gray matter". *NeuroImage*. 45. no. 3. (April 2009): 672-8.

Pagnoni G, Cekic M. "Age effects on gray matter volume and attentional performance in Zen meditation". *Neurobiology of Aging*. 28. no. 10. (October 2007): 1623-7.

Sasmita AO, Kuruvilla J, Ling AP. "Harnessing neuroplasticity: modern approaches and clinical future". *The International Journal of Neuroscience*. 128. no. 11. (November 2018): 1061-1077.

Vestergaard-Poulsen P, van Beek M, Skewes J, Bjarkam CR, Stubberup M, Bertelsen J, Roepstorff A. "Long-term meditation is associated with increased gray matter density in the brain stem". *NeuroReport*. 20. no. 2. (January 2009): 170-4.

³⁶⁸ Miller AK, Alston RL, Corsellis JA. "Variation with age in the volumes of grey and white matter in the cerebral hemispheres of man: measurements with an image analyser". *Neuropathology and Applied Neurobiology*. 6. no. 2 (1980): 119-32.

³⁶⁹ Shaw, C.A., & McEachern, J. (Eds.). *Toward a Theory of Neuroplasticity* (1st ed.). Psychology Press. (2001).

³⁷⁰ Zilles K. "Neuronal plasticity as an adaptive property of the central nervous system". *Annals of Anatomy = Anatomischer Anzeiger*. 174. no. 5. October 1992): 383-91.

³⁷¹ It's important me to define a couple of terms here because typically when I am speaking of these phenomena, I usually refer to neural pathways, not neuronal. Neural is the adjective for nerve and neuronal is the adjective for neuron. Neural means dealing with nerves or the nervous system. Neuronal means dealing specifically with neurons.

system throughout the life space based in this type of neuroplasticity. This type of neuroplasticity studies the effect of various internal or external stimuli on the brain's anatomical reorganization, often through cross-sectional imaging methods such as an MRI or CT scan.³⁷² The changes of grey matter proportion or the synaptic strength in the brain are considered examples of structural neuroplasticity. This relates to Davidson's work on meditation and is currently being investigated more within the field of neuroscience.³⁷³ The second type of neuroplasticity is functional. Davidson's research also touches on functional neuroplasticity because the increase in density of gray matter alters the functional properties of neurons and they adapt. The changes can occur in response to previous activity (activity-dependent plasticity) to acquire memory or in response to malfunction or damage to neurons (reactive plasticity) to compensate a pathological event. Activity-Dependent plasticity can be in the form of synaptic, intrinsic, and homeostatic plasticities. While essential for thorough understanding the absolute function, these descriptors do not necessarily advance this research in any way that I can yet see.³⁷⁴

³⁷² Chang Y. "Reorganization and plastic changes of the human brain associated with skill learning and expertise". *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. 8. no. 55. (2014): 35.

³⁷³ Mateos-Aparicio P, Rodríguez-Moreno A. "The Impact of Studying Brain Plasticity". *Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience*. 13. no. 66. (2019): 66.

³⁷⁴ Regarding physiological forms of activity-dependent plasticity, those involving synapses are referred to as synaptic plasticity. The strengthening or weakening of synapses that results in an increase or decrease of firing rate of the neurons are called long-term potentiation (LTP) and long-term depression (LTD), respectively, and they are considered as examples of synaptic plasticity that are associated with memory. More recently it has become clearer that synaptic plasticity can be complemented by another form of activity-dependent plasticity involving the intrinsic excitability of neurons, which is referred to as intrinsic plasticity. This, as opposed to homeostatic plasticity does not necessarily maintain the overall activity of a neuron within a network but contributes to encoding memories.

Patten, AR, et al. "The Benefits of Exercise on Structural and Functional Plasticity in the Rodent Hippocampus of Different Disease Models". *Brain Plasticity*. 1. no. 1. (October 2015): 97–127.

Davidson's research is broadly focused on the neural bases of emotion and emotional style as well as methods to promote human flourishing, including meditation and related contemplative practices. His studies have centered on people across their lifespan, from birth through old age. In addition, he's conducted studies with individuals with emotional disorders such as mood and anxiety disorders and autism, as well as expert meditation practitioners with tens of thousands of hours of experience. His research uses a wide range of methods including different varieties of MRI, positron emission tomography, electroencephalography and modern genetic and epigenetic methods.³⁷⁵ Davidson has published hundreds of scientific papers, numerous chapters and reviews, and is co-author with Daniel Goleman of *Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body* (2017). He is also the author, with Sharon Begley, of The New York Times bestseller *The Emotional Life of Your Brain* (2012).

A criticism in Davidson's work is that he does not refer to the intense decades-long debated controversy between the valence and the right-hemisphere hypotheses. Allen Shore, both a scientist and clinician, critiques Davidson's model as highly corticocentric and focuses on the prefrontal higher levels of the human brain, and on left-hemispheric conscious behavior, verbal cognition, and the explicit top-down control of emotion.³⁷⁶ Shore claims, because of the body of

Zhang W, Linden DJ. "The other side of the engram: experience-driven changes in neuronal intrinsic excitability". *Nature Reviews. Neuroscience*. 4 (11) (November 2003): 885–900.
 Debanne D, Inglebert Y, Russier M. "Plasticity of intrinsic neuronal excitability". *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*. 54. (February 2019): 73- 82.

³⁷⁵ Center for Investigating Healthy Minds, "Center for Healthy Minds," Founder of Center for Healthy Minds, Richard J. Davidson, accessed January 22, 2021.

³⁷⁶ Schore, Allan N. "Review of the Emotional Life of Your Brain." *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 32, no. 3 (2015): 539.

his work in affective neuroscience on implicit affect regulation, as well as in neuropsychanalysis on the role of the cortical and subcortical areas of the right brain in all emotional functions of the human unconscious mind, support a position consonant with the right hemisphere hypothesis. I am not a neuroscientist but I am interested in evidence-based research to help show that the work Compassion Project does is beneficial, so I find it necessary to understand Davidson's corticocentric view of the human brain. Josef Parvizi explains that traditionally, the cerebral cortex is seen to have the most important role in higher functions of the brain, such as cognition and behavioral regulation, whereas subcortical structures are considered to have subservient or no roles in these functions.³⁷⁷ His article highlights the conceptual bias at the root of the corticocentric view of the human brain and emphasizes its negative implications in current practices in the cognitive neurosciences. The aim of his article is to suggest that the corticocentric view of the human brain is myopic in scope because it does not let us see that the higher functions of the brain might in fact depend on the integrity of its lower structures.

Killgore and Yurgelun-Todd's (2007) research shows,

The two halves of the brain are believed to play different roles in emotional processing, but the specific contribution of each hemisphere continues to be debated. The right-hemisphere hypothesis suggests that the right cerebrum is dominant for processing all emotions regardless of affective valence, whereas the valence specific hypothesis posits that the left hemisphere is specialized for processing positive affect while the right hemisphere is specialized for negative affect. Here, healthy participants viewed two split visual-field facial affect perception tasks during functional magnetic resonance imaging, one presenting chimeric happy faces (i.e. half happy/half neutral) and the other presenting identical sad chimera (i.e. half sad/half neutral), each masked immediately by a neutral face. Results suggest that the posterior right hemisphere is generically activated during non-conscious emotional face perception regardless of affective valence, although

³⁷⁷ Parvizi, Josef. "Corticocentric myopia: old bias in new cognitive sciences." *Trends in cognitive sciences* vol. 13, no. 8. (2009): 354.

greater activation is produced by negative facial cues. The posterior left hemisphere was generally less activated by emotional faces, but also appeared to recruit bilateral anterior brain regions in a valence-specific manner. Findings suggest simultaneous operation of aspects of both hypotheses, suggesting that these two rival theories may not actually be in opposition, but may instead reflect different facets of a complex distributed emotion processing system.³⁷⁸

Again, the reason for bringing this information in is to be consistent with analyzing cognitive functions in relation to the ideas I'm exploring but this research in particular illustrates my point against binaries.³⁷⁹ Even the brain processes information in a dynamic process that cannot be attributed to simply one executive function or to a singular hemisphere in the brain. I'm exploring this is because when I say a more holistic approach, I might quite possibly mean using both hemispheres of your brain to create more neural pathways to create a more meaningful experience. The right side uses creativity, feeling, and imagination while the left side is more analytical and generates ideas. With Compassion Project's curriculum, you are asked to engage with both sides. At all CP events, participants are welcomed to bring their full, complex, human selves. This is how compassion is built for community, ourselves, and one another. This is another aspect to what a holistic experience means in relation to research.

Here seems like an important place to remind the reader why, as an American Studies scholar am I discussing cognitive neuroscience to such detail. There are two main reasons for

³⁷⁸ Killgore, William D S, and Deborah A Yurgelun-Todd. "The right-hemisphere and valence hypotheses: could they both be right (and sometimes left)?." *Social cognitive and affective neuroscience* vol. 2, no. 3 (2007): 240.

³⁷⁹ For consistencies sake of definitions, cognitive neuroscience is the scientific field that is concerned with the study of the biological processes and aspects that underlie cognition, with a specific focus on the neural connections in the brain which are involved in mental processes. I tend to use neuroscience and cognition interchangeably but ultimately when I speak of cognition, I'm referring to the process we can't see and neuroscience as being able to obtain the picture via advanced technologies.

this; one in being reflexive of my process, this is the way in which I understand the physical biological processes that are happening when we engage with our surroundings. Visualizing the spark of a neuron and the race through its pathways ignites an excitement in me that ultimately fuels this research.³⁸⁰ Secondly, there are a multitude of books that use affective neuroscience for the purpose of providing the reader with neurally-inspired exercises to change emotional style or engage in more productivity, creativity, etc. While the research in these books is sound, coming from neuroscientists from Stanford and Harvard, they have been written in a less scholarly language for the common reader to understand and ultimately come under attack by fellow scientists. Two authors of this sort that I would like to highlight are Shelley Carson, PhD who wrote *Your Creative Brain: Seven Steps to Maximize Imagination, Productivity, and Innovation in Your Life* (2010) and Tara Swart, MD, PhD, who wrote *The Source: The Secrets of the Universe, The Secrets of the Brain* (2019). These women tap into the neuroscience between creativity and illustrate just how we can train our brains to think more creatively or rather unlearn following the path of least resistance. In connecting creativity to elements of compassionate forward-thinking, Dr. Swart states;

Brain agility and neuroplasticity are attributes that make us more adaptable and resilient and also increase our sense of agency in an ever-changing world. As geo-political and psycho-social crises are impacting us and our children at unprecedented levels, we are mindlessly creating a dystopian future and future leaders ill-equipped to deal with this. Of all the elements of brain agility, including: mastering our emotions; understanding the brain-body connection; trusting our intuition; making decisions for social good; staying motivated to reach our goals; and reframing creativity to allow us to design a future we can feel good about; it is creativity that can harness the most from the power of neuroplasticity (the ability

³⁸⁰ The next avenue of this research will be for me to make a body of work addressing the topics discussed for an exhibition and eventually a book. It is the only way for this work to truly come to fruition.

of the brain to change itself) to make social innovation more effective and have a positive impact on populations of brains, not just our own. Change starts with us. An understanding of how the brain works, raising from non-conscious to conscious the drivers of our behavior that may be barriers to success; priming the brain to notice and grasp opportunities that may otherwise have passed us by; turning “lack” thinking into abundance; and manifesting the real-world outcomes that we desire for ourselves and future generations, leads to a cascade effect of health, wealth (in whatever form that may be), and well-being. Key relationships are improved, and people are inspired. This is where science meets spirituality—a powerful combination that can reap benefits for all.³⁸¹

While it is evident the topic of compassion is being studied in psychology, there is still pushback. Loretta Graziano Breuning addresses some of the criticisms in a 2018 article called “Compassion Failure: A New Paradigm”.³⁸² While it is necessary to discuss these criticisms to form a well-rounded argument, she is quite off-base in her assumptions that those working in the field of evidence-based research on compassion simply nods to science and that their emphasis was on critiquing society’s lack of compassion. Breuning’s claim is that the compassion paradigm treats every mental health problem as a symptom of society’s failure and that it presupposes that these problems will dissolve with “progressive” social change, but the compassion paradigm disempowers those it purports to help and stifles dissent and promotes greed.³⁸³

³⁸¹ Swart, Tara. The Neuroscience of Creativity (SSIR).” *The Source: The Secrets of the Universe, the Science of the Brain* by Tara Swart. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, October 11, 2019. Accessed February 11, 2021.

https://ssir.org/books/excerpts/entry/the_neuroscience_of_creativity.

³⁸² Breuning is the author of *Habits of a Happy Brain: Retrain Your Brain to Boost Your Serotonin, Dopamine, Oxytocin, and Endorphin Levels*; *The Science of Positivity: Stop Negative Thought Patterns By Changing Your Brain Chemistry*; and *I, Mammal: How to Make Peace with the Animal Urge for Social Power*.

³⁸³ This is an avenue for future research in considering the social and political change of our current era.

The notion that compassion disempowers creates an opposition between psychology, the study of behavior and the mental processes that lead to behavior (thoughts, feelings, desires) and neuroscience, which dives deeper into the human mind, observing biological and chemical processes in the brain and nervous system. Disagreements and the nuances between fields act as an important reminder here that I am a scholar of American Studies and interested in dynamic processes. I work interdisciplinarily, which allows me to address topics that consider a more holistic approach. It is evident to see the compartmentalization that routinely takes place in academic discourse for those who must be faithful to a field. American Studies develops knowledge of the histories and cultures of the United States by engaging with political and social that exist in the context of empire and global capitalism.

The current state of our culture demands compassion. Individually and collectively, our mental health is suffering. Loneliness is on the rise, with a 2020 study showing that three out of five Americans are lonely.³⁸⁴ A Gallup poll from 2022 found that 44% of K-12 educators feel burned out “very often” or “always” and 35% of university workers feel this way, too, “making educators among the most burned groups in the U.S. workforce.”³⁸⁵ One in five adult Montanans have been told by a health professional that they have a depressive disorder and 41% of Montana high school students have reported symptoms of depression which is the highest rate ever

Breuning, Loretta Graziano. “Compassion Failure: A New Paradigm.” *Psychology Today*. Sussex Publishers, May 30, 2018. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/your-neurochemical-self/201805/compassion-failure-new-paradigm>.

³⁸⁴ Renken, Elena. “Most Americans Are Lonely, and Our Workplace Culture May Not Be Helping.” NPR. NPR, January 23, 2020.

³⁸⁵ Agrawal, Stephanie Marken and Sangeeta. “K-12 Workers Have Highest Burnout Rate in U.S.” Gallup.com. Gallup, June 8, 2022.

documented.³⁸⁶ As of September 2023, Montana's suicide rate is reportedly the highest in the United States, with 323 suicides in 2022, for a rate of 28.77 suicides per 100,000 people.³⁸⁷

Mental health support is critical, and a multi-pronged approach is necessary to provide pathways for intervention, as well as prevent suffering. Increasing access to counseling, medical treatment, support groups, peer support, and raising education and awareness are all ways we can promote mental health. But we also need to challenge the systemic inequities that got us here. People are in pain because division, isolation, and hopelessness are rampant, coded into us at younger and younger ages. We don't have to become desensitized to violence, hate, and climate catastrophe, but we do have to practice being uncomfortable in community and turning towards each other, and love, together. Teaching compassion is both responsive and preventative because it reminds us of our common humanity and our shared future.

Compassion Project aligns its work with scholars of compassion who have contributed evidence-based research, many from the Center for Mindful Self-Compassion.³⁸⁸ Dr. Kristen Neff, Dr. Chris Germer, Dr. Jack Kornfield, Dr. Tara Brach, Dr. James Doty and several others who work on combining ancient Eastern wisdom with modern Western psychology have paved the way for a new frontier in the science of meditation, mindfulness, and self-compassion.

³⁸⁶ Larson, Seaborn, Montana DPHHS, and Thom Bridge. "MT Students Report Highest-Ever Depression Rates, Sustainable Solutions Elusive." Helena Independent Record, October 31, 2021.

³⁸⁷ Bouman, Patrick. "'The Existential Crisis of Our Time': Montana Suicide Rate Reportedly Highest in U.S." Bozeman Daily Chronicle, September 7, 2023.

³⁸⁸ "Mindfulness Training: Center for Mindful Self-Compassion." CMSC. Accessed January 27, 2020. <https://centerformsc.org/>.

Another recent and interesting body of research is shown in *Compassionomics: The Revolutionary Scientific Evidence That Caring Makes a Difference* (2019). Physician scientists Stephen Trzeciak and Anthony Mazzairelli uncover data that compassion could be a “wonder drug” for the twenty-first century. They provide a review of the science, coupled with captivating stories from the front lines of medicine to demonstrate that human connection in health care matters in astonishing ways. A few prominent takeaways are that compassion has vast benefits for patients across a wide variety of conditions such as loneliness, response to stress, lowers blood pressure, promotes healing from trauma, improves life in palliative care, compassion reduces the perception of pain, compassion builds trust, reduces backpain, headaches, and IBS, and improves functional impairment and improves endocrine function with odds of optimal blood sugar control 80% higher among patients with diabetes with high compassion physicians.³⁸⁹ Missed opportunities for compassion can have devastating health effects like heart attack patients with a lack of emotional support had three times higher odds of death.³⁹⁰ Compassion can help reverse the cost crisis in health care with compassionate care being patient-centered and patient experience drives business.³⁹¹ Patients perceive compassionate physicians to be more competent and drives lower costs through better adherence requiring less references and fewer tests.³⁹² Compassion can be an antidote for burnout among health care providers by

³⁸⁹ Trzeciak, Stephen, Anthony Mazzairelli, and Cory Anthony Booker. *Compassionomics: the Revolutionary Scientific Evidence That Caring Makes a Difference*. Pensacola: Studer Group, 2019. 50-83.

