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## Being With and Being There: Our Enactment of Wide-Awakeness

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### Abstract

Maxine Greene championed that teachers and students can discover openings providing space for the development of wide-awakeness through art and aesthetic education. Wide-awakeness is a heightened sense of consciousness encouraging critical awareness and deep engagement with one's world. As individuals come alive in this way, their open-minded exploration is fueled by their development of personal agency and self-worth through their pursuit of presentness and possibility. Through a case study of the college art education course, Pedagogy as Art Practice, I sought to gain a better understanding of what ways the teacher and students' engendered wide-awakeness, how the structure of the course supported this development, and how this impacted the participants. With this paper I narrate the story of how the participants' *being with* and *being there*, or their relational and intellectual engagement, facilitated their enactment of wide-awakeness.

### Introduction

I first read Maxine Greene's (1995) *Releasing the imagination* in a course at the beginning of my doctoral studies. As I read, I felt Greene was elegantly describing the experiences my students and I shared when I was a high school visual arts teacher. Her words sent me searching for a poem one of my students had written for me:

#### Untitled<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes, light knows the perfect path  
To take: Puzzle pieces falling from  
Cloudy sky, landing in place, perfectly,  
With grace.

We were sitting somewhere in the dark,  
Together, waiting for something to happen.  
We had all the materials: Paper, pencils,  
And paint! We just needed the glue.

And then you came, a gaping mind at hand  
To graciously hold together all the pieces,  
All of them. Not leaving a single one behind,  
Working harder and harder, wrapped up in your  
Gluing, your stitching, your braiding; filled  
With pleasure only your kind would understand.

And we sat, silently, in awe of this: We know  
How it is we must live! We know now, what  
It is we had forgotten along that old, spiraling path!

2009

By sharing in this experience with my student, I felt the empowerment he alluded to was inspired by engagement with art and art making, and the dialogue and relationships facilitated by these engagements. Together we encouraged one another to embrace our fullest potentials through our collaborative, creative engagements. Together we shared in the power of the arts and the power of care to transform our consciousness, our lives, and quite possibly our world.

There is a need for this transformation because the current push for standardization in education often leads to a focus on the reproduction of given knowledge rather than work that

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted with permission of student.

requires complex thinking and personal expression (Eisner, 1993). Students are often viewed as *a gaping mind* for teachers to fill with predefined facts (Freire, 1968/2000). Students know something is missing; but they sit apathetically *waiting for something to happen*, longing for something or someone capable of holding *together all the pieces*. How can we collaborate with students to bring together all of the pieces necessary for meaningful learning experiences in visual arts courses? How can we help students remember what they have *forgotten along that old, spiraling path*? Maxine Greene (1995) warned, if “nothing intervenes to overcome such inertia, it joins with the sense of repetitiveness and uniformity to discourage active learning” (p. 21). She went on to assert “it is the obligation of teachers to heighten the consciousness of whoever they teach by urging them to read and look and make their own interpretations of what they see” (p. 35). Greene explained this heightened consciousness as living in the world in a state of wide-awakeness.

### Wide-Awakeness

Wide-awakeness was originally conceived by the Australian phenomenologist, Alfred Schutz (1967; as cited in Greene, 1977). Schutz proposed wide-awakeness as an alternate mode of existence that transcends the passive attitude so easily assumed in relation to one’s surroundings. Maxine Greene (1995) advocated that the arts enable students to apply this “initiating, constructing mind or consciousness to the world” (p. 23). She went on to explain the qualities of mind wide-awakeness develops as “excellences”, and she listed these as “tentativeness; regard for evidence; simultaneously critical and creative thinking; openness to dialogue; and a sense of agency, social commitment, and concern” (p. 179). Many other scholars have theorized about the ability of the arts to promote the development of mind in similar ways to these excellences (Dewey, 1934; Efland, 2004; Eisner, 2002). Greene (1995) specifically connected wide-awakeness with Dewey’s conception of mind as a verb. Dewey (1934) wrote, “Mind is primarily a verb. It denotes all the ways in which we deal consciously and expressly with the situations in which we find ourselves” (p. 274-275). Therefore mind is the action we take both mentally and physically in all our doings. This action involves pursuing curiosities with one’s own mental capacity rather than being content with the knowledge provided by someone else.

While the enactment of wide-awakeness can occur in any context, Greene (1995) advocated, “encounters with the arts have a unique power to release imagination” (p. 27). Art and aesthetic education have this unique potential because these are relational and dialogical engagements. When making or viewing art, you enter into dialogues with materials, your thoughts, or other individuals and you are exploring connections between what you see and sense and have experienced. In order to access the enlargement of experience made possible by encounters with art, teachers and students must approach the creating or viewing of art wide-awake and willing to search for and develop meaning. Greene (1995) believed teachers

and students should enter into this process as a “collaborative search” (p. 23). It is collaborative because it unravels through dialogue and relationship. Greene (1995) further illuminated the nurturance of wide-awakeness as:

Attending concretely to these children in their difference and their connectedness, feeling called on truly to attend—to read the child’s world, to look at the child’s sketch—teachers may find themselves responding imaginatively and, at length, ethically to these children. (p. 42)

Teachers intent on awakening, must be wide-awake themselves. They must seek “truly to attend” to students. Teachers should be present with students in the moment and invest in them as individuals, with the hope of inspiring belief in their worth and possibility. This care is a teacher’s ability to join students in the journey of wide-awakeness. From these critical interactions, students may develop a situated awareness of their world, and assert their understanding of it.

The mindful investment of wide-awakeness leads to the development of self. This is because thoughtful participation in experience and purposeful action can establish self-worth and agency. Greene (1995) wrote, “Individual identity takes form in the contexts of relationship and dialogue; our concern must be to create the kinds of contexts that nurture—for all children—the sense of worthiness and agency” (p. 41). As teachers and students become wide-awake, this way of thinking and being in the world holds the possibility of not only being personally transformative, but also socially. Greene (1995) called this “social imagination” (p. 5) or the ability to imagine what should or could be in the world. She went on to explain:

this attitude of mind strains toward the normative, toward what might be, what ought to be. At that point, it becomes a search for a social vision of a more humane, more fully pluralist, more just, and more joyful community. (1995, p. 61)

Therefore as agency and self-worth are established on the journey of awakening, individuals can become confident in their naming of the world and their action to transform the world or themselves.

