EXPLORING THE TRANSITION FROM ART STUDENT TO ART EDUCATOR THROUGH VISUAL DIARIES

by

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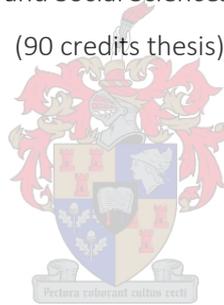
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DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: April 2022

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ABSTRACT

My journey as an art student, volunteering facilitator and later as an arts educator has thus far been riddled with the fear of failure, a common experience for anyone hoping to have a positive social impact in a country as economically unequal as South Africa is.

The main research question was formulated as follows: *What are the challenging aspects regarding the transition from art student to art educator?* In addition, I ask: a) How did my own art and art education journey influence my educator identity? b) How did my experience of working in various communities with different racial and cultural groups influence my educator identity? c) To what extent did the use of visual diaries help me to reflect on my educator identity?

The aim of the study was to share my own experiences of becoming an art facilitator with the hope that it would assist other young art educators in their teaching and learning journey to become art facilitators. I explore these questions using four theoretical perspectives, namely empowerment, power hierarchies, critical citizenship education and educator identity, which formed the framework for this study. Empowerment can be described as a practice through which individuals define their own needs and priorities and take action towards attaining them (Rowlands 2001:15). The concept of power hierarchies in the learning environment is highlighted as a framework, and the importance of understanding and navigating different spaces and shifting power positions is crucial for facilitators. Citizenship education aims to prepare people for living in diverse societies and emphasises aspects of human rights, democracy and social justice. Various researchers have engaged identity and have argued that identity is something that we all engage in, instead of something we have, and we therefore perform our identity. Benwell and Stokoe (2006:49) go even further by describing identity as constructed and produced moment-by-moment in everyday conversation.

In this thesis I have used of autoethnography as a methodology and my visual diaries to assist me in remembering and reflecting on my journey from an art student to an art educator. Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that aims to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experiences (Ellis 2004; Jones 2005). In auto-biographical work, the writer must read, explore and discover to create knowledge that is useful for themselves and the reader. When this work is judged by the reader as honest and valuable, the research could be considered credible. I have used my visual diaries as reference to construct my learning and teaching experiences. In auto-biographical work, the writer must read, explore and discover to create knowledge

that is useful for themselves and the reader. When this work is judged by the reader as honest and valuable, the research could be considered credible.

The biggest challenges in my transition from art student to art educator have been developing confidence, building relationships with all learners, and developing structure and managing my time effectively.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No words can express my gratitude to Prof. Elizabeth Gunter, Yumna, Stephané Conradie, Neeske, Ledelle, Uncle Andre, Vulindlele Nyoni and Elmarie Costandius and everyone in the Visual Arts Department who made time for me.

It was a privilege to get to know all the teachers and principals who were never too busy when I approached them, be it for advice and/or information. I appreciate all the warmth and motivation given me when I needed guidance in navigating my journey from art student to art educator. This journey has deepened my love for South Africa, with all its diversity of race, nationality, culture, gender issues, beliefs and multiple ways of knowing and being.

I am deeply grateful to the community workers who have become my mentors. The journey has not been easy as working with people tests one's ability to see a situation from someone else's perspective. With every project and programme, I have been involved in, I have been blessed to meet the most diverse, warm-hearted and talented people who care for the learners and communities they serve, and with whom every day is an opportunity to learn. What a gift it is to be allowed into the classrooms and community centres, and to work slowly to gradually make a difference in the lives of young people.

These artists defy any category, exceed limited expectations, and challenge unequal power relations and inauthenticity. To all the young inspiring and aspiring artists who choose to make time to attend class, especially while I am still developing my practice – I thank you for your graciousness and your passion to learn and create.

DEDICATION

Ouma, my best friend and main debating opponent, thank you for inspiring me to listen, be tolerant of diverse opinions and ultimately do this work. I dedicate this thesis to you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and background

Art making should not be a privilege for the fortunate few who can afford art materials and classes with professional artists. I am a fortunate South African who gets to create art and then to share this passion with young artists, many of whom may not have resources or dedicated time and space to create art. My journey as an art student, volunteering facilitator and later as arts educator has thus far been riddled with the fear of failure, a common experience for anyone hoping to have a positive social impact in a country as economically unequal as South Africa. Although I am aware of the reality that art education cannot immediately improve the daily lives of young people and their families, art workshops bring people together and also allow individuals to go deep within themselves. Over the past four years, I have worked as an arts facilitator in Bellville South, and continue to work in Delft and in communities of Hout Bay in Cape Town.