³⁹⁰ Ibid. 50.

³⁹¹ Ibid. 217-220.

³⁹² Ibid. 228-236.

investing in workforce wellbeing leading to fewer employee absences.³⁹³ By addressing the question of time, researchers from John Hopkins University performed a randomized controlled trial in cancer patients during a consultation with their oncologist.³⁹⁴ This study found that forty seconds of compassion is all you need to make a meaningful difference for a patient and that the compassionate opportunity-response communication sequence takes about thirty seconds.³⁹⁵ Compassion matters, not only in meaningful but measurable ways in which Trzeciak and Mazzarelli's book provides evidence for.

Tools such as mindfulness, creativity, and compassion have substantial bodies of research that have positive effects for one's wellbeing which ultimately leads to positive effects for community. Compassion Project uses art and mindfulness to boost mental health and push for systematic change by building cultures of belonging, growing skills of mindfulness, sharing the therapeutic benefits of creativity and making, connecting through real human stories, and envisioning a future built on compassion. This is done through creative acts such as poetry, painting, movement, storytelling, and connecting through shared values, using conflict generatively in dialogue and reflection, and imagining and pursuing ideas about sustainable practices of wellbeing for us and the Earth.

In this next section I will discuss Compassion Project's current mission, vision, and values and layout our current offerings. I will then analyze the data collected from surveys from

³⁹³ Ibid. 236-240.

³⁹⁴ Fogarty, L. A., et al. "Can 40 Seconds of Compassion Reduce Patient Anxiety?" *Journal of Clinical Oncology* 17, no. 1 (1999): 371-79.

³⁹⁵ Trzeciak, Stephen, Anthony Mazzarelli, and Cory Anthony Booker. *Compassionomics: the Revolutionary Scientific Evidence That Caring Makes a Difference*. Pensacola: Studer Group, (2019): 254.

participants and dive into the role of creativity and the impact of artifact creation in making these programs successful. While mindfulness and compassion play an important role in democratizing education, I believe that the creation of an artifact is what truly makes one's experience the most meaningful. It is the about the environment we cultivate to do this vulnerable work through community agreements and setting a safe and courageous container for our participants.³⁹⁶

Compassion Project's Current Mission, Vision, And Values

In the discussion of Compassion Project from this point, I will be reflexive in my experience with the organization as an integral part of the current Compassion Project team, it seems necessary to state 'we' and 'our' statements because we believe in what we do as a set of lived values. Our mission is to cultivate compassion through education, art, and mindfulness. We envision a compassionate world where; (1) everyone has what they need to lead a flourishing life, (2) conflict is generative, (3) everyone is free to be the fullest version of themselves, and (4) humans live in harmonious relationship with other living beings and the natural world. Our values are equity, love, imagination, imperfection, and growth. These lived values are established by the following guiding principles.

- (a) People are more important than profit.
- (b) Intention matters, but impact matters more.
- (c) We see vulnerability as strength.
- (d) We name our personal areas of privilege and commit to dismantling oppressive behaviors, practices, systems, and norms.
- (e) We work together to create a culture that values justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- (f) We lean into discomfort and conflict.
- (g) We value our personal wellbeing and make time to rest.
- (h) We are courageous when we reimagine the world and how it could be.

³⁹⁶ Much of this research for our practices comes from Brene Brown's work and is further illustrated in Appendix A.

- (i) We see value and potential within every individual.
- (j) We give each other what we need to feel empowered.
- (k) We seek to understand complexity and nuance.
- (l) We are humble, transparent, and accountable. Apologies must be sincere.

This set of defining principles and lived values are laid out in our Goals and Vision document for 2020-2022 focused on the categories of equity, leadership, development, and programming. This document has been established around the following problem statement.

“In the face of our generation’s most pressing challenges, we recognize we are here to nurture and unlock our innate human capacity for understanding, harmony, and compassion. Compassion for ourselves, others, and the environment will move us toward the world we envision. Many problems lie ahead, and we recognize their entanglement. We recognize we must not be limited to one single struggle, but that compassion underlies them all. Climate change, racialized violence and injustice, poverty and wealth disparity, gun violence, anxiety, depression, and suicide, unhealthy relationships, empathy fatigue and burnout, oppression, and xenophobia: all of these issues matter. To transform them, we must come back to our common humanity, which has been anti-nurtured and distanced from us.”³⁹⁷

To address this vision and goals we have broken them down further using Paulo Freire’s Transformation Praxis from his work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.³⁹⁸ There are many links between the work of Dewey and Freire as discussed previously. I will break down this Transformation Praxis regarding how this organization operates, as well as the application to Compassion Project’s guiding principles. A Transformation Praxis is a process through which we learn, grow, and change. We practice this with ourselves as well with others. We act, reflect, and share our reflections and learn from one another to transform future actions. This process operates on these understandings:

- (a) The “banking education” model, in which students are empty of knowledge and teachers are gifters of knowledge, reinforces an oppressive structure and immobilizes people from building a world that works for them.

³⁹⁷ Compassion Project Team Goals and Vision for 2020 – 2022. Page 2.

³⁹⁸ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

- (b) We seek to balance and share power by being co-investigators of problems and co-creators of solutions.
- (c) Sharing experiences and staying grounded in our hearts and bodies helps us mitigate overthinking and overintellectualizing.
- (d) World transformation starts with self-transformation.
- (e) All people are born innately good, creative, aware, and capable.
- (f) Everyone is an expert of their own experience.
- (g) Stretching and exercising our imagination is foundational to the success of the process.

Examples of how we operate within this practice include action, reflection, and dialogue which will be the pillars that connect this work with Dewey's ideas of democratizing education. Our actions include our art and mindfulness practice. This also involves our daily actions as we believe in leading by example. The micro level of individual actions ultimately effects the macro as a ripple effect. Reflection requires time and inner conversation. Reflection be actions mentioned previously but also have a self-exploration component. Dialogue is the sharing of our experiences, ideas, failures, observations, critiques, and wins with others to shape future action. So how is this praxis going to get us to our vision? In other words, what is our Theory of Change? Theory of Change is a specific type of methodology for planning, participation, and evaluation that is used in non-profit sectors to promote social change by defining long-term goals and works backwards to identify all conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goal to occur.³⁹⁹

Let's take our four vision statements for example, (1) everyone has what they need to lead a flourishing life. We are committed to working towards a world where safety, health, clean water, nutritious food, homes, strong communities, and fulfilling educational, work, spiritual,

³⁹⁹ "What Is Theory of Change?" Theory of Change Community, January 30, 2021.

culture, and leisure opportunities are abundant and available to everyone. Here cultivating compassion will shift “me” to “we” and promote sharing and collaboration. Our pathway: action, reflection, and dialogue on compassion shifts me to we transform into the vision that sharing enables everyone to have what they need to lead a flourishing life. Our pathway is consistent in the practice of action, reflection, and dialogue on compassion is applied to each vision statement.

This pathway through hardship towards healing moves us to our second vision that (2) conflict is generative. We are working for a world where conflict and difference do not automatically end relationships but instead transforms them. Compassion gives us skills to move through hardship, suffering, and pain. Compassion teaches us common humanity and forgiveness; it also calls for accountability and healing with and where there is harm. Action, reflection, and dialogue on compassion moves us towards curiosity, allowing our vision that (3) everyone is free to be the fullest version of themselves. We are working for a world that values and celebrates difference and variety. Compassion loosens judgement of ourselves and others and moves us toward curiosity and acceptance. Our last vision statement that (4) humans live in harmonious relationships with other living beings and the natural world. We are working for a balanced world where all species and elements are seen as valuable pieces of a larger whole. We are working to mitigate and revert climate change and compassion for the environment recognizes the interconnection of all life. Applying that pathway of action, reflection, and dialogue around compassion here again we recognize the interrelatedness of all things that help define our principle to be in harmony with the natural world.

Through our compassion, art, and mindfulness practices we routinely engage in this transformational praxis, opening ourselves to ever-evolving change and growth. It is important

we do not get to set on a particular destination or sense of arrival, but rather, support ourselves and others in a common direction. There should always be openness, spaciousness, and possibility in that world we envision. I believe this is a dynamic and holistic process.⁴⁰⁰

We have 3 pillars of Dewey's work: pragmatism, democratizing education, and aesthetics, transferred to three essential ingredients for Compassion Project's methods: mindfulness, creativity, and compassion, linked to our transformation practice of action, reflection, dialogue.

Overview of Design and Process, Demographics, Evidence of Success

We are dedicated to teaching and spreading compassion through art, education and mindfulness. Our workshops allow for crucial conversations and our curriculums train and support educators and volunteers to incorporate lessons on kindness and compassion into their classrooms and everyday lives. In a world seemingly divided, we believe in bringing people together around shared values. As we learn and practice art and compassion with one another, we remember personal transformation is how we build a brighter future. We define compassion as mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness- for others, ourselves, and our environment. We believe that compassion makes hard conversations possible. The benefits of art and mindfulness within the Compassion Project's curriculum and how they are intentionally utilized lend itself well to these ideals.

⁴⁰⁰ I'm also interested in exploring Popper's Three Worlds in relation to this project; World 1: the world of physical objects and events, including biological entities, World 2: the world of individual mental processes, World 3: the world of abstractions that emerge from and have an effect back on world 2 through their representations in world 1.

For our purposes with Compassion Project, we identify three main benefits for art. First, art can externalize thoughts and feelings in a way that words cannot. Secondly, art offers a tangible way to work through challenges via the safety of metaphor like an emotional mapping tool. Lastly, art lessens dichotomous thinking, thus allowing for seemingly opposites to co-exist. The benefits of mindfulness have been shown to reduce stress, decrease anxiety, promote emotional health, decrease depression, enhance self-awareness, lengthen attention span, improve sleep, and decrease blood pressure.

We currently offer several different programing options with availability to create curriculums for requested workshops. These programs, along with our internal team operation consist of the same transformation praxis of action, reflection, and dialogue around compassion. Compassion Classrooms is a program for educators to receive training and support to incorporate lessons on kindness and compassion into their classrooms. Lessons include age-appropriate activities, resources, and prompts that meet National Art, School Counselor, and Montana State Learning Standards for kindergarten through 12th grade. I have included detailed lesson plans for K-2 and 9-12 in the Appendix A and Appendix B for further reference. All lesson plans follow the same layout but are adjusted for age-appropriate materials.

Overview of Lesson Plans

1. Lesson 1: Introducing Compassion (40-50 min.)
 - a. Introduce the Compassion Project
 - b. Lead a Warm-Up activity
 - c. Quick-draw compassion / kindness
 - d. Reflect on drawings
2. Lesson 2: Understanding Compassion (40-50 min.)
 - a. Lead a Warm-Up activity
 - b. Read a story
 - c. Ask questions about and discuss compassion
 - d. Partner draw a compassion story
3. Lesson 3: Expressing Compassion (40-50 min.)

- a. Lead a Warm-Up activity
- b. Paint compassion on wood blocks
- c. Write artist statements about what students learned
- 4. (OPTIONAL) Lesson 4: Spreading Compassion (40-50 min.)
 - a. Lead a Warm-Up activity
 - b. Share compassion statements and artwork.
 - c. Fill Compassion Tree with leaves (K-5), create web of compassion (6-8), compassion journaling activity (9-12)

Arts for Resilience is a mini-workshop series of recorded videos that invites rest, play, and connection to build resilience through change and hardship. This program was launched in April 2020 after Montana received our shelter-in-place orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The subscription is packaged for three different audiences: schools, households, and adults. Each series comes with twelve videos introducing art and mindfulness prompts that are powerful, yet simple and accessible. Our volunteer training events are for anyone wanting to make compassion a bigger part of their work and life. In these sessions, we explore what compassion is, the basics of mindfulness, art as a form of play, and compassion's role in building a bright future. Attendees are welcome to volunteer with us or take what they learned back to their workplace, school, or organization.⁴⁰¹ Compassion for Caregivers workshops are for people in paid or unpaid caretaking positions to enjoy a calm, creative, and human-centered atmosphere. Participants can expect to be led in a group mindfulness practice, art activity, and small-group discussion. Each workshop is designed for participants to attend multiple times; compassion is a practice.⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ A handout for our Volunteer Training can be found in Appendix C.

⁴⁰² More information and a handout for our Compassion for Caregivers can be found in Appendix D.

We host a variety of workshops in collaboration with community partners from our “Kindness Matters” reading hours for ages 3-5, partnerships within elementary schools, after-school programs for middle and high schoolers, and activities with senior citizens. Each workshop experience is vastly different due to the nature of our emergent process and interactions with participants. A basic overview begins with a welcome, overview, and introductions where we share our names, pronouns if participants would like to share, and the intention or hope for our time together. We ask participants to reflect on their experience and definition of compassion and then share ours. We define compassion as mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and the Earth. Our mission is to spread and teach compassion through art and mindfulness, and we envision a world where everyone has what they need to live a flourishing life, conflict is generative, everyone is free to be the fullest version of themselves, and humans live more harmoniously with the Earth.

From how we teach, communicate, and fundraise: we are always looking to learn and grow. We are inspired by the Community Centered Fundraising movement, a model grounded in equity and social justice. We prioritize the entire community over individual organizations, foster a sense of belonging and interdependence, present our work not as individual transactions but holistically, and encourage mutual support between nonprofits.⁴⁰³ Our focus is on connection and mutually beneficial relationships. These connections are fostered through “Giving Circles” where our donors are invited to host a brunch to raise funds for the Compassion Project. Hosts invite their networks to attend this special gathering and learn about our organization. Donors of

⁴⁰³ <https://communitycentricfundraising.org/>

all levels are welcome. We also provide “Business Sponsorships” on a 6-month or annual basis, where we provide a complimentary workshop for up to fifteen employees that begin with mindful movement and meditation and then flow to free drawing while discussing compassion and how to practice it. Lastly, participants create a painting where we focus on the process of playing and painting rather than the product. While this is the standard, we are very open to exploring different creative activities. Our workshops focus on self and collective care, are trauma-informed, and boost mental health and wellbeing. This sponsorship includes social media spotlights and acknowledgment and recognition at our events.

Compassion Project's methods offer a practical pragmatic pedagogy with mindfulness, creative expression, reflection, and dialogue set within a non-judgmental environment where humans can show up as their authentic selves. Since 2017, we have engaged over 8,000 individuals in school and community lessons and workshops. Our programs serve people of all ages and promote lifelong skills for strong relationships and wellbeing. The data that I used for this research is collected from two separate events. The first data collected is from an event called “Train the Trainers” which was a workshop that trained educators how to bring Compassion Classrooms into their schools. There were 200 participants, 22 provided pre-assessment survey responses and 11 provided post-assessment data. The second set of data collected is from our community workshops where questionnaires went out to an estimate of 1,500 participants with 66 providing feedback.⁴⁰⁴ All data provided shows an increase of

⁴⁰⁴ The data of these surveys is available upon request. Surveys shows results of an increased awareness of self-compassion, not anything regarding artifact creation as this data was collected prior to when I began this research.

awareness of self-compassion using Dr. Kirsten Neff's Self-Compassion Scale in using a pre and post assessment form with a 1-5 scale.⁴⁰⁵

Dewey believed that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform.⁴⁰⁶ As we reflect on our world today, we recognize racial, political, economic, and ecological, global challenges all around us. This awareness calls for action aimed at broad and deep systemic change. In "Education and the Heart of Social Change," Robert Roeser asks "what kinds of action and what approaches to social change are needed to encourage and support more people to be a force for good in the world?"⁴⁰⁷ This fundamental question links Dewey's theories, Davidson's research, and methods practiced with Compassion Project. The lever for generational social change focuses on education and the transformation of schooling. By teaching students awareness and compassion, infused with a sense of the personal, social, and global responsibilities that attend these, is what Dalai Lama has called "educating the heart."⁴⁰⁸

An education of the heart emphasizes not only the development of social-emotional skills (self-management, emotional awareness, kindness) but also incorporates the cultivation of attentional skills (focus and mindful awareness), systems-thinking skills (seeing interdependence and common humanity), and ethical dispositions (fairness, altruism, non-violence). By taking a

⁴⁰⁵ See Appendix E.

Neff, K. D., et al. "Examining the Factor Structure of the Self-Compassion Scale using exploratory SEM bifactor analysis in 20 diverse samples: Support for use of a total score and six subscale scores." *Psychological Assessment*, 31 (1), (2019): 27-45.

⁴⁰⁶ Dewey, John, Thomas M. Alexander, and Larry. Hickman. "My Pedagogic Creed" *The Essential Dewey*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998): 229.

⁴⁰⁷ Roeser, Robert W. "Education and the Heart of Social Change." Mind & Life Institute, September 30, 2022.