### **Situating My Research**

The similarities between my personal experiences with art education and Greene’s writing on wide-awakeness led me to using my dissertation as an exploration and investigation of Maxine Greene’s writings on the theory of wide-awakeness. This paper focuses on how my dissertation pilot study expanded my understanding of the nuances of how wide-awakeness was enacted in a college art education course taught at a large research university in the

southeastern region of the United States. The course, Pedagogy as Art Practice, was aimed at exploring teaching as an art practice through dialogue and art making.

### ***The Case***

The professor, Todd, designed this four-week summer class as a studio art education course because he found there was a gap between students' studio coursework and art education coursework. His plan for the course was to bring those two practices together around critical conversations about the profession of art teaching. The case study course had a total of ten participants—the instructor, eight undergraduate Art Education majors, and myself. I functioned within the course as both a student and a researcher. Adam, Eliza, Chelsea, and Skylar were planning to student teach in the fall; Lauren, Gabrielle, and Sarah were planning to student teach in the spring. Brooke had just been admitted to the Art Education major and this was her first course within the department. I was completing my second year in my doctoral studies and about to begin my comprehensive exams in the fall.

### ***Methodology***

I used an instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995) to guide my search for understanding the following research questions:

- In what ways did the teacher and students' behavior exhibit wide-awakeness?
- How did the teacher and students create situations facilitating the development of wide-awakeness in this art education course?
- To what extent did wide-awakeness impact the classroom and the teacher and students?

I chose this mode of inquiry for its inducement of wide-awakeness. Case study work requires the researcher to be aware and analytical at all times. This methodology called for my presentness and attention to the subtleties of the case happenings, deep emotional understanding of those happenings, and willingness to follow where the case lead. This methodology also allowed me to share this search with my participants (Simons, 2009, p.36). Within the case study, research became a shared experience, a collaborative search for understanding, which resulted in a rich and intimate understanding, a wide-wake experience, a sophisticated beholding (Stake, 1995, p. 43).

Based on Lincoln and Guba's (1986) suggestions for establishing trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry and Merriam's (1995) for working with a single case, I embedded multiple components in my research design in an effort to generate quality data and interpretations. To maintain internal validity within the case study, I participated in the entire duration of the

course, conducted member checks of the interview transcripts, and attended to the complexity of the case by drawing on, and thus triangulating, the field notes, interview transcripts, and course artifacts. My memo making throughout data analysis served as an audit trail for tracking my interpretive process. Lastly, I used thick, rich, narrative descriptions to report the findings to enable readers to make naturalistic generalizations from the data and informed judgments about transferability between my case and their own (Stake, 1995).

### ***Data Generation***

On the first day of class, Todd invited us to introduce ourselves one at a time and explain what we were hoping to get out of the course. This allowed me to explain my personal interest in the course and my hope to conduct a case study of the course as a pilot for my dissertation research. I felt transparency in my intent to research the course was vital on the first day since I was beginning to develop relationships with my classmates and professor that would shape our time together in the course and our inquiry into the course for my pilot study. Like my classmates and professor, I eagerly participated in the happenings of the class and in getting to know one another. Following each class period I documented my participant observations with field notes and expanded my field notes into narratives of our experiences to ensure rich memories. I collected supporting artifacts generated by the course for document analysis as the course progressed. These documents included the syllabus, videos or handouts distributed by the instructor, and photographs of the students' in-process and completed art making. Then as the course came to a close, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the professor and three students in order to better understand the experience from the perspective of other participants. These interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and then given back to the interviewees for member checking.

### ***Data Analysis***

I conducted a thematic, narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008; Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of the field notes, interview transcripts, and documents generated during the study. I chose to work with this narrative approach to analysis because as Bruner (1986) and Polkinghorne (1988) advocated, narrative is the primary method by which human existence is made meaningful and therefore the human sciences should utilize this linguistic form of knowing as they seek to understand and explain human action. I believe formal logic alone was not enough to communicate the richness of the experience I investigated. Therefore, I have crafted narratives to fully communicate my holistic sense making of those experiences and explain my exegeses of the field texts we constructed together.

I specifically used Clandinin and Connelly's (1990) approach to narrative as a methodological guide. My analysis occurred through repeated rereadings of field notes and interview

transcripts to discover “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual’s experience and in the social setting” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132). To guide my analysis, I conducted detailed memo writing in relation to the field notes, transcripts, and documents. Memos were focused on autobiographical reflections, methodological notes, and notes in relation to my research questions and the various elements of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. I also thematically coded the data and wrote memos defining each code. I repeatedly returned to the coding and memo writing to refine my analysis over time. Once I felt the codes were representative of the data and my interpretive memos, I worked with the codes to understand their relationship to the experience and the research questions I was asking about the experience. My aim in this interpretive process was to craft a plot outline which would provide a holistic understanding of our experience and reveal the elements that emerged as themes throughout our experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). After I developed the detailed plot outline, I located moments from our experience that embodied the themes expressed throughout the plot outline and pulled excerpts from the field notes, transcripts, documents, and my memos that supported those themes. I then used these moments and excerpts to narrate the story of the elicitation, enactment, and effect of wide-awake within this art education course. In the following section I present vignettes providing narrative snapshots of key experiences in the course and use these vignettes to situate my discussion of the themes I generated.

### **Being With and Being There**

Throughout the pilot study course, Todd often encouraged us to look at what we came in contact with as creative material and ask ourselves, “What can I do with this?” Therefore, I used our class’ discussion of Schulte’s (2013) article “Being There and Becoming-Unfaithful” and our class’ appropriation of the terms being with and being there as creative material to enable me to discuss my interpretation of the ways these practices were lived out as wide-awake engagement in Pedagogy as Art Practice. I reinterpret *being with* and *being there* as the relational and intellectual engagement that facilitated our enactment of wide-awakeness. In what follows, I will discuss in detail how the participants were invited to *be with* and *be there* by the cultivation of care and the purposeful design of the course. I will then reveal how the participants lived out this way of being throughout the course and how the experience impacted them. Throughout this discussion, I will elaborate on our practices of *being with* and *being there* separately in order to clarify how I conceptualize the two ways we enacted wide-awakeness. Although, it is important to note that in the midst of wide-awake moments these two ways of being worked in tandem.

