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A Case Study on Mindfulness-Based Art Making and Teaching

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A Case Study on Mindfulness Based Art Making and Teaching

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Dedication

To Uncle Keith, Granny Mary, Grandad, Mom, Dad, Brandon, and Isabella. Without your life stories and influence my life would be astronomically different. Thank you for helping me realize my life's purpose.

To my siblings and future children, may this bring inspiration your way. You deserve all the happiness and joy life has to offer.

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Abstract

A Case Study on Mindfulness Based Art Making and Teaching

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Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by being fully aware of one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings in the present moment. This study used a case study methodology to investigate how one teaching artist incorporated mindfulness in studio and teaching practices. To answer the central research question, the researcher collected data through a semi-structured interview, participant-observation, and questionnaire. The researcher first conducted an interview with one teaching artist actively using mindfulness-based art making through her professional art work, personal practice, and teaching. The researcher then participated in and observed a meditative drawing class given by the aforementioned teaching artist. The researcher administered a short 11 question survey to four adult female students in the teaching artist's meditative drawing class. In vivo coding was used to analyze the data collected from the interview, participant-observations, and the surveys. Mind mapping was also used in analyzing the themes that emerged from all three sets of data collected. The results of this study indicate that the teaching artist in this study incorporates mindfulness in her studio practice by creating time and space for the practice, separating her professional artwork from her meditative drawing practice, and allowing the

practice to grow. She integrates mindfulness in her teaching through setting clear guidelines for her students, maintaining a mindful tone and environment for students, and by using reminders from her own personal experience with mindful-based art making. The hopes of the researcher are that this study will encourage others in the field of art education to pursue the exploration of mindfulness-based art making as a practice for personal and professional use, as well as the use of mindfulness-based art making within future studies.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION	2
PROBLEM STATEMENT	2
PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH	4
PROFESSIONAL MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH.....	5
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	7
DEFINITION OF TERMS	7
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	11
BENEFITS TO THE FIELD OF ART EDUCATION	11
SUMMARY.....	11
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	13
MINDFULNESS	13
Roots of Mindfulness.....	14
Mindfulness Practices	14
How is Art Making Mindful?	15
Mindfulness in Education	16
A Mindfulness-Based Art Making Case Study.....	17
SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING.....	18
Developmental Contemplative Science	19
CARE THEORY.....	20

EDUCATOR SELF-CARE & MINDFULNESS	23
CONCLUSION.....	24
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	25
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	25
Qualitative Research	26
Case Study	27
Participants.....	28
The Researcher.....	31
Student Participants	32
Locations.....	32
Ethical Treatment of Subjects	33
DATA COLLECTION	35
Semi-Structured Interview	35
Surveys.....	36
Participant Observation.....	37
DATA ANALYSIS.....	39
Coding.....	41
Analysis of Interview	41
Analysis of Fieldnotes from Observation	43
Analysis of Survey.....	44
Triangulation.....	46
Validity & Transferability.....	46
CONCLUSION.....	48

Chapter 4: Data Analysis	49
MINDFULNESS IN STUDIO PRACTICES	49
How Borrelli Defines Mindfulness	49
Mindfulness-Based Art Making.....	50
Mark Making	51
Flow State	51
A Glance Into Borrelli's Meditative Drawing Practice	52
Why Meditative Drawing?.....	54
How Borrelli's Meditative Drawing Practice Originated.....	55
Borrelli's Reflections & What She Has Learned.....	56
MINDFULNESS IN TEACHING PRACTICES	58
The Process	58
Guidelines	60
Reflections	61
CONCLUSION.....	63
Chapter 5: Conclusions	65
RESEARCH QUESTION.....	65
SUMMARIZED RESULTS & ANALYSIS	65
Mindfulness in Studio & Teaching Practices.....	66
Survey Results	66
Analysis.....	67
BENEFITS & CHALLENGES	68

Students' Experiences	69
Reflections from A Public-School Educator.....	69
Mindful Classrooms with James Butler & Teacher Burnout.....	70
IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	72
Areas for Future Research	72
CONCLUSION.....	73
Appendix A: Interview Questions	76
Appendix B: Survey Questions.....	77
References.....	78
Vita.....	83

List of Figures

Figure 1:	Becca Borrelli Illustrations Logo.....	29
Figure 2:	Lemon House Studio Logo	33
Figure 3:	Interview of In Vivo Coding	42
Figure 4:	Mind Map.....	43
Figure 5:	Participant Observation Field Notes	44
Figure 6:	Survey Responses	42
Figure 7:	Example of Borrelli's Mindful Drawing Prompt	60
Figure 8:	Visual Journal Entry Example #1	73
Figure 9:	Visual Journal Entry Example #2	74

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Art is a natural way to practice mindfulness. The colors, textures and sounds of creating pull us into the moment. You don't need any previous training to meditate through art, just a willingness to draw like a child, with freedom and a sense of curiosity.

-Amy Maricle is an artist, art therapist, and founder of Mindful Art Studio

In our current time in history, there has been an increase in awareness surrounding mental health issues. According to the American Institute of Research (2018), the increase in awareness and understanding of mental health can change the way we, as a society, view and respond to individuals suffering from mental health problems. One way that the increase in mental health problems is being addressed is through the use of mindfulness. Mindfulness is the act of purposefully slowing down, bringing one's awareness to the present moment, and bringing awareness to the emotions, feelings, and sensations that are happening in the mind and body (Watt, 2012). When practicing mindfulness, it is critical to remember to remain non-judgmental, have patience, acceptance, trust, compassion, and surrender to the moment (Davies, 2017). It is also important to understand that it is a non-striving practice, meaning there is no need to rush and there is no specific goal other than to bring one's full awareness to the present moment (Watt, 2012). Mindfulness enhances qualities that include not only attentional and emotional self-regulation, but also prosocial dispositions such as empathy and compassion, self-representations, ethical sensitivity, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Zenner et al., 2014).

Mindfulness is not an overwhelming, arduous practice that takes years of study and research to be able to share and/or lead. Mindfulness is rather a simple practice that is more accessible to an individual than meditation or yoga, because it can be practiced by anyone, in any location. Mindfulness practices can be anything from doodling or mark making in the margins of a notebook, to just simply taking a breath in the middle of any moment. The practice of mindfulness doesn't have to be anything elaborate or complicated. Many people don't even realize that they are practicing mindfulness strategies daily because of how simple they can be. Simply taking in a deep breath, closing your eyes, and focusing on the present moment can be a simple way to briefly practice mindfulness.

However, there is a lack of research on mindfulness-based practices in art education. This thesis examined a teaching artist's use of mindfulness practices within her studio practice and in an art class, and how it impacted the educator and her students.

CENTRAL QUESTION

This study focused on the central research question: How does one teaching artist combine mindfulness techniques into her art making process and her teaching practice?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem that was addressed in this research is the lack of informal and formal art programs that use mindfulness techniques to support art-based learning. The purpose of this case study research was to research mindfulness techniques used in support of art

making. In this case study, the researcher focused on one teaching artist who applied mindfulness techniques as part of an online drawing class.

In today's educational landscape with the overemphasis in standardized testing comparing student achievement levels, students and teachers face enormous stress. Darling-Hammond (2016) comments on testing during a child's entire education experience, saying that some students take "35 tests from 2nd through 11th grades before they even got to the SAT, ACT, or AP tests at the end of high school" (p. 27). Darling-Hammond (2016) claims that these tests are almost entirely multiple-choice, emphasizing recall and recognition rather than applied learning. She also states that schools scoring lowest in testing are required to place low achieving students into "long hours of drill based remedial math and reading courses, which deprived them of learning opportunities in science, social studies, and the arts, as well as engaging, project-based learning" (Darling-Hammond, 2016, pp. 27-28). This is where mindfulness-based art making can come into play and give students reprieve from the high levels of stress they face.

Mindfulness-based art making is the process of incorporating mindfulness techniques, such as attention to breath and mental scanning of the body, into an art making process, such as ceramic wheel throwing and drawing. Mindfulness based art making can be an easy and simple way to relieve the pressures of high stress and allow the class to function more smoothly. This approach allows for the students and teacher to regain mental clarity and emotional order in the classroom. This thesis explains how one art teacher integrated mindfulness strategies into her teaching and artistic practice.

PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Art has always been my very best friend throughout my life. Being part of a family comprised of many artists has also helped to solidify the significance of art making within my life. During high school I used the process of making art to express my inner most feelings and to help myself through some challenging experiences. It was this very process that would turn into the most crucial and important practice that would continue to help me through the years. Over the past fifteen years, art making has helped me overcome many tough experiences, like having alcoholic family members and the mental and emotional abuse that comes with that territory, having depression and anxiety that stems from some of my childhood challenges, managing stress, going through the grieving process of losing loved ones to suicide, and learning to love and appreciate myself.

My personal practice of making art became a form of meditation. It was like the process of making something became the way that I filtered through some of the problems that had accumulated in my mind and my heart. The simplicity of tuning out the noise of the world and placing all my focus and energy on making something significant became my personalized go-to therapy session. I didn't have to explain what or why, I simply just did and was. I was able to be completely present in the moment when I was creating art. This ability to remain in the present helped me to let go of what I did not need and to work with more intention on the things I did need. It allowed me to heal with less judgement or criticism from myself, family members, and others. This process also allowed for really painful feelings to surface, but in a way that I was able to digest it all at my own pace and really take the whole experience into account. It gave me the time and space I needed in

order to process those deeply painful events and memories without having to relive them. It gave me what I needed in order to overcome those experiences. Art making gave me the ability to be mindful, which in turn helped me develop resiliency and altogether allowed me to move forward.

Using art making as a form of mindfulness was a blessing for me. It is a gift I have acquired and I have been longing to share this practice with as many people as possible. This desire to share its benefits is exactly what fuels my research. I want to know how art making can foster mindfulness and help others in finding the calm in their storm. I want to be able to not only provide mindfulness-based art making practices for myself, I want to be able to share those practices with anyone in my life. I also want to be able to share this as a means to giving others more tools in their tool belt to cope with challenging situations in order to heal.

PROFESSIONAL MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

In a globally connected society, it can be hard to feel that one has a voice that will be heard. Having a true sense of self can lead to more awareness and a greater tolerance of the people around you, making you less likely to act out in an unhealthy manner. This is where art education can be significant: in facilitating a sense of identity and a healthy visual process to foster mindfulness. Michel (2004) explained the importance of the use of art education when discussing his research on Vietnam veterans who used art to process their post traumatic experiences. He concludes that, “In an age where mass manipulation puts

individuality at risk, it may be one of art education's most significant contributors to foster the development of the individual" (p. 205).

Through personal experience, combining art making and mindfulness techniques like focusing on breathing, can facilitate affective selfcare. Mindfulness techniques incorporate conscious pauses through simple practices. For example, taking a conscious deep breath before carving into a slab of stone helps to pull the person into the present moment. Since art making is a creative outlet, it allows for the expression of emotions. Furthermore, when art making is integrated with mindfulness techniques, it may bring a heightened awareness to emotions as they emerge and the ability to release them. This process also allows for a sense of heightened awareness when a situation arises. Mindfulness techniques, including mindfulness-based art making, can contribute to the development of empathy, which can help one have a greater sense of perspective (Darbeda & Etchevers, 2017).

With all of this considered, the use of mindfulness techniques combined with art making in an educational setting has potential to serve students and educators as a form of selfcare. Educators experience high rates of stress in their career (Frank et al., 2015). Their position as a form of caretaker and educator for their students brings about a high sense of responsibility which correlates to high levels of stress. Since I plan to work as a teaching artist, I am inspired to continue this research in order to share best practices in my future students and with my future colleagues.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used a case study methodology. Case study is defined as “an investigative approach used to thoroughly describe complex phenomena, such as events, important issues, or programs, in ways to unearth new and deeper understandings of these phenomena” (Lapan et al., 2012, p. 243). According to Lapan et al. (2012), the purpose of case study research includes “its ability to explain, explore, describe, and compare educational or social programs and to discover and communicate innovative ideas and programs” (p. 246). This methodology is best suited to answer the research question because it provides an in depth focus on how one teaching artist integrates mindfulness-based techniques in her teaching and art making.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Acceptance: In mindfulness, emphasis is placed on bringing one’s attention to the present, so it is important to do this with a sense of acceptance. “Acceptance allows us to be with what is happening without trying to change it” (Davies, 2017, p. 28).