In the final year of my Fine Arts degree, I started volunteering a few Saturdays, assisting an art class with a friend and the help of three local community members in Delft, Cape Town. To date, the attendance of the youth has almost doubled. Together with the programme coordinator, we are responsible for between 80 and 90 learners every session. These learners are split into art-making groups based on their age: 1-6, 7-12 and 13-16 years old. Another programme I have facilitated with relative independence was in Bellville South, in collaboration with the Women of Wisdom Movement, a group of young women whose focus was on the process of self-reflection through art.

I am currently working with a well-established art education NGO providing art classes at schools and community centres for young artists in Hangberg and Izama Yethu, both areas in Hout Bay. In addition, I facilitate art classes for high school learners from grade 8 to 12, as well as two female empowerment art classes with young women in grade 8. Currently, I am learning from people who have been art educators for years. This experience and apprenticeship learning environment is of great value in my learning process. Since I started working in Hout Bay, my first permanent position as an art educator, I have had to slow down my involvement as a volunteer in the Delft programme to prevent burnout. I still assist as a volunteer and advise the staff on the art programme as best I can.

The anxiety I experienced during my first few years has deep entangled roots. In this thesis I plant my feet firmly and water the ground upon which I stand, so as to provide honest reflection on my journey

to best of my ability and to extract the most important aspect of my journey for other art practitioners and educators to possibly learn from.

In this thesis I am sketching my own personal background, my student years and then my work experience and show how my journey has led me to understand my role as educator and facilitator. I have used my visual diaries as inspiration to identify the most important events that changed in my life and therefor formed me as an educator/facilitator.[1]

Many of the people (artists, teachers and learners) with whom I work experience, or have experienced some form of adversity such as exposure to violence, substance abuse or various levels of food insecurity. From my own experience as an artist and facilitator, I am aware that art cannot resolve the most pressing harsh realities. I use visual diaries to make sense of personal trauma; to reflect on learning experiences through drawing; and to record notes on educational philosophies and learning. Over the years I have found this to be a useful tool for continuing to explore, and in this way enhance my educational facilitation journey.   In this thesis I desired to reflect on my journey thus far by using the various visual diaries that I have kept over the last number of years.

1.2 Problem Statement

This research reports on an autoethnographic reflective study of my journey to become an art facilitator. Many students leave the university with uncertainty regarding how to practically facilitate art classes. As a postgraduate student, one might know how to express oneself, but it takes some experience to step out of that individual creative space to facilitate collaborative creative spaces. In the literature, much has been written about the transition from being student to being gainfully employed, but very little is written specifically in the art world about the transition from artist to educator.

In South Africa with its multicultural population, the situation becomes even more challenging and complex. That which I have learnt in my undergraduate studies or through my own art practice, might not be relevant to a group of learners in a specific context. Issues of race, culture, class and gender could make the transition experience more complex. Critical citizenship education that addresses ethical relationships and social justice could be relevant in these situations. I am a 'coloured' woman now working in marginalised communities which encompass diverse racial and cultural groups. My own

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[1] I would from now on use the term facilitator as I associate with that more than with educator because of the hierarchy associated with the term educator.

experience of growing up in a 'coloured' community does not necessarily grant me an insider's perspective. My skin and cultural heritage helps me to relate to the artists some extent, but it is also limiting when I have to interact with learners from different racial and cultural groups.

My journey to becoming an art teacher working with artists in these communities has been fraught with fear, anxiety, a lack of trust in making decisions. At the same time, this journey of mine was driven by a deep insatiable hunger to learn. I am constantly relearning how to use my time in class to create valuable experiences for young people. I have experienced the joy of connecting with learners and sparking their curiosity and a yearning for exploration, yet I am also deeply familiar with the raging anxiety of not being able to trust my own decisions as an art facilitator. The conversations and perceptions of class and race relations within the contexts in which I work have often provided moments of doubt regarding my positionality, suitability or worthiness to do this work.

The visual diary has been the one thing that I have engaged in consistently to help me make sense of my life, contradictions and complexities.

1.3 Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

Issues of power, race, gender and class could cause a lot of uncertainty in young educators entering the educational environment. I would like to use my thesis as a vehicle to share my own experience – starting as very young high school learner – in the hope that fellow artists entering the educational field will benefit from my reflections upon transitioning from student to educator. I weave my own journey through the theories of empowerment, identity and critical citizenship education, and by using my visual diaries as a tool to draw from and enrich the continued development of my critical thinking. I specifically make use of my visual diaries, as it is the form that I myself use and understand. Working in a visual diary is also a practice I teach and encourage learners to explore.