### ***Vignette I: The First Day***

On the first day of the course, we walked into the sun-filled room unsure of what to expect. Todd was sitting at a table he had meticulously prepared for us. The table was in the center of the room. It was covered with pristine tablecloths and surrounded by exactly ten chairs. In front of each chair was a coffee cup and a syllabus inviting you to have a seat. As each student entered the room, Todd greeted them; and as they took in their surroundings, they intuitively did a dance around the table to find the mug they wanted to drink from. We chatted casually about our mornings and our cups, and poured ourselves coffee as we waited for everyone to arrive. Once each chair was filled, we officially began by introducing ourselves, explaining what we hoped to get out of the course, and reviewing the syllabus. Todd elaborated on the syllabus by explaining that the course is on teaching as art practice and we are going to be thinking about our teaching through our art making in order to explore the relationship between these two practices. Todd stressed, “This class needs to be purposeful for you.” He explained how we need to each choose a focus for our art making and challenged us to cultivate our creative practices with an intent to push ourselves. We then explored the idea of creative material. We decided creative material is everything we come in contact with. We have the option to view things this way—to look at them for the possibility of what they can be and what we might be able to do with them. We then listed all of the creative materials fueling our own art making and teaching practices.

Next we watched a video of the social-conceptual artist Theaster Gates talking about his project Soul Food Pavilion (Smart Museum of Art, 2012). For this project, Gates transformed a space into a dining room in which people could share a meal of soul food and discuss questions related to the foods of African Americans. Gates explained that the dinners allowed him to “leverage ritual to ask hard questions.” Through the sharing of these meals, “Ritual becomes a tool that allows for people to feel safe, that gives us all an excuse to be more open, more transparent, more vulnerable than we might be normally.” From here Todd explained we would be coming together around the material and ritual of coffee and breakfast every morning for the first thirty minutes of class for “Radical Hospitality.” During this time we would critically engage ideas of art education theory and practice through conversation. He read from the syllabus:

As artists and art educators, we will never fully cultivate an understanding of what art pedagogy and art practice is until we begin to think carefully and thoughtfully about what each, as an individual and collaborative practice, can *do*. This class aims to encounter and explore the *doing* of “praxis” as it exists within *and* in-between *art pedagogy* and *art practice*. Each day we will labor to exercise a commitment to investigate, think and live the dynamic, yet often incompatible, intersections of art pedagogy and art practice.

Todd explained that the remaining hour and forty-five minutes of each class would be spent cultivating our personal art practices. This time was called PRAXIS.

Then Todd projected an excerpt of Schulte's (2013) article "Being There and Becoming-Unfaithful" on the SMART Board. Schulte was advocating for a purposeful and relational "*way of being there*" (p. 3) with children through research in which the researcher is actively in pursuit of "becoming-unfaithful" (p. 8) to their preconceived notions or aims in order to be attentive to the particularities of the moment at hand. A researcher who does not seek to become unfaithful risks what Schulte called "being near there" (p. 5) or being unauthentically present. Schulte explained:

...to be invested in ways that are *real* requires that I continually labor to *live within* the event of young children's experiences, to *linger* in the particularities of a given moment, and to occupy the immediate yet incipient relations of its social, cultural, aesthetic, and political vitality. (p. 5)

Todd used these ideas from the article as a prompt for us as a class to consider how we wanted to participate with each other and the course material. Todd asked us to consider how we wanted to be there with one another this semester. We discussed the ways in which our being there matters in the class and as teachers. We talked about how smaller groups are more personal and the importance of community and collaboration. We explored the idea of authenticity and talked about what we felt was appropriate for teachers to bring into a classroom from their personal lives. Todd asked, "Is there such a thing as being near but not being there?" and we troubled this idea and made plans of how we will be with and be there this semester and as teachers.

Todd then told us he wanted us to cultivate a space for ourselves within the room for the semester, and gave us the rest of the class period to prepare our space. At this point he stepped back and allowed us to direct how we proceeded. We discussed what medium each person would be working with and how much space each person needed for art making. We talked about our desires to have personal space but wanting also to be near each other, and how we could structure the flow of the room to support this. Several people sketched out ideas for the floor plan and then we moved the tables around the room to find the best design. We settled on our dinner table in the center of the room, in front of the Smartboard, just as Todd had it setup. Behind the dinner table was an "L" shape arrangement of worktables.

### *An Invitation to Awaken*

The conversations and happenings on the first day of the course prepared a space in which we were encouraged to participate with one another and the course material in a wide-awake way.

Todd purposefully crafted these encounters and the course design to establish the class as a space in which this type of engagement was encouraged and valued. I have conceptualized Todd's pedagogical practices that initiated this participation as cultivating care to inspire *being with* and crafting encounters to encourage *being there*. I will now discuss how these themes were embodied in the vignette and the class as a whole in order to reveal how students were invited to awaken by the instructor modeling *being with* and constructing situations eliciting *being there*.

### *Cultivating Care to Inspire Being With*

As evident in Vignette I, Todd sought to cultivate care within the classroom between him and the students, the students and each other, and care with creative material—or our thoughts and surroundings. This atmosphere of care inspired thoughtful and purposeful relational engagement or what I refer to as *being with*. A large part of how Todd initiated this environment was by using the work of the contemporary artist Theaster Gates, [Soul Food Pavilion](#) (Smart Museum of Art, 2012), to open up the possibilities of breakfast as Radical Hospitality. Radical Hospitality was a time for us to come together around our breakfast table over a cup of coffee and breakfast treats we brought in and engage in critical conversations about the profession of art education. During Todd's interview, he elaborated on how he used the work of Theaster Gates to craft an environment supportive of deep engagement. Todd explained:



Figure 1. The table and cups we gathered around for Radical Hospitality.

...[I used] the material of contemporary art, which is this artist and his practice, as a way to sort of emphasize and accent that pedagogic quality that I hope that these students will come to in their own way, which is hospitality and this idea of giving gifts to each other by being with one another. So part of that is tapping into that, and then using this sort of thing that's really personal to me, which is I like to share coffee with people because it's a kind of gift. It's an invitation, so if I make you a cup of coffee and I give it to you, and I say "Hey, let's have a cup of coffee," it's

that kind of gesture, from the onset, that opens a kind of pedagogic space. That material does it, and that kind of hospitality opens up a space for learning to begin working itself out. And so, the structure of the course, in my opinion had to be entirely centered on this kind of breakfast, as a kind of radical hospitality. Every day we have to be able to come together differently than we might in another class. We have to be able to come together around the material of food, and through that situation, we begin to attend to very difficult professional dilemmas.