Being vs. Doing: According to Davies (2017), there are two modes of the brain, doing and being. When in the state of doing, the brain’s focus is outward and centers on achievement and problem solving. In this state, the brain is seeking to judge, categorize and compare. Davies further explains that,

Mindfulness seeks to move the mind from ‘doing’ to ‘being’ by consciously directing attention to the inner world to our breathing, and to our body sensations –

and also to the outer world as we experience it through touch, sight, smell, taste, and hearing. 'Being' is simply soothing, but it does not mean turning the brain off like a TV. In 'being' mode, we are very much alive to our environment, we experience the incredible richness of the world around us as if for the very first time. We are able to perceive the reality of what is, rather than dream or illusion of what we would like. (Davies, 2017, p. 11)

Body Scan: A type of mindfulness exercise invites one to explore the body's sensations in a gentle and systematic way, moving from your head to your feet. It can take 20-30 minutes, and is best practiced when alone or without disturbances. In this practice you notice, "with a sense of compassion and acceptance, what is happening to your physical self" (Davies, 2017, p. 96). It can lead to a deep sense of relaxation and reconnection with the body. The intention of this practice is for the mind to connect with the physical self and develop a greater awareness of the sensations of the body. According to Davies, "when we feel pain or discomfort, we generally try to ignore it or fix it, but there is evidence to show that accepting uncomfortable sensations can help to relieve or reduce pain and tension in the body" (2017, p. 96).

Flow Activities: Flow is the state of being "in the zone." Davies (2017) explains that when we are in a state of flow we are totally immersed in the activity. She also goes on to state that, "we readily bring our full attention to our hobbies and leisure pursuits. When we play sport or do crafts, tend the garden or go climbing, we become absorbed in a

way that is naturally akin to mindfulness” (Davies, 2017, p. 60). By their nature, flow activities are practices of mindfulness. Examples of flow activities are gardening, exercise, art making, music, crafting, writing, and cooking (Davies, 2017).

Mindful Classrooms: Mindful Classrooms is an organization that provides resources to aid and educate schools on how to sustainably implement mindfulness practices into their daily routines, climate, and culture (Butler, n.d.).

Mindful Drawing: Mindful drawing is a mindfulness practice in which one uses the properties of mindfulness, non-judgement and conscious awareness of the present moment, while drawing. Artist Susan Yeates (2018) describes mindful drawing as “one that helps you to bring your attention to the present moment in time by focusing on what you are drawing – the sound, smell, feeling of it, what you can see etc.”

(<http://www.magenta-sky.com/what-is-mindful-drawing/>).

Mindfulness: Mindfulness is shifting semi-conscious attention to a full purposeful awareness (Salgado, 2017). Mindfulness is the state of focusing our attention on the present moment with non-judgement, heightened awareness of our feelings, thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations. Mindfulness is paying attention to ourselves and the space around us on purpose (Kabat-Zinn, 2007).

Meditation: Mindfulness, though closely related, is not meditation. Mindfulness is paying attention to what you are doing and how you are feeling, a way of living. Whereas, meditation is paying attention to the experience of non-doing, a state of being (Davies, 2017).

Social emotional learning (SEL): According to Gresham (2009), SEL is a pedagogy that emphasizes social and emotional competencies in childhood and adolescence, such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2019). This approach combines assessment and intervention with social skills that contribute to the development of these social-emotional competencies. Social-emotional competencies are linked to positive academic and psychological outcomes.

Social emotional health (SEH): According to the Momentous Institute (2018), social emotional health emphasizes the capacity to understand and manage one's emotions, reactions, and relationships. The institute believes that SEH can be developed in stages. Their model begins by being grounded in safe relationships. Next, children are taught to self-regulate emotions and behaviors, then build their awareness of self. Self-awareness can then be transferred to understanding others.

Teaching Artist: According to Booth (2009), a teaching artist "is an artist who chooses to include artfully educating others, beyond teaching the technique of that art form,

as an active part of a career” (p. 3). Teaching artists differ from art teachers/educators. They emphasize being an artist and making the majority of their income from their art, while teaching occasionally (Booth, 2009).

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The limitations of this study are that it focuses on one teaching artist’s perspective and the research cannot be generalized.

BENEFITS TO THE FIELD OF ART EDUCATION

This study will benefit the field of art education by exploring how mindfulness techniques are currently incorporated into the teaching and art making of one teaching artist. Art education takes place in various settings, with an assortment of student and teacher backgrounds. This can often lead to stress that results in many different ways. Mindfulness-based art making may assist other art educators by relieving stress through practices and strategies which may be incorporated into art classrooms.

SUMMARY

This study explored the practice of mindfulness-based art making through observing one class and the personal practice of one teaching artist. Results demonstrated how one teaching artist and her students used mindfulness techniques while making art. Currently, there is little to no research in the field of art education which explains how mindfulness strategies may be combined with art making. Therefore, this study explains

mindfulness-based art making in an educational setting and how this may support personal self-care practices.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter discusses literature that is pertinent to this study. There are three main areas that informed this study: mindfulness, social emotional learning, and care theory. The sections on mindfulness discuss how researchers have defined mindfulness, where this concept comes from, the application of mindfulness in education, and how art making is mindful. The next section on social emotional learning (SEL) explains the term and its connection to mindfulness. The last sections on care theory define the term, describe how it is understood in the realm of education, and explains its connection to mindfulness.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the act of slowing down, bringing one's awareness into the present moment, and focusing awareness on what is happening in the mind and body, such as emotions, feelings, or sensations (Watt, 2012). Unlike meditation practices, the goal of mindfulness is not to change one's state of consciousness. Rather, the goal of mindfulness is to be in a state of self-observation in the present moment, without judging or analyzing the current reality (Dehnabi et al., 2017). While practicing mindfulness, some principles to remember are being non-judgmental, having patience, acceptance, trust, and compassion, surrendering, and remembering that it is a non-striving practice, meaning there is no need to rush (Davies, 2017). Kabat-Zinn et al. (2007) explains that "mindfulness is the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to things as they are" (p. 47).

Roots of Mindfulness

The practice of mindfulness has ancient roots in many practical and religious practices. Examples include, but are not limited to, meditation from Buddhism, mandalas from Hinduism, and prayer from Christianity, Judaism, and Islamism. However, this does not mean that the practice of mindfulness is directly related to religion, as it is not a religious idea or practice. Instead, these types of religious activities themselves are examples of mindfulness (Davies, 2017; Watt, 2012). In 1979, psychologist Jon Kabat-Zinn popularized mindfulness in the west after studying Buddhist meditation with Thich Nhat Hanh, a popular Vietnamese Buddhist monk who is credited as the father of mindfulness (Fitzpatrick, 2019). Kabat-Zinn adapted what he learned from mindfulness' precepts in order to formulate a method for relieving stress and managing pain (Watt, 2012). Kabat-Zinn's method is called Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Watt, 2012). MBSR is a practice or method that combines relaxation and mindfulness (Dehnabi et al., 2017). The methods used in MBSR are based on self-consideration and self-focus, centering on thoughts, feelings, and perceptions (Dehnabi et al., 2017). MBSR practice includes "an eight-week course that trains participants, especially people suffering from long term illness or chronic pain, to be mindful and to relate better to stress, pain, and other difficulties" (Watt, 2012, p. 5).

Mindfulness Practices

Examples of mindfulness in current non-psychological practices include: meditation by sitting quietly and focusing your attention on a mantra or repeated phrase;

body scans by mentally scanning sensations in your body from your head to your toes; mindful eating by using all of the senses to slowly ingest food; mindful walks or drives by focusing your full attention to each moment while walking or driving; flow activities like gardening, exercise, crafting, writing, and cooking by practicing these activities and giving them full attention (Davies, 2017). Mindfulness is also currently being used in many variations of psychotherapy such as: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). MBSR is the combination of relaxation and mindfulness as a practice (Dehnabi et al., 2017). MBCT is a cognitive based psychotherapy that incorporates mindfulness practices such as meditation and breathing (Psychology Today, 2019). In addition, mindfulness techniques are informing other forms of psychotherapy like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Watt, 2012). ACT is an action-oriented therapy that involves a patient accepting their current situation or circumstance that may be holding them back and then following through with the commitment to make necessary changes to better their situation (Psychology Today, 2019).

How is Art Making Mindful?

Art making is inherently mindful because the attention of the individual can be focused through working directly with materials. In the art making world, focus and awareness are both key skills that support the creative process. These two strategies are also important components of mindfulness. In an essay about mindfulness-based art strategies in the classroom, Patterson (2015) connects the two practices of art making and mindfulness. She states:

The mindfulness process is akin to the art-making process. Both are solitary undertakings that often operate in the context of silence; both require practice to help direct attention more skillfully. The artist and the meditative practitioner intensely and purposefully organize his/her thoughts, feelings, observations and experiences. In both processes, one is witnessing awareness and grounding the Self in contemplative and creative practices. Frequent artistic rituals are akin to an indirect approach to teaching mindfulness in the classroom, and have the potential to significantly enhance learning. (p. 190)

Art making also has great potential to connect with mindfulness practice, as studio materials such as clay, paint, charcoal, mixed media, photography, etcetera, provide a physical connection to the present. The use of these materials allows one to focus on one moment and provides a tangible tether, an anchor, to the present moment.

Mindfulness in Education

Rechtschaffen (2014) states that a mindful classroom is more effective if there is an environment that supports and cultivates this approach. This means that if there is a specific class practicing mindfulness, the outcome is more impactful if the entire school practices mindfulness as well. In general, schools that are incorporating mindfulness into their curriculum incorporate the following types of activities: breathing techniques, and mindful eating activities using food like raisins and chocolate. Tools such as a small gong or singing bowl are often incorporated into mindfulness practices. During these practices, teachers and students focus their breathing and practice body scanning. The intention of focusing on breath is to bring one's full attention to the cycle of breathing in and out. Body scanning can involve closing one's eyes and imagining a beam of light, or a scanner, that follows along one's body from head to toes. After these activities, students are encouraged to discuss their emotions and ideas. Students can talk about those things with their

classmates with a mindful perspective, which means being more aware of their feelings or sensations in their bodies (Long, 2012). Rechtschaffen (2014) explains other ways in which mindfulness is currently incorporated into schools, such as through the practice of mindful mornings, scheduling mindful moments, peace corners, and using mindful language. Mindful mornings are a practice where faculty, within a group setting, start their day with a 10 to 30-minute mindfulness practice. Scheduling mindful moments include beginning class with a formal mindfulness practice. Peace corners are a dedicated corner or space of the classroom or school where students collaborate with faculty to create a safe and relaxing space for everyone to participate in mindful activities, such as listening to relaxing music, or playing with relaxing tactile objects (silk fabric, coloring materials, etc.). Using mindful language includes a certain level of awareness when using mindful vocabulary to describe or explain feelings, sensations, or interactions with peers. The importance of using mindful vocabulary allows the user to focus on what is present and enables them to describe exactly what they are experiencing.

A Mindfulness-Based Art Making Case Study

At McGill University in Montreal, Canada, a study focused on middle school aged children who were given a pre and post-test mindfulness-based coloring activity. Some of the children were asked to complete a mandala coloring activity (structured mindfulness) and some were given a free draw/coloring activity (open/free mindfulness). The mindfulness-based coloring activity had students focus on placing different colors into intricate shapes of a structured mandala. The boundary of the shapes and organizational

design led students to focus intently on the structure and pattern of the shapes, relieving any stress that may be created by art activities such as in free draw. The researchers described taking a test as an anxiety provoking activity and the mindfulness-based coloring as a destressing activity. The results from this study were as follows:

Although colouring structured mandalas has typically been defined as mindfulness-based colouring activities for anxiety reduction and promoted as such throughout popular culture, free draw/colouring may also be considered as mindfulness-based or include mindfulness components, as youth are reporting increases in state mindfulness following completion of both activities. These findings are important for educators looking to reduce test anxiety in their classrooms through mindfulness-based approaches, as a variety of simple colouring activities can be potentially beneficial, and not solely the suggested mandala strategy. (Carsley & Heath, 2018, p. 264)

This study provides a clear example of how a mindfulness-based art making activity can be used in school and suggests that it can help decrease stress levels within the classroom.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

According to CASEL, “Social emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which people understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (CASEL, 2019). Social learning conceptualization is broken down into social learning theory, cognitive-behavioral theory, and applied behavior analysis. According to Gresham (2018), social learning theory is based on the early work of Bandura. Social learning theory focuses on vicarious learning and the role of cognitive-mediational processes to explain which environmental events are attended to, retained, and subsequently performed when a person is exposed to modeling stimuli. Gresham further

explains that “cognitive-behavioral theory is used to explain deficient social skills functioning. This approach assumes that an individual’s behavior in response to environmental events is mediated by cognitions or thoughts” (Gresham, 2018, p. 3). He explains that applied behavioral analysis explains social skills deficits and competing problem behavior excesses. His work is grounded in the concept of three-term contingency which describes the relationships among antecedents’ events, behavior, and consequent events (Gresham, 2018).