Given the problem described above, I formulated my *main* research question as follows:

> *What are the challenging aspects regarding the transition from art student to*
> *art educator?*

The sub-questions were:

a.   How did my own art and art education journey influence my educator identity?

b.   How did my experience of working in various communities with different racial and cultural group influence my educator identity?

c.   To what extent did the use of visual diaries help me to reflect on my educator identity?

The aim of the study was to share my own experiences in becoming an art facilitator in the hope that it would assist other young art educators in their teaching and learning journey of becoming art facilitators.

The objectives of the study were:

a.   To explore the challenging aspects regarding my transition from art student to art educator;

b.   To reflect on how my art and art education journey influenced my educator identity;

c.   To reflect on how my experience working in various communities with different racial and cultural groups has influenced my educator identity;

d.   To reflect on the extent to which the use of visual diaries has helped me to reflect on my educator identity.

1.4 Overview of Research Methodology

I make use of autoethnography as a method and use my visual diaries as to assist me in remembering and reflecting on my journey from an art student to an art facilitator. Autoethnography is both a process and a product, an approach to research and writing that aims to describe and systematically analyse personal practise to understand cultural experience. Visual diaries or journals refer to sketch books which combine creative processes such as drawings, collages, and written text. It is also referred to as a visual journal. Journaling is a medium for practising reflexivity, and is a reproductive explorative practice that has the potential to activate what Dewey (1958) called "reflective thought".

1.6 Structure of Thesis

Chapter 1 introduces the study, as well as the research question and sub-questions. The aims of the study are elaborated as well. Chapter 2 provides a discussion of the theoretical framework for the study, while the context in which this study is situated is described in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 elaborates on the research methodology. Chapter 5 presents the data and a discussion of the findings of the research, and Chapter 6, in conclusion, is focused on the implications of the research are discussed.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Introduction

In this section I discuss the various theoretical perspectives that I used as a lens to reflect on my transition from student to educator. Firstly, I discuss the concept of empowerment, followed by the notion of power hierarchies; thirdly, critical citizenship and, lastly, I elaborate on the concept of educator identity.

2. 1 Empowerment

The concept of empowerment proliferates extensively through divergent streams of literature, spanning business, education, bilateral and multilateral development agencies and all the self-help genres. These well-intended frameworks and policies might captivate or raise speculation, yet what constitutes empowerment for one person can be ineffective or even disempowering for another.

In education and in social work, an interpretation of empowerment is highlighted from a critical pedagogical perspective in Freire's notion of conscientisation, which centres on people becoming "subjects: in their own lives and developing "critical consciousness" (Freire, 1972:40). This is a process by which people collectively become aware of their social conditions and develop an understanding of their own power, which ultimately inspires action. According to Freire, personal empowerment does not exist (Freire & Shor, 1987:109). Freire speaks critically of the connotation of empowerment in the United States (US) as an individual expedition to get ahead.

According to Freire, it is no surprise that quick fixes and antidotes pervade empowerment discourses in a profit-obsessed individualistic society. Freire states that "education is empowering insofar as it connects to other efforts in society for transformation" (Freire & Shor, 1987:112). According to Freire, the overemphasis on individualistic self-improvement discourses and programmes are barriers to social transformation and social class empowerment. I agree that empowerment does not happen in isolation and apart from necessary structural changes that need to happen to reduce extreme inequality. Socio-political structures hinder people's ability to exercise agency, which requires people coming together to challenge and decide on the best action.

Much like Freire's literacy for consciousness raising, art can be used as a tool for learning to ask questions in order to understand how oppression functions and how to change it. It is important to understand who is driving *empowerment* and who is said to benefit. Who are the stakeholders that

stand to gain from this intervention? The feminist perspectives on empowerment seem to provide answers to these questions.

According to Jo Rowlands, a feminist thinker, the concept of empowerment is often embroiled in the assumption that the reader innately understands what is meant by the word, and the process of how empowerment occurs is either prescriptive or entirely overlooked. At times the word is employed to simply connote good intentions or to suggest an opaque acknowledgement of the need for change in terms of the distribution of power within development settings (Rowlands, 2001:7). For Rowlands (2001:9), much like critical pedagogies, the obscurity surrounding empowerment stems from the root concept — power — which in itself is widely theorised in social, political, geo-political, economic, international studies. Rowlands points out that power comes in different forms, namely *'power over', 'power to', 'power with'* and *'power from within'*. *'Power over'* refers to power as limited, where there are the dominators and the dominated. *'Power to'* refers to generative or productive power, sometimes expressed through forms of resistance, which creates new possibilities and actions without any domination (Rowlands, 2001:11).