Here is an excerpt from my field notes about one of our mornings together that reveals how the generosity of the meal and the material of our coming together to share the meal encouraged our *being with* one another:

More students were entering the classroom and people were beginning to serve grits and coffee. There was a lot of excitement over the grits. Everyone was chatting about their love of grits and connection to them. Brooke began talking about a girl who ran an omelet stand near her mother's cafe and how she was a person everyone should meet. This led Brooke into exploring, yet again, the theme for her art making project inspired by our Radical Hospitality—what are the gifts that others have given her through their own personal forms of radical hospitality.

Like Todd told me, “We never know where our small gestures will take us; but these are the things that move us.” People were opening up and sharing their personal stories over breakfast. Breakfast as Radical Hospitality initiated a feeling of community, comradeship. It also provided time for us to linger with each other in exploration of our past experiences, beliefs, and hopes for the future.

Another element of Todd inviting us to *be with* one another, our course material, and the happenings of our lives was to look at them as creative material. Our discussion of the idea of creative material on the first day, welcomed us to look for the possibility of what we can do with everything we came in contact with that semester. It encouraged a heightened perception of our encounters. We attended more closely to our experiences and considered carefully what might come of them. Todd defined some of the creative material he put to work to cultivate the classroom environment:

...without necessarily talking about it, I drew from new materials and perspectives people like Karen Barad and Joan Bennett. And I think we, we started to see that in our breakfasts together, where it's not just people coming together, but we talk about the whole material of that space—those interactions, those ideas, those things—as having potential. It's about, I think, allowing people to adopt a different

kind of ethic towards people and things, human and non-human. When we can begin to see the table and the coffee as a kind of creative material that enables us to begin to think differently about being with each other, that's really important; and that's just one part of them noticing creative material.

The students began to put the idea of creative material to work in their interactions with each other and the material of the class by attending purposefully to the possibility of those interactions. I will explore this in more detail in the next section.

Todd's hospitable pedagogy extended past his gift of coffee or his invitation to look at our surroundings as creative material to the way he welcomed students everyday when they entered the room and was deeply engaged with them in both whole group and personal conversations. He did this through being attentive and curious. With a question as simple as "How are you doing?" he would invite us to engage. Then he would *be with* us as we responded by listening intently and responding thoughtfully. He aimed to meet students where they were and to be interested in what they were interested in. Todd explained another important aspect of his pedagogy was being humble. Todd's humility guided his attention to students' contributions in the class. He felt it was important to listen carefully to students' intellectual generosity, value their ideas and experiences, and acknowledge their contributions. These practices made students feel cared for and more willing to participate and to reciprocate. Sarah said one of Todd's roles was "respecting us as future educators and as individuals—like who we are and what we had to offer." She shared how powerful it was when he would acknowledge her contributions: "sometimes he would look at me after I would say something...just looking at me with this like 'Thank you, for saying that.'" Todd explained another enactment of humility, as a teacher, is "being able to get free of yourself a bit so that students are able to cultivate spaces that might be contrary to those you desire to have." The class was very student focused and driven. Todd would come in with a plan; but he held it loosely to allow students to transform our time into what we needed most as pedagogues and individuals. By cultivating care in these ways, we were invited to be fully present *with* each other relationally. Within this environment, he also invited us to awaken through carefully crafted encounters.

#### *Crafting Encounters to Encourage Being There*

Todd explained in his interview, "I am not interested in giving students the stuff they need. I am interested in inviting them into a situation where they have to think about it, because giving it to them will not help them." These convictions lead Todd to purposefully crafting the course design and encounters in a way that allowed the students to *be there* intellectually with one another and the course material. He did this to allow students to construct their own understanding by negotiating the material themselves. As described above, we would begin

our days by sharing coffee around our intimate table and having conversations as a form of Radical Hospitality. These hospitable conversations were encounters based on prompts related to professional dilemmas we face as art educators. The conversations invited us to share our past experiences and beliefs with one another in an effort to construct a more complex understanding of those dilemmas. The prompts were as simple as the question from the first day of class, “Is there such a thing as being near but not being there?” or as elaborate as follows:

Todd began class today by explaining how we were going to structure our breakfast conversation. He wanted to divide the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011) between each of us. Then we could take five minutes to read over our individual standard and underline or make note of what stood out to us. Todd thought these standards held valuable creative material for us as teachers and worried that people read these and see them as an end rather than a starting point. He clarified, “We want to unpack it in a way that helps us understand what it is and what it enables us to do.” He clarified, “We are not doing this to critique, but to look for a certain kind of potential that is typically not seen or desired to be seen by individuals reading these. Standards should generate possibilities for practice not merely guide it.” He ushered us into our reading with, “Let’s think more deeply and more interestingly. I want you to recognize the language being used, but then see how you can put it to work in your classroom.”

Our encounters put us in constant dialogue with each other, materials, and ourselves; and Todd’s sharing of a cup of coffee with us opened up a space for this dialogue so we would consider critically, make connections, pose questions and imagine alternatives.

The aim of the students’ art making during PRAXIS was to explore the intersection of art pedagogy and art practice in a way that was meaningful for them. Thus students selected how they would conceptually investigate teaching as art practice through the medium of their choice. This time became an opportunity to deeply explore pedagogical dilemmas that piqued students’ personal curiosities or commitments. For instance, Adam made a connection between our explorations of Radical Hospitality and how Odin, the Norse god, sacrificed one of his eyes to gain knowledge that would lead to the betterment of society. Adam saw Odin’s sacrifice as “voluntary charity” and began reimagining his work as an educator as a gesture of kindness related to Odin’s. Adam decided to design a collaborative printmaking project during PRAXIS that enabled him to give a piece of his art and art knowledge away to others as he taught them how to pull a print and let them keep the print they made of his drawing of Odin.



Figure 2. Adam's drawing of Odin.

We also entered into personal dialogues with one another before, during, and after class. These conversations provided us the opportunity to get to know one another and supported our *being with* and *being there* by connecting us relationally. All forms of our dialogue were very personal. These encounters led to storytelling, reflecting, sharing, and connecting. This *being there* drew on both our cognitive and imaginative engagement with the encounters of the course. We were negotiating who we wanted to be as teachers and were drawing on our own experiences and values to do so.