Developmental Contemplative Science

Developmental contemplative science (DCS) is a learning theory supporting social emotional learning (SEL) and explains why mindfulness works. DCS focuses on the use of mind-body systems in curriculum and how the use of mental training in education (i.e. mindfulness) can “enhance and develop within and across developmental periods” (Carsley & Heath, 2018, p. 253). DCS suggests that mindfulness works within three core premises. The first is that “the brain adapts in response to experience, intentional training and/or education (mindfulness activities)” (Carsley & Heath, 2018, p. 254). This means that mindfulness-based activities can lead to physiological changes. The second is that engaging in mindfulness-based activities will eventually lead to increases in mindfulness, which lead to higher cognitive and emotional processing in everyday situations. Finally, the third demonstrates that there are specific developmental periods in which particular regions in the brain are more likely to develop or be modified. This suggests that mindfulness training at different developmental periods should vary to be effective. This

then suggests that at stages like early adolescence when cognitive gains increase the most, mindfulness-based activities will have a bigger impact and can be particularly beneficial (Carsley & Heath, 2018).

CARE THEORY

In order to understand the need for mindfulness-based art making in education it is important to understand where it could fit into the dynamic of educator and student relations. This can best be understood through the lens of care theory; to understand that there is a serious need for a caring relationship between students and teachers. It is also very important to understand what a caring relation looks like and how it works. In the book *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, Noddings (1992) writes that care theory is the idea that within schools it is important that teachers not only focus on educating the student academically, but also focus on educating the whole person through social and emotional education as well.

Noddings (1992) explains that there are two roles in a caring relationship: the carer and the cared-for. In this type of relationship, a teacher would be considered the carer and the student the cared-for. Noddings explains, “In order for the relationship to be properly called caring, both parties must contribute to it in characteristic ways” (p. 15). This means that the environment around this relationship between teacher and student must allow for the teacher to care for the student and the student to accept care from the teacher. If either party in this relationship cannot fulfill their role in caring and being cared-for, even though there still may remain a relation, it is not able to be a caring relation. Noddings (1992)

proceeds to say that, “no matter how hard teachers try to care, if the caring is not received by students, the claim ‘they don’t care’ has some validity. It suggests strongly that something is very wrong” (p. 15). In defining a caring relation between teacher and students, there is an emphasis on the need for attention, or engrossment, when in a caring relation. Noddings (1992) emphasizes that by engrossment, she means, “an open, nonselective receptivity for the cared-for” (p. 15-16). Within a caring relationship, there is also motivational displacement, or “a sense that our motive energy is flowing toward others and their projects” (Noddings, 1992, p. 16).

In order for students to learn the skill of caring, the teacher needs to be a living example through their relations with their students, or the cared-for. Noddings (1992) explains that this is done through four major steps: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Modeling can be described as living as the example. She explains that, “we have to show how to care in our own relations with cared-fors, [or students]” (Noddings, 1992, p. 22). The second step, dialogue, is described as open-ended, meaning that “neither party [within the dialogue] knows at the outset what the outcome or decision will be” (Noddings, 1992, p. 23). Dialogue can be used to better understand one another, to empathize, and to appreciate. Noddings states, “It can be playful or serious, logical or imaginative, goal or process oriented, but it is always a genuine quest for something undetermined at the beginning” (Noddings, 1992, p. 23). Dialogue is a tool that not only informs, but also “contributes to a habit of mind,” enabling the person or persons to make a more informed decision (Noddings, 1992). When discussing the third step, practice, Noddings explains that “attitudes and mentalities are shaped, at least in part, by experience”

(Noddings, 1992, p. 23). If teachers are to teach the whole student and if society expects students to come out of their educational experience prepared to approach moral life with care, it is vital that students are given opportunities to practice expressing care. Students need to be given the chance to gain skills in caregiving in order to develop the characteristics and attitudes needed to thrive within society. Society, as a whole, would benefit from this; just imagine if we had more students develop skills in care before completing their educational experiences. The last major component of care is confirmation. Confirmation is the “act of affirming and encouraging the best in other. When we confirm someone, we spot a better self and encourage its development” (Noddings, 1992, p. 25). Within confirmation, the one working toward a better version of themselves must see the “better self” as worthy, as something worth striving towards. Unlike religious moral education, which advocates being “good” so that one will not be punished by a deity, confirmation is uplifting and pushes one to be their best self. Noddings (1992) explains that religious moral education focuses on a sequence of accusation, confession, penance, and forgiveness. In comparison, confirmation allows one to remain in connection to the situation, and to their decisions. Therefore, explaining that religious modes of education have to have an authoritative figure, whereas confirmation leads the student to be more self-accountable and better able to acknowledge morally wrong or right behavior.

EDUCATOR SELF-CARE & MINDFULNESS

In *The Way of Mindful Education*, Rechtschaffen (2014) discusses the importance of reflection on the educator. Rechtschaffen states that even on our own personal journey it is important to not project one's own feelings, like anxiety or sadness, onto students (Rechtschaffen, 2014). The role of educator falls into caregiving and administering guidance to students (Noddings, 1992). Therefore, just as Noddings has explained, the role of educator is to become a living example for students. Rechtschaffen (2014) states that, "instead of taking on the immense and impossible task of trying to get the world around us to calm down, we can notice and learn to manage the wild chatter in our own minds" (p. 44). He explains that the job of educators becomes more manageable when the educator can find peace from within, by using mindfulness techniques, to then become a living example for students. With experience as a marriage and family counselor, Rechtschaffen explains how often parents will bring their child into his office claiming the child is misbehaving terribly and acting out (Rechtschaffen, 2014). His explanation for this is that the child feels unsafe, or unstable, and so they react by acting or lashing out. His solution includes the parents going in for marriage counseling, stating that, "once the parental structure is strong, the child can relax and stop sounding the alarm with his or her behaviors" (Rechtschaffen, 2014, p. 44). As an extension of guidance and caregiving in students' lives, it is important that educators learn to harness mindfulness practices so that their example can provide stability and a sense of calm for their students. Therefore, by using mindfulness practices, educators can find peace from within and "without needing anything to change, we can be the guiding light our students are drawn toward. Instead of

waiting for the world to be peaceful, we can simply relax and let the world find peace around us” (Rechtschaffen, 2014, p. 45).

CONCLUSION

In reviewing pertinent literature, there is a lack of research on mindfulness-based art making and its effects on both teachers and students. There is an extensive amount of literature on mindfulness in education, however, little in the field of art education. The connection of mindfulness and creativity to the possibility of self-care for both educators and students is apparent. The next chapter discusses the methodology of this research study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an outline of the research methodology, data collection, and data analysis strategy chosen for this study. The data collection tools used were a semi-structured interview of one teaching artist, a survey administered to four participants from one of her meditative drawing classes, and the researcher's fieldnotes gathered during the teaching artist's online meditative drawing class. Data analysis was done through content analysis, coding, and inductively finding emerging themes from the data in order to better understand and represent the results from this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study examined the question of how teaching artist, Rebecca Borrelli, combined mindfulness techniques into her art making process and teaching practice. The main purpose of this study was to have a better understanding of mindfulness-based art making from the perspectives of both teacher and student. Other purposes of the study were to discover possibilities of how mindfulness-based art making can be taught and used by an art educator, and different techniques and ways to practice mindfulness-based art making. Because the nature of this study was interpretive and there was a limited number of participants, qualitative case study was the ideal research methodology.

Qualitative Research

According to Lapan et al. (2012), qualitative research is different than quantitative research in that it places more emphasis on the perspective and experience of the insider. In this study, the perspective and experience emphasized was that of the teaching artist, Rebecca Borrelli, the students in one of her classes, and that of the researcher as a participant in the class. This study takes in an emic approach to understanding the phenomena that occurs during observation and through analyzing the data gathered from the research. Meaning that the perspective of the researcher is similar to an “insiders’ perspective.” Pike (1967) explains that, “The etic viewpoint studies behavior as from outside of a particular system, and as an essential initial approach to an alien system. The emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system” (p. 37–72). In quantitative research, the researcher is in many ways expected to separate themselves from the research being conducted, draw from large numbers of people, and generalize their research findings. Whereas in qualitative research, the researcher immerses themselves in the environment, because the questions require examining the details of the context in order to shed light on the specific phenomena, people, or places, and due to the focus on small numbers of individuals, are not generalizable (Lapan et al., 2014). Lapan (2012) explains, “the term *qualitative* implies observing the *kinds* of things in the world, whereas *quantitative* suggests locating the amount” (p. 6). Within research, methods refer to the types of tools used in collecting data, and methodologies are distinct approaches used to frame the work used within the investigation. Qualitative methodologies allow the researcher to examine the details of the phenomena. Qualitative research also allows for

the use of multiple methods to collect data. This study used the data collection instruments of one semi-structured interview, a survey, and fieldnotes gathered by the researcher during an online class in order to gather the information needed to answer the central research question: how does one teaching artist combine mindfulness techniques into her art making process and her teaching practice? Qualitative research was best suited to investigate the central research question of this study because the research explored one teaching artist's perspective and experience with mindfulness-based art making practices and teaching. The teaching artist's perspective was triangulated by examining the perspectives of one group of her students, including the researcher.

Case Study

A case study is defined as “an investigative approach used to thoroughly describe complex phenomena, such as events, important issues, or programs, in ways to unearth new and deeper understandings of these phenomena” (Lapan et al., 2012, p. 243). This case study is focused on one teaching artist, Rebecca Borrelli, and her implementation of mindfulness strategies in her teaching and studio practice. Furthermore, a case study is fundamentally bounded. This study only focused on one class taught by Rebecca Borelli, and was bound by time (when the class took place), place (where the class took place), and people (the participants of the class and the teaching artist). According to Lapan and Armfield (2012), the purpose of case study research includes “its ability to explain, explore, describe, and compare educational or social programs and to discover and communicate innovative ideas and programs” (p. 246). This method was best suited to answer the

research question because it provides an in depth focus on *how* one teaching artist, Rebecca Borrelli, integrated mindfulness-based techniques in her art making and teaching. The goal in using case study methodology was to understand not only the use of mindfulness-based art making from an artist's perspective, but also how and why this approach is useful from a teacher's perspective. Furthermore, this methodology was well suited to describe how mindfulness techniques were integrated into the teaching and studio practice of one teaching artist.

Participants

Creswell (1998) suggests that the ideal range of participants when conducting qualitative research is from 5 to 25 participants. However, this case study primarily focused on one teaching artist and secondly on one of her classes consisting of six female students, of which four agreed to answer the survey questionnaire. This class was selected due to the main criteria of content being taught, and because the time frame in which the class fell aligned with the researcher's schedule. The sampling strategy for selecting the main participant, the class, and the student participant was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is defined as "using those individuals, objects or events that are available to the researcher" (Martella et al., 1999, p. 124). This type of sampling also can be limited, meaning it does not tend to be representative of the population (Martella et al., 1999). I chose this strategy because the study was to focus on an active teaching artist, preferably in the Austin area, whose class focused on the mindful properties of artmaking.

Rebecca Borrelli was chosen for this study because of her understanding of mindfulness-based art making and instruction, and because she was actively teaching an art class located in my area. She was also chosen because she is located in Austin, Texas and has familiarity with thesis research. Rebecca is a white female artist, and is 39 years of age. If I had to describe Rebecca, or as those who know her more intimately know her as Becca, I would say that she is made of the same stuff Fred Rogers from Mister Roger's Neighborhood is made of. In that she is constantly on the search for the magic in people, and in the world around her. Figure one, Becca's logo, and Figure two, the Lemon House Studio Logo are playful and exemplify her unique nature.



Figure 1: Becca Borelli Illustrations Logo
Copyright Rebecca Borelli. Used by permission of artist.

Spending time with her, I found that she is a deep thinker, constantly in the world within, but only to understand the world around her more authentically. She has this wonderful way of capturing the essence of any moment. She sees the invisible sparkle of magic in everything and everyone. Becca explains that her journey with meditative drawing began from doodling in her childhood. In our interview she explained that while working on her undergraduate degree, and then afterwards when she was teaching at an elementary school,

she barely had the time to create art made purely for her own joy. In the interview, Borrelli stated,

The meditative drawing class definitely originated from my personal practice. I had naturally drawn that way as a kid, very repetitive and sort of doodlesque. I could do it for hours and I would do it at school and I would do it at home. Then I went into an art education undergraduate program and took a lot of classes that were technique driven and completely stopped making art that way and burned out on it and didn't make art for a long time. (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

However, a few years later, in the midst of her master's degree program in art education at the University of Texas in Austin, when prompted to create a portfolio of work, she found that she was experiencing a lot of stress because of her lack of art making. She defined this event as being a catalyst for her reintegrating an artistic self-practice, which she described as meditative drawing. She stated,

Three or four years while I was a school teacher I stopped drawing altogether and Dr. Adejumo's community class, you know, had that component of a portfolio, and that was the first art I had done in four years and I was so stressed out about it. And his suggestion was to try and remember, you know, where art making was just joyful and then go with that. I thought, oh geez, doodling in high school, that was so joyful for me and so that was when I began a daily practice of that kind of drawing again. And began using it in the evening as a way to unwind from thesis writing. So that was the beginning of my meditative drawing practice, was in grad school. (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Another reason I chose Borrelli for this study was because of the variety in background of her student audience. Since her class was promoted online, the audience that she could reach was from all over the world, leading to more variety in cultures, jobs, races, and finances. This provides a wide variety of experiences and perspectives, giving a broader understanding of certain patterns that may arise within a small group.