⁴⁰⁸ Dalai Lama & McLeod, M. Educating the heart. *Shambhala Sun*, (2007): 59.

holistic approach in developing these skill sets students are found to be "more personally healthy and happy, and support identities in which being a force for good in the world is central."⁴⁰⁹

There is a growing number of research practitioners focused on this type of creative curricula and contemplative educational models. Roeser presents seven key areas where more practice and science are needed to deliver on the promise of this growing movement:

1. *Love*. Focusing more on social relationship skills related to care, compassion, and forgiveness; as well as the processes of social othering and belonging, seems critical in the future of this work. In the face of growing divides, we need an education of the heart earlier and ongoing, across the first decades of life.
2. *Body*. We need a greater focus on the physical body and its connection to our earthiness in contemplative programs. We need to nurture our body alongside the heart and mind, as well as our connection to nature and our related awe and joy. Many programs and scientific studies still view mindfulness as a way to reduce problems and distress—rather than to foster joy and meaning. Including more body-centered activities in which students engage in the arts, spend time in nature, participate in youth events, share meals, and do acts of service together are all ways to include the body more and to make programs more interesting, engaging, active, and relevant.
3. *Development*. We need to move beyond just thinking about adults in contemplative studies and focus on intergenerational relationships. A developmental contemplative science approach is needed to answer many practical questions of relevance for families, schools, and communities (e.g., when and how can I teach mindfulness, and how does one think about motivating students to practice at different ages? How long should students of different ages practice?)
4. *Diversity*. We need diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, and cultural points of view included in the design, implementation, and evaluation of contemplative programs in education. The goal is to create ways of developing and evaluating programs that are culturally responsive and inclusive. In addition, we need to honor diverse wisdom traditions and practices including and extending beyond Buddhist-inspired ones.
5. *Youth participation*. We need to explicitly include the views of young people in the design, activities, and implementation of programs. Such programs can provide opportunities for young people themselves to think about how, specifically, they will act as forces for good in the world, or in what ways they want to learn to train their attention and compassion.

⁴⁰⁹ Roeser, Robert W. "Education and the Heart of Social Change." Mind & Life Institute, September 30, 2022.

6. *Engagement in society.* We need to develop young people's personal, social, and global ethical responsibilities alongside their own skills and well-being. The aims of these programs should focus on both personal transformation and systems change.
7. *Human-Earth connection.* We need to tell every student the scientific story of the creation of the universe and foster a sense of belonging and connection to the earth. We need to take all students to places like the ocean, the mountains, and beyond city lights at night so they can see this magnificent planet and universe for themselves. We need to situate human flourishing within the human-earth connection, and support students in working to save and love Mother Earth.⁴¹⁰

Given the current climate of American education the application and transformation of pedagogical practice in this direction remains a distant goal where we must practice moral imagination by envisioning the full range of possibilities to solve ethical change. Compassion Projects provides us with a method for such praxis.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Ultimately this study investigates embodied aesthetic experience to authentically engage in the human project. When I was initially dealing with pragmatist aesthetics, I understood it as a method similar to what art historians have often done - appreciate the work through its formal qualities, analyze the conditions in which it was made and its content, assess the historical context, and consider its reception in today's socio-political culture. This is what this project initially set out to do; it was to encourage more engaged citizenship through critical thinking skills developed through visual literacy and greater attention to aesthetic experience. In understanding that we are biologically geared to make special and that arts are a component of human behavior, and that special doesn't have to be housed within the walls of a museum but is relevant to our everyday objects. This would allow us to connect and communicate on a more creative and imaginative level that seems to have more unity across diversity for the human experience. What the study of pragmatist aesthetics has taught me is the aspect of embodiment. I had considered the making of an artifact as the key component for an authentic or more holistic version of understanding; a visual element, an expressive element, to solidify one's way of knowing that initially sprung from my interest in visual literacy. While this is still believed to be true in this study it has also transformed.

Rather than assessing the object or artifact created by the experience, we embody the experience. Larry Hickman discusses this in the concluding chapter of *Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism* (2007) that habits are the artifacts formed from productive pragmatism. Pragmatism doesn't simply end with the action but rather the formation of a habit. The habits are

the ways in which we continually show up in the world, adapting and continuously growing with the dynamic contexts of our culture. Somaesthetics make our bodies the work of art that deserves aesthetic attention as they interact with their environment. Art is an instrument, a pragmatic tool that helps us engage with the world in a way that only exists because of social human interaction and communication. Our bodies are the medium for aesthetic experience, pragmatist aesthetics establishes art's roots in the biophysical rhythms of the lived body and conditioning by socio-historical forces. When John Dewey's aesthetics become a central theory for all his previous works, we begin to see that Dewey's work is not just some applicable model but it's a continual self-fashioning and critical self-awareness in relation to one's environment. The art of living is a commitment to continual growth through an aesthetically tuned (body and mind) that promotes lifelong learning. This takes learning outside of the classroom so while I must mention schooling, to help place this study into praxis – it is about a lifelong commitment to embodied aesthetic experience for continual and dynamic growth.

Limitations of Study

The limitations of the study are also reasons why I believe this research is important. The project is very broad in its scope as my goal is to engage cross-disciplinary demographics in an accessible manner.⁴¹¹ While it was important for me to historicize Dewey's theories and those of

⁴¹¹ While all the topics discussed are relevant, I could have done more work concisely guiding the reader to the current state of the research rather than trying to cover the histories of each topic. In spanning my disciplinary reach, I neglected to uplift and emphasize the importance of art throughout. Of course, in concluding this study I can finally see all the things I would've done differently in terms organization but the most important being to guide the reader through the application of these theories through images and objects. I was so focused on theorizing about the art of living and convincing the reader that the arts are essential, that I didn't structure a

art and aesthetics, a more evidence-based study on the affective neuroscience of compassion may have been more effective. The science backing the benefits of mindfulness, creativity, and compassion is sound. The research that has been developed over the last two years in completing this project has gained a lot of traction among scientists. But I am not a scientist. I write in the humanities and what is driving this work is what wasn't clear in my analysis, which is why these elements of mindfulness, creativity, and compassion are not being implemented more in our current culture. It was my goal to propose a method, Compassion Project for implementing this work in an applicable real-world example but I did not consider the receptions of its application or the dive into the resistance of other contemplative pedagogies.

Another limitation of this study is that I only included Compassion Project in my applied analysis and due to my involvement as Board President, it was difficult to be objective. The variables in the real world between the interactions with our environment cannot be quantified; they must be lived, experienced, and embodied. The work I've done with Compassion Project has been personally transformational and rewarding. While I must continually remind myself to practice what I preach, CP has given me a space where I can show up as my whole human self, feel supported and seen, and help me practice and reflect on my lived values.⁴¹² Our organization has helped make visible the world I want to live in and help cultivate through genuine human interaction. Compassion Project's data is assessed using Dr. Kirsten Neff's Self-Compassion

strong debatable argument. Chapter 3 feels incredibly dated given the contemporary conception of the museum and socially engaged public art.

⁴¹² This notion of practicing lived values could be an idea for a future study in accessing wither people who have engaged with Compassion Project feel similar.

scales.⁴¹³ While we have seen an increased awareness in self-compassion through all our participants, there has not been a way to track the progress and practice of compassion once they leave a workshop. We are currently building our volunteer trainings around a multi-stepped accountability practice in which participants come back and continue to explore with us. While Compassion Project provides a practical methodology that addresses many cultural issues at hand, its application must be emergent and adaptive set within a pragmatic transformation praxis.

Conclusions and Implications

This study has shown the longevity and adaptations of John Dewey's work for the twenty-first century. John Dewey wrote thinking about the future and with the advancements in cognitive neuroscience, we are now able to see how his theories operate within the human mind. Given the complexities of what we experience in our current state of the world; his theories provide historical insight into the ever-prevalent need for gaining awareness of our human condition and adapting for sustainable wellbeing.

Embodied aesthetic experience has a positive effect on developing our ways of knowing. When members of a community succeed through language-permeated practices in realizing shared meanings in conscious experience, aesthetic experience is possible. In this sense, Dewey views art as the process of experience civilizing itself or making itself meaningful. The aspect of artifact creation becomes the habits that we form and through embodied action and communication, we become the artifact that engages with the world. The artifact becomes a microcosm of the individual, whose efforts can lead to creative development and habit

⁴¹³ See Appendix E.

formation. The relationship between artifact and artist is metaphorical in this regard. The practice of compassion and mindfulness increases the gray matter in our brains which allows for more neuroplasticity and minimizes the stress response in our amygdala. This is indicative of the next evolution of our species in order to sustain our nervous systems for healthy development within our current environment. American Studies calls for action and this study offers a praxis to address Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* – we acknowledge suffering and work to process it, in our bodies and in a form of creative expression.

Compassion Project offers an applicable model for a pragmatic pedagogy for social utility through the practice of mindfulness, creative expression, reflection, and dialogue embedded in a dynamic transformation praxis. "Pragmatism is a mediator and reconciler, it has in fact no prejudices whatever, no obstructive dogmas, no rigid canons of what shall count as proof. It is completely genial. It will entertain any hypothesis and will consider any evidence."⁴¹⁴ Rationalism sticks to logic. Empiricism sticks to the external sense. Pragmatism is willing to take anything, to follow either logic or the senses, and to count the humblest and most personal experiences. It is democratic, its manners are as various and flexible, its resources rich and endless, and its conclusions as friendly as those of mother nature. CP's methodology can be applied in various situations to create a community engaged and open to transformation. "The Latin root for the word compassion is *pati*, which means to suffer, and the prefix *com-* means with. Compassion, originating from *compati*, literally means to suffer with."⁴¹⁵ This connection

⁴¹⁴ James, William. "Lecture II. — What Pragmatism Means." In *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. United States: True Sign Publishing House, (2023): 44-45.

⁴¹⁵ "Understanding the Meaning of Compassion." What Is Compassion? Understanding The Meaning of Compassion. Accessed September 29, 2023.

of suffering with another person brings compassion beyond sympathy into the realm of empathy; compassion is empathy in action. Compassion gets involved and prompts us to act on those who are suffering behalf.

Compassion Project defines compassion as mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and Mother Earth. Our mission is to cultivate compassion through education, art, and mindfulness through embodied practice. We envision a compassionate world where; everyone has what they need to lead a flourishing life, conflict is generative, everyone is free to be the fullest version of themselves, and humans live in harmonious relationship with other living beings and the natural world.⁴¹⁶ Jim Garrison states, “How to achieve *dynamic* unity in diversity will probably prove the most important topic of the twenty-first century.”⁴¹⁷ A dynamic, holistic, embodied approach to unity across diversity is what this research is after and it is my assumption that in bringing people together through methods used in Compassion Project, we are beginning to see what this could like as a practice.

We become the artifact. Having an awareness of our perception, the practice of paying attention, and reflecting on our interactions within our environments and with others as social beings; our experiences inform the ways in which we see the world. And we can learn from others' experiences through interaction, dialogue, and reflection – sometimes dialogue can't completely express our experience because there are simply no words to describe it. That is why we communicate creatively through drawing, painting, and poetry. The function of inquiry is the

⁴¹⁶ “Compassion Project,” Compassion Project, accessed January 22, 2021. <https://www.compassionproject.org/>.

⁴¹⁷ Garrison, James W., Stefan Neubert, and Kersten Reich. *Democracy and Education Reconsidered: Dewey after One Hundred Years*, (2016): 194.

production of artifacts, of new habits, and habits are the product of pragmatism; habits are intelligence, the measure of human development and accomplishment.

Dewey's theories give us great thoughts on experience, habits, and pragmatic solutions for living but what is missing is the newly researched neuroscience, though remember that what makes these elements so fascinating to our human experience is the non-cognitive functions that play a role in our consciousness and actions. We now understand that there is no dualism between the mind and body for they are inextricably connected. But what about the spirit? Holistic psychologists point to the rise in anxiety and depression are related to our spiritual needs that are being ignored within our society. According to "Contemporary perspective on Spirituality and Mental Health" (2009), there are six core spiritual needs:

1. *To Belong*. We need to belong to something greater than ourselves. We need to find community, people who resonate with us, know that we are valued.
2. *Authentic Expression*. The ability to fully be ourselves and express our truths, We need to feel we don't have to self-censor, mask who we are, what we think, and feel.
3. *Purpose*. We need to feel as through we're doing something that contributes to the greater good of our families, friends and community.
4. *Freedom*. Free will; an ability to choose for ourselves that leads to overall confidence, self-trust, and autonomy, Humans feel most spiritually bankrupt when they lack choice.
5. *Meaning*. Life has suffering and joy. We need meaning in our lives to make sense of the suffering we experience.
6. *To Love And Be Loved*. Love is the truth of who we are. We need to love others, ourselves, and we need to be loved. This is our natural state of mutual giving, sharing, and accepting.⁴¹⁸

Compassion Project cultivates the environment in which these needs can be met and practiced in community. Our community agreements help to establish the space in which we take time to care for and listen to our bodies, we understand that I belong here and so do you, you can

⁴¹⁸ Sharma P, Charak R, Sharma V. "Contemporary perspectives on spirituality and mental health." *Indian Journal of Psychological Med.* (2009): 16-23.

ask for what you need, we celebrate our differences and honor all that we have in common, we are human, we are imperfect, and we are in it together.

This research advances the field of American Studies through its multidisciplinary approach that applies theory to praxis. Examining the on-going conversations between Dewey, classical pragmatism and the intersectionality of Black Feminist visionaries and Native American wisdom traditions are worthy of American Studies analysis for a holistic understanding of the multiplicities of American culture striving for liberation and wellbeing. New frontiers for the research on compassion, contemplative studies, and the science of embodied cognition give hope in restoring a common faith in the abilities of humankind, our relationships with ourselves, in community, and with the Earth.

Areas for Future Investigation

There are many areas for future investigation in this work and it is an important task to put compassion in the mainstream of scientific research specifically in healthcare and education. I would like to continue this work with more inclusion of artists and artworks, consider new resources on the aesthetics of wellbeing, body politics, and prioritize more connection with the Earth. All these listed topics aid in the research of moral imagination where ethics and aesthetics are one.

While my goal was to expand my knowledge and experience of the arts across disciplines, my argument would be stronger rooted within an art historical context. Situated somewhere between the community arts movement and participatory art that emerged in the sixties as a counterculture response against the post-war order. Not necessarily a movement but a set of art-based strategies that resulted in a plethora of highly specialized projects such as theater

in prison, ecology projects, disability groups, and black art projects. "These projects are not specifically artworks, but their collaborative and participatory spirit, community activism, and deployment of cultural programming as part of their operations makes their work appear close to some project that arise from an arts background."⁴¹⁹ These types of artists were Deweyian in nature separating their ideas and their work from the art world, which they saw as bound up with power and uninterested in the lives of most people. They were anti-hierarchical and interested in the engagement and process of learning by doing to challenge the dominant ideologies of art. This type of art practice was political in nature as it set out to change aspects of social organization, art, and culture and was concerned with the integrity of their vision and implementation. Their ideas were powerful and aligned with wider social change at the time but trying to influence art world institutions required compromise. Often funded through grants with a social inclusion agenda, some artists thought that accepting funding enabled them to work and affected that institution's attitudes and behavior while others believed it prevented the movement from challenging the oppressive social structures they wanted to overthrow.⁴²⁰ With the emergence of neoliberalism community and participatory arts found themselves on the losing side of a global ideological war.

A few artists that lend themselves to this type of practice are Nate Thompson, Sara Ahmed, Tim Rollins, Suzanne Lacy, Maggie Nelson and Harry Dodge, and Nick Cave. These artists have used aesthetics to affect social dynamics by emphasizing participation, dialogue, and

⁴¹⁹ Thompson, Nato. *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*. 1st ed. New York, N.Y: Creative Time, (2012): 28.

⁴²⁰ Matarasso, François. "Is There a Community Arts Movement Once More?" October 12, 2018.

action. Nick Cave is famous for his "Soundsuits" which blend costume and sculpture as a metaphorical suit of armor and have evolved into musical choreographed vehicles of empowerment. Originated in response to the Rodney King beatings, these suits fully conceal the body in order to obscure race, class, and gender and allows the viewer(s) to experience performance without bias. Cave uses creativity as an instrument of self-forgiveness and believes the fundamental truth of our human experience reveals itself through our engagement with the world.⁴²¹ Cave has been an advocate for the generative value of hope and reflects;

I have no time for cynicism. It feels hugely misplaced at this time. I remain cautiously optimistic. I think if we can move beyond the anxiety and dread and despair, there is a promise of something shifting not just culturally, but spiritually, too. I feel that potential in the air, or maybe a sort of subterranean undertow of concern and connectivity, a radical and collective move towards a more empathetic and enhanced existence... It does seem possible — even against the criminal incompetence of our governments, the planet's ailing health, the divisiveness that exists everywhere, the shocking lack of mercy and forgiveness, where so many people seem to harbor such an irreparable animosity towards the world and each other — even still, I have hope. Collective grief can bring extraordinary change, a kind of conversion of the spirit, and with it a great opportunity. We can seize this opportunity, or we can squander it and let it pass us by. I hope it is the former. I feel there is a readiness for that, despite what we are led to believe.⁴²²

I present this quote as a nod to spirituality and connectivity with the empathetic move towards enhanced existence and its possibilities in our current anxiety-ridden and divisive culture. This is moral imagination in practice and the realization that art can be an instrument to rehabilitate the world through which we heal ourselves in the process.