Todd's personal *being there* with students was expressed in multiple ways. The first was his crafting of encounters that were relevant to the students. He

was also there with students as we worked through unpacking the prompts together by means of conversation and art making. Skylar elaborated in her interview on Todd's *being there*:

Even though the art making was really important, I think Todd saw that we were all extremely intrigued with the conversation; and what we were talking about was so productive in all of our minds. I think it would be a shame to stop it just because of classroom structure—and he never did. We would have our coffee and talk about the prompt, and it's just a constant back and forth between everyone, and then once the conversation kind of stops we would go into working. Todd would always walk around, go to each of us, see where we were in our process, and he would sit with us and ask us questions. ...In the beginning he asked us what our [art making] ideas were and how it is relating to our topics we are talking about in our morning conversations. It's a lot of unpacking. You'd say concepts, and he would be like "Okay, so what does that mean? How can you expand on that?" It's just a lot of...probing, getting us to constantly keep thinking about it. ...But never questions where it was like "I don't know, like do you really want to be doing that? Blah, blah, blah." It was like tell me more, tell me more, tell me more. And the more we

told, the more we were being able to unpack it for ourselves, which helped so much.

Todd gave students agency to direct the progression of the class. This included the set up of the room, how conversations developed, the length of time spent discussing a topic, and their focus for art making. The course was student driven. Todd took on the role of participant and mediator throughout these experiences. If he was not listening, or sharing, or making, he was questioning. He encouraged students to linger in their *being there* by probing them to go deeper in their thinking, unpack the ideas they were working with, or explain their thinking.

Time also played a major element in allowing these encounters to develop throughout the class periods. As I said, Todd did not limit or direct the time spent on the various aspects of our encounters. The students' enactment of wide-awakeness took time. It was a process that could not be rushed. This time involved developing relationships, finding ways to connect to one another and material, taking risks in contributing, and developing your thoughts and work. Students needed to linger with one another and the moment at hand.

### ***Vignette II: A Critical Conversation***

We were ready to jump into discussing which Critical Dispositions from the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011) we each selected as the most important to us. Gabrielle began with 9(n): "The teacher sees him/herself as a learner, continuously seeking opportunities to draw upon current education policy and research as sources of analysis and reflection to improve practice" (p. 18). She said to be a good teacher you should always be learning and not always do the same lesson plans. Todd probed her to go deeper, "Why is that so valuable to you?" Gabrielle explained she often hears about other teachers who don't try something new and no longer see themselves as learners. Sarah jumped in, "If you stop seeing yourself as a learner, you forget what that feels like. Growing and discovering more about yourself is learning. It would just not make sense to not be a learner anymore." Eliza tagged onto this idea, "You have to know what you are doing and put in 100%. Loving learning means wanting to continually better yourself and your students." Todd discussed the importance of revealing to your students you are still trying to learn. He encouraged us to think of ourselves as incomplete and to embrace surprise, curiosity, and to keep moving. "Share your vulnerability with students," he said, "you can say, 'I don't know, let's figure this out together.'" Brooke reaffirmed, "It is important for students to see you are doing it together." Sarah added, "They see you as a real person, not all knowing. It is a unifying factor." Brooke replied, "We are all on the same team." Eliza stressed that it is an exercise of humility.

Sarah then shifted us to 3(r) "The teacher is a thoughtful and responsive listener and observer" (p. 12). She said, "Perhaps this is the foundation of being a good teacher. This is the means of creating a safe, open, awake classroom, and being a strong person." She went on, "Without

this foundation, you can't build anything strong or worth keeping." Playing with a word repeated throughout the document, Todd asked, "What does it mean to be committed?" Eliza said it was a length of time, period, or amount. Sarah said it means to be all in. To her it was about being there and being present with students, doing as much as you can do all the time as long as you are teaching. She reasoned, "If you engage only when required, you are half the person you can be. You're not committed." Brooke linked this to a bible story about Nehemiah rebuilding a wall in Israel. She said he was committed to rebuilding the wall. It was his sole focus. She linked this to how teachers will have to put other things aside when they are in the classroom. She said, "Other things will just have to wait in the classroom, your personal things will have to wait." She personified this role saying, "I'm here with my students right now." She explained, "It becomes who you are." Todd asked if you can be committed without really knowing what you are committing to. Adam replied, "What is really set in stone? How can you know the future?" Eliza added, "I think you have to take what comes up and go for it." Chelsea said, "A big part is just wanting it. You have to want to be there."

#### *A Wide-Awake Response*

Todd's presence in the classroom and conceptualization of classroom encounters encouraged the enactment of wide-awakeness. Vignette II is just one example of daily conversations during Pedagogy as Art Practice. As evident in Vignette II, Todd and the students lived out the deep engagement of *being with* one another and the course material and cultivated the critical consciousness of *being there*. This wide-awake participation was evident throughout both the encounters Todd presented students with and the encounters students initiated. I will now define these themes to reveal my understanding of how Todd and the students responded to one another's invitations to awaken by choosing to *be with* and *be there*.

#### *The Deep Engagement of Being With*

Our *being with* throughout the course was lived out as a deep engagement, or commitment to investing ourselves in each other and the work of the class. It was being wide-awake relationally and perceptually with each other and what we came in contact with. It opened a space in which we wanted to engage. This required a striving to be present and purposeful in our engagements. Our *being with* was looking, listening, engaging, questioning, reflecting, and contributing. The following field note is an example of *being with*:

Skylar just realized several of her mugs cracked when they dried and she had to switch gears to throw more cups instead of firing the ones she had already made. She was really struggling with working in our classroom. Todd affirmed her feelings. He said, "I'm not surprised. This room was not designed for this type of work." Todd then tried to help Skylar ease back into making her cups. He offered,

“What if I start and you have to make something out of it?” As Todd sat at the wheel he said, “Oh my goodness, I’m really scared. It has been like ten years since I have thrown.”; but he jumped in anyway to support Skylar. He struggled through the motions and when he was finished, he playfully said, “Here you go. Good luck!”...Todd is so responsive to his students. He was there with her in this moment of realizing she was not as far along as she had thought and in her struggles in the room. Then he took the playful risk to do something he had not done in a long time to help her ease into it. Todd stepped into Skylar's space to help her not feel so alone or overwhelmed within it.