The Researcher

As the researcher and a participant observer within the study, it is necessary to also give a brief description of myself and my background. I grew up in and around Lafayette, Louisiana, also known as the heart of Cajun country. For context, I am of Cajun descent, white, 29 years old (on the cusp of turning 30) and I identify as gender non-binary. While growing up I was surrounded by artists, artisans, and crafters. My paternal grandfather painted houses for a living but also did landscape paintings on the side, for his enjoyment. My mother was always busy with some crafting or art project, constantly crocheting or making scrapbooks, doodling on every random piece of paper in our home while on the phone. Her mother, my dear Granny Mary, was also riding the same wave length, constantly making. From birth until I was in grade school, she would always make my sister and I matching outfits for the summer, or make either an outfit or pajamas for all of the kids in our family at Christmas time. So, throughout my childhood, I was always inspired to make and be creative. This flourished in my teen and young adult years, especially when it came to deciding on which major I would choose in college. While finishing my prerequisites for a general studies degree, I finally decided to go after what I knew best and majored in studio art. In the last few semesters of my studies I found myself particularly drawn to 3-D mediums, more specifically clay. Making with clay was magical. It helped me to slow down, to find grace within myself; it became my safe haven to express any and all emotions; it allowed me to be free. Since finishing my undergraduate in studio art, I am currently studying art education at the University of Texas in Austin. I'm using

this study to better understand the magic that came from my clay sculpture experience, and to help share this magic with others.

Student Participants

Student participants of Borrelli's online meditative drawing class were asked to participate in a survey questionnaire after the class was over. Of the student participants from the online class, four student participants responded to the survey questionnaire. All student participants of the survey questionnaire within this study identify as female. There were two student participants within the age range of 25-35 years, one within the age range of 35-44 years of age, and one participant within the age range of 66 years or older. Each student participant had a different career, those were: a stay at home mom, a bartender, a retired occupational therapist, and a freelance marketing writer.

Locations



Figure 2: Lemon House Studio Logo
Copyright Rebecca Borelli. Used by permission of artist.

The principle locations of the study were two settings. The first was in the Lemon House Studio, Rebecca Borrelli's work place. The studio is a quirky shared work space in a renovated house located in Austin, Texas. The exterior of the Lemon House is a pastel yellow, cottage style home (see Figure 2: Lemon House Studio Logo). Each artist has a studio space about the size of small bedroom within Lemon House. Each work space is

decorated to the artists' individual and unique style. Even their tools and crafting material is a form of decoration within the rooms. Rebecca's studio space is white with very simple details. A few of her artworks were on display as we conducted our 30-minute-long interview at her work table, situated at the very center of the room.

The second place that data was collected was online via Zoom, an online conference site. Access to the conference was available to the student participants after purchasing a ticket to the class through Mind Oasis, a mediation platform Borelli partnered with for this class. Once students purchased tickets for the class through Mind Oasis, the Zoom conference was accessible through an email sent to student participants. Once logged onto the conference site, Borelli taught her 90-minute meditative drawing class with integrated visual and audible interaction, and all participants were able to interact in real time with one another. Students were encouraged to have paper and whichever drawing material they preferred.

Ethical Treatment of Subjects

Research with any human subjects requires the application of ethical treatment. The University of Texas at Austin's Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved this study (study approval #2018-10-0097) under the guidelines for an expedited study. This means that there were minimal risks for human participants in this study. Those who chose to participate received a consent form, and gave their written consent. This was necessary because it allowed the participants to be informed about all aspects of the study beforehand and gave them the choice to participate or not without consequence. The

teaching artist, Rebecca Borelli, received a different consent form from the students who participated in the class because I collected more detailed information from her. Additionally, the names of all student participants were omitted to protect their privacy. The only real participant name used in this study was the teaching artist, Rebecca Borelli, which was used with her approval.

DATA COLLECTION

The purpose of a case study is to describe, illuminate, or provide insight, which requires a substantial amount of qualitative data (Lapan et al., 2012). For this reason, the case study method in qualitative research allows for the use of multiple types of data collection. This study utilized three data collection tools: semi-structured interview, survey, and fieldnotes from a class observation. The first was a semi-structured interview with Rebecca Borelli. The second was a survey with the four adult student participants. The third was fieldnotes taken by the researcher while observing the online class.

Semi-Structured Interview

An interview is a common data collection tool used in qualitative research to gain better understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Questions and outlines for interviews can be highly structured (a very focused approach) or unstructured (a more organic approach). Semi-structured interviews sit in the middle of this spectrum, and allow for conversation to freely flow within a certain set of guidelines. The questions are asked in a way that allows for an array of responses, but keeps the focus more direct on a specific

memory or experience. According to Lapan et al. (2012), questions asked during an interview should remain neutral and should not be suggestive or lead the discussion. The interview questions for this study can be found in Appendix A. The interview of Rebecca Borrelli was based on these questions but can best be described as semi-structured because conversation remained structured, but allowed for non-scripted follow up questions to provide clarification. The semi-structured interview with Rebecca Borelli took 30 minutes to conduct, was audio recorded, and transcribed.

Surveys

In the same way that interviews are a commonly used research tool and can be highly structured or unstructured, surveys and survey questions can do the same. However, the questions used in a survey tend to be more structured, since they are not conducted in conversation. This structure within surveys helps to set guidelines for the gathering of information. Surveys use open ended or close ended questions, depending on what type of information the researcher is trying to attain. This study used a mixture of close and open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The closed ended questions used in the survey collected demographic information (gender, age, career, etc.). Some of the close-ended questions used a Likert scale, a 5 to 7-point scale that allows an individual to express how much they agree or disagree with the question being asked (McLeod, 2019). The open-ended questions used in the survey allowed the participants to use their own words to describe their experiences. The survey used in this study was created on a website called Survey

Monkey. After the class ended, the participants were able to access this survey through a link provided in an email sent by Borrelli, and were asked to do so on a voluntary basis.

Participant Observation & Fieldnotes

This study utilized participant observation in order to have a better understanding of the central phenomenon, mindfulness-based techniques within art making. This form of data collection can range from full participant to full observer. Bogdan and Biklen (2003), explain that there is a continuum in field observations, particularly pertaining to participant observers. They state,

At one extreme is the complete observer. Here, the researcher does not participate in activities at the setting. He or she looks at the scene, literally or figuratively, through a one-way-mirror. At the other end is complete involvement at the site, with little discernable difference between the observer's and the subject's behaviors. Fieldworkers stay somewhere between these extremes. (p. 82)

This allows the researcher to essentially look at what is happening through two lenses, participant and observer, in various degrees. When conducting research in this way, the researcher reflects on their own experiences and to better understand those being observed. This allows for a more in depth understanding of a specific phenomenon. Martella et al. (1999), explain that participant observation allows the researcher to interact with the participants in a way that only observing does not. They go on to explain,

Qualitative researchers “make the assumptions that behavior is purposeful and expressive of deeper beliefs and values” (Potter, 1996, p. 99). Therefore, the one method that allows for the consideration of these deeper beliefs and values is to become personally acquainted with the participants. Researchers interact with the participants in an attempt to see if they say what they believe and believe what they say. (p. 285)

Interacting with Rebecca's students helped me grasp how Borrelli's teaching was perceived and understood by her audience.

In this study, I was a participant observer, as well as a student, during the online meditative drawing class. This allowed me to have a first-person perspective of the class. Through this perspective, I was able to analyze the activities of the class in a way that as merely an observer of the class I otherwise would not have had. If I were only an observer, I do not believe that I would have gone through a similar thought process as the student participants. Having the experience of a participant observer allowed me to better understand the student responses as well in the survey. Through the combination of participation and observation used my perspective as an observer and also as a participant to aid in the analysis of the data. My participant observer fieldnotes for the online meditative drawing class were split into two categories. The first category of notes taken were direct observations of the teacher and students' participation, their reactions, and the dialogue during the class. The second category of notes taken were my personal reflections of what happened during the class, as well as teacher/student interactions.

Fieldnotes allows for the researcher to make first-hand notation of their observations. When taking fieldnotes the researcher writes down first-hand accounts of what they observed and what they felt while observing. Martella et al. (1999), explain that fieldnotes are often recorded on two different levels. The first level are surface facts of what is happening during the observation, and the second level focuses on the researcher's thoughts and feelings while observing the phenomenon (Martella, 1999, p. 285). Taking fieldnotes gives the researcher the ability to reflect during and after an observation. After

taking notes, the researcher can reflect back on their experience and connect what was observed to what was felt or experienced. This data provides clear context in a way that allows the reader of the research to feel as if they are present during the actual experience.

While conducting participant observations, I took fieldnotes of the sequence of instructions and how I felt throughout the class. Notes were taken on what other participants were doing and their interactions during each step. I also recorded how Borelli interacted with students and instructed the class, and of my own participation and how I felt about being part of the overall experience. These notes provided valuable information that might have been forgotten if I had not recorded it in this format.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data collection and analysis are steps of research that are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project (Creswell, 2018). In qualitative research, data analysis consists of preparing and organizing the data collected, reducing the data into themes through the process of coding, and finally representing the data in visuals such as tables, graphs, or through discussion (Creswell, 2018). Data analysis for this study began with transcribing the interview. After I transcribed the interview and reread the transcript a few times, I began highlighting key ideas within the interview. Then I created a code to begin to categorize these key ideas into prevalent themes. Finally, I organized all of the data from the interview into a word document. In this document, I generated a table in which I organized the key ideas into the themes they best fit.

After analyzing the data from the interview, I read over the fieldnotes taken as a participant observer during the duration of the meditative drawing class. The notes taken were sorted into two different categories: direct observations, and personal reflections of what was observed. These notes were hand written during the class, so I digitized them to aid in data analysis. Once I typed the notes into a word document, similar to analyzing the interview, I read through the notes a few times and highlighted key ideas within both sections of the fieldnotes that were relevant to the central research question of the study. After highlighting relevant information from the fieldnotes, I create a code for each category or theme that emerged, then organized the highlighted data by theme into a table, like I had done for the interview data.

To analyze the survey, I read through the responses to both the close-ended and open-ended questions. The close-ended questions focused on demographic information, and the open-ended questions allowed the participants to discuss their experience with the class, subject, and experience with stress outside of the class in their own words. Similar to the data analysis process of both the interview and field notes, I highlighted pertinent phrases and key ideas that were relevant to the study but were also prevalent throughout the data. Once the data from the survey was highlighted, I again created a code for each emerging theme. Then, I organized all of the highlighted data into a table. Doing this for the interview, the fieldnotes, and the survey helped with identifying prevalent themes, determining existing patterns, and see patterns between the instructor's, the students', and my own experiences.

Coding

In this study, inductive coding was utilized in analyzing the transcriptions of the interview with Borelli, the fieldnotes that were taken while observing the class, and the written responses from the surveys. Bogdan and Biklen state that developing a list of coding categories after data has been collected and sorted is a crucial step in data analysis (2003). They go on to explain that when analyzing and sorting through data, certain words phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects' ways of thinking, and events will begin to repeat and stand out to the researcher. When discovering emerging themes within the data collection, coding can help a researcher to go over what has been collected in a thorough and organized way. Coding allows the researcher to provide an interpretation of the data. Once researchers discover themes, they are better able to explain the results of their study.

Analysis of Interview

In the analysis of the data collected from the interview with Borelli, I underlined in pencil any phrases or quotes that I felt were key ideas and important to answering the central question of this study. After reading through the underlined pieces of data, four main themes emerged: defining mindfulness/meditative based art making, personal/artist perspective, teacher's perspective, and matters for concern (both for students and teachers). I used four different colors, each one representing a specific theme. Then I went back through the transcription and used the color codes to indicate which theme each quote or phrase fit best under (see Figure 3).