Art does have the ability to save us, in so many different ways. It can act as a point of salvation, because it has the potential to put beauty back into the world. And that in itself is a way of making amends, of reconciling us with the world. Art has the power to redress

⁴²¹ Popova, Maria. "Art as Living Amends: Nick Cave on Creativity as an Instrument of Self-Forgiveness and the Necessity of Hope in a Fragile World." *The Marginalian*, September 14, 2023.

⁴²² Ibid.

the balance of things, of our wrongs, of our sins... By “sins,” I mean those acts that are an offence to God or, if you would prefer, the “good in us” — that live within us, and that if we pay them no heed, harden and become part of our character. They are forms of suffering that can weigh us down terribly and separate us from the world. I have found that the goodness of the work can go some way towards mitigating them.⁴²³

By making our abstract feelings visible, we make them tangent, we process them differently, we can see and know them in a new way that allows for use to adopt or adjust them into habit. This is pragmatic intelligence in action. This is part of the practice that Compassion Project intends to influence.

While concluding this research project, I discovered a text by Yoram Lubling and Eric Evans titled *Peace in Motion – John Dewey and the Aesthetics of Well-Being* (2016). These authors use Dewey’s theories of inquiry, ethics, value, and art to establish the naturalistic conditions under which pervasive quality, which emerges as the most plausible criterion for the evaluation of wellbeing, enters a situation as either settled or unsettled as *peace in motion*. They offer a Deweyian reconstruction of our philosophical understanding of wellbeing set within the transactionally situated self, which is an embodied, enculturated agent. There are many recent resources that look at reimagining Dewey’s work for our contemporary culture and while I think they are worthwhile, to be honest, I think the most exhilarating progress and potential of this work is in the realm of activism and creating pedagogies for social utility. At its core Compassion Project is working towards systematic change through art and mindfulness and I truly believe that this type of awareness and engagement is essential for the survival of our

⁴²³ Ibid.

species, tapping into our biological nature, and understanding the dynamic and varied perspectives that each unique individual should nurture to heal and transform community.

I tended to shy away from the political in this study but there is much more to explore in terms of body politics and embodiment.⁴²⁴ The late bell hooks, cultural critic and author, who responds to the ongoing dialogues of art and aesthetics in a world concerned with identity politics was briefly mentioned but not fully explored. Her collection of essays in *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (1995) question how art can be an empowering and revolutionary force within the liberation of the black community. She is most well known for her feminist theory that recognizes that social classifications such as race, gender, sexual identity, class, etc. are interconnected and that ignoring their intersectionality creates oppression toward women and has an impact on our experience in living in society. In her introduction titled “Art Matters” she states;

It occurred to me then that if one could make a people lose touch with their capacity to create, lose sight of their will and their power to make art, then the work of subjugation, of colonization, is complete. Such work can be undone only by acts of concrete reclamation.⁴²⁵

Two other resources that will be of future importance to this research are *The Political Life of Sensation* (2009) by Davide Panagia and *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political: Conversations with Athena Athanasiou* (2013) by Judith Butler. Panagia argues that by overlooking sensation, political theorists ignore a crucial dimension of political life and posits

⁴²⁴ While this research is inherently political, our current climate is far too real for me to tackle in the length of this paper and I chose to prioritize my own mental and physical health in order to finish.

⁴²⁵ hooks bell. *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*. New York: New Press. (1995): XV.

sensation as a radical democratic moment of aesthetic judgment. The contemporary citizen is a viewing subject that is influenced by material culture and other perceptual stimuli more than the reading and writing that are the established modes of political deliberation. Butler's work looks at dispossession as the condition of those who have lost land, citizenship, property, and a broader belonging to the world in the context of neoliberal expropriation of labor and livelihood.

Dispossession opens a performative condition of being both affected by injustice and prompted to act. I would also like to take a closer look at Fariha Róisín book *Who Is Wellness For? An Examination of Wellness Culture and Who It Leaves Behind* (2022). Róisín is a multidisciplinary artist and author who explores wellness culture through the lens of social justice, weaving investigation, and memoir to offer a radically inclusive new paradigm for self-care.

The most important advancement of this research is in consideration of compassion with the Earth. While Compassion Project considers compassion with the Earth in our work, we have been called to significant action living in our current climate crisis. There are undoubtedly many avenues for this direction of research, and some incorporate the work of John Dewey in the field of pragmatic environmentalism.⁴²⁶ Other researchers argue that we experience our peak aesthetic experience in nature and that biodiverse natural environments correlate significantly to good health and wellbeing, ranging from better mental health outcomes to healthier behaviors.⁴²⁷ Immense biodiversity initiate an emotional response of awe, wonder and privilege that unlocks

⁴²⁶ Armitage, Kevin C. "The Continuity of Nature and Experience: John Dewey's Pragmatic Environmentalism." *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 14, no. 3 (2003): 49–72.

⁴²⁷ Lovell, Rebecca, et al. "A Systematic Review of the Health and Well-Being Benefits of Biodiverse Environments." *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health. Part B, Critical Reviews* 17, no. 1 (2014): 1–20.

egocentric and anthropomorphic connections to wild animals and a feeling that is beyond words.⁴²⁸ This feeling beyond words gives us an insight of the intersection between art and climate change. Many of our young Compassion Project participants make this connection and their paintings visualize this need for care of our natural resources. *Full Ecology: Repairing Our Relationship with the Natural World* (2021) is a collaboration between social-cultural psychologist Mary Clare and science writer Gary Ferguson that breaks down the modern impulse to see humans as separate from nature and encourages us to learn from the supremely methodical and highly improvisational natural systems in which we live. They argue that change begins with us stopping to question our assumptions about our place in the world and that from this point of reflection, we gain an alternative blueprint for acting in ecologically healthy ways.⁴²⁹

Murray Bookchin addresses our age of ecological crisis in *The Philosophy of Social Ecology: Essays on Dialectical Ecology* (1990) and asks us to overcome the one-sidedness of earlier conceptions of the dialectic which took for granted the necessity of the domination of nature in the progress of history. He connects the failure of revolutionary movements of the past to the degraded actuality of the present, especially the concrete social factors underlying the ecological crisis such as hierarchy, class, patriarchy, and the emergence of capitalism.⁴³⁰

Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham are feminist geographers who offer empirical evidence from local economic projects and action projects on the state of our world and its alternative futures in

⁴²⁸ Curtin, Susanna. Wildlife tourism: The intangible, psychological benefits of human-wildlife encounters. *Current Issues in Tourism*. 12. (2009): 451-474.

⁴²⁹ Clare, Mary M., and Gary Ferguson. *Full Ecology: Repairing Our Relationship with the Natural World*. Berkeley, California: Heyday, 2021.

⁴³⁰ Bookchin, Murray. "The Necessity of Dialectical Naturalism: Inst. for Social Ecology." Institute for Social Ecology, August 25, 2015.

Post-Capitalistic Politics (1996). Their research embodies moral imagination and pragmatic discourse through the intersection of politics, language, and collective action to confront the forces that stand in the way of economic experimentation and explore new ways of moving from theory to practice.⁴³¹ Anti-capitalist affirmations and the concept of educating the heart are foundational practices for Indigenous ways of being.⁴³²

The theme of creativity in this research has been dominated by the western perspective. Native American traditions offer a radically different model that have much to teach us about living presence of the sacred and its relation to art, community, and dwelling in nature. These “wisdom traditions,” as Thomas Alexander terms them, have been lost in modernity and their loss celebrated in postmodernism.⁴³³ Wisdom traditions are concerned with teaching human beings how to live wisely and well as human beings. These traditions are concerned with the most creative task there is, in transforming a creature who is biologically human, into one who is a fully realized human being. The wisdom in a fully realized human being involves living with such awareness and recognition of the larger forces that affect our condition along with an insight into the individual, unique, and transitory situations that demand our attention and

⁴³¹ Gibson-Graham, J.K. *A Postcapitalist Politics*. University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. (2006)

⁴³² For further reading please see;

Archibald, Jo-Ann. *Indigenous Storywork : Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008.

Johnson, Aostre N., et al. *Educating from the Heart : Theoretical and Practical Approaches to Transforming Education*. 1st ed. Blue Ridge Summit: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2011.

⁴³³ Alexander, Thomas M. *The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*, (2013). 264.

embody all that is meaningful; these truths, great and small, that are vitally present in our experience.

“To live as an artist is a way of being in the world. A way of perceiving. A practice of paying attention.”⁴³⁴ Adrienne maree brown claims that her body of work is mostly about attention. She wants to bring attention, movement attention, and the flow of our human attention to the places we as a species most need to learn and grow. *Holding Change* is a book about attending to coordination, to conflict, to being humans in authentic and functional relationship with each other – not as a constant ongoing state, but rather a magnificent, mysterious ever-evolving dynamic in which we must involve ourselves, shape ourselves and each other.⁴³⁵ Holding change is a variation of holding space.⁴³⁶ Space is never fixed by literal, physical dimensions and varies according to participant’s histories, dynamics, emotional nuances, moods, and pressure; it does change. It is change. We hold space for each other to change at the individual and collective level.⁴³⁷ It is about facilitating an environment that makes it possible for groups of people with shared intentions to be around each other and move towards their vision and values and to navigate conflict in a way that is generative and accountable. Brown states;

It is time to move towards ways of being that are focused on listening to each other deeply and accepting each other, whole. We need to learn ways of being in space together

⁴³⁴ Rubin, Rick. *The Creative Act A Way of Being*. (2023): 47.

This book was published as I was finishing this study. It encapsulated everything that I've been after without the academic jargon. It is a fantastic read and testament to what living life as an artist means as a way of being.

⁴³⁵ brown, adrienne maree *Holding Change: The Way of Emergent Strategy Facilitation and Mediation*. Chico, CA: AK Press. (2021): 4.

⁴³⁶ brown uses this distinction between what she offers and the facilitation teaching that Autumn Brown and Maryse Mitchell-Brody have been developing in the Allied Media Conference workshops called *Holding Space*.

⁴³⁷ Ibid. 5.

that help us see beyond false constructs of superiority and inferiority without asking us to sacrifice what has shaped us. We need to study being receptive and nonjudgmental with each other, letting the earth and community hold us until we remember we already belong.⁴³⁸

Compassion Project holds this space. Compassion Project creates an environment where individuals can show up as their authentic and dynamic selves and understand that their contribution and experience is important for the optimal growth of a healthy and resilient community. When individuals feel seen and if their experience matters, it gives them agency. Agency is the motivation or rather reassurance for a way of knowing and contributing. I truly believe in the transformative and communicative nature of the aesthetic human experience once we give ourselves permission. Permission to be vulnerable, permission to take up space, permission to express ourselves in a way that feels authentic. This is what creates agency. Like Dewey, I do believe in a common faith between our species having much more in common than we are made to believe. We just need to be seen, validated, and given agency. Agency allows for accountability, and I may be an optimist, but I do think most are trying their best. Their best in a world that is harmful to our bodies and wellbeing. Perception comes from experience, experience comes from our processual and transactional relationships with our environment, and our environments are currently not built to sustain our wellbeing. By reaching for what's cruelly optimistic, we are damaging what makes us whole. We are living in a culture of crisis, but it's not just located within the humanities discipline. We are experiencing a mental health crisis, a neoliberal crisis for basic human rights, a crisis of misinformation.

⁴³⁸ Ibid. 9.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

K-2 COMPASSION CLASSROOMS CURRICULUM

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Overview

Congratulations on completing your training with the Compassion Project! Remember your full network of support: this includes Compassion Project trainers, co-teachers, and school counselors. During Lesson 3, we highly recommend recruiting a couple of extra pairs of hands to help (i.e. parent volunteers). The Compassion Classrooms Curriculum coincides with MT Core Standards, National Art Standards, and American School Counselor Association Standards, which are found on Page 4. This lesson plan is made of four lessons, or classes. You may break up the lesson plan differently if you wish, which is why each activity is listed with an estimated time. To re-engage students after a break, whether it be hours or days, make sure to use a visualization or other Warm-Up. These can be found in the Resource List. Lessons 1 - 3 are required and Lesson 4 is optional. Following the project, you will be asked to list the activities you used for assessment purposes, so please keep track.

Learning Objectives

Following these lessons, students will be able to:

- Explain the concept of compassion
- Recognize acts of compassion and opportunities to practice compassion
- Integrate compassion into their lives and their communities

The Therapeutic Benefits of Art

- Art-making externalizes thoughts and feelings in a way that words cannot. Once "out there," the difficult aspects of human experience are in a more manageable space.
- Art offers a tangible way to work through challenges via the safety of metaphor.
We can use visual art as an emotional mapping tool.
- Art's openness lessens black and white thinking, thus allowing for seeming opposites to co-exist.

Set-Up

Before you begin, ensure you have enough wooden blocks for every student. Begin by assigning each student a block number and logging it in the spreadsheet provided. To save more time, we recommend writing student names on the backs of blocks in sharpie, which designates the bottom and back of the art.

Materials List

Meditation / visualization scripts	Smocks or old t-shirts	Paint
Printed images or images for projector	Writing materials	Cups - preferably paper or reusable
Coloring / drawing materials	Sharpies	Paper plate palettes
Sticky notes or note cards	7" x 7" wood blocks	Paper towels

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Paint brushes	Newspaper or drop cloths for tables	Tape
White or colored paper	Selected reading	Scissors

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Curriculum Outline

Materials by Lesson

Pre-Lesson Preparation	
Ensure you have enough wooden blocks for every student. Begin by assigning each student a block number and logging it in the spreadsheet provided. To save more time, we recommend writing student names on the backs of blocks in sharpie.	
Lesson 1	Lesson 3 - <i>This lesson is the most demanding.</i>
☐ Visualization / meditation ☐ White or colored paper ☐ Coloring / writing materials ☐ Printed photos or show images on projector	☐ Visualization / meditation ☐ Wood blocks ☐ Paper plate palettes ☐ Paint ☐ Paint brushes ☐ Coloring / writing materials ☐ Smocks or old t-shirts ☐ Water cups
Lesson 2	Lesson 4
☐ Visualization / meditation ☐ White or colored paper ☐ Coloring / writing materials ☐ Selected reading	☐ Sticky notes or note cards ☐ Scissors ☐ Colored paper ☐ Coloring / writing materials ☐ Tape

Lesson Plan Overview

1. **Lesson 1: Introducing Compassion (40-50 min.)**
 - a. Introduce the Compassion Project
 - b. Lead a visualization / meditation
 - c. Quick-draw compassion / kindness
 - d. Reflect on drawings
2. **Lesson 2: Understanding Compassion (40-50 min.)**
 - a. Lead a visualization / meditation
 - b. Read a story
 - c. Ask questions about and discuss compassion
 - d. Partner draw a compassion story
3. **Lesson 3: Expressing Compassion (40-50 min.)**
 - a. Lead a visualization / meditation
 - b. Paint compassion on wood blocks
 - c. Write artist statements about what students learned
4. **(OPTIONAL) Lesson 4: Spreading Compassion (40-50 min.)**

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- a. Lead a visualization / meditation
- b. Share compassion statements and artwork
- c. Fill Compassion Tree with leaves

Learning Standards

Grade(s)	Standard #	American School Counseling Association Mindset and Behaviors for Student Success
K-12	M.3	Sense of belonging in the school environment.
K-12	B-LS 1	Demonstrate critical thinking skills to make informed decisions.
K-12	B-SS 1	Use effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills.
K-12	B-SS 2	Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
K-12	B-SS 4	Demonstrate empathy.
Grade(s)	Standard #	Bozeman Public Schools Art Standards
K-2	1	Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
K-2	3	Refine and complete artistic work.
K-2	10	Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
Grade(s)	Standard #	MT Common Core Standards
K	SL.K.6	Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.
K	L.K.6	Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.
K	RL.K.7	With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear.
K	RL.K.10	Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.
K	RI.K.1	With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details of a text.
K	RI.K.2	With prompting and support, identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.
1st	RF.1.4.a	Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
1st	RL.1	Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
1st	RL.1.10	With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for their grade level.
1st	W.1.1	Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.
1st	SL.1.5	Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
1st	L.1.5.c	Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at home that are cozy).
2nd	RF.2.4.a	Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
2nd	RL.2.3	Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.
2nd	RL.2.1	Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate an understanding of key details in a text.

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2nd	W.2.1	Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.
2nd	SL.2.1.a	Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

Lesson 1: Introducing Compassion

Est. time 40 - 50 minutes

Key Vocabulary

Compassion: mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and our environment (please see Layers of Compassion reference sheet for additional language)

Kindness: caring for yourself, others, or things around you

Self-compassion: being kind to ourselves when we feel bad or make a mistake

Set Up - 5 minutes

1. In Lesson 1, it generally works best to have drawing supplies readily available on desks/tables.

Materials

Warm-Up activity: visualization / meditation	Coloring / drawing materials
White or colored paper	Printed photos or show images on projector

Clean Up - 5 minutes

1. Collect and keep student drawings.
2. Clean up drawing materials.

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1. Introduction - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Explain to the class that everyone is going to work together to create an art show about compassion.
- b. Show a couple of photos of the Compassion Project - Bozeman to the class.
- c. Possible questions to ask:
 - i. What do you notice in these photos?
 - ii. How do you feel about creating an art show?
 - iii. How do you want people to feel while looking at your artwork?
- d. Explain how their artwork is going to be displayed along with their friends and other participating classrooms or schools.