As this field note reveals, *being with* went beyond being alert in experience. It involved acting upon that awareness. This action often involved lingering in moments to allow them to fully develop. Here is an example from a conversation between two students:

Chelsea and Brooke then went to look at the evolution of the Spheres of Influence Exquisite Corpse art making project we were collaborating on as a class. Brooke said, “I love these. Check them out!” Brooke pointed to one sphere and explained this was a piece of baking paper Sarah was using. Oil spilled onto it and part of the paper burnt and made a beautiful pattern. Brooke said, “Isn’t that great!” Chelsea and Brooke inspected it closer commenting on how part of it was flaking off. Chelsea then said it reminds me of a planet.

The girls were sharing in this moment together and their heightened sense of awareness pulled them into a discussion of one small aspect of this collaborative project. Other major examples of this were the students deciding to organize a special breakfast to cheer Eliza up after a car accident and Chelsea helping Adam when he was unable to finish his project on time. This type of engagement also took place in countless small ways like asking how someone was when they seemed distracted, inquiring into the stories others shared, bringing in cream and sugar for people who did not like their coffee black, or washing your coffee mug after you used it.

Another aspect of our *being with* was relying on each other, and finding encouragement and support in each other. This occurred through us: listening, consoling, comforting, and advising. Skylar further elaborated on how the environment encouraged this *being with*. She explained:

What was amazing about the class, was that everybody wanted to share their opinion, and I think that all has to do with the environment of the classroom, like one, it was small, and the way the table was set up—just as a dinner table practically—

we were all looking at each other, and we were all very engaged in what everyone else was saying.

As Vignette II revealed, we moved with each other. As one person would share a personal experience or belief in dialogues, others would affirm their contribution, add to it, probe them to continue, or present alternative ideas. Sarah explained:

It was a safe environment, it was an intimate environment, it was a community. We were a unit. We all worked together all the time, and when one of us wasn't there it felt weird. It felt like part of the conversation was missing, that we were leaving out a huge piece that could have been developed. So I feel like we were really reliant on each other, and were deeply invested in each other and our successes and our conversation and how we felt about everything.

Within the caring environment Todd initiated on the first day, we were compelled to carefully cultivate this space together throughout the rest of the course. This resulted in the creation of a safe space in which we could take risks in our thinking and making as we sought to respond to the encounters of the course. Within this space everyone opened up. Laura explained, "in other classes, I am one of those people who won't speak up. I won't. But I feel comfortable in this class and that makes all the difference, that I can say anything and it is going to be valued." This intimate space also encouraged us to connect on a personal level. We shared our struggles and triumphs, and turned to each other for personal advice.

Our enactment of wide-awakeness was often accompanied by strong emotions. This was expressed through things like glowing with joy, pulsing with passion, or swelling in anger. If wide-awakeness is the heightening of senses, the heightening of reactions is a logical connection. There were often ah-ha moments when connections were made. These were expressed through sincere nods of heads, Sarah's joyful squeals, raised voices, or laughing together. Disappointment was also a thread throughout our engagements. This seems to have been rooted in the fact that participants really valued what they were making or what we were discussing. Disappointment was expressed when something did not go as a student had planned or when discussing unjust circumstances. Participants' disappointment arose from their criticalness of the situation at hand, and it was accompanied by the support of peers. This was expressed by peers *being with* their classmates in ways like consoling them, giving them ideas for how to move forward, or explaining what was positive about the situation.

It is important to note that Todd engaged in *being with* us in these ways. Sarah beautifully captured the roles he played in the process:

I feel like Todd was a mediator in our thought process. If we would wonder to a place, he would somehow think of a question that was relevant to where we were in conversation. So instead of constantly drawing it back to where he introduced it, he moved with us... So I feel like in that way Todd's role was definitely a unifier, a mediator, a contributor, a strengthener, he was the backbone, and I feel like we would have gone several of the places, maybe, we did without him; but I feel like it would not have reached the depths that it did without his contributions, and without him allowing us to speak. ... So maybe his role too was to teach us how to listen, and then our role was to be supportive of one another, and to respect one another, and to be open-minded.

Todd was *with* us as a participant and as an instructor. His role as an instructor was to be a mediator of these experiences.



Figure 3. Sarah's final project highlighted concepts from our conversations that were influential to her developing teaching philosophy.

### *The Critical Consciousness of Being There*

The encounters Todd presented to students elicited a critical consciousness and active imagination because students were asked to make their own interpretations and solutions. As in his *being with*, Todd modeled *being there*. His search for creative material, his careful use of language, and his thoughtful responses invited students to behave in this way. The attitude of thought elicited by Todd's invitations was wide-awakeness. Within the course our *being there* intellectually propelled us forward in our thinking and making.

Part of this awareness was adopting Todd's playful outlook for creative material. We began looking at things for what they might be or might do for us. This *being there* was a thoughtful and reflective exploration of ideas or materials relevant to our professional and personal lives. It helped us recognize that all encounters can be viewed differently,

wide-awakely. This attitude is much richer than criticizing. It is productive because it releases possibilities for growth. Sarah often applied this language to her daily life. She talked about looking at the hardships or struggles we face for what they may make possible in our lives.

Another application of our *being there* was throughout our dialogues with each other and our art making. These dialogues were shaped around topics that were relevant to us as art educators and we were invited to draw upon our own experience and beliefs to contribute to these dialogues. Within this space, everyone was compelled to share thoughts and feelings with peers, to listen, and respond. Skylar spoke for everyone in relation to this during her interview:

We are talking about real concerns and fears that we have or ideas that we have, and really digging deep and putting them into what it will actually look like in our classroom; ... having those conversations and really believing the ideas that we were talking about can actually work and almost like imagining what it is going to be like in the class. It was almost like a lot of dreaming in the class, dreaming about what could happen, and really being excited about it, and not just talking about it ... Any time we talked about anything else in [other] classes there just wasn't this passion there, and there wasn't this, (sigh) I don't know, there wasn't this idea that what we were being taught was actually going to be used. It was just things that we needed to know. But this stuff, I'm like, "I have to remember this because this is going to change the way that I teach my classroom."

The "digging deep," or what we often called "unpacking," that occurred within our conversations was an analysis of the personal beliefs, values, and experiences of one another. As these conversations heightened our consciousness, we were moved to construct personal knowledge and beliefs. Sarah explained the process of *being there* during her interview as follows:

You sit down and you engage in this conversation. And somebody starts to say something, and maybe if you're a good listener, you really start to translate and eat that conversation, and it makes you think about things in your own way, in your own head, and you start to create your own opinion on the matter, on the conversation, or your own questions or you know curiosities and when you speak you've made that creation in your head into a tangible thing.