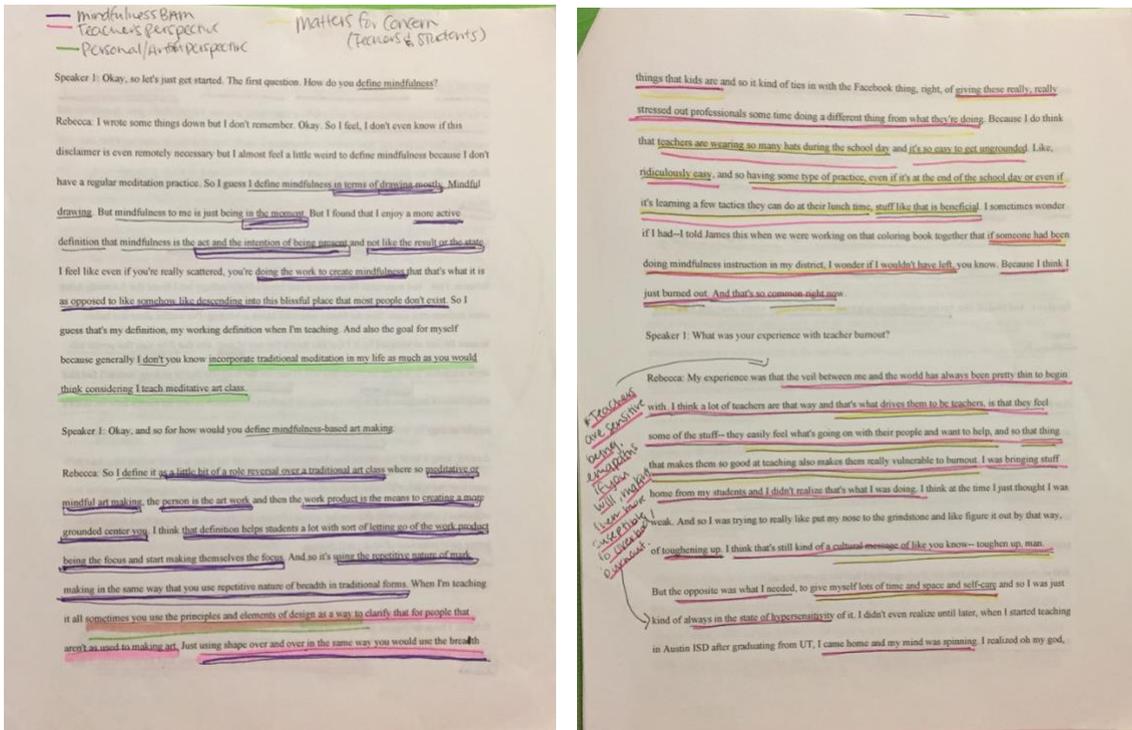


Figure 3: Images of in vivo coding used throughout interview.

Once all of the themes were highlighted within the interview transcription, I created a mind map (see Figure 4) to organize the emerging themes even further into sub themes in order to best answer the central research question.

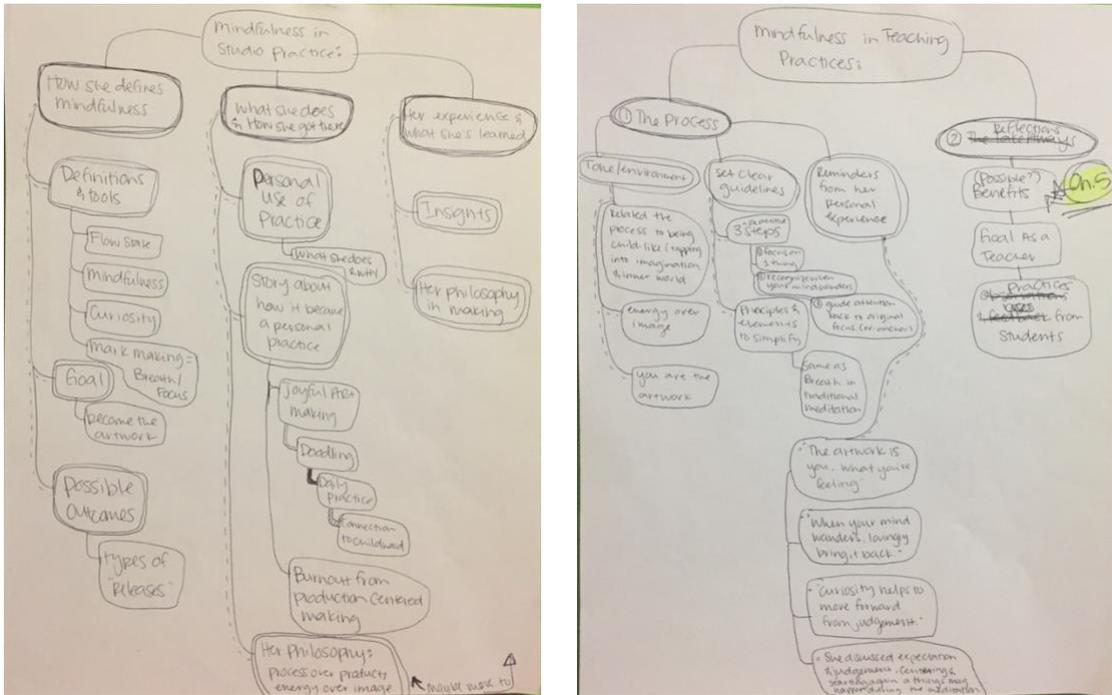


Figure 4: Mind Map used to discover and organize themes.

Analysis of Fieldnotes from Observation

The first step in analyzing data collected in fieldnotes and observations was transcribing hand written into a word document (see Figure 5). Then I read through the typewritten and discovered two emerging themes: flow, and human experience. Similar to the process in coding the interview, I used two different colored highlighters and underlined key phrases and ideas that best fit into each theme.

— Flow
— Human experience

Field Notes: Participant Observations from
Rebecca Borelli's Meditative Drawing Class

Time:	Details (thick description)	Questions
7:41	Breakdown of what's needed (material)	*after everyone introduced themselves
7:42	Borelli defined active meditation (drawing art) Introduction to class She related it to being child-like (tapping into imagination and inner world)	
7:45	Warm-up activity- choose horizontal or vertical layout Fold paper into 4 Write color, line, shape, and favorite one in each square Spend 3 minutes in each square (quadrant) focusing on each principal	What can you do to breakdown a greater idea to introduce a bigger idea?
7:47	3 repetitive steps (when focusing on the meditation): focus attention on just one thing, recognize when your attention has shifted, and guide it back to original focus. "In drawing meditation, the artwork is you." Rebecca Borelli	
7:50	When the mind wanders, lovingly bring it back to the warm up activity	
7:51	Demo	Engaging your experience to what students may experience
7:52	Started with color for 3 minutes	Use it to connect with attention
7:57	Started line for 3 minutes (simplified ideas for line)	Use it to connect with attention
8:00	Started with option to move onto shape	Note to self: go with [lead =>]
8:12	moved onto favorite	Note to self: Got a little bored with line, but that's okay! =>
8:15	Everyone started sharing what they had done for the warm up	
8:20	One participant shared that they realized they had to let go of judgement	OMG yes!!!!
8:22	Moving into larger piece (mandala circle)	

8:23	Create a "limit with a shape (circle)	
8:24	Rebecca talked about expectation and judgement and centering/starting again as things that may happen during the drawing meditation	This is a great way to ease new comers into this type of meditation.
8:25	Fill in circle starting from the inside or outside of the template drawn out. "If you start to feel bored your brain is craving variety. Hone in on it and change it up just a little bit." Rebecca Borelli	
	Becca told everyone to continue working for about 30 minutes	Everyone was starting to become really relaxed & into the process. <3
8:27	Began working on greater mandala piece as a class	
8:35	"Curiosity helps to move forward from judgement." Rebecca Borelli	The entire experience was <u>transitory</u> , I continually <u>transitioned</u> the entire time. <u>Smooth</u> .
8:55	Began sharing One participant shared: "I <u>wasn't going to show</u> because I felt angry, which turned into <u>angst</u> , and then <u>spooky</u> ." Another shared: " <u>Be present and persistent</u> . I felt rigidity at first because I was wanting and seeking out flow. <u>Stick with it</u> and it will come." Another shared: " <u>I made a mistake and laughed because it was a reminder that I'm just human</u> ." Another shared: "I went with a design that I didn't like, then felt sleepy, and then somehow <u>found flow</u> " =>	<u>Stick with it and flow will come!!</u> <u>Failing is still valuable! It helps us to learn and embrace our humanity</u> <u>Again, sticking with it will help us to find flow! Yes!</u>
9:07	Ended	

Figure 5: Participant Observation Field Notes Analysis

Analysis of Survey

To begin the analysis of the survey data, all of the information was stored on the survey generator site I used for this research called SurveyMonkey, so I transferred all of the responses into a word document table (see Figure 6) to clearly separate the questions from the responses. From there, I began noticing where themes were more prevalent in the responses, where there was more similarity between responses, and where there were more differences. From the responses emerged three themes: high empathy based, seeking mental/emotional outlet/relief, and finding mental/emotional outlet/relief.

Survey Responses	
Questions	Responses
Gender:	100% of participants identified as Female
Age Range:	50% of participants 25-34 yrs 25% of participants 35-44 yrs 25% of participants 66+ yrs
Employment:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stay at home mom <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bartender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retired Occupational Therapist <input type="checkbox"/> Freelance Marketing Writer
How many meditative art classes have you taken (not including today)?	50% of participants had never taken a meditative art class 50% of participants had taken 1-2 meditative drawing classes
After taking the Meditative Drawing class, I feel calmer and more relaxed.	25% Strongly Agree 50% Agree 25% Disagree
Taking this class impacted my way of processing emotions.	25% Strongly Agree 50% Agree 25% Neither Agree nor Disagree
How likely are you to recommend this class or classes similar to this?	75% Very Likely 25% Somewhat Likely
How likely are you to use what you have learned from this class in your everyday life?	75% Very Likely 25% Somewhat Likely
Why did you take this class?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To learn a different way to meditate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> To tap into my creativity <input type="checkbox"/> I have a daily meditation and was curious about combining art and meditation. I know Rebecca and knew this would be led by a knowledgeable and kind professional. <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Because Becca is awesome. 2 I've taken this class before and it provided me with creative healing processes and coping mechanisms. When I'm stuck on a writing problem, I have an outlet for refocusing my brain and looking for other solutions to the problem. I always come out more inspired than I went in. The work is not what's important, but the process of creating new brain space and thoughts.
What is your knowledge of Art? What is your knowledge of meditation?	<input type="checkbox"/> I'm a work in progress for both <input type="checkbox"/> I have been practicing meditation for almost ten years. I love art but I don't know that I have a ton of knowledge about it. <input type="checkbox"/> Minimal knowledge of art (took one art class as an undergrad). I have had a daily Vipasana meditation practice for at least 4 years. I am also a member of a sangha and smaller KM meditation group and have been to several weekend insight meditation retreats. <input type="checkbox"/> Ha! I'd say none, but I actually have a B.A. in art history, just not much practice doing it with my own hands. I'm also an RYT-500 yoga teacher, with a very personalized and minimal home meditation practice. Very free form, aka I do it how I want and don't follow rules. :)

Key:
 High Empathy Based
 Seeking Mental/Emotional Outlet/Relief
 Found Mental/Emotional Outlet/Relief

Figure 6: Survey Results Analysis

Triangulation

In qualitative research, triangulation involves the thorough reviewing of data collected and emergent themes through different methods in order to validate the results found within the study (Oliver-Hoyo, 2005). In this study, the emerging themes found within the analyzed data from the interview transcription, participant observation notes, and the survey responses were used in triangulation. This means that the themes found from each set of data were compared to one another, in search of commonality and differences. The commonality in themes from the different sets of data lead to overarching themes, which were themes that were found throughout the research. In this study the overarching themes are: restorative practices, self-care, and connection to self.

Validity & Transferability

According to Trochim (2020), a measure leads to valid conclusions, a sample enables valid inference and therefore, it is an inference or conclusion that can have validity within a study. Within some qualitative research the framework of validity is often structured differently to that of the framework of validity used within quantitative research (Trochim, 2020). While quantitative research focuses on the internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity, qualitative research focuses on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Trochim, 2020).

Transferability within qualitative research focuses on the degree to which results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts (Trochim, 2020). The responsibility is then placed on the one doing the generalization of the information, in this case the

researcher or the reader (Trochim, 2020). When discussing the transferability of research done within a study, the researcher can enhance transferability by thoroughly describing research context and assumptions central to the research (Trochim, 2020).