2. Warm-Up - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Focus: visualization / meditation
- b. Tips for guiding a visualization / meditation:
 - i. Consider the space - how can you help your students? i.e. dim the lights, play soft music, sit on the ground, etc.
 - ii. Take a few deep breaths.
 - iii. Take your time - try talking at 50% normal speed. Pauses are GOOD.
 - iv. Remember that everything takes practice.
 - v. If you feel uneasy about guiding the visualization / meditation, maybe ask someone to lead it for you.
- c. Read aloud the guided meditation / visualization for K-2.
- d. Ask students to find their own space where they will be comfy.

Visualization / Meditation and Warm-Up Activity for Lesson 1:

Imagery: Trees

Topic: Self-Compassion

Take a moment to get cozy....this is a special time just for you go ahead and get the wiggles out if you need to because we are going to be still and quiet for a few minutes....once all of your silly wiggles are out, close your eyes if you can....with your eyes closed, feel the ground or your chair beneath you....is it smooth? warm? soft?....feel your body touch the chair or the ground and take a big breath in...and let your breath out..... listen to your breathing....all of us are breathing our tummies get bigger when we breathe in and smaller when we breathe out....like a balloon...what color is your balloon tummy?.....(long pause) now let's imagine we are little trees...one day we will be big trees, our whole class will make a forest....every day we will grow a little bit....one day we might get a new leaf, or a new flower, or a new branch.....every day holds something new..... what kind of tree are you?....as you breathe, your tree leaves wave in the breeze under a bright blue sky as you breathe, your tree branches reach toward a warm, happy sun.....each day you are given what you need to grow warm sun....cool water....fresh air....and room to stretch your beautiful leaves..imagine your special tree and all the kind things you do for the world....birds call you their home and live safely in your branches animals and people rest in your shade.....you make clean air for everyone to breathe and live....and every day you grow and stretch toward the warm sun.....take a deep breath and say goodbye for now to your tree....you can come back to your tree anytime you want because your tree is in your imagination thank yourself for being such a wonderful tree.....and when you are ready, stretch your hands and feet....and slowly open your eyes.

3. Quick Draw Compassion / Kindness - Est. time 10 minutes

- a. You are welcome to participate.
- b. Invite students to use the drawing materials at desks / tables.
- c. Ask the students to take a few minutes to draw what the words compassion / kindness mean to them. Challenge the students by asking them to think about how they can draw compassion/kindness without using symbols such as hearts and rainbows.
 - i. You may prompt students with questions such as:

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1. What is something kind you have done for a friend this week?
 2. What does it look like when someone is being kind to you?
- ii. You may choose to play music during this short exercise.

4. Reflect on Compassion Drawings - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Reflective activity options:
- i. Option 1 - Share out as a class and write ideas about compassion / kindness on the board or on a large sheet of paper.
 - ii. Option 2 - Have students get into groups of 2 or 3 and share their drawings with one another. Challenge students to practice listening skills as each person speaks.
 1. Listening skills include -
 - a. Facing the person who is speaking.
 - b. Keep eyes on or near the speaker.
 - c. Being quiet and showing them you understand. Nodding, telling, or otherwise showing them you agree/understand.
 2. If needed ask -
 - a. How does it feel to know someone is listening to you?
 - b. How can you practice compassion / kindness when you are listening to someone?

Lesson 2: Understanding Compassion

Est. time 40 - 50 minutes

Key Vocabulary

Compassion: mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and our environment (please see Layers of Compassion reference sheet for additional language)

Kindness: caring for yourself, others, or things around you

Self-compassion: being kind to ourselves when we feel bad or make a mistake

Set Up - 5 minutes

1. Have drawings from Lesson 1 available to use.
2. Hang up drawings from Lesson 1 somewhere visible in the room.

Materials

visualization / meditation	Coloring / drawing materials
Selected reading	White or colored paper

Clean Up - 5 minutes

1. Collect student drawings.
2. Clean up drawing / writing materials.

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1. Warm-Up - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Select the visualization / meditation or Warm-Up activity you would like to try. We recommend a short one for this lesson.
- b. Ask students what they remember from Lesson 1.
 - i. Reference their drawings hanging up.
 - ii. Summarize any themes you see, without referencing one single image.
 - iii. i.e. Notice colors, how unique each piece is, textures, themes such as helping or giving, etc.

2. Read - *Est. time 30 minutes*

- a. Explain to students that we are going to continue to learn about compassion and create artwork for the art show, except first we are going to read a story.
- b. Select a reading from the resource packet or from your school library and read the story together as a class. Remind students to have their thinking caps on and look for compassion in the story.
- c. While listening to the book, stop in a few places where the characters show compassion through actions or thoughts.
 - i. Based on the story, how do you think this character feels?
 - ii. If you were this character, what would you do to show kindness?
- d. At the end, come back to the group definition of compassion.
 - i. Ask, based on the story, what did we learn about compassion?
 - ii. Return to the board and add to the group definition.
 1. What does compassion for others look like?
 2. What are examples of showing compassion for the environment?
 3. How do we show compassion to ourselves?
 - iii. Make a shift in the conversation to self-compassion.
 1. So what do we do when we make a mistake or feel bad?
i.e. What if we were the character in the story that made a mistake?
 2. Tell the class an example from school or from personal life about self-compassion.
 - a. An example might be, "My cat, Socks, likes to sleep a lot. Sometimes he sleeps on the ground.
One day, Socks was napping near me and I didn't

see him. I accidentally stepped on his tail and he meowed really loudly. I was upset that I made a mistake and upset Socks. For a moment, I was angry at myself and Socks didn't seem too happy either! Instead of being angry at myself, I said, 'I'm sorry, Socks!' and leaned down to pet him and make sure he was okay. It is important to realize when we make mistakes and how it makes others feel, but we also need to forgive ourselves. I felt better after I realized that we all make mistakes sometimes."

3. Write / Draw - *Est. time 15 minutes*

- a. Assign everyone partners and make one group of three if needed.
- b. Make sure partners are sitting together and have art supplies. Every group of two will need a large, fresh sheet of paper.
- c. Ask partners to draw their own compassion story. The only rules are both of you have to be in the drawing and you have to be going to help someone or something.
 - i. Possible prompts:
 - ii. If you were in the story we just read together, what would have been different? Or which characters would you want to be? How would your story end?
 - iii. Where are you and your partner going? i.e. jungle, beach, library, etc.
 - iv. Who or what are you going to help? i.e. sibling, animal, friend, etc.
 - v. What are you and your friend going to do to help?
 - vi. It is important for students to work together and draw together.
 - vii. Make sure they are accepting each other's ideas.
- d. Go around and add the story examples to the class compassion list on the board.
- e. Collect drawings, collect materials, and add names if not listed on the drawings.

Lesson 3: Expressing Compassion

This lesson takes extra set up and clean up time.

Key Vocabulary

Est. lesson time 40 - 50 minutes

Compassion: mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and our environment (please see Layers of Compassion reference sheet for additional language)
Kindness: caring for yourself, others, or things around you
Self-compassion: being kind to ourselves when we feel bad or make a mistake
Shape: a flat space surrounded and enclosed by lines, i.e. circle, square, triangle, etc.
Texture: the surface of something and how you think it might feel or how it actually feels, i.e. rough, smooth, bumpy, hairy, etc.
Warm colors: reds, yellows, oranges
Cool colors: blues, greens, violets

Set Up - 15 minutes

1. Have drawings from Lessons 1 and 2 available to reference.
2. Prepare paint palettes with small, nickel-sized dabs of paint.
3. Fill cups with water.
4. Cover tables with newspaper or drop cloths.

Materials

Visualization / meditation	Newspaper or drop cloths	Paint brushes
Wood blocks	Paint	Coloring / writing materials
Paper plate palettes	Water cups	Smocks or old t-shirts
Paper towels		

Clean Up - 15 minutes

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1. Collect student blocks and let them dry. Collect and record artist statements.
2. Rinse paint brushes and cups.
3. Clean up newspaper and paint palettes.

1. Warm-Up - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Select the visualization or Warm-Up activity you would like to try. We recommend a short one for this lesson.
- b. Ask students what they remember from Lesson 2.
 - i. Write what they remember on the board.
 - ii. Tell the students that their drawings were practices for their paintings and today they are going to paint.
 - iii. Give any additional cautionary instructions about working with paint.

2. Paint - *Est. time 30 minutes*

- a. Hand out blocks assigned to each student.
- b. Make sure they orient their block correctly (names are on the back).
- c. Before they start painting, show how to mix colors.
 - i. Red and blue make violet.
 - ii. Red and yellow make orange.
 - iii. Yellow and blue make green.
 - iv. Adding black darkens a color, making it a shade.
 - v. Adding white lightens a color, making it a tint. i.e. So pink is red with white added, meaning pink is a tint of red.
- d. Tell students they can paint something they drew in Lessons 1 or 2, or if they came up with a new idea, they can paint that. Challenge them to paint something other than hearts and rainbows.
- e. Remind students that their painting will be displayed for others to see and every single piece of art will be special and unique. The art show is supposed to show what they learned about compassion and how it is important to them.
 - i. Additional prompts -
 1. Paint someone who has been kind to you.
 2. Paint you or someone else doing something nice for someone.
 3. Paint how compassion makes you feel.
 4. Paint something you learned about compassion from the story you read or the story you drew with your partner.

- f. Go around and help students as they paint. Refill palettes if needed and help with color mixing. If students want to layer, each paint layer takes about 10 minutes to dry.

3. Write - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. When students finish, have them write their artist statements.
- b. Artist statements will be displayed with their artwork.
 - i. Artist statement prompts -
 - ii. "Compassion is ____."
 - iii. "I painted _____. It means ____."
 - iv. "I learned compassion is _____."
 - v. "I will be kind by _____."
 - vi. "I hope people in my school will _____."
 - vii. "The people, animals, etc. were kind in the story because ____."
- c. Students might need extra help writing artist statements. You may need to ask them lots of questions about their painting to get them going. One to three sentences make a proper length artist statement.
- d. Match student blocks and artist statements. Make sure the blocks have a safe place to dry. Clean up.

*(OPTIONAL LESSON)*Lesson 4: Spreading
Compassion*Est. lesson time 40 - 50 minutes*

Key Vocabulary

Compassion: mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and our environment (please see Layers of Compassion reference sheet for additional language)

Kindness: caring for yourself, others, or things around you
--

Self-compassion: being kind to ourselves when we feel bad or make a mistake
--

Set Up - 25 minutes

1. Create a tree on the whiteboard or cut one out of colored paper and staple or tape it to a wall or bulletin board. Above the tree, write "Acts of Compassion" or "We Grow Compassion Together." Feel free to make it your own! Make the tree large enough so you can add note cards or sticky notes as leaves.
2. Lay out everyone's compassion blocks matched with their artist statement.
3. Arrange chairs or floor mats in a circle.

Materials

Colored paper	Tape	Sticky notes or note cards
Coloring / writing materials	Scissors	

Clean Up - 5 to 20 minutes

1. Collect everyone's compassion blocks for the last time and put in a bag or box to be taken to a storage location or the art exhibit location.
2. If you haven't already, make sure you enter names, block numbers, and artist statements into the spreadsheet provided.
3. Put supplies away and pick a spot to store the Compassion Leaves for the

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Compassion Tree.

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1. Warm-Up - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Select the visualization or Warm-Up activity you would like to try.
- b. After the Warm-Up, ask students to retrieve their compassion block and artist statement.

2. Share - *Est. time 15 minutes*

- a. Have everyone in the class sit in a circle with their block and statement.
- b. Demonstrate showing your block to the class and reading your artist statement aloud. Ask a student to hold your block high or slowly walk around the circle showing it to everyone. When they have made it around the circle, ask them to put the block in a visible place where all of the blocks will eventually end up together. Leaning the blocks against a whiteboard or putting them on a single table works well.
- c. Now see who would like to go next. Have the student ask someone to help them hold their block while they read. This might sound like:
 - i. "Who would like to share next?" Sarah raises their hand. "Sarah, would you ask someone to help you?" Sarah: "Can someone help me?" Jesse volunteers. Sarah: "Thank you, Jesse." Sarah hands their block to Jesse.
 - ii. Encourage everyone to volunteer and treat everyone's blocks with kindness and care.
 - iii. Feel free to ask a follow-up question if someone needs more practice speaking.
 - iv. The exchange between students is the most important part of this exercise. Make sure everyone is asking for help, volunteering, and thanking the helper. Using names is encouraged.
- d. Ask the class what they think of seeing all the art together.

3. Compassion Tree - *Est. time 25 minutes*

- a. Ask who noticed the Compassion Tree!
- b. Ask the class what they think the tree is missing. The tree is missing leaves, but not to worry! They can all work together to give the tree leaves.

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- i. Optional - Each branch is for a different type of compassion. One is compassion for ourselves. The others are compassion for others and compassion for the environment or school / community.
- ii. Give students time to make leaves. Cut and decorate leaves. As students are working, watch for acts of compassion or use examples from the past. Write each act of compassion on a leaf and add it to the tree.
- iii. Work together as a class to fill the tree with leaves over the course of the school year. You can also make flowers or fruits and have a flowering or fruit-producing tree.

Project Completion Checklist

When you have completed all of the tasks below, you have completed this project. Well done! Feel free to utilize these lessons plans, activities, and resources in your future teaching!

☐ ☐ Pre-project assessment:

- ☐ Pre-project assessment survey (approximately 50 questions)

☐ Training:

- ☐ I attended a Compassion Project training and stayed for at least 3 hours.

☐ Lessons:

- ☐ My class(es) completed Lessons 1-3 of the Compassion Classrooms curriculum.

☐ ☐ Logistics:

- ☐ Student artwork and artist statements are correctly numbered and recorded in the spreadsheet or google form provided.
- ☐ I have a personal list of student names and their matching block numbers. (This will help students and parents find their artwork when the project is done.)
- ☐ I shared the artist statement spreadsheet with my local project leader or confirmed that they received my completed google form.

☐ ☐ Post-project assessment:

- ☐ Pre-project assessment survey (approximately 50 questions)

Resource List

This Resource List includes meditation / visualization scripts which can serve as Warm-Up activities. It also includes reading suggestions and alternative media such as apps and videos.

Visualization / Meditation Scripts

Visualization / Meditation and Warm-Up Activity Imagery:

Picnicking with a Friend

Topic: Sharing

Preparation and Other Considerations:

This meditation is designed to follow the Visualization / Meditation in Lesson 1. This script has a lot of detailed imagery in it, so make sure to take your time. Talking slowly and feeling out pauses will allow students to fully use their imagination.

Does everyone have their own space?.....It looks like everyone has their own special spot.....now go ahead and wiggle or make a silly face.....it is time to let our silliness out.....when I get count down to one, everyone's sillies are going to be out, ready?.....5...4...3...2...1....thank you....now it is time to close our eyes and be quiet....nice and quiet.....close your eyes.....remember when we all imagined ourselves as trees?

let's take three deep breaths and go back to our trees....big breath in....and out....big breath in....and out, nice and slow....last one, big breath in and out.....now instead of BEING a tree, we are sitting underneath our tree today.....can you see your tree?....is it tall or small....wide or thin.....imagine your tree your tree is in a beautiful park where it is has everything it needs....as you look up, the branches of your tree are gently swishing....can you hear the branches?....swish....swish go the branches....you are sitting on your favorite blanket under your tree..... you are resting and relaxed....what color is your blanket?....what does it feel like?....is it fuzzy, or smooth....soft, or warm?.....this is a really peaceful spot to rest on your blanket.....before you appears a basket....you and the basket are sitting on your blanket under your tree....inside the basket is your favorite food..... imagine opening the basket to find your favorite food....maybe you picked a big, juicy, red strawberry....maybe your favorite food is salty french fries.....what is your favorite food?

you realize your food is so good that it should be shared with someone.....who would you share

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your food with?..... imagine your friend joining you on your blanket under the tree.....they are so excited to eat with you.....you reach into the basket and pull out your favorite food..... together you and your friend eat together and have fun under the tree in the peaceful park.....yum.....yum.....can you see you and your friend smiling?.....it is almost time to leave the park....but it is okay, you and your friend can come back sometime.....before we finish, take one big breath in...and out....and then slowly open your eyes.

Visualization / Meditation and Warm-Up Activity Imagery:

Light

Topic: Saying Thank You

Preparation and Other Considerations:

Leading visualization / meditation exercises takes practice. Take a moment to reflect on what you can include or try differently this time. The person leading the activity is also being challenged to practice mindfulness.

Good day class.....I want to begin today's compassion lesson by saying thank you.....thank you all for being you....thank you for being in my class.....I get a ____ feeling when I think about coming to school everyday and seeing all of you.....now are we ready to begin today's activity? as we have practiced.....go ahead and find your own space maybe trace a little circle on the ground around you with your finger.....good.....and let's find some stillness now after three breaths, let's close our eyes.....breath in....and out....filling our bodies with air.....and letting it out..... breath number three....in and as you breathe out, close your eyes.....I invite you to find calm and stillness you are enough just as you are.....I want you to know I am so thankful you are here.....in this classroom....in this school.....I hope this is can be a place where we thank one another and when we say thank you, we can imagine a light....a soft warm light.....can you imagine a light?..... maybe your light is like the sun....maybe your light is like a little star...your light is beautiful whenever we say thank you, we shine our light on someone else....we make it possible for them to be seen, for their actions to be seen.....how do you feel when someone thanks you?..when I thank you?....does it feel good?..... stay with that feeling.....imagine your little golden light and its warmth.....the light is shining out of you....the light is growing.....the light is spreading through our classroom.....and down the hallways..... now it is filling the entire school.....and as we say thank you each other, let us not forget about ourselves feel your light....and quietly say thank you to yourself when you are ready, take a deep breath, feel the ground beneath you, listen to my voice....and slowly open your eyes thank you, everyone.