I would like to regard the work I do with learners as a manifestation of *power to* create, experiment and explore. *Power-with* refers to *power* as a collaborative process, particularly when problems are challenged collectively (Rowlands, 2001:12). This involves expanding the possibility of what people imagine themselves being able to be and do (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010:3). Through the *power to* and *power with* conceptions of power, empowerment is regarded as a process by which people develop awareness of their own interests and how those relate to the interests of others, in order to both participate from a position of increasing strength in decision making and to actually influence such decisions (Rowlands, 2001:13). 'Power from within' refers to a spiritual strength and uniqueness that everyone possesses. Self-acceptance and self-respect are the foundation of this form of power.

A vital aspect of the empowerment process requires a practice through which individuals define their own needs and priorities and take action towards fulfilling them (Rowlands, 2001:15). Empowerment is a multifaceted process of ongoing negotiation where there is no systematic process of inputs and outcomes (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010:8). Initiatives aiming for the empowerment of certain populations may find their impact challenging to evaluate because empowerment is complex and unpredictable.

Empowerment is also context specific. It is contingent not only on the influence of broader social, cultural, economic, and political environments, but also on the personal circumstances as well as the

narrative perceptions held by the individual (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010:3). It is therefore important to bear in mind the fact that any empowerment programme cannot be one-size-fits-all. To answer the question of how empowerment might be experienced and demonstrated, Rowlands identifies three dimensions in which empowerment operates: personal, relational and collective (2001:15).

Critical Pedagogy considers the relationship between power and knowledge. Giroux, drawing from the work of Freire, advocates for critical pedagogy that aims to make sense of how power operates through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within institutional contexts, and attempts to help develop students as informed subjects and social agents (Giroux, 2010:717). If curriculum separates knowledge from issues of power, and is developed in technical ways, knowledge is instrumental, merely information or skills to be mastered (McLaren, 2007:209). In educational programmes little attention is paid to the fact that knowledge is consistently ideologically constructed and connected to specific social relations and interests (McLaren, 2007:209). The work of Michel Foucault is significant for understanding the socially constructed nature of truth/knowledge and power/knowledge relations. Power is regarded by Foucault as permeating all aspects of daily life, coming from above and below, and is entangled with even micro-relations traced in domination and resistance. Critical pedagogues advocate that knowledge should be assessed on whether it is oppressive or exploitative and not on the foundation of whether it is objectively "true".

McLaren (2007:210) argues that

> …[w]hile educators stress that praxis (informed action) must be guided by phronesis (the disposition to act truly and rightly), they often forget that empowerment must be anchored in altering production practices that underscore the appropriation of the labour of the many by the few.

In grappling with the power/knowledge relationship, issues arise regarding the kinds of theories educators should work with and what knowledge they can provide to empower students arise. Empowerment, according to critical pedagogy, means more than assisting students to make sense of courage necessary to change the social system, where needed (2007:210).

McLaren (2007: 214) also states that

> Empowerment is gained from knowledge and social relations that dignify one's own history, language and cultural traditions. But empowerment is more than self-confirmation. It also refers to the process by which students learn to question and selectively appropriate those aspects of the dominant culture that will provide them with the basis for defining and transformation, rather than merely serving, the wider social order.

For McLaren, empowerment is the process by which students begin to critically incorporate knowledge from outside their immediate experience in order to expand their understanding of themselves, the world, and possibilities for transformation of the norms and assumptions about the way we live (2007:214).

In this thesis I consider the possibility of empowerment in the classroom and the educators' role in potentially creating the conditions for it. I also discuss my discomfort with the term itself. In the next section I consider the notion of power hierarchies that may exist within development and educational settings that I had to consider as both educator and researcher.

2.2 Power hierarchies

The unequal power hierarchies that exist within and at the intersection of race, class, ability and gender may pose challenges to facilitators and educational organisations and therefore cannot be ignored. Ilan Kapoor refers to Spivak's postcolonial perspective (2004) that draws attention to how people are positioned within the development discourse, with specific attention to the *Third World Other*. Spivak argues that representations of the *Other* are often a reflection of our own desires and image as researchers (cited in Kapoor, 2004:627). Highlighting how our understanding – as academics and social development workers – of the *Other* might be narrowly reflective of our positioning (socioeconomic, gendered, cultural, geographic, historical, institutional, etc.). Spivak emphasises the necessity for an intensified process of self-reflexivity, appealing to those who represent or work with marginalised groups to admit complicity and to attempt to unlearn prejudices as a way of creating room for the subaltern to speak and act (Kapoor, 2004:627). This prodded me to question how I might unintentionally be complicit in the maintenance of unequal power hierarchies. What prejudices about the artists I work with lie under the surface? Spivak notably speaks of an initial unlearning phase which consists of 'learning from below' which, much like Freire's rejection of the banking education system and emphasis on dialogic problem-posing strategies, aims to create space for the marginalised to share their knowledge.