Credibility criteria in qualitative research achieve authenticity, or credibility, from the study's participants (Trochim, 2020). Since the purpose of qualitative research in this regard is to either describe or understand the phenomena of interest from the participants perspective, it is important that the researcher gather the participants judgment on the results found (Trochim, 2020). In order to get this type of feedback, a researcher can conduct what is called a member check, which is when the researcher discusses and affirms their findings with the study's participant(s) (Lapan, 2012). When discussing the findings of this study, Borrelli agreed that regular practice, as well as using curiosity and nonjudgment in a mindfulness-based art practice can lead to promote growth and deepen a mindfulness-based art practice (R. Borrelli, personal communication, April 30, 2020). She agreed that sharing personal experience as reminders with students can help their progression in a mindfulness-based art practice (R. Borrelli, personal communication, April 30, 2020). She also agreed that setting clear guidelines, as well as setting a mindful or calm tone and environment were best practices when teaching mindfulness-based art making (R. Borrelli, personal communication, April 30, 2020). Overall, Borrelli stated that she agreed with all of the findings from this study (R. Borrelli, personal communication, April 30, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The methods used to collect data in this case study include the use of interview, survey, and participant observation. For data analysis, inductive coding for emergent themes and triangulation were utilized. In the following chapters, I provide clear and detailed context of the results of this study. The researcher will also do her best at explaining how mindfulness informs artistic practice and teaching art.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter will address the central research question through outlining and discussing themes found from the data analysis. The central question of this study was: how does one teaching artist combine mindfulness techniques into her art making process and her teaching practice? Since this study focused on one teaching artist's experience with instructing a mindfulness-based art making class, background information of her prior experience was essential in understanding her chosen methods for her personal and teaching practices with the subject. Additionally, information concerning the process of her meditative drawing practice has also been included in order to better understand the practice as a whole.

MINDFULNESS IN STUDIO PRACTICE

In answering the central research question, two overarching themes emerged. The first was mindfulness within studio practices and the second was mindfulness in teaching practices. The first theme was discovered in how Borrelli defined mindfulness and distinct tools or ways of using mindfulness within the studio practice that fit into her definition. The first theme, mindfulness in studio practices, can then best be understood through Borrelli's journey and her background, including her particular experiences. This is followed by her reflections and what she has learned from having a mindfulness-based art practice, as well as the philosophies she has garnered along the way.

How Borrelli Defines Mindfulness

Borrelli's basic definition of mindfulness is being fully present in the moment. However, she goes even further in her definition of the term and differentiates between

mindfulness and meditation. She stated, “Mindfulness to me is just being in the moment. But I found that I enjoy a more active definition, that mindfulness is the act and the intention of being present and not the result or the state” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). Borrelli proceeded to explain that even when in practice one can still be scattered, as long as one is intent on doing the work to create mindfulness, it is that intention rather than descending into a blissful place which most people might not experience. In her personal practice, Borrelli explained that she does not incorporate traditional meditation as much as one might expect considering she teaches a meditative drawing class. Instead, she practices mindfulness when making art or in doing simple tasks. Which leads into the next term relevant to understanding Borrelli’s studio practices, mindfulness-based art making.

Mindfulness-Based Art Making

From the context of Borrelli’s studio practice, mindfulness-based art making is a bit of a role reversal from traditional art class. Mindful-based art making asks the artist to think of and treat themselves as the artwork and the physical work product is the means to creating a more grounded centered self. She explained, “I think that definition helps [people] a lot with sort of letting go of the work product being the focus and to start making themselves the focus [of the practice]” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). Borrelli added that the use of the principles and elements of design, as well as repetitive mark making is a way to practice mindfulness-based art making. Which leads to the next term, which is a tool or repetitive mark.

Mark Making

For Borrelli, the repetition of a mark is exactly similar to the breath or mantra within traditional meditation. The purpose of the breath and mantras used within traditional meditation is a tool that is used to bring one's self back into the state of meditation. In her own words she explained it as such,

Using the repetitive nature of mark making in the same way that you use the repetitive nature of breath in traditional forms. Using shape over and over in the same way you would use breath over and over. Every time the mind wanders, go back to one shape, anchoring your experience in the moment using just one mark. (Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Another thing that came up for Borrelli when discussing repetitive mark making was that often one can experience boredom. She stated that she can often get bored when making repetitive marks and the use of variation can help dispel boredom. Borrelli's personal practices consisted of the repetition of one mark as a way to become more present, with the use of the mark as a way to pull her into the present moment. She claimed that this repetitive mark helps her to fall into a state commonly known in the creative world as flow state.

Flow State

Csikszentmihalyi (1997) explains that flow state is when one is able to sense effortless action within an activity. A flow state also tends to occur when the rules or guidelines within the action are clearly set for an intended goal (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). According to Borrelli, flow state is when one becomes the thing that they are making. There is no mental separation between one's physical state and the thing in which they are making. One's attention is so focused on the product that they are making, they become so wrapped up in what they are doing that they, in essence, become that object. She went on to explain that for her this flow state blurs the line between herself and the mark which

ultimately helps her in letting go of stress. Borrelli claimed that when drawing, or making art, people tend to bring a lot of expectation into their practice about what the product is going to look like. She then stated that similar to traditional meditation, flow state asks one to let go of judgment of the experience, to let go of judgement of their mind state and letting go of judgement of what is being made.

Another tool that Borrelli explained was helpful in the process of mindfulness-based making was curiosity, especially when suspending judgement of a work in progress. While observing her online meditative class, one student mentioned that they were experiencing judgement towards a particular mark that they were making in context to the larger artwork. Borrelli and the student then got into a discussion about letting go of judgement, which ended in her stating, “Curiosity can help us to move forward from judgement” (R. Borelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). The use of curiosity in this way, served as a transitory tool while observing and participating in her meditative class, to help one to move from one mark to the next almost seamlessly.

A Glance into Borrelli’s Meditative Drawing Practice

In terms of practical use, Borrelli explained that she uses drawing, or doodling as she likes to describe her style of drawing, in a reflective way. In the beginning of her journey with meditative drawing, before she met her husband, her practice began from the comfort of her bed. Each night she would dump out dozens of markers in bed, turn on music or a podcast, and begin meditatively drawing. She explained that she would only use ink and markers, no pencils and erasers were involved. This form of drawing encouraged Borrelli to really focus on each mark as she made it and truly consider the next mark she would make. In her own words,

I tried to eliminate the feeling of my bed becoming my work space, because that would have defeated the purpose. I'd start with one line, and then contemplate the next mark, or shape. One at a time I'd stay in the present moment to the extent I was able, and use the marks to unwind from my day. (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Then she would draw for an hour and drift off to sleep. She went on to explain how the following morning she would arise feeling fresh and “shiny” with the sun rising and markers scattered all around her. Borrelli also explained that her practice had given her “the best sleep of her life!” Now that she is married, her practice has changed a little. It is no longer being done in her bed with markers scattered about, falling asleep as she continues on with another mark. She has now carried her practice over to the spare room in the home she and her husband share. In the early mornings, she shuffles over to their spare room and cozies up on the day-bed. When discussing the location of where she does her meditative drawing, she noted that she does *not* practice meditative drawing in her studio or during her work day for clients. Through her years of balancing paid art work and personal art work, she has learned that personal meditative drawing and commissioned art work have to be separate. However, she does clarify that sometimes when working on work for clients meditative drawing does tend to happen. It seems it has become her technique. She also noted that her meditative art work sometimes ends up becoming part of a collection for sale. Although she draws in a meditative way, she notes that her intention while working is to have them separate, not to merge her meditative drawing practice with commissioned work in order to maintain the integrity of the process of her meditative drawing practice.

Borrelli explained that she typically tries to practice meditative drawing for an hour or so in the morning. However, if she has a relaxed evening she will practice before bed as well. She explained that her practice has often been more consistent when things are “flowing” in her life, and waned when she is feeling stressed. The phases of stress are the moments when she feels she needs this practice the most; she explained, “the irony of course like other forms of meditation, is that the latter times are when I need it the most” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). Through her practice she has noticed that negative emotions tend to be more present and obvious if she is stressed. She explained, “drawing when I’m stressed is interesting because I’ll literally see the negativity come out on the paper. That can be very uncomfortable” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). Letting go of attachment to the product, something she reiterates to her students, is something she has practiced more and more as her meditative drawing practices matures. She stated, “sometimes I’ll just throw the drawing away on those days. That’s therapy in its own right” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019).

Why Meditative Drawing?

For Borrelli, a need for ritual and practice arose when experiencing high amounts of stress while writing her thesis in graduate school. Although she is no longer in school, she has maintained this practice because at the end of a busy work day she said it can be very intense to sit in silence and reflect on the day. She also explained that she spent a great deal of time in her head with her own thoughts, so meditative drawing has become a less

jarring way to process her experience. For Borrelli, mark making is used in the same way that breath is used in traditional meditation is second nature, which she believes stems from her childhood. Drawing or doodling was how she would center and unwind as a child. Borrelli would also prefer to believe that her meditative drawings are spiritual messages. On the matter, she stated, “I also love that it allows things to come ‘through’ me and manifest in physical form,” and “having a beautiful physical record of meditation makes me exorbitantly happy” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019).

How Borrelli’s Meditative Drawing Practice Originated

Borelli described her own personal journey with meditation and art. She explained that drawing became a form of mediation for her through her graduate studies. She developed this practice after having a conversation with her professor, Dr. Christopher Adejumo. She explained,

The meditative class definitely originated from my personal practice. I had naturally drawn that way as a kid, very repetitive and sort of doodlesque. I could do it for hours and I would do it at school and I would do it at home. Then I went into an art education undergraduate program and took a lot of classes that were technique driven and completely stopped making art that way and burned out on it and didn’t make art for a long time. [For] three or four years, while I was a school teacher, I stopped drawing altogether and Dr. Adejumo’s community class had that component of a portfolio. That was the first art I had done in years and I was so stressed out about it. His suggestion was to try and remember where art making was just joyful and then go with that. I thought, oh geez, doodling in high school, that was so joyful for me. So that was when I began a daily practice of that kind of drawing again. I began using it in the evening as a way to unwind from thesis writing. So that was the beginning of my meditative drawing practice, was in grad school. (R. Borelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

This led to her incorporation of art making into her personal practice that helped her to ground or center herself, to reconnect with her true self. Borelli mentioned, “I don’t

incorporate traditional meditation in my life as much as you would think considering I teach meditative art classes” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). She went on to explain her experience with meditative art making,

I feel like there’s this zone, like that flow state people talk about when they’re making art where they sort of become the thing that they’re making. And I feel like when students recognize that they’re blurring the line between themselves and the mark a little bit, that’s a helpful analogy for sort of letting go of product stress. Because I think a lot of people when they’re drawing, bring a lot of expectation into their practice about what the thing is going to look like. In the same way that traditional forms of meditation are asking the sitter to let go of their judgement of their experiences. It’s the same with drawing, but instead of letting go of judgement of your mind state, you’re letting go of judgement of what you’re making. (R. Borelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Borelli made a point by explaining that we experience stress in the product driven society that we live in. She also mentioned this is very apparent in the art world where people are literally working to produce a product. She connected her understanding to a creative process that relieves production stress by simply focusing on the process and not necessarily on the product.

Borrelli’s Reflections & What She Has Learned

In having a mindfulness-based art practice, Borrelli has experienced many areas of growth. One thing in particular to note about Borrelli, is that she described herself as a highly sensitive person, an empath. Being an empath means that while she is an individual, a separate entity, she feels very sensitive to the emotional or energetic state of others around her. In possessing this gift of sensitivity, when one comes into contact with other people, there is a heightened sense of awareness of their emotional and physical states. With this knowledge in mind, it seems clear that she would need a form of personal practice to debrief or separate herself and her experience from that of the those around her. In having a mindfulness-based art practice, Borrelli has claimed that the practice has helped her to

discern which emotions and reactions that arise are her own and those that are others. She also explained where meditative drawing has become a tool in which she is able to express and discuss what it is often like to be an empath or highly sensitive person. Borrelli has been able to use her drawings to depict the sensation of feeling and sensing the energy that is around her. When comparing her practice to traditional meditation, she has felt that her practice is more tangible and relatable for most people to wrap their minds around since most of the world lives within the physical world around them and understands it in that way. She explained,

Meditative drawing has felt like this sort of in road to that idea where it begins to be the foundation for a conversation around the power of energy. Meditative drawing has expanded that conversation. Because I think traditional meditation isn't for everyone. (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

Teaching and creating have shaped Borrelli's philosophies. She has condensed her philosophies down into simple phrases, or mantras, as she would best describe them. Her mantras are 'process over product' and 'energy over image.' Energy over image is the idea that how we present ourselves speaks louder to others than what we say. In other words, it can be another way to say actions speak louder than words. Process over product means that the process of doing something, or making something, presents more opportunities for growth than the actual product; there is more gained when emphasis is placed on the process than the product being made. These personal mantras have influenced the development of her professional illustration business, how she teaches her classes, and also how she carries herself through the world. For example, Borrelli has included these mantras into a series of the workshops she teaches. She also used them as reminders for her students within the meditative drawing class, which is further discussed within the next section. When practicing her personal practice of meditative drawing, she explained that she often

refers to these two mantras as she creates, as a reminder to focus on the intention she wants to bring to her practice.