Visualization / Meditation and Warm-Up Activity Imagery:

Moving Music Notes

Topic: Mindful Listening

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Preparation and Other Considerations:

For this activity, find some calming instrumental music (without words) to play quietly for students. The script is specifically adapted to exercise mindful listening. Consider trying long pauses.

Do you want to go the extra mile? This activity can be adapted to other senses, such as touch or smell. For touch, you could give every student something to hold and feel, like a stone, feather, or other item. For smell, they could hold an unlit candle, bar of soap, flower blossom, or another slightly smelly object. Feel free to try something new.

Okay everyone.....we are going to take a few minutes and listen to a song.....(start music - acoustic guitar, piano or slow jazz could all be fitting choices, make sure it is something without words) everyone find a place to sit or lay down where you can hear the song....can everyone hear? okay, take three deep breaths and listen to the song.....in and out....breathe in.....and as you breathe out, feel your body soften..... in, good, and out, wonderful.....when you are ready, close your eyes so you can focus on the music let your body relax as you listen.....imagine each note traveling through the air.....how do the notes move if you could see them? would they dance?.....would they spin?.....would they float?.....imagine the notes moving through the air.....the music fills the room and travels to your ears.....music is usually made to make people feel a certain way how does this music make you feel?.....slowly lift your hands and let them move with the music.....move with the music.....we can sway with the music as it changes, grows, slows...now bring your hands back to your side or your lap.....what is it like to listen?.....what is the music saying to you now?.....thank you for listening so carefully.....listening is a way to show we care listening is a way to show someone we care about them.....when you listen to me, I feel cared for let's listen for a little longer and see what the music does.....very nice....wonderful listening.....alright, we are nearly done.....take one big breath....slowly take a stretch if you need it and when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

Reading Suggestions

Teaching Tolerance magazine from the Southern Poverty Law Center. Subscriptions are free to K-12 educators and libraries at <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/subscribe>. It has film kits on social justice topics to lend; it also includes recommended books for both teachers and kids.

Amelia Bloomer lists at:

<https://ameliabloomer.wordpress.com/>

The Feminist Task Force of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association (ALA) creates a yearly list of the best feminist literature for children and young adults.

American Indian Youth Literature Awards

<http://ailanet.org/activities/american-indian-youth-literature-award/>

These awards are given every two years by the American Indian Library Association. Awards are used "to identify and honor the best writing and illustrations by and about American Indians".

Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature

<http://www.apalaweb.org/awards/literature-awards/>

These awards, from the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA), "honor and recognize individual work about Asian/Pacific Americans and their heritage, based on literary and artistic merit".

Coretta Scott King Book Awards at:

<http://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards>

Also from ALA, these awards "are given annually to outstanding African American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values".

Jane Addams Childrens' Book Award at:

<http://www.janeaddamspeace.org/jacba/>

Awards given by the Jane Addams Peace Association "to children's books published the preceding year that effectively promote the cause of peace, social justice, world community, and the equality of the sexes and all races as well as meeting conventional standards for excellence".

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Pura Bepre Award at:

<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal>

Awards given to a “Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth”. The awards are co-sponsored by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), and REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, an ALA affiliate.

Rainbow Award books at:

<http://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/>

Book list from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table of the American Library Association. It creates an annual bibliography of quality books “with significant and authentic LGBTQ content, which are recommended for people from birth through eighteen years of age”.

Schneider Family Award at:

<http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/schneider-family-book-award>

Another ALA award – it honors “an author or illustrator for a book that embodies an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences”.

Videos and the Headspace App

Brene Brown on Empathy Video

This short, animated video describes the difference between sympathy and empathy. Learn how empathy fuels connection and sympathy drives disconnection. This video is narrated by Brene Brown - researcher, storyteller, and author.

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw>

Headspace for Educators

Headspace is an online and app-based meditation resource. Access hundreds of meditations on dozens of topics such as gratitude, appreciation, compassion, and more.

<https://www.headspace.com/educators>

Videos about Compassion Project

Short Version (1 minute): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvPAmj6agWY>

Long Version (10 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev7pPFizqXM&t=41s>

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APPENDIX B

9-12 COMPASSION CLASSROOMS CURRICULUM

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Overview

Congratulations on completing your training with the Compassion Project! Our staff and volunteers are here to support you as you integrate the following lessons in your classroom. Also remember your full network of support: this includes co-teachers and school counselors.

The Compassion Classrooms Curriculum coincides with MT Core Standards, National Art Standards, and American School Counselor Association Standards, which are found on Page 4.

This lesson plan is made of four lessons, or classes. You may break up the lesson plan differently if you wish, which is why each activity is listed with an estimated time. To re-engage students after a break, whether it be hours or days, make sure to use a visualization as a Warm-Up. These can be found in the Resource List. Lessons 1 - 3 are required and Lesson 4 is optional. Following the project, you will be asked to list the activities you used for assessment purposes, so please keep track.

Learning Objectives

Following these lessons, students will be able to:

- Explain the concept of compassion
- Recognize acts of compassion and opportunities to practice compassion
- Integrate compassion into their lives and their communities

The Therapeutic Benefits of Art

- Art-making externalizes thoughts and feelings in a way that words cannot. Once "out there," the difficult aspects of human experience are in a more manageable space.
- Art offers a tangible way to work through challenges via the safety of metaphor. We can use visual art as an emotional mapping tool.
- Art's openness lessens black and white thinking, thus allowing for seeming opposites to co-exist.

Set-Up

Before you begin, ensure you have enough wooden blocks for every student. Begin by assigning each student a block number and logging it in the spreadsheet provided. To save more time, we recommend writing student names on the backs of blocks in sharpie.

Materials List

Meditation / visualization scripts	Smocks or old t-shirts	Paint
Printed images or images for projector	Writing materials	Cups - preferably paper or reusable
Coloring / drawing materials	Sharpies	Paper plate palettes
Sticky notes or note cards	7" x 7" wood blocks	Paper towels

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Paint brushes	Newspaper or drop cloths for tables	Tape
White or colored paper	Selected reading	Scissors

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Curriculum Outline

Materials by Lesson

Pre-Lesson Preparation	
Ensure you have enough wooden blocks for every student. Begin by assigning each student a block number and logging it in the spreadsheet provided. To save more time, we recommend writing student names on the backs of blocks in sharpie.	
Lesson 1	Lesson 3 - <i>This lesson is the most demanding.</i>
☐ Warm-Up activity ☐ White or colored paper ☐ Coloring / writing materials ☐ Printed photos or show images on projector	☐ Warm-Up activity ☐ Wood blocks ☐ Paper plate palettes ☐ Paint ☐ Paint brushes ☐ Coloring / writing materials ☐ Smocks or old t-shirts ☐ Water cups
Lesson 2	Lesson 4 - Optional
☐ Warm-Up activity ☐ White or colored paper ☐ Coloring / writing materials ☐ Selected reading	☐ Sticky notes or note cards ☐ Scissors ☐ Journals or writing paper ☐ Coloring / writing materials ☐ Tape

Lesson Plan Overview

1. **Lesson 1: Introducing Compassion (40-50 min.)**
 - a. Introduce the Compassion Project
 - b. Lead a Warm-Up activity
 - c. Quick-draw compassion / kindness
 - d. Reflect on drawings
2. **Lesson 2: Understanding Compassion (40-50 min.)**
 - a. Lead a Warm-Up activity
 - b. Read a story
 - c. Ask questions about and discuss compassion
 - d. Partner draw a compassion story
3. **Lesson 3: Expressing Compassion (40-50 min.)**
 - a. Lead a Warm-Up activity
 - b. Paint compassion on wood blocks
 - c. Write artist statements about what students learned
4. **(OPTIONAL) Lesson 4: Spreading Compassion (40-50 min.)**

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- a. Lead a Warm-Up activity
- b. Share compassion statements and artwork
- c. Compassion journaling activity

Learning Standards

Grade(s)	Standard #	Guidance Counselor Standards
K-12	M.3	Sense of belonging in the school environment.
K-12	B-LS 1	Demonstrate critical thinking skills to make informed decisions.
K-12	B-SS 1	Use effective oral and written communication skills and listening skills.
K-12	B-SS 2	Create positive and supportive relationships with other students.
K-12	B-SS 4	Demonstrate empathy.
Grade(s)	Standard #	Bozeman Public Schools Art Standards
K-12	1	Generate and Conceptualize artistic ideas and work
K-12	3	Refine and compete artistic work
K-12	4	Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.
Grade(s)	Standard #	MT Common Core Standards
9th/10th	RL.9-10.6	Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
9th/10th	W.9-10.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, including culturally diverse topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
9th/10th	SL.9-10.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
9th/10th	SL.9-10.1.b	Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.
9th/10th	SL.9-10.1.c	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
9th/10th	SL.9-10.1.d	Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, with specific attention to culture, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.
11th/12th	RI.11-12.3	Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, cultures, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
11th/12th	W.11-12.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, including culturally diverse topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
11th/12th	SL.11-12.1.b	Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
11th/12th	SL.11-12.1.c	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

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11th/12th	SL.11-12.1.d	Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, with specific attention to culture; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
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Lesson 1: Introducing Compassion

Est. time 40 - 50 minutes

Key Vocabulary

Compassion: mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and our environment (please see Layers of Compassion reference sheet for additional language)

Kindness: caring for yourself, others, or things around you

Self-compassion: being kind to ourselves when we feel bad or make a mistake

Set Up - 5 minutes

1. In Lesson 1, it generally works best to have drawing supplies readily available on desks/tables.

Materials

Visualization / meditation	Coloring / drawing materials
White or colored paper	Printed photos or show images on projector

Clean Up - 5 minutes

1. Collect and keep student drawings.
2. Clean up drawing materials.

1. Introduction - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Explain to the class that everyone is going to work together to create an art show about compassion.
- b. Show a couple of photos of the Compassion Project - Bozeman to the class.
- c. Possible questions to ask:
 - i. What do you notice in these photos?
 - ii. How do you feel about creating an art show?
 - iii. How do you want people to feel while looking at your artwork?
- d. Explain how their artwork is going to be displayed along with their friends and other participating classrooms or schools.

1. Warm-Up - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Focus: visualization / meditation
- b. Tips for guiding a visualization / meditation:
 - i. Consider the space - how can you help your students? i.e. dim the lights, play soft music, sit on the ground, etc.
 - ii. Take a few deep breaths.
 - iii. Take your time - try talking at 50% normal speed. Pauses are GOOD.
 - iv. Remember that everything takes practice.
 - v. If you feel uneasy about guiding the visualization / meditation, maybe ask someone to lead it for you.
- c. Read aloud the guided meditation / visualization for 9-12.
- d. Ask students to find their own space where they will be comfy.

Visualization / Meditation and Warm-Up Activity for Lesson 1:

Imagery: Compassion Thought Bubbles Topic: Self-Compassion

Take a moment to get cozy....this is a special time just for you go ahead and stretch a little bit or move around

if you need to.....we are going to be still and quiet for a few minutes once you are ready....once ready, close your eyes if that feels comfortable for you....with your eyes closed, feel the ground or your chair beneath you....is it smooth?warm?.... soft?..... hard? notice that support beneath you wherever your body meets the chair or the ground.....take a big breath in...and then let your breath out...listen to your breathing....all of us are breathing...just notice the breath, there is no need to judge it....just notice it just as we do not judge our breath, we do not judge ourselves ...now that we have slowed down and calmed down we might start to notice our thoughts....I invite you now to let your thoughts come and go....thoughts come and go like bubbles rising.....peaceful bubbles, moving of their own accord.....not judging our thoughts or our breath....just noticing ...being kind to ourselves.....isn't that a wonderful thought? Being kind to ourselves I invite you now to imagine yourself with a friend.....you and your friend are spending time together your friend is going through a hard time....you can see they seem a little down....and you want to help your friend feel better because you care for your friend.....what would you say or do to help your friend feel better? breathe in, and breathe out.....what would you say or do to help your friend feel better?.....now I have one more question....if you were feeling bad....could you say or do this same thing for yourself?....can you be kind to yourself? and the thoughts in your mind are coming and going like bubbles....they rise and pop or float on sometimes it is hard to be kind

to ourselves....but I invite you to try....my hope for all of us to be kind to ourselves, just as we would be kind to a friend just as we would help a friend....let's bring your awareness back to your breath....breathe in and out....bring your focus back into the room....and when you are ready... go ahead and slowly open your eyes.

2. Quick Draw Compassion / Kindness - Est. time 10 minutes

- a. You are welcome to participate.
- b. Invite students to use the drawing materials at desks / tables.
- c. Ask the students to take a few minutes to draw what the words compassion / kindness mean to them. Challenge the students by asking them to think about how they can draw compassion/kindness without using symbols such as hearts and rainbows.

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- d. Students may draw with their eyes closed if that frees them up.
- e. Invite students to consider how they hold their drawing material. Holding the material like a wand or holding it loosely changes the line quality and the emotions communicated through the drawing.
 - i. You may prompt students with questions such as:
 - 1. What is something kind you have done for a friend this week?
 - 2. What does it look like when someone is being kind to you?
 - ii. You may choose to play music during this short exercise.

3. Reflect on Compassion Drawings - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Reflective activity options:
 - i. Option 1 - Share out as a class and write ideas about compassion / kindness on the board or on a large sheet of paper.
 - ii. Option 2 - Have students get into groups of 2 or 3 and share their drawings with one another. Challenge students to practice good listening as each person speaks.
 - 1. Good listening means -
 - a. Facing the person who is speaking.
 - b. Making eye contact.
 - c. Being quiet and showing them you understand.
Nodding, telling, or otherwise showing them you agree/understand.
 - d. Asking follow-up questions or rephrasing what was said.
 - 2. If needed ask -
 - a. How does it feel to know someone is listening to you?
 - b. How can you practice compassion / kindness when you are listening to someone?

Lesson 2: Understanding Compassion

Est. time 40 - 50 minutes

Key Vocabulary

Compassion: mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and our environment (please see Layers of Compassion reference sheet for additional language)

Kindness: caring for yourself, others, or things around you

Self-compassion: being kind to ourselves when we feel bad or make a mistake

Critical thinking: a process of questioning, reasoning and evaluating a situation, involves acknowledging complexity and considering multiple points of view before coming to a conclusion

Perspective: a particular point of view or way of seeing the world

Set Up - 5 minutes

1. Have drawings from Lesson 1 available to use.
2. Hang up drawings from Lesson 1 somewhere visible in the room.

Materials

Visualization / meditation or other Warm-Up activity	Coloring / drawing materials
Selected reading	White or colored paper

Clean Up - 5 minutes

1. Collect student drawings.
2. Clean up drawing / writing materials.

1. Warm-Up - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Select the Warm-Up activity you would like to try. We recommend a short one for this lesson.
- b. Ask students what they remember from Lesson 1.
 - i. Reference their drawings hanging up.
 - ii. Summarize any themes you see, without referencing one single image.
 - iii. i.e. Notice colors, how unique each piece is, textures, themes such as helping or giving, etc.

2. Read - *Est. time 30 minutes*

- a. Explain to students that we are going to continue to learn about compassion and create artwork for the art show, except first we are going to read a story.
- b. Select a reading from the resource packet or from your school library and read the story together as a class. Remind students to have their thinking caps on and look for compassion in the story.
- c. Ask students to practice *critical thinking* and consider new *perspectives*.
- d. During or at the end of the reading, use these discussion questions:
 - i. Based on the story, how do you think this character feels?
 - ii. If you were this character, what would you do to show kindness?
 - iii. When was it difficult for certain characters to show compassion in the story? When is it difficult for us to show compassion?
- e. At the end, come back to the group definition of compassion.
 - i. Ask, based on the story, what did we learn about compassion?
 - ii. Return to the board and add to the group definition.
 1. What does compassion for others look like?
 2. What are examples of showing compassion for the environment?
 3. How do we show compassion to ourselves?
 - iii. Make a shift in the conversation to self-compassion.
 1. So what do we do when we make a mistake or feel bad? i.e. What if we were the character in the story that made a mistake?
 2. Tell the class an example from school or from personal life about self-compassion.
 - a. An example might be, "You may not know this about

me, but I used to get poor grades in school. And I'm a teacher! Surprising, right? Well, I was having a hard time focusing on school when I was getting poor grades. There were some other things going on in my life that were distracting. I look back now and realize how hard I was on myself. I wish I wouldn't have been as hard on myself. I wish I would have understood that I wasn't getting good grades not because I wasn't smart or capable. I was struggling and everyone struggles sometimes. It's a part of life. Understanding that we all struggle sometimes and being patient with ourselves is a form of self-compassion."