Our dialogues during Radical Hospitality were treasured by each of us. Skylar explained in her interview, “it’s a lot more productive and a lot more inspiring when you have conversations and questions and interactions; and not just simple interactions, but deep, intellectual conversation and emotional conversation.” In our *being there* we were not only exploring what was presently at hand, but Todd was preparing us for the future. He wanted our *being with* and *being there* to continue. He was trying to help us see how we could apply it to our future teaching endeavors. Brooke’s final project in the class embodied this aim. Her project was a participatory experiment that invited individuals at the art show to engage with the members of our class. Brooke began by drawing each of her classmates and Todd. Then she provided a small notebook labeled with each person’s name. As people viewed her drawings, they read the following on a wall plaque:

Please pick one of these people and either find the person (all of these people are present at the opening of the show) or find their art in the show. Encounter that person through conversation and observation, or encounter their art. Then write about it in the book that corresponds to that person. The intent is for you to record what you took away from that encounter so that it may be shared. The result should be a collaboration of different view points collected together. This idea is based off of the notion that all people are teachers and learners in some way. They are always teaching something whether they mean to or not.

Brooke’s collaborative project extended conversations from our classroom about being in a constant state of teaching and learning to others so they could consider it with us.



Figure 4. Brooke’s interactive final project.

### *Vignette III: The Last Day*

We decided to end the course the same way we spent the majority of our time in it, talking around our dinner table as we shared coffee and breakfast. After our last breakfast together, we would attend the exhibition opening for our art show. The show was made up of each student's art making project for the semester. Our janitor Florence, a mother figure within our department, joined us for our last breakfast and conversation around the table. Todd opened up our conversation by telling us he had not really had a plan for the class when it started. He knew the students needed to explore the relationship between teaching and art practice; so he set out with the aim of each of us finding purpose in our classroom pedagogy and how we reconciled teaching as art making. He wanted to prepare us to enter any space and be able to see it as creative material rather than limitations. He reinforced that it is more productive to look at things for their potential than limitations.

Then Todd took the risk of exposing himself on a more personal level. His voice lowered, his face grew somber, and he spoke sincerely, "I really needed this class; so thank you." This opened up a time for Todd to talk about what the class meant to him and for the students to talk about how Todd and the course had impacted us. There was an overwhelming warmth in the room. As Florence shared the space with us, she could even feel it. Florence said she had never seen students' care about a teacher like this and Sarah responded, "I've never had a teacher care about me like this." In that moment, some of us smiled, others nodded in agreement, and yet others wiped tears from their eyes. As the time for the opening drew near and we tried to pull ourselves away from the table, Todd explained that the exhibition was not representative of our class—the material of the class was our conversations at that very table.

### *Lasting Impressions*

Our last day together was a time to reflect on our experiences in the course, and Vignette III has begun to reveal the lasting impressions of the course. The main themes of impact that arose from my interpretation of the accumulation of experiences throughout the course were the formation of a community of care and consciousness and the empowerment of individuals through a sense of possibility. I will now discuss how these themes were expressed in the Vignette and other field texts.

### *A Community of Care and Consciousness*

Todd's commitment to *being with* and *being there* was taken up by everyone in the course. Our relational and thoughtful engagement with the course content and one another established us as a wide-awake community. This community valued each other's contributions. Sarah said in her interview that "remembering the conversations that we have in the morning, or remembering how people feel about me, or that people take me seriously and listen to me, you know, it's just so, it was so powerful." Skylar was so moved by being part of our community

that she devoted her art making throughout the course to honoring the relationships she developed with her peers. She made a mug specifically for each person and gave it to him or her on the last day of class. Skylar explained her project as a “hospitable gesture” that represented her “connectedness.” Skylar said her project was more than “me giving them a piece of artwork, but me giving them my art practice, my art ideas, and [them] taking that with them for the rest of their life.” Within this caring environment, we questioned everything. Todd explained that this habit led students to consider ideas for “what they are really about, and ultimately what they might be, what they might make possible for them and their students.” We developed this habit because we recognized how generative it was. Our questioning allowed us to consider what we might make possible through experience.

#### *Empowered Through a Sense of Possibility*

Our commitments to be fully present with one another and genuinely value the work of one another shaped our beliefs of who we were and what we were capable of doing. Through the course people grew to identify themselves as thinkers, teachers, and artists. Students also expanded their definition of what art is. Students grew to see our conversations, our *being with* and *being there*, as an art practice. This view aligns with Dewey’s (1934) expanded conception of “art as experience.” Sarah explained in her interview,

This course taught me to embrace the fact that [being an artist and a teacher] are not different and that they don’t have to be. I don’t want them to be anymore. When I make art I want to think about how it can affect my future, and how it can affect my students, and how it can help me grow to become a better person, to be a better mentor, a better teacher, a better companion. That is what this course was to me—this unification of two separate things becoming one entity and a stronger one. ...and how to apply it to every aspect of my life, and not just see it as “Oh this is an art education course, it is only related to art education.” It is related to everything I do, everything I think, everything that matters. When you are an artist and you are living artfully and you live in a way where you’re appreciative of every small thing that happens to you, and you can see that for what it is, and for what it could be, and for how it can translate, and you can take this one little event that occurs, and open it up, and you can introduce it to every part of your life, you can integrate it everywhere.

What once was separate became joined. Art became viewed as a way one engages. Art became wide-awakeness; and this wide-awakeness can be applied to all aspects of life including, but not limited to, teaching and art making.

### Conclusions and Implications

My understanding of our enactment of wide-awakeness and how this enactment impacted the participants makes interesting connections to Maxine Greene’s theorization of wide-awakeness. Please reference the diagram below throughout the discussion that follows to visualize the web of meaning I have made through my interpretation of our experiences.