MINDFULNESS IN TEACHING PRACTICE

The second overarching theme found to answer the central research question is how Borrelli applies mindfulness in her teaching practice. This is first explained in defining her process of teaching her meditative drawing class: through tone and environment, setting clear guidelines, and highlighting insights from her personal experience. This chapter will explain what led her to carry her personal philosophies into her current teaching practice and help the reader to better understand how she arrived at this point in her career.

The Process

When teaching her meditative class, it became apparent that tone and environment were two particularly important elements in Borrelli's instruction. Throughout the class that I observed, Borrelli maintained a calm and open demeanor. At all times, she interwove the wisdom gained from her personal experience. She also provided feedback she has received from former students. Verbal and nonverbal communication were extremely important throughout the class as Borrelli felt it was important that students felt comfortable engaging in the activities. Some of the bits of wisdom she shared were: "The artwork is you, what you're feeling" which means allow the artwork to reflect what emotions and feelings are coming up for you. She also told students, "When your mind wanders, lovingly bring it back" which means when you find yourself distracted or your thoughts moving to something else, bring your attention back to the mark you are making. Another piece of advice was, "Curiosity helps to move forward from judgement" which means that using curiosity can help one to be less judgmental of what is being made helping

one to place emphasis more on the intention and less on the product. Finally, she discussed expectation and judgement by explaining that they arise to refocus on the mark being made by centering and starting again as things may happen during the meditation. She explained that she has had students frequently come in to her meditative art class wanting to experience bliss while making. However, once the students began the planned activities the students would tend to take a product driven attitude about what they were making, overloading the process with judgment and criticism, making it difficult to see the possibilities and to experience the bliss in which they initially sought. Borrelli stated,

I would say at least three quarters of the students in every [intro] class I've ever taught don't realize that what they want is more energetic, they want to come after a long day of work and unwind and they view art as a way to do that. But then they come into class and immediately start slave-driving themselves. (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

She continued with, "I think a lot of people think they want to learn a technique, but really what they want is to feel better after a long day of having to produce a product for someone else" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). In order to overcome this product driven response to making, Borrelli has referred to the process of making as being child-like in asking her students to tap into their imagination and inner world. She explained that her students would describe the experience of falling into that creative state as similar to their childhood experiences. She said, "Some students have talked about feeling like they felt when they were kids because that's how kids (before the age of 10) create, just completely for the experience of it" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). From this realization Borrelli fashioned a few key phrases that she mentioned throughout the online meditative class I observed. These were energy over image, you are the artwork, and product over process. From Borrelli's experience in teaching a mindfulness-based art class, it is important to set a tone of openness to being vulnerable, compassionate towards any experiences, and willingness to find flow. Other

areas to include are open and effective communication with students and clearly setting guidelines.

Guidelines

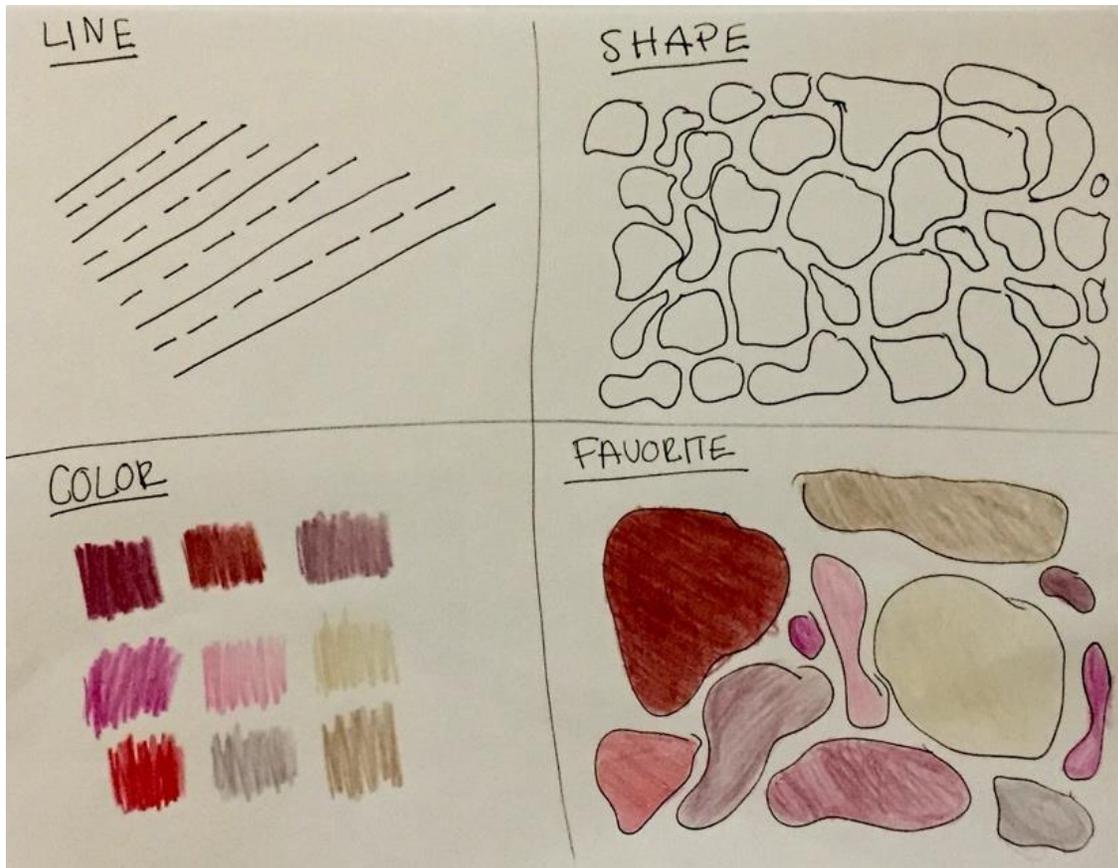


Figure 7: Example of Borrelli's mindful drawing prompt. Image and photo done by Caitlyn McKey.

In the meditative class I observed, Borrelli began by asking her students to quadrant off a piece of paper, creating four squares to work in (see Figure 7). Each square was labeled, the first being color, followed by line, and shape. The last square students were encouraged to combine their favorite or to continue with one of their favorites. For each square, students spent a few minutes focusing on each specific element. Borrelli explained

that using the principles and elements helps to simplify the exercise for students and takes away the stress that students can often experience when making. Once all the quadrants were completed, she asked students to flip their paper over or to use another piece of paper. On the new sheet of paper students were instructed to draw a circle about the size of a small bowl on their paper. She then encouraged students to continue the fourth quadrant (the one focused on their favorite element) within the circle they drew. In this part of the process, in order to help create the meditative flow for students, Borrelli encouraged her students to use three repetitive steps. It began with focusing on one element, recognizing when your mind wanders, and then guiding your attention back to the original focus. In traditional meditation this is often referenced as observing your breath. When one's mind wanders in traditional meditation, the idea is to bring the sense of awareness back to the breath over and over throughout the meditation. When explaining this Borrelli also told students, "If you start feeling bored your brain is craving variety. Hone in on it and change it up just a little bit" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). I found this advice to be particularly helpful when participating in the exercise.

Reflections

In the interview Borrelli spoke about the experiences of teaching art in a traditional sense, which to her meant focusing on technique and production, versus teaching art in a mindful way, which is focusing on the experience and the process of making art. She explained, "I think teaching art traditionally you spend a lot of time looking at the students' artwork, and then getting feedback on what they need from you based on what they're making" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). Whereas in meditative drawing, "the goal is less about what they're making and more of how they're feeling" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). In realizing that students were wanting

something more energetic from her art classes, she applied something she'd learned about students leaving your class feeling shinier than when they came into the class. This meant that students needed to have an experience that left them feeling positive about their experience, lighter and not bogged down with stress. This then became her goal: to focus on the brilliance of her students and understanding what made that twinkle in their eye disappear. From her experience, she realized that there were so many rigid teaching styles, especially within art, and that students were leaving the class with an abundance of technical knowledge but that they were still stressed out. In a practical sense, she realized that the goal of students leaving her class "shinier" meant that students were leaving feeling more centered and energetically aligned. With this new teaching approach, she realized that just like her students had to let go of judgement in the process of making, she too had to let go of judgment in teaching in a mindful way. Once the shift in perspective on how she needed to teach her classes changed, she knew that if students left feeling more grounded and centered then her job was done.

In reviewing the data collected from the interview, I realized that this shift truly began while Borrelli was teaching art in an elementary school. She expressed having found herself feeling completely depleted of energy by the end of every workday. In regards to the teaching experience, Borrelli explained, "teachers are wearing so many hats during the school day, and it's so easy to get ungrounded. Like ridiculously easy" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). She also explained that she felt that it was her job in life to be a teacher, however she felt completely restricted and cornered in the profession, that she was not prepared for how difficult it was really going to be. Carrying feelings of inadequacy in being a teacher led her to notice what other teachers were doing, especially that there were other teachers who completely captured the minds of their students. Borrelli noticed that there were teachers who would not use their voice to respond

to students, but rather their body language and energy. She, and many others within the field of education, call this “teacher with-it-ness.” This is when a teacher is able to quickly and correctly identify specific behaviors that can impact the class, and act on them immediately (Marzano, 2003). From this insight, she began looking into what these teachers were doing. Borrelli’s discovery was that these teachers maintained a presence that demanded the awareness of their students. She realized that the children were responding to the teachers’ energy. The children responded to teachers’ modeling what they were teaching them. This led to her realization that children are similar to dogs; they respond to the energetic state of the adults, or people, around them. She exclaimed,

That’s why modeling is so important! You can tell kids until you’re blue in the face all kinds of stuff, but if you’re modeling something different it doesn’t work because kids learn from what you are, not what you do. (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

In short, this means that a teacher’s presence is what students naturally respond to best. Her realization that people respond best to energy is what led to her motto, “energy over image.” She explained that, “this idea that energy is just as important or more important than what you’re saying and doing more of” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). This led to Borelli intentionally paying attention to her energy and what she brought to her classroom. She realized, “kids are reacting to if I had a really bad day and it would change how they would behave in my classroom” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019).

CONCLUSION.

Through analysis of the data collected in this research, two themes emerged to answer the central research question. The two themes were mindfulness found in studio practices and mindfulness found in teaching. In Borrelli’s studio practice, separating her professional artwork from her meditative drawing practice, creating time and space for the practice, and allowing the practice to grow are all essential parts to maintaining the habit.

In her teaching practices, noting that environment can have an impact on students' experience, that advice from a personal practice can be helpful for students, and setting clear guidelines are all important when teaching others on how to create and maintain a meditative drawing practice. The following chapter will discuss why meditative drawing and other mindfulness-based art practices could be beneficial, its importance within the field of art education, and potential areas for future research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The contents of this chapter will discuss the meaning behind the research completed for this study. This chapter will also cover the experience of four participants from the online class and how these students have used mindfulness-based art making in their personal time. Furthermore, this chapter will also examine reflections from the primary participant, Rebecca Borrelli, on her thoughts regarding the inclusion of mindfulness-based art making in public schools. It will also briefly discuss Borrelli's connection to Mindful Classrooms, a schools focused program in Austin, Texas. Finally, this chapter will discuss implications for future research on this topic.

RESEARCH QUESTION

In order to understand the results of the study it is important to reflect again on the central research question of this study: how does one teaching artist combine mindfulness techniques into her art making process and her teaching practice?

SUMMARIZED RESULTS & ANALYSIS

The two overarching themes of the results of this thesis are the use of mindfulness in Borrelli's studio practices as an artist and in her teaching practices as an educator. These themes aid in understanding the application of the practices, as well as the possible effects of using mindfulness-based art making practices within the professional areas of an art teacher and an artist. Together these themes paint a picture of not only what it looks like for a teaching artist to apply mindfulness practices to their personal studio practices, but also what it looks like for students in learning and maintaining their own personal mindfulness-based art practices.

Mindfulness in Studio & Teaching Practices

Mindfulness-based art making in a studio can look different depending on the artist and their chosen medium. For Rebecca Borrelli, she used the practice of mindfulness-based art making as a form of meditation both at the beginning and end of her day, which she referred to as meditative drawing. She used each mark as a place of focus. With her intention placed on each mark made, Borrelli was able to be in the present moment, in the same way that one would use breath in traditional meditation. As her practice has matured, she has been able to use mark making through mindfulness-based making as a way to connect spiritually to her art making and the world around her. Borrelli's meditative drawing practice has been a tool to bring awareness, enlightenment, meaning making to a deeply personal level. As a teaching artist, Borrelli is able to then carry this keen personalized sense of awareness of her own experience and that of others into her classes as well. She takes what she has learned and makes it digestible for her students by keeping a moderate pace in teaching, sharing reminders from her personal experience in meditative drawing, and by keeping the process simple.