To move away from oppressive relationships, Spivak calls for pedagogues to renounce their need to constantly theorise for their own benefit, and focus instead on the specific needs and tasks on hand in the particular settings where they are working. Spivak clarifies that, for researchers in development contexts "working hands-on with teachers and students over long periods of time on their terms without thinking about producing information for academic peers [,] is like learning a language" (cited in Kapoor, 2004:548). The researcher, according to Spivak, needs to undertake a process of hyper-self-

reflexivity which should not be seen as an egotistic endeavour when it is intentionally conducted in order to clear the way for ethical relationships (Kapoor, 2004:548). Looking at the project through Spivak's lens opened issues which I for the most part wish to dismiss as inconsequential. Yet there is value in questioning my intentions and reflecting upon my intervention, especially considering the sensitive nature of working with personal and collective artistic practices with young people in this context. Getting to know artists on a personal level makes it hard to think of them as vulnerable or marginalised, because each learner is so much more than any label can prescribe. They are not what postcolonial theorists would call the *Other* in my eyes. But what Spivak implies by the traces of colonial measures within the production of knowledge about and engagements with the subaltern brings about critical caution to conceptualising the visual diary practice.

Costandius (2015:96) calls attention to the "unequal hierarchies" of "facilitator-student-learner relationships that include age differences, educational qualifications and / or life experiences. Unequal power relations based on theories of multiculturalism can give rise to resistance, assimilation or amalgamation. One way of dealing with this is to highlight the fact that relationship between lecturer and student or student and learner is *problematic* and to acknowledge any element that may restrict the attempt to create a space for candid conversation, especially regarding sensitive topics that may stir up emotion. One could argue that, if the hierarchical difference between high school learners and university students in this research context is too extreme, there might be little chance for real reflection and critique from the learners' side to challenge the position imposed on them by students. Educators must exercise self-awareness as much as possible and tread carefully, and learners have to be prepared to handle such unbalanced relationships.

Understanding relationships between people can be especially complex in development and educational settings. Unequal relations exist between learners and facilitators, teachers and facilitators, facilitators and organisation management, between local and international donors and local management. In this thesis, I narrate my journey of transition from student to art facilitator while navigating different spaces and shifting power positions. In the next section my attention is focused on critical citizenship education and I consider the role educators can play in developing curriculum and bringing critical citizenship education to life.

2.4 Critical Citizenship Education

Citizenship education forms part of a global discourse that seeks to inform people dialogically and to prepare prodded them for living in diverse societies. Citizenship education was introduced in South Africa as a way to deal with the social scars of apartheid and colonialism and bring about social transformation and social cohesion. In South Africa, citizenship education is based on the central values upheld in the constitution. Hence, the emphasis falls on principles of respect, tolerance and diversity, the promotion of human rights, duties, and responsibilities in participating in political life (Hammett & Staeheli, 2009:5). The Life Orientation curriculum builds on this policy by underscoring citizenship education within the "development of self-in-society", with the idea that learners understand themselves in society and how their actions may affect others. Topics like xenophobia, race, HIV/Aids, discrimination and diversity are discussed, as well as the importance of service and volunteerism (Hammett & Staeheli, 2009:5). Values and concepts associated with the ideal citizen as expressed through the citizenship education-related tasks part of the curriculum have been criticised by educators as too abstract. Yet these values and principles are not necessarily internalised as part of the ethos of South African citizens. There is a perpetual need for educators in the classroom and the afterschool sector to bring these concepts to life.

Citizenship education in the South African context has been written about from various theoretical perspectives and prominent amongst these are democratic citizenship (Davids 2018) and critical citizenship. Critical citizenship education, according to Johnson and Morris,[2] combines critical thinking and critical pedagogy in a framework for curriculum development. The term 'critical thinking' broadly implies higher-order thinking that questions assumptions or facilitates a willingness to look from different perspectives (Costandius, 2014:75). Critical pedagogy was first introduced by the Frankfurt school and critical Pedagogy associated with Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, calls on educators to devise context-specific educational practices that brings educators and students in conversation to uncover their critical consciousness.

According to Johnson and Morris, four features are identified that separate critical pedagogy from the more abstract notion of critical thinking: politics/ideology, social/collectivity, self/subjectivity and praxis/engagement (2010:92). Within each of these realms Johnson and Morris refer to seminal writers who connect knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that pedagogues maintain. Johnson and Morris

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[2] The work of Johnson and Morris (2010) provides a broad but comprehensive framework for critical citizenship education. Johnson and Morris developed a framework for critical citizenship education drawn from classic and contemporary perspectives on critical pedagogy and international standpoints on citizenship education. Burbules and Berk (1999:55), also highlighted by Johnson and Morris, argue that there is no difference between thinking critically and thinking politically. Johnson and Morris draw on a politicised conception of criticality when formulating their framework of critical citizenship.

converted these features into aspects more relevant to curriculum planning: politics (society and interaction), (the self and reflection) (action, engagement and possibility) (Johnson & Morris, 2010:92).

Johnson and Morris also incorporate some elements of Andreotti's (2006) discussion in their framework. Andreotti (2006:6) draws together a post-colonial perspective with critical literacy to describe two kinds of global citizenship, namely "soft" and "critical". Soft Citizenship is based on the premise that the problem is the reality of poverty and a lack of knowledge and resources, usually in communities in need of charity from those more fortunate, especially by the global North coming to the aid of the unfortunate South. Critical citizenship views the issues as the effects of inequality and injustice perpetrated by social, political, and economic structures that can be challenged – through critical thinking and reflection, questioning norms and assumptions, dialogue and action in solidarity with others affected – towards a more equal and just society. Ultimately, Johnson and Morris comment that Andreotti's attention to global citizenship hinders broader application to citizenship education overall.

Critical thinking, and critical pedagogy, further draw on various theories of learning: cognitive development, and emotional, social and cognitive dimensions of learning (Illeris, 2003), Vygotsky's (social) constructivist learning theories, Zembylas' (2003) acknowledgement of emotion as a significant aspect of learning and Fenwick's critical cultural perspective.[3] For both Piaget and Vygotsky, the learning comes with interaction, but also through a process of deep personal reflection on such interaction (Costandius, 2014, 78).

Critical cultural perspectives regard power as the most directive aspect of experience. Fenwick classifies critical pedagogy under resistance and critical cultural learning perspectives. To understand human cognition from a critical cultural perspective, we should analyse the structures of dominance that determine the social relationships and competing modes of communication and cultural practices within that system (Fenwick, 2001:39). The resistance /critical cultural orientation suggests that educators assist learners in critically questioning their collective experience. Through resistance, the unimagined possibilities for work, life, and social development begin to seem possible (Fenwick, 2003:39). According to critical cultural learning perspectives, the route to empowerment begins with

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[3] While the psychoanalytic perspective stresses the inner struggle, the critical cultural perspective emphasises the struggle that is embedded in society (Fenwick, 2001), critical cultural perspective addresses power relations and their consequences; by resisting these power relations, people become exposed to unforeseen and unimagined possibilities for critical reflection and development. Discourses in the critical cultural perspective explore dualisms (Fenwick, 2001) which include and exclude others. Here learning starts to take place when people become aware of inferences and preconceived assumptions.

validating one's experience, scrutinising how power operates within the communities in which one moves around, and examining how perception shapes one's experience and therefore one's learning. Writers in critical cultural pedagogy such as Freire, Giroux, McLaren and hooks claim that when the workings of dominant power are identified, the ways to resist them come to the fore (Fenwick, 2003:39). Educators are encouraged to investigate how human identities and creative potential are confined or distorted by their experiences and to assist people toward liberation and new possibilities for action (Fenwick, 2003:52).

Costandius (2016) highlights that the emotional aspects of arts education need to be recognised and incorporated alongside all other aspects of learning, and the complexity of the interaction between all these aspects also needs to be considered. If educators are not self-aware, emotions can mediate the way in which curriculum is brought to life in the classroom. According to Costandius, emotions should be acknowledged and deeply felt, but should not be the only driving force for action (2014:86). In an arts curriculum it seems that it is vital to recognise and acknowledge emotions, but to proceed with the rational analysis of the emotional reactions of students, learners and lecturers. It is important to remain cognisant of the larger context within which one is working, and to be flexible in one's approaches.

The research suggests that students ideally should be psychologically ready to have open-minded conversations about race, democracy, values and other aspects related to citizenship education, because when they are not ready, yet participate in the course, their own learning may be minimal. Some lecturers may say that it is not concern if students are not psychologically ready as they work with students who are ready to learn. But, with the complex history of South Africa, with oppressors and oppressed, there is little option but to incorporate the process of becoming ready in the process of learning.

The question of how I can use this research to say anything about my work as a masters' student arises. I am not advocating to jump into doing critical citizenship research with my learners, but rather consider aspects of critical citizenship to enrich my process of reflection, decision making and action going forward as a facilitator.

These concepts are not new but help to provide me with the required language to describe the aspects that contributed to my anxiety in the transition from art student to art educator. In this thesis I speak about how I have come to deal with cultural differences discovered through the creation of art, imagination and engagement with people despite uncertainty and discomfort.

2.4 Educator Identity

Goffman (1959) argues that individuals, in interaction with people, present themselves in a particular manner (perform) to make identity claims about themselves by using material and social means. Liu, Cutcher and Grant (2015: 237) claim that identity is something that a person engages in, rather than something they have, or something they are, thus they perform their identity. Goffman (1959:26) sees performance as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence any of the other participants". This means that one's identity is continuously reconstructed and in flux, and changes according to the socially constructed context (Liu *et al.*, 2015).

De Paula (2016) argues that identity can relate to either an individuals' uniqueness or a bond that they share with a group of people. Identity, according to Fearon (1999), can be linked to either the 'social' and /or 'personal'. In the social link, identity refers to a social category of people marked, for example, by their membership, characteristic features or attributes for belonging to a social group, while in the personal, identity is seen as some distinguishing characteristics that a person associates with or views as significant to them. The connection between the social and personal construction of identity is strengthened by the stories people tell about themselves in the context of wider cultural stories (master narratives, cultural plotlines, discourses or interpretative repertoires) and this narrative discourse organises life, social relations, interpretations of the past and future (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, McAdams, 2001).

In this thesis I reflect on my own learning and teaching challenges with regard to my transition from art student to art educator and how this educational journey influenced the trajectory of my educator identity. Benwell and Stokoe (2006:49) argue that identity is "performed, constructed, enacted or produced, moment-by-moment, in everyday conversation". My educator identity is a continuous process, but I choose to start with reflecting on the different learning situations during the last five years.

Life stories and personal narratives are psychosocial constructions, written by both the person him/herself and the cultural context within which the person's life is immersed and given meaning (McAdams, 2001). Individual life stories reflect the cultural values and norms, as well as assumptions about gender, value and class. According to McAdams, identity is an internalised life-story. This introduces the possibility of continuously rewriting one's life-stories into more empowered versions. In a country with complex legacies of trauma, this kind of simplistic understanding of empowerment can

be ineffective without the help of trained professionals from whom more serious interventions are needed. Using a visual diary is not a kind of therapy and I do not profess to suggest it to teachers or learners as a healing practice for all. It can, however, be utilised as a tool for the development of one's teacher identity.

Zembylas draws our attention to the significance of narrative research in the development of teacher identity, specifically singling out emotion as a particularly useful resource. Emotion is not a matter of personal temperament or psychological state only, but also includes social and political experiences that are created by how one's work, in this case teaching, proceeds (2003:216). Emotion is both an individual psychological experience, as well as, to some extent, socially constructed. Teachers experience and express emotions as a matter of personal temperament, yet often within a social context underpinned by systems of value from their school, culture and family (Zembylas, 2003:216). Relationships and values have a huge impact on how and when emotions are felt and conveyed. In recognising emotional responses, educators are able to develop a wider sense of self-awareness, which ties in with the notion of critical citizenship education.

Drawing from a poststructuralist perspective of emotions and teacher identity, Zembylas argued that teacher identity[4] is constantly becoming embedded in power relations, ideology, and the culture of the teacher's context. Identity formation for Zembylas is therefore not only an individual (Ericksonian) or social (Vygotskian) phenomena disconnected from the political context in which one lives. Rather, identity formation is integrated with and always connected to the social, political, and historical contexts (2003:221). Poststructuralist thinking has opened the door to the importance of the socio-political context with regard to how identities transform largely out of the history of how emotions, thoughts, judgments and beliefs are constructed (2003: 22).

Emotions are embedded within educational histories (of institutions and individuals), both seen and unseen (Boler (1999), cited in Zembylas 2003). Teachers, in searching for ways that motivate them to make sense of their own emotional experiences in teaching, can develop "philosophies and histories of emotions'' (Woodward (1991), cited in Zembylas). It is important for teachers to recognise the ways in which their emotions broaden or restrict possibilities in their teaching and how their emotions allow them to think and behave differently (2003:232). Thus, teachers' emotions can become sites of

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[4] "teacher identity: first, that the construction of teacher identity is at bottom affective, and is dependent upon power and agency, i.e., power is understood as forming the identity and providing the very condition of its trajectory; second, that an investigation of the emotional components of teacher identity yields a richer understanding of the teacher self' (2003:232)

resistance and self-transformation. One way of dealing with emotions is autobiographical reflection and storytelling, yet Zembylas ultimately concludes that it is only when reflection and story resonate with others can they become a political force for constructing strategies for resistance and self-formation. A starting point for political action is created through the sharing of stories (2003:231).

Zembylas recommends ways for teachers to increase their awareness of the role of emotions in teaching and create collective resistances through the power of emotion – establishing mentoring among teachers, the development of teacher-teacher meetings or seminars for emotional and professional connection, teacher engagement in action research on their own practices and on the emotional dimensions of the self that influence their teaching practice (2003:231). To oppose the dominant perspectives that regard teachers merely as logical agents, the reflexive teacher should connect to or, with others, create 'resistances' in communities that are reflexive and self-directed, and who are aimed at re-defining the stereotyped identities of teachers (2003:230). Zembylas concludes that, for an approach to be effective, it should be collaborative.

2.5 Synthesis

In this chapter I have discussed the four theoretical perspectives of empowerment, power hierarchies, critical citizenship education and educator identity, which formed the framework for this study. Empowerment can be described as a practice through which individuals define their own needs and priorities and take action towards realising them (Rowlands, 2001:15). The concept of power hierarchies in the learning environment is highlighted as a framework, and the importance of understanding and navigating different spaces and shifting power positions is crucial for facilitators. Citizenship education aims to prepare people for living in diverse societies and emphasises aspects of human rights, democracy and social justice. Various researchers grapple with the notion of identity and argue that identity is something that we all engage in, instead of something we have and therefore we perform our identity. Benwell and Stokoe (2006:49) go even further by describing it as constructed and produced, moment-by-moment, in everyday conversation. In the next Chapter I elaborate on the context in which this reflection was situated.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I situate my research within the historical and current South African context. Thereafter I provide an introduction of my learning and teaching contexts within the Western Cape in order to further contextualise the research. I will first describe the South African historical and current context, and secondly, the Western Cape's historical and current context. Lastly, my own learning and teaching contexts will become clearer as highlighted in the different stages of my journey thus far.

3.2 Historical and current South African context

The legacy of poor investment in education in schools in lower income communities has its roots in the racist apartheid education system. Schools designated for black and coloured learners during the years of apartheid were not only severely under-resourced; the curriculum was also specifically designed to keep people in subjection within an environment hostile to violence from the state. Much focus and media coverage drew attention to issues of poor resources and infrastructure in the post-apartheid era. The body of research into what constitutes the notion of quality education for learners in South Africa has expanded exponentially since the dawn of this democracy. Educational researchers, philosophers and educators continue to debate what constitutes quality education and to what purpose education should be directed.

Formal art classes have historically been a privilege for white middle-class South Africans. Currently NGOs as well as government initiatives have made strides towards expanding access to after-school arts programmes, yet a large majority of learners in the country, particularly learners in economically poor or rural areas, do not benefit from equal and accessible quality after-school programmes. Corruption at national and local level has meant that many learners, especially in low-income communities have few safe, creative or educational recreational or after-school options.

School learners should have an abundance of after-school choices, ranging from creative, cultural, academic and physical activities, especially in communities where substance abuse, teen pregnancy or drop-out rates are high. Government and the private sector need to see the upliftment of people living in such communities as mutually beneficial, yet there is a lack of coordination in terms of intervention by national and educational organisations.

The limited capacity of national and provincial departments receives much attention, according to

Kanjee, Sayed and Nkomo, but little attention is given to the capacity of local implementers who work in community centres, NGOs and research and development organisations (2013, 370).

As the nation battles the effects of extreme inequality during a global pandemic, gender-based violence and rape culture has yet again become synonymous with South African culture. Although schools have received their fair share of well-derived criticism as a space not immune to what happens in homes and communities, schools for the most part provide a safe space for learners who experience abuse and food insecurity. Reopening schools during the pandemic was always going require a sensitive balancing act.

3.3 Historical and current Western Cape context

Covid19 has exacerbated the inequality experienced throughout the province, and has brought families to the brink of starvation, homelessness and hopelessness. The pandemic's impact on learner education will leave deep scars in the gains made by learners and families striving for a lifeline out of poverty through education. For learners with access to the internet and technology and who have parents who could support the transition to digital education, learning has almost easily continued. There are breakthroughs in digital education while poor schools struggle to keep pupils learning constantly and smoothly. This paints the famous image reproduced internationally of the deeply unequal society that safeguards the connected, educated and upwardly mobile few in moments of crisis.

The extreme inequality seen in the South African education system needs to be addressed. Although the focus on the lack of technological resources in underserved communities