3. Write / Draw - *Est. time 15 minutes*

- a. Assign everyone partners and make one group of three if needed.
- b. Make sure partners are sitting together and have art supplies. Every group of two will need a large, fresh sheet of paper.
- c. Ask partners to improvise their own compassion story. You can explain it to them like they are creating a compassion comic book. The only rules are both of you have to be in the drawing and you have to be going to help someone or something.
- d. If they want, one person can be the author and the other can be the illustrator.
 - i. Possible prompts:
 - ii. If you were in the story we just read together, what would have been different? Or which characters would you want to be? How would your story end?
 - iii. Where are you and your partner going? i.e. jungle, beach, library, etc.
 - iv. Who or what are you going to help? i.e. sibling, animal, friend, etc.
 - v. What are you and your friend going to do to help?
 - vi. It is important for students to work together and draw together.
 - vii. Make sure they are accepting each other's ideas.
- e. Go around and add the story examples to the class compassion list on the board.
- f. Collect drawings, collect materials, and add names if not listed on the drawings.

Lesson 3: Expressing Compassion

This lesson takes extra set up and clean up time.

Est. lesson time 40 - 50 minutes

Key Vocabulary

Compassion: mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and our environment (please see Layers of Compassion reference sheet for additional language)
Kindness: caring for yourself, others, or things around you
Self-compassion: being kind to ourselves when we feel bad or make a mistake
Shape: a flat space surrounded and enclosed by lines, i.e. circle, square, triangle, etc.
Texture: the surface of something and how you think it might feel or how it actually feels, i.e. rough, smooth, bumpy, hairy, etc.
Warm colors: reds, yellows, oranges
Cool colors: blues, greens, violets
Primary colors: red, yellow, and blue, you can make complementary colors from these colors
Complementary colors: orange, green, and violet
Tint: adding white to a color, i.e. pink is a tint of red, to make red you add white
Shade: adding black to a color

Set Up - 15 minutes

1. Have drawings from Lessons 1 and 2 available to reference.
2. Prepare paint palettes with small, nickel-sized dabs of paint.
3. Fill cups with water.
4. Cover tables with newspaper or drop cloths.

Materials

Warm-Up activity	Newspaper or drop cloths	Paint brushes
Wood blocks	Paint	Coloring / writing materials

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Paper plate palettes	Water cups	Smocks or old t-shirts
Paper towels		

Clean Up - 15 minutes

1. Collect student blocks and let them dry. Collect and record artist statements.
2. Rinse paint brushes and cups.
3. Clean up newspaper and paint palettes.

1. Warm-Up - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Select the Warm-Up activity you would like to try. We recommend a short one for this lesson.
- b. Ask students what they remember from Lesson 2.
 - i. Write what they remember on the board.
 - ii. Tell the students that their drawings were practices for their paintings and today they are going to paint.
 - iii. Give any additional cautionary instructions about working with paint.

2. Paint - *Est. time 30 minutes*

- a. Hand out blocks assigned to each student. Make sure names are on the back.
- b. Make sure they orient their block correctly (top, bottom, sides).
- c. Before they start painting, show how to mix colors.
 - i. Red, yellow, and blue are **primary** colors. Mix primary colors to make **complementary** colors.
 - ii. **Warm colors** might bring up activated, excited emotions: reds, yellows, oranges.
 - iii. **Cool colors** might bring up calmer, more subdued emotions: blues, greens, violets.
 - iv. Red and blue make violet.
 - v. Red and yellow make orange.
 - vi. Yellow and blue make green.
 - vii. Adding black darkens a color, making it a **shade**.
 - viii. Adding white lightens a color, making it a **tint**. i.e. So pink is red with white added, meaning pink is a tint of red.
 - ix. Build up **texture** by varying the amount of paint or the thickness of each paint layer. Add water to create a watery **texture**.

- d. Tell students they can paint something they drew in Lessons 1 or 2, or if they came up with a new idea, they can paint that. Challenge them to paint something other than hearts and rainbows.
- e. Remind students that their painting will be displayed for others to see and every single piece of art will be special and unique. The art show is supposed to show what they learned about compassion and how it is important to them.
 - i. Additional prompts –
 - ii. Paint someone who has been kind to you.
 - iii. Paint you or someone else doing something nice for someone.
 - iv. Paint how compassion makes you feel.
 - v. Paint something you learned about compassion from the story you read or the story you drew with your partner.
- f. Go around and help students as they paint. Refill palettes if needed and help with color mixing. If students want to layer, each paint layer takes about 10 minutes to dry.

Optional - If you are teaching a certain subject, like math or social studies, for example, consider putting extra constraints on the artwork. You could incorporate a math lesson by using geometry to create patterns or you could reference tessellations. Students could create a tessellation stencil and then trace it onto their wood block. As for social studies, you could ask paintings to be about a certain topic you have been reading or discussing. The Civil Rights Movement could be a topic for discussing compassion.

3. Write - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. When students finish, have them write their artist statements.
 - b. Artist statements will be displayed with their artwork.
 - i. Artist statement prompts -
 - ii. "Compassion is _____."
 - iii. "I painted _____. It means _____."
 - iv. "I learned compassion is _____."
 - v. "I will be kind by _____."
 - vi. "I hope people in my school will _____."
-

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- c. Students might need extra help writing artist statements. You may need to ask them lots of questions about their painting to get them going. One to five sentences make a proper length artist statement.
- d. Optional - If you want to emphasize the writing portion, you can add extra constraints to the artist statement. You could have students write poems as artist statements or assign extra journaling activities and/or prompts.
- e. Match student blocks and artist statements. Make sure the blocks have a safe place to dry. Clean up.

*(OPTIONAL LESSON)***Lesson 4: Spreading Compassion***Est. lesson time 40 - 50 minutes***Key Vocabulary**

Compassion: mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness for others, ourselves, and our environment (please see Layers of Compassion reference sheet for additional language)

Kindness: caring for yourself, others, or things around you
--

Self-compassion: being kind to ourselves when we feel bad or make a mistake
--

Critical thinking: a process of questioning, reasoning and evaluating a situation, involves acknowledging complexity and considering multiple points of view before coming to a conclusion

Perspective: a particular point of view or way of seeing the world

Set Up - 25 minutes

1. Lay out everyone's compassion blocks matched with their artist statement.
2. Arrange chairs or floor mats in a circle if possible. Standing in a circle also works.

Materials

Writing journals or paper	Tape	Sticky notes or note cards
Coloring / writing materials	Scissors	

Clean Up - 5 to 20 minutes

1. Collect everyone's compassion blocks for the last time and put in a bag or box to be taken to a storage location or the art exhibit location.
2. If you haven't already, make sure you enter names, block numbers, and artist statements into the spreadsheet provided.

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1. Warm-Up - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Try the Impact of our Actions meditation / visualization for this lesson.
- b. After the Warm-Up, ask students to retrieve their compassion block and artist statement.

2. Share - *Est. time 10 minutes*

- a. Have everyone in the class sit in a circle with their block and statement.
- b. Demonstrate showing your block to the class and reading your artist statement aloud. Ask for a moment of silence after you read your statement and before the next person reads. Put your block in a place where all the blocks will end up together. Leaning the blocks against a white board or putting them on a single table works well.
- c. Now see who would like to go next.
- d. Ask the class what they think of seeing all the art together.

3. Journal on Compassion

- a. As homework, ask students to find a famous piece of artwork, a poem or a news article that demonstrates compassion.
- b. If they want, they can create a photo-journal, or type of scrapbook. Have them print the image, article, or poem and edit it in some way to reflect what they learned about compassion from it or how it reinforces their view of compassion. Make sure they are backing their essays and answers up with evidence.
 - i. Possible journaling or discussion questions -
 - ii. Pick a perspective on compassion from the artwork, poem or article. Describe how this person or group might define compassion.
 - iii. Define compassion for yourself.
 - iv. How is your view of compassion similar or different to the view in the artwork, poem or article?
 - v. Why might your views be similar or different? How do different experiences, cultures and backgrounds factor into these views?
 - vi. What is the importance of understanding another's perspective?
 - vii. Are there limits to compassion or situations when compassion was not helpful or productive?
 - viii. What effect or outcome did this definition or practice of compassion

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have on others?

- c. A secondary journal prompt - and this one might take less time - is: what hopes do you have for our school to be more compassionate? What would a more compassionate school look like and feel like? How do you want yourself and others to feel when you/they come to school every day?

Project Completion Checklist

When you have completed all of the tasks below, you have completed this project. Well done! Feel free to utilize these lessons plans, activities, and resources in your future teaching!

☐ ☐ Pre-project assessment:

- ☐ Pre-project assessment survey (approximately 50 questions)

☐ Training:

- ☐ I attended a Compassion Project training and stayed for at least 3 hours.

☐ ☐ Lessons:

- ☐ My class(es) completed Lessons 1-3 of the Compassion Classrooms curriculum.

☐ ☐ Logistics:

- ☐ Student artwork and artist statements are correctly numbered and recorded in the spreadsheet or google form provided.
- ☐ I have a personal list of student names and their matching block numbers. (This will help students and parents find their artwork when the project is done.)
- ☐ I shared the artist statement spreadsheet with my local project leader or confirmed that they received my completed google form.

☐ ☐ Post-project assessment:

- ☐ Pre-project assessment survey (approximately 50 questions)

Resource List

This Resource List includes meditation / visualization scripts which can serve as Warm-Up activities. It also includes reading suggestions and alternative media such as apps and videos.

Visualization / Meditation Scripts

Visualization / Meditation and Warm-Up Activity Imagery:

Waves

Topic: Gratitude

Preparation and Other Considerations:

Before you begin this visualization / meditation, consider taking a moment to write down three things you are grateful for and three behaviors you want to encourage in your students. By taking the time to recognize and acknowledge the goodness around us, we might encourage students to continue along that path of behavior.

Today's Warm-Up activity is about gratitude....it is important to be thankful, especially if we are having a rough day....consider the positive impact you can have on someone else just by simply saying thank you....it feels good to be thanked, doesn't it? it feels good to be appreciated....telling someone we appreciate them is a small way to make a difference.....and with that, let's take a few moments to explore gratitude further....go ahead and settle in your chair or on the floor and find an object in front of you to focus on....bring your awareness to that object and take a few, full breaths...in through your nose and out through your mouth....on an exhale, close your eyes let's bring an awareness to your body by squeezing your hands separately or together....just a nice gentle squeeze.....and release....if you need to, go ahead a shift in your seat or let your head hang heavy....whatever you need to do to feel comfortable....breathe in, and out.....let your awareness rest on your breath let your breath rock you like a wave.....feel the wave rise on an inhale and gently fall on an exhale....this wave is small....this wave is kind and peaceful....the wave rolls up and down now take a moment to find something you are grateful for.....it could be a person....a pet.....a place.....something good that happened to you....it could be something about the weather....whatever you are grateful for, just choose one thing.....and give it your gratitude.....in your mind, softly say thank you....thank you....two small, simple words but they have a huge impact..... as you focus on

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what you are grateful for, you may start to notice more things in your life to be grateful for.....that is pretty awesome....breathe in, and out....and let the wave that is your breath wash you in gratitude.....very nice.....I am so grateful for each one of you.....thank you for your attention....I deeply appreciate your focus today.....let your mind be free....let go of the day so far and come into the present moment....take a full breath and squeeze your hands like before let the muscles in your hands and arms relax.....and when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

Visualization / Meditation and Warm-Up Activity Imagery:

Color

Topic: Visualizing Compassion

Preparation and Other Considerations:

Leading visualization / meditation exercises takes practice. Take a moment to reflect on what you can include or try differently this time. The person leading the activity is also being challenged to practice mindfulness.

We have been spending time learning about compassion.....today's meditation is about compassion and color.....color can be symbolic, meaning that a color can stand for something larger than itself....color might be symbolic of emotion, seasons of the year, teams, traditions, and more....maybe certain colors make us feel a certain way or remind of us things that are important to us..... with that, we are going to begin today's visualizationas usual, bring your eyes to a soft focus....take a few full breaths....and when you are ready, close your eyes....these moments are just for you..... remember that you can't mess up during these activities....if you are focusing on your breath, embracing the stillness, and listening to your mind, you are doing perfectly....it can be easy to feel like we're just not getting it, or we aren't feeling the way we want to feel.....it is understandable to feel that way....but for now, just try to let go of all that....try to let go and focus on your breath....you are enough, just as you are right now.....(long pause)...let us shift our focus to the idea of compassion....we have been learning a lot about compassion.....what thought or idea about compassion is coming to you today? if compassion feels a little too big or overwhelming for right now....try kindness or empathy....what comes to mind with kindness and empathy? if compassion, kindness, or empathy were to have a color, what would that color be?....breathe in, breathe out..... see if a color or colors appear in your imagination, and if no color comes to mind, that is okay....stay with that color or that feeling for a few more breaths....breathe in and out....and now let your focus go....let your mind be free..... feel your body soften as you exhale....and slowly let us bring our focus back into the room opening your eyes slowly and noticing the space around you and how maybe you feel differently than when we started the exercise.

Visualization / Meditation and Warm-Up Activity Imagery:

Pond Ripples

Topic: Impact of our Actions

Preparation and Other Considerations:

Have notecards or sticky notes handy to write down student ideas. You might want to give students two or three minutes in silence to write after this exercise.

We may not always see the impacts our actions have....but we can imagine the ways we want to make a difference and work toward those goals this visualization is about imagining how we can contribute to our community in a positive, compassionate way....because the truth is, we all can make a difference....before we begin this exercise, consider your posture..... press your feet firmly on the ground, let your neck reach up toward the sky and relax your hands in your lap or at your side....find an object in front of you and rest your gaze there....after a couple of breaths, go ahead and relax your focus and gently close your eyes....take a moment to acknowledge how you are feeling today....however you are feeling - that is okay....sit with your breath and with an awareness of your body for a moment....when you think about it, our bodies really are amazing....they help us do so many things....think about all the things you have accomplished today....you woke up and come to school....you greeted your teachers and your classmates..... you have already made the world a better place today, just by being you....I am so glad you are here....notice your breath....where do you feel your breath the strongest in your body? In your nose?...perhaps your shoulders?..... or your belly?....wherever you feel your breath, just focus on that part of you for a moment our bodies really are amazing....and the ways we use them every day have an effect it is kind of like dropping a stone in a clear pond.....our actions ripple out and touch everything, everyone..... what kind of mark do you want to make on the world?....how do you want people to feel when they are around you?..... imagine this feeling, like ripples on a pond, expanding ever-outward....you can show compassion to yourself and others, and you get to decide what that looks like....wonderful....let's slowly bring our awareness back to the breath....good...and then notice the sounds in the room..... maybe notice how your posture has shifted since the beginning of this activity....and when you are ready, go ahead and open your eyes.

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Reading Suggestions

Teaching Tolerance magazine from the Southern Poverty Law Center. Subscriptions are free to K-12 educators and libraries at <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/subscribe>. It has film kits on social justice topics to lend; it also includes recommended books for both teachers and kids.

Amelia Bloomer lists at:

<https://ameliabloomer.wordpress.com/>

The Feminist Task Force of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association (ALA) creates a yearly list of the best feminist literature for children and young adults.

American Indian Youth Literature Awards

<http://ailanet.org/activities/american-indian-youth-literature-award/>

These awards are given every two years by the American Indian Library Association. Awards are used "to identify and honor the best writing and illustrations by and about American Indians".

Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature

<http://www.apalaweb.org/awards/literature-awards/>

These awards, from the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA), "honor and recognize individual work about Asian/Pacific Americans and their heritage, based on literary and artistic merit".

Coretta Scott King Book Awards at:

<http://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards>

Also from ALA, these awards "are given annually to outstanding African American authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values".

Jane Addams Childrens' Book Award at:

<http://www.janeaddamspeace.org/jacba/>

Awards given by the Jane Addams Peace Association "to children's books published the preceding year that effectively promote the cause of peace, social justice, world community, and the equality of the sexes and all races as well as meeting conventional standards for excellence".

Pura Bepre Award at:

<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal>

Awards given to a “Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth”. The awards are co-sponsored by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), and REFORMA, the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking, an ALA affiliate.

Rainbow Award books at: <http://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/>

Book list from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Round Table of the American Library Association. It creates an annual bibliography of quality books “with significant and authentic LGBTQ content, which are recommended for people from birth through eighteen years of age”.

Schneider Family Award at:

<http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/schneider-family-book-award>

Another ALA award – it honors “an author or illustrator for a book that embodies an artistic expression of the disability experience for child and adolescent audiences”.

Videos and the Headspace App

Brene Brown on Empathy Video

This short, animated video describes the difference between sympathy and empathy. Learn how empathy fuels connection and sympathy drives disconnection. This video is narrated by Brene Brown - researcher, storyteller, and author.

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw>

Headspace for Educators

Headspace is an online and app-based meditation resource. Access hundreds of meditations on dozens of topics such as gratitude, appreciation, compassion, and more.

<https://www.headspace.com/educators>

Videos about Compassion Project

Short Version (1 minute): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvpAmj6agWY>

Long Version (10 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev7pPFizqXM&t=41s>

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APPENDIX C

VOLUNTEER TRAINING



COMPASSION PROJECT

Volunteer Training

Overview of today:

- Welcome
- **Goal:** you takeaway a stronger sense of why it is important for you to teach and spread compassion, strategies to overcome myths and barriers around compassion, support for your own mindfulness and self-compassion practice, and tools and activities for sparking compassionate dialogue with others.
- Flow of today
 - For each topic, we'll follow this process:
 - 1) learn, 2) experience, and 3) apply
 - **Training Content!**
 - **Your why:** you will learn to articulate why compassion is important for getting to our vision for a brighter future.
 - **Overcoming barriers:** we will identify the near and far enemies of compassion and bust some myths that stand in our way.
 - **Making compassion relevant:** we will explore how to spark the self-interest in others to talk about and model compassion.
 - **Incorporating mindfulness:** we review the definition of mindfulness and the ideal qualities to aim for when leading these kinds of activities.
 - **Incorporating art:** we will review the connection between art and compassion and try out a creative activity!
 - **Reflection and storytelling:** we will come up with discussion and journal questions to invite deeper reflection on the importance of compassion.
 - Share takeaways
 - CP event sign-up
 - Additional resources & evaluation

Community Agreements:

In this space ...

- We take time to care for and listen to our bodies
- I belong here and so do you (-Essie Justice Group)
- You can ask for what you need
- We celebrate our differences and honor all that we have in common
- We are human, we are imperfect, and we are in it together!



COMPASSION PROJECT

1. Your Why

Learn:

Thanks for joining us. We are sure there is an important reason why you decided to share your time today. Let's get started by grounding in our "why".

We envision a world where:

- Everyone has what they need to live a flourishing life
- Conflict is generative
- Everyone is free to be the fullest version of themselves
- Humans live more harmoniously with the Earth

This vision is ambitious and far from our current reality, but we believe we can get there. We would like to start with a journal prompt. Use the vision statement above as your spark.

Experience:

Pick one pillar of our vision statement and write what that means to you. What would your life be like if conflict were generative? If you had what you needed to flourish? If you could be the freest and fullest version of yourself? If humans lived harmoniously with the Earth and other species?

Apply:

Share your "why" with a neighbor. How does compassion help us get to that vision?



COMPASSION PROJECT

2. Overcoming Barriers

Learn:

There are many barriers to the world we just imagined. And there are many barriers to practicing compassion. But we believe hard things are worth doing!

Research by Dr. Kristin Neff and Dr. Christopher Germer presents that there are near and far enemies of compassion. Far enemies are fairly intuitive. They are logically and diametrically opposed to how we generally understand compassion (reactivity, divisiveness, cruelty). But near enemies are sneakier. These are qualities that masquerade as compassion and we might mistake as such if we aren't thoughtful.

Before we get into the near and far enemies of compassion, check out the three parts to compassion, according to their research. Then let's discuss the near and far enemies.

3 Parts of Compassion	<u>Mindfulness</u>	<u>Common humanity</u>	<u>Loving kindness</u>
Define →			

Near Enemies	Complacency	Sameness	Pity
Far Enemies	Reactivity	Divisiveness	Cruelty

Experience & Apply:

Let's do some mythbusting. **What are commonly-held beliefs about why it might be bad to be compassionate to people or the Earth?** We will write these out on a big piece of paper.

Potential myths:

Being compassionate is: weakness, selfish, self-indulgent, "too soft", girly, not effective, etc.

Once we have those up and we've busted those myths, go ahead and pick up two slips of paper. On one sheet write the myth or the old belief. On the other sheet, write a new belief, or a new question you have. We are going to tear up and throw away the myth.



COMPASSION PROJECT

3. Making Compassion Relevant

Learn:

Compassion is an expansive topic and not something regularly talked about, except possibly in religious or spiritual settings. When introducing compassion as a topic, it's important to remember that everyone has a different background and will bring different meanings, assumptions, and cultural knowledge that informs how they understand this word.

When we are talking about compassion, we are talking about a shared value and ways to live that value through actions we take in the world.

Our organization's definition is:

"Compassion is mindful support, relief, and genuine human kindness - for others, ourselves, and in partnership with the Earth."

The literal definition is:

"The Latin root for the word compassion is *pati*, which means to suffer, and the prefix *com-* means with. Compassion, originating from *compati*, literally means "to suffer with."

Experience:

Goals of teaching compassion: (Circle the ones that are most important to you & add more.)

Increase	Soften our relationship with
Mindfulness Self-kindness Common humanity Belonging Self-awareness Inner-strength Open and honest communication Openness to grieving Ability to bounce back from mistakes Care and concern for others, empathy Interdependence Growth mindset Curiosity, awe, and wonder Respect and reciprocity with the Earth Active listening Forgiveness Advocating for oneself	Self-judgment Shame Judgment of others Assumptions Loneliness Binary thinking Hierarchy Rumination Beliefs about ourselves that don't serve us Productivity



COMPASSION PROJECT

Apply:

Bring to mind a group or a person with whom you would like to practice compassion. This could look like: simply asking someone what compassion means to them, planning to lead a group activity, or partnering with CP for a workshop.

Bring to mind what you know about these people and their situation, Consider the lists on page 4. **What are some of the items on those lists that you think might be important to them, and why?** Write a sentence or two about how you would connect compassion to this list, through a story, an example, or another idea you think will resonate with them. Then follow it with a thoughtful question. Keep in mind, this isn't a sales pitch. This is about putting yourself in someone else's shoes and exploring why compassion is important to them.

What might you say? Write it here.



COMPASSION PROJECT

Incorporating Mindfulness

Learn:

Mindfulness is being aware of what is happening in the present moment, both internally and externally. We can access and practice mindfulness anywhere, anytime. It's noticing how your toothpaste tastes, hearing the birds sing when you step outside, checking in with the quality of your breathing, taking an extra moment to savor the texture and warmth of that cozy scarf you love, and so much more.

We can grow mindfulness through practices such as meditation. Meditation is actually a family of practices that humans have curated for thousands of years, and may involve chanting, sitting, eating, walking, etc. Meditation, like prayer, is a part of ancient and rich spiritual and cultural practices, but regardless of what you believe, the tools are helpful as we navigate daily life. We think you will find that mindfulness, meditation, and art are all profoundly human.

Mindfulness, or greeting the here and now as it is, has awesome impacts on our social and emotional health.

Research has found that a regular mindfulness practice can increase our attention spans, boost life satisfaction, improve sleep, decrease anxiety and depression, lessen stress, and increase resilience.

Experience:

What do you notice about your internal and external world right now?

Let's take three collective deep breaths together.

Apply:

You cannot expect to teach or share mindfulness in a meaningful way without cultivating your own practice. Let's start with finding one to five minutes 4 - 7 times a week for practicing. Pull from the list of ideas on page 7.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Tip: Add a mindfulness practice on top of another routine part of your day. If you brush your teeth every single morning, add three deep breaths to the beginning and of your tooth brushing. Write a little reminder on your mirror. If you go on a daily walk, set a three-minute timer on your phone and try to focus on your breathing for those three minutes.



COMPASSION PROJECT

Mindfulness activity ideas:

- Three deep breaths - one for yourself, one for others, and one for the world
- Mindfully stretching
- Brewing your favorite tea or making your favorite drink, savoring the steam, smells, and/or temperatures
- Keeping a gratitude journal and listing three things you are grateful for
- Turning off your phone and going for a walk
- Listening to a song in your car or the shower and singing along
- Downloading Insight Timer and playing with the timers, meditations, sounds, and bells
- Cataloging the plants and animals that live in your neighborhood
- Star gazing, or watching a sunset or sunrise
- Taking five extra minutes in the shower
- Lighting a candle

Lead a partner in taking three deep breaths. Then give each other kind feedback in these areas:

- **A confident demeanor:**
 - Open body language and providing strong and smooth guidance
- **Thoughtful word choice:**
 - Words that allow for the person meditating to have their own experience
 - Go for verbs with “ing”: inviting, noticing, allowing, breathing, opening, understanding, listening, flowing, settling, grounding, stretching, expanding, softening, welcoming
 - Try out statements like, “when you are ready...” “in your own time...” “I’m inviting you to...” “as we begin” “as we are closing this practice”
- **A warm tone of voice:**
 - Emotionally balanced and expressive
 - Not harsh or monotonous
- **A balanced speed:**
 - Gradual and spacious, allowing for some intentional silence
 - Not too slow that the person meditating feels lost, and not too fast that they feel rushed
- **A variety of ways to engage and adapt:**
 - Remember that everyone stores trauma in their body at varying degrees and in different ways. What might be triggering to one person might not be for someone else. So the key here is to always give people options and affirm that they know what’s best for them.
 - “You may gently close your eyes or let your gaze rest in front of you.”
 - “You may gently close your eyes or write or draw during this practice.”
 - “You may sit, stand, lie down, or stretch during this practice - whatever feels best for you today.”
 - Do not turn out lights, and if you soften them, give everyone a heads up.
 - “If at any point you start to feel overwhelmed, bring your attention back to your breath.”



COMPASSION PROJECT

- If you are going to use a bell or any sound devices, let people know before you use it and do not use anything overly loud.

4. Incorporating Art

Learn:

Why do we use art to teach compassion?

- Art-making externalizes thoughts and feelings in a way that words cannot. Once "out there," the difficult aspects of the human experience are in a more manageable space.
- Art offers a tangible way to work through challenges via the safety of metaphor. We can use visual art as an emotional mapping tool.
- Art's openness lessens binary thinking, thus allowing for seeming opposites to co-exist.
- Art gets us out of our heads and into our bodies.
- Art is fun and it connects people across age, race, ability, gender, nationality, culture, religion, etc.
- People who have access to the arts are more likely to be civically engaged!

Experience:

Pick a piece of paper. Take 10 seconds to scribble. Start to pull out an image from this random starting place. After 1-2 minutes, everyone passes their paper to the left. Keep adding to each other's drawings for 3 to 5 rounds.

Apply:

What counter-cultural lessons could come out of this activity?



COMPASSION PROJECT

5. Reflection and Storytelling

Learn:

In our workshops, one of the goals is to share stories. The flow of a workshop goes something like this: 1) welcome and opening to make compassion relevant (could be a journaling, hand raising, or pair share activity, or another kind of icebreaker), 2) a self-compassion meditation or mindfulness activity, 3) a quick creative drawing or warm up (if there is time), 4) reading a poem or story together, 5) creating a painting, drawing, or another art piece about compassion, and 6) sharing our stories and reflections at the end.

We see our stories in the stories of others, which is why it is important to come together around story. Soon we will have a new and refreshed list of compassionate books and stories for people to share and read together. No matter the story, here are some reflection questions you might consider as you get ready to create your own art piece about compassion or support others in doing the same.

Experience:

What is one kind thing you did for someone else this week?

What is one kind thing someone did for you this week?

What emotion or emotions was _____ character feeling?

Why do you think _____ responded _____ way?

What would you have done in _____ situation?

Who is it easy for you to have compassion for in this story? In your life?

Who is it HARD for you to have compassion for in this story? In your life?

What is one, kind thing you might say to yourself?

What might you say to a good, close friend in your situation?

What do you not know about this situation or person?

What is one thing you are grateful for?

How is the Earth taking care of you right now?

What are some ways the Earth takes care of you every day?

What might you do for the Earth in return?

What is one thing you have been needing lately that you have been afraid to ask for?

Write your own questions:

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COMPASSION PROJECT

Apply:

Draw a picture of a story you started to write. Consider the thoughts, words, colors, textures, shapes, types of weather, places, objects, animals, foods, sounds, smells, people, etc that make your story come to life.

Need help guiding a group reflection? Check back in with your notes on pages 2 and 4. Move conversations and takeaways toward those benefits of compassion and our compassionate vision for the world.

APPENDIX D

COMPASSION FOR CAREGIVERS



COMPASSION PROJECT

Compassion for Caregivers

Overview of Today:

- Welcome
- Overview
- Introductions
 - Name + pronouns if you would like to share those
 - The kind of care you provide and how that has been lately
 - Intention or hope for our time together
- Definition of compassion + our mission + vision
- Permission slips
- Mindful movement
- Meditation
- Drawing + painting
- Group discussion
- Evaluation and close

Community Agreements:

In this space ...

- We take time to care for and listen to our bodies
- I belong here and so do you (-Essie Justice Group)
- You can ask for what you need
- We celebrate our differences and honor all that we have in common
- We are human, we are imperfect, and we are in it together!

Mission & Vision

Our mission is to spread and teach compassion through art and mindfulness.

We envision a world where:

- Everyone has what they need to live a flourishing life
- Conflict is generative
- Everyone is free to be the fullest version of themselves
- Humans live more harmoniously with the Earth

APPENDIX E

SELF-COMPASSION SCALE (SCS)

To Whom It May Concern:

Dr. Kristin Neff grants permission to use the Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003) for any purpose whatsoever, including research, clinical work, teaching, etc. Please cite:

Neff, K. D. (2003). Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250.

Permission is also given to translate the Self-Compassion Scale using the analytic approach to validate the factor structure that was established in:

Neff, K. D., Tóth-Király, I., Yarnell, L., Arimitsu, K., Castilho, P., Ghorbani, N.,... Mantios, M. (2019). Examining the Factor Structure of the Self-Compassion Scale using exploratory SEM bifactor analysis in 20 diverse samples: Support for use of a total score and six subscale scores. *Psychological Assessment*, 31 (1), 27-45.

Best

wishes,

Kristin

Neff, PhD

Self-Compassion Scale (SCS)

HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. For each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following 1-5 scale. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be.

**Almost
never**

1

2

3

4

**Almost
always**

5

1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.
6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
7. When I'm down, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.
9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition
16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.
17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.
18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it.
19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.
21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

Reference

Neff, K. D. (2003). Development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and Identity*, 2, 223-250.

SCORING KEY

Self-Kindness Items: 5, 12, 19, 23, 26

Self-Judgment Items (reverse scored): 1, 8, 11, 16, 21

Common Humanity Items: 3, 7, 10, 15

Isolation Items (reverse scored): 4, 13, 18, 25

Mindfulness Items: 9, 14, 17, 22

Over-identification Items (reverse scored): 2, 6, 20, 24

To reverse score items (1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1).

To compute a total self-compassion score, first reverse score the negative subscale items - self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification. Then take the mean of each subscale, and compute a total mean (the average of the six subscale means).

When examining subscale scores, higher scores on the self-judgment, isolation and over-identification scale indicate *less* self-compassion before reverse-coding, and *more* self-compassion after reverse coding. You can choose to report subscale scores with or without reverse-coding, but these three negative subscales must be reverse coded before calculating a total self-compassion score.

Note that the scoring procedures are slightly different than that used in the original scale article (Neff, 2003), in which items were totaled rather than averaged. However, it is easier to interpret the scores of the total mean is used and most researchers currently report total SCS scores on a five-point scale.

NORMS AND SCORE SIGNIFICANCE

There are no clinical norms or scores which indicate that an individual is high or low in self-compassion. Rather, SCS scores are mainly used in a comparative manner to examine outcomes for people scoring higher or lower in self-compassion.

As an ad hoc rubric, however, you can consider scores 1.0-2.49 to be low, between 2.5-3.5 to be moderate, and 3.51-5.0 to be high. When trying to determine whether self-compassion levels are high or low relevant to a particular sample, some researchers use a median split.

SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDITY

The SCS was developed in a sample of college undergraduates (Neff, 2003a). After identifying 71 items that were easily understood by students using a small pilot sample ($n=68$), exploratory factor analyses (EFA) were used with a larger sample ($n=391$) to identify 26 items that loaded best on separate subscales representing the six components of self-

compassion. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were used to provide support that scale items fit as intended with the proposed a priori theoretical model. An initial CFA found a marginal fit to a higher-order model representing a global factor of self-compassion and six subscale factors. Cross validation using CFA in a second sample ($N=232$) found adequate fit for a higher-order model. Total SCS scores evidenced good internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$), as did the six subscales (Cronbach's α ranging from .75 to .81). Test- retest reliability over a three-week interval was also good for the total score (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$) and six subscale scores (with Cronbach's α ranging from .80 to .88).

More recently, bifactor Exploratory Structural Equation Modeling (ESEM) has been used to verify the factor structure of the SCS rather than a higher order model, as it is more theoretically appropriate.

[Neff et al. \(2019\)](#) used bifactor ESEM to examine the factor structure of the SCS in 20 diverse samples ($N = 11,685$), and excellent fit was found for a model of one general factor of self-compassion and six specific subscale factors. Moreover, 95% of the reliable variance could be attributed to a general factor. Although there has been debate over whether or not the SCS should be used as a total score or as separate positive and negative scores, empirical evidence tends to support the use of a total score rather than two separate scores ([Neff, 2018](#); [Neff, 2020](#)). The factor structure of the SCS has also been found to be culturally invariant across 18 international samples ([Tóth-Király & Neff, 2020](#)).

For an in-depth discussion of the psychometric properties of the SCS, see [Neff and Tóth-Király \(in press\)](#).

ANALYTIC APPROACH FOR VALIDATION AND TRANSLATION

In order to validate the factor structure of the scale (including for translations) we strongly recommend the use of bifactor ESEM, as this is the most appropriate method to assess the operation of self- compassion components as a system. Information on this analytic method can be found in ([Neff et al., 2019](#)). Moreover, appropriate syntax for how to conduct these analyses for the SCS using Mplus can be found in the online supplement to that article and also [here](#).

Many translations of the SCS already exist can be found [here](#). You are free to create a new translation of the SCS, but we ask that you use bifactor ESEM to validate the scale structure since it is most appropriate.