Survey Results

Based on the data gathered from the survey responses of four of the students who took Borrelli's online meditative drawing classes, 75% of her students have careers that could be categorized as high-empathy based jobs. This means that the central focus to their job is caring for others or catering to the needs of others. These jobs consisted of a stay at home mom, a bartender, and an occupational therapist. With this information in mind, a few areas that are extremely important when reviewing the importance of this mindfulness-based art making is how well the subject translates to everyday use for participants, how it has impacted the participants' life after the workshop, and what benefits the practice might

bring to the participants. When asked if the meditative drawing class impacted their way of processing emotion, 75% of participants of the class responded affirmatively. When asked if taking the meditative drawing class made them feel calmer after taking the class, 25% of participants strongly agreed, and 50% of participants agreed. When asked how likely they were to use this form of practice in their everyday life, 75% of participants responded very likely, and 25% were somewhat likely. When participants were asked why they enrolled in the class the responses were the following:

1. to learn a different way to meditate
2. to tap into creativity
3. to find a creative way to meditate
4. because they had taken the class before and the practice really resonated with the participant

One participant also noted that the process of the practice was very healing for them and was a phenomenal coping mechanism. In addition, they stated that this process aided them in overcoming creative blocks in their career; that it had provided a creative outlet which supported problem solving.

Analysis

Bringing mindfulness into her studio practices has enabled Borrelli to maintain a joyful art making process, to let go of product driven stress, and to bring more digestible meditative and art making practices to her students. Through her meditative drawing practice, she has been able to relieve production fatigue and burnout. Her process of making, which focuses more on the process than the product being made, also allows her to work more efficiently through any form of artist block because it allows her to focus on the experience she is living in, to remain in the moment, and to be mindful. Borrelli's

practice engages her more intimately within her experiences because she allows herself the time to deeply reflect, not just in passing where the moment is more fleeting, but rather in a way that grounds her experience and solidifies how she feels about it. The practice she has cultivated for herself as an artist is nourishing as it does not deplete her creativity or growth. In fact, this practice expands her artistic ability in a way that I think most traditional forms of art practices do not. When I reflect back on my experience in undergraduate studio classes, I realize that our formal practices were based on trying to draw in realistic ways, attempting to capture the exact structure of what was in front of us. These traditional exercises are isolated from meaning making, and distanced from the emotional depth that many artists encounter. In contrast, Borrelli's practice focuses on the unseen, the expression of life and energy that is around her. It allows her to focus on the emotive existence of the world. Her practice allows the artist to capture what they feel or what they feel is being expressed, not just what they see.

Bringing mindfulness into her teaching practice has also allowed her to connect intimately with her students, in a way that is different from traditional, or more formal, studio instruction. She is able to emotively connect with students and understand their perspectives through emotion. This form of teaching art gives her the space to see the human experience in each of her students. It also empowers her students to bring home an exercise that is enriching not only to their artistic practices, but to their self-care practices as well. She expressed that some of her students have used meditative drawing outside of her class in many ways that have enriched their lives. Former students have reported to Borrelli that mindfulness-based art exercises have enriched their creativity, aided them in reaching their creative goals, provided a new form of meditation, and as a new way to creatively process information. Like Borrelli, some students utilize this practice before bedtime as a way to calm and center their mind and unwind from the day. Some students

have also used mindful drawing as a way of tapping into their childhood joy, creativity, freedom of choice, freedom from judgement, and connect to the essence of the moment. The majority of the participants in this study have found healing through this practice and intend to continue to use this practice on their own in some way.

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

Students' Experiences

Based on the data provided in the previous section, it is clear that mindful drawing practices were beneficial to the participants in this study. Meditative drawing provided a creative outlet for participants to problem solve, express emotions, and navigate internal dialogue. This practice resonated with the majority of the participants. They specified that it provided a healing practice and coping mechanisms.

The challenge that I feel lies here, however, is that this practice did not resonate with all participants. Not all students who participated in this practice thought it was beneficial. Perhaps the participants in this study entered the class with a predetermined mindset – and the class aligned with their emotional needs because that was their expectation. This study's participants were only adult women, and due to the small sample size cannot be generalized to other women. In addition, the results cannot be generalized to individuals from other gender expressions or children.

Reflections from A Public-School Art Educator

Since Borrelli has experience as an art educator in public schools, I also wanted to hear her perspective on how she felt mindfulness-based art practices might be beneficial within the realm of public schools. Two major benefits Borrelli believes this approach may

bring to children are that it can reduce sensory overload, and it can also help to solidify learning within children. In regards to sensory overload, she explained,

Kids are getting really bombarded at a sensory level from modern culture on a day to day basis and in a way that even ten years ago kids weren't experiencing. So meditative drawing is such a powerful way to clear some space in their minds because they're not even getting that space when they get home anymore. (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019)

On a personal level, I completely understand and agree with Borrelli's statement. When discussing how meditative drawing can help students to retain or grasp learning material, Borrelli reflected on a Ted Talk she had recently watched. The Ted Talk by Sunni Brown (2011) discussed the importance of engaging at least two of the four learning modalities when students are learning new information. Brown explained that this can ultimately aid children in solidifying new information. For Borrelli, this means doodling or mindful drawing plays a key role in helping make new information concrete. She also explained that in her personal experience doodling during instruction has often been scrutinized or shamed by instructors. Borrelli proceeded to say the Sunni Brown claims that students actually learn deeply when activating two learning modalities while processing new information, that it helps them to contextualize the new information. Intentional doodling, or visual note taking, during instruction became a practice she noticed another teacher at her school utilized with her students. The teacher gave her students a blank sketchbook at the beginning of the year and encouraged the students to doodle in them whenever they needed to during class. She mentioned that this teacher noticed that their depth of processing was so much greater when they were doodling.

Mindful Classrooms with James Butler & Teacher Burnout

Within the interview, Borrelli mentioned a colleague and friend, James Butler, the driving force behind Mindful Classrooms in Austin Independent School District. Borrelli

has collaborated with James in creating a coloring book focused on Social Emotional Learning (SEL). According to their website (www.mindfulclassrooms.com/about), Mindful Classrooms is an organization that provides resources to aid and educate schools on how to sustainably implement mindfulness practices into their daily routines, climate, and culture (Butler, n.d.). Butler is the founder of Mindful Classrooms and is also employed as the Social Emotional Learning Mindfulness Specialist for Austin Independent School District. Borrelli explained that Butler decided to create Mindful Classrooms she explained that he did not just want to bring this practice into schools solely for students, he realized that educators needed these practices as well. As a former public-school educator Borrelli explained, “teachers are struggling with all the same things that students are” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). She proceeded to explain that “teachers are wearing so many different ‘hats’ during the school day and so it’s easy to get ungrounded” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). This means that teachers are not just teaching students about a subject, they are filling multiple roles as nurses, parents, mentors, etcetera. Teachers do so much more than teach. Borrelli said that “having some type of practice, even if it’s at the end of the school day, or even if it’s learning a few mindful tactics they can do at their lunchtime, stuff like that is beneficial” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). A comment that really stood out to me during our interview was “if someone had been doing mindfulness instruction in my district, I wonder if I wouldn’t have left. Because I think I just burned out. And that’s so common right now” (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019).

Referring back to Chapter Two and the topic of teacher burnout, mindfulness practices in schools has become essential not only for students, but vital for educators. From Borrelli’s perspective, most art teachers would consider themselves sensitive beings, and that is exactly what draws them to being a teacher in the first place. She elaborated, “I

think a lot of teachers are that way (sensitive) and that's what draws them to be teachers, is that they easily feel what's going on with their people and want to help" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). She continued in saying, "so the thing that makes them so good at being a teacher also makes them really vulnerable to burnout. I was bringing stuff home from my students and I didn't realize that that's what I was doing" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). A message she had received from colleagues and the culture around her was to toughen up, but she stated "the opposite was what I needed, to give myself lots of time and space and self-care" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019). She noted that in hindsight some sort of mindfulness practice might have helped to create the separation between the feelings she had been absorbing from her students and what her own feelings were. She noted, "it would have been huge" (R. Borrelli, personal communication, March 1, 2019).

IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

The following section discusses topics where research on mindfulness-based art making can be expanded.

Areas for Future Research

The future of research on mindfulness-based art making can expand within the following research topics: the inclusion of Mindfulness-Based Art Making in K-12 and/or college classrooms, Mindfulness-Based Art Therapy, conducting a study with K-12 and/or college students to examine the benefits and challenges of having a mindfulness-based art practice, and a study focused on teachers to see where benefits may or may not lie in having a mindfulness-based art practice. There is a definite need for research in these areas because

there is little to no research done on the topics of mindfulness-based art and mindfulness-based art making. These areas of research would aid in filling the gap that exists within the fields of research that could discuss this. Some areas of study this research can be done within include psychology, child psychology, art therapy, art education, sociology, and fine art.

CONCLUSION

Since conducting the research for this study, I have spent even more time refining my personal practice of mindfulness-based art making. I currently have been keeping a visual journal (see Figures 8 & 9) where I answer a journal prompt with a carefully crafted palette that represents any feelings or emotions that I feel best answer the journal prompt.



Figure 8: Visual Journal Entry Example 1. Images and photos done by Caitlyn McKey.



Figure 9: Visual Journal Entry Example 2. Images and photos done by Caitlyn McKey.

The journal prompts I have been using are sourced from the social media platform Instagram, where author and journaling expert, Amber Rae, emboldens followers through her journaling series titled “Journal Your Feelings” (Rae, 2020). Mindfulness-based art making has become my passion and something that I love sharing with anyone and everyone. When preparing for and conducting research for this study, I heard a lot of classmates express how tired they were of their thesis topic. This study has in fact stoked the passion I have for this topic even more. I have been able to increase my personal sense of awareness, heal emotional wounds, develop higher emotional intelligence, and conduct myself in a more mindful way as I navigate my life. Mindfulness-based art making has changed my life for the better. I come from a background of minimal mental health awareness and family suffering from the emotional, psychological, and physical effects of alcoholism. I also experience frequent cycles of anxiety and depression, and maintaining a mindfulness-based art making practice has helped navigate these issues tremendously. In fact, at this very moment, I’m writing from my quickly thrown together home office because our world is experiencing a global pandemic. Currently, the world is in turmoil facing the COVID-19 virus, and as someone with a mental health disorder, having a mindfulness practice to rely on has made a possible life-threatening experience feel less overwhelming. My practice has aided me in keeping my demeanor relatively calm and my

perspective open to what is possible. In an optimistic way, it has also helped me to contextualize exactly what it is that I am experiencing in an effective and mindful way. Has this practice changed my life? Absolutely. It has without a doubt made me a better human being and I want nothing more than to share this healing practice with anyone in need.

Appendix A: Interview Question

Interview Questions for Rebecca Borelli:

1. How do you define mindfulness? Mindfulness-based art making?
2. In using meditative drawing, how has it impacted your students?
3. How has meditative drawing impacted your art practice?
4. How has meditative drawing impacted your teaching practice?
5. With your background in art education in schools, how do you think putting this practice into schools would benefit the students?
Teachers? Why?
6. What was your experience with teacher burnout?
7. Based on your experience with mindfulness-based art making, what would you say to encourage others to incorporate mindfulness-based art making in their life? Why?
8. Explain step by step how you use meditative drawing in your personal practice. Walk me through your ritual. (Feel free to describe how you set up the space/environment, any materials you might use, incense etc.)
9. Explain why you decide to use this form of meditation in your life.
10. How often and when do you practice?

Appendix B: Survey Questions

Survey Questions for Student Participants:

Gender: Male Female Transgender Non-Binary Prefer not to say

Age Range: 25-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-55 56-60 61-65 66+

Employment:

For the following questions please answer with answer that best represents your experience:

1. How many meditative art classes have you taken. (not including today)

0 1-2 3-4 5+

2. After taking the Meditative Drawing class, I feel calmer and more relaxed.

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Neutral Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. Taking this class impacted my way of processing emotions.

Strongly Agree Somewhat Agree Neutral Somewhat Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. How likely are you to recommend others to take this class or classes similar to this?

Very Likely Somewhat Likely Not Likely

5. How likely are you to use what you have learned from this class in your everyday life?

Very Likely Somewhat Likely Not Likely

6. Why did you take this class?

7. What is your knowledge of Art?

8. What is your knowledge of meditation?

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Vita

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