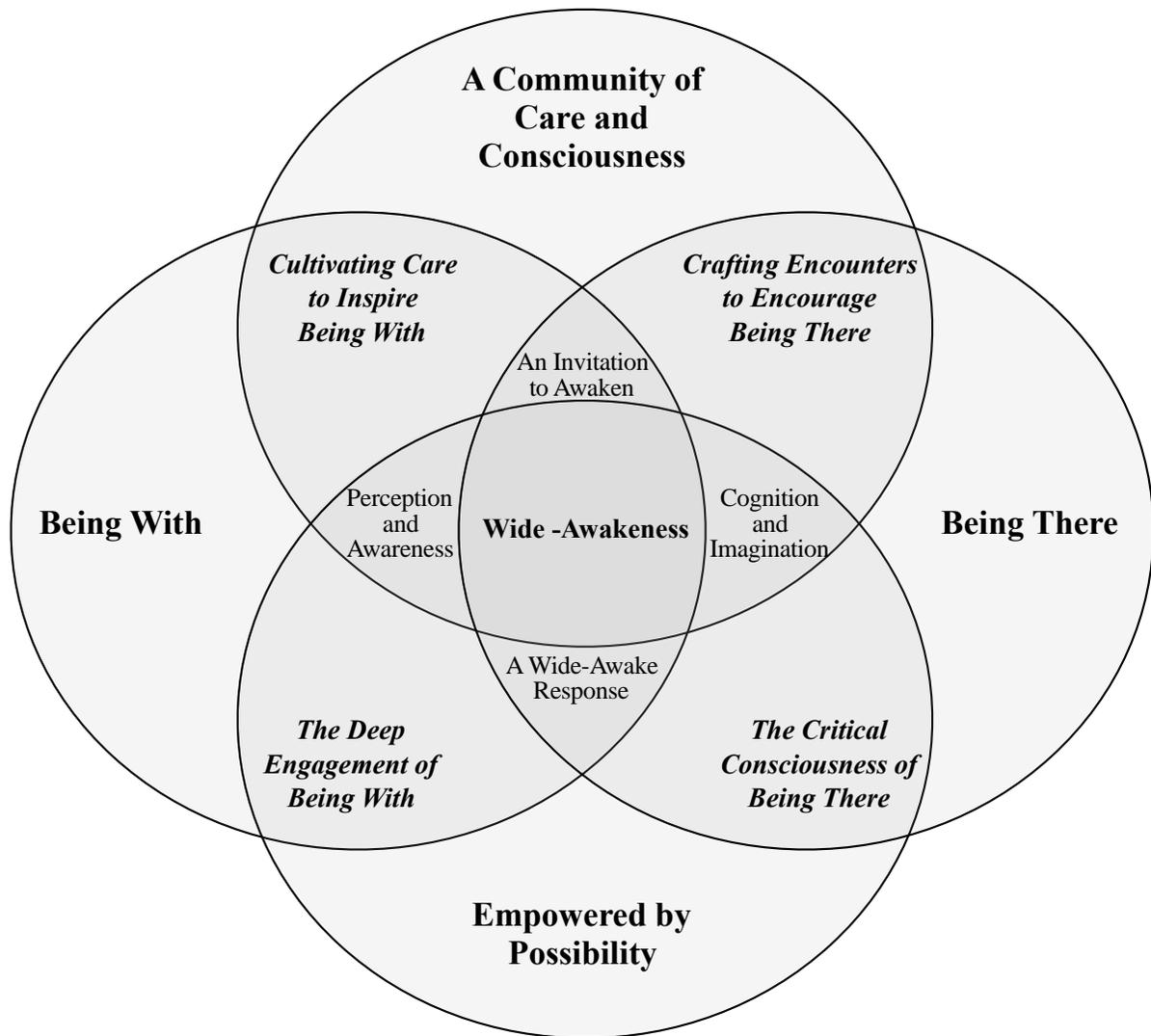


Figure 5. Visualization of our enactment of wide-awakeness.

Through Pedagogy as Art Practice, Todd answered Greene’s (1995) call for the heightening of consciousness. His pedagogy of *being with* and *being there* cultivated a space in which students could enact wide-awakeness. This pedagogy was a performance of Dewey’s (1934)

definition of mind as care, both affect and intellect. This began with the care Todd invested in the course design and in his *being with* students. The invitation of coffee, explained through the work of Theaster Gates, and the idea of creative material connected to Todd's life and the students' in personal ways. Todd made room in the course for student agency. He constantly gave the conversation and happenings over to the students to construct. He also empowered students by acknowledging the worth of their contributions. Todd's practice of *being with* was quickly adopted by students as was evident through their deep engagement in dialogue and relationship with each other. The encounters Todd presented to students elicited a critical consciousness or wide-awakeness because students were asked to make their own interpretations by *being there* with the course material and one another. As in his *being with*, Todd modeled *being there*. His search for creative material, his careful use of language, and his thoughtful responses invited students to behave in this way. Through thoughtful and reflective dialogues, the class entered Greene's conception of the "collaborative search" (p. 23) by sharing personal beliefs, values, and experiences relevant to art making and teaching. Each individual then processed these conversations in order to construct personal knowledge and beliefs. Students were able to "name their worlds" (Greene, 1995, p. 150) and used their "social imaginations" (Greene, 1995, p. 5) to project how these will transform their teaching and art making practices. Greene (1995) theorized, "Individual identity takes form in the contexts of relationship and dialogue; our concern must be to create the kinds of contexts that nurture—for all children—the sense of worthiness and agency" (p. 41); and that is what happened in this course. The participants developed a community that valued the care and consciousness of wide-awakeness and were empowered by the possibilities this released in their lives. This pilot study has moved me to more deeply understand wide-awakeness. The participants' *being with* and *being there* have clarified for me that wide-awakeness is both a state of mind and a relational practice. One must actively approach experience with interested attentiveness and careful consideration in order to act upon it critically or imaginatively. This expanded conception on wide-awakeness has both shifted my methodology and aims for my dissertation study. I have worked to incorporate the practices of *being with* and *being there* into the ways I participate as a researcher in my new case and further inquire into the affect and intellect of wide-awakeness. These findings are also directly applicable to the classroom.

It is vital for art educators to view their pedagogy as art practice. Rather than developing aesthetic objects, we are crafting aesthetic experiences for our students. I propose this course can serve as a pedagogical model for encouraging the enactment of wide-awakeness within courses merging art and aesthetic education. While I believe educators should craft their own unique course structures and encounters in response to their course and students' needs, educators can use the constructs of *being with* and *being there* outlined in this article as pedagogical guides for their crafting. We can begin by creating an atmosphere of care through thoughtful and purposeful relational engagement or *being with* our students and

course material. Then we can intentionally design experiences that allow our students to *be there* intellectually with one another and the course material. Attending to the relational and intellectual components of our pedagogical practices has the potential to draw our students and us into Greene's (1995) "collaborative search" (p. 23) and make possible the enactment of wide-awakeness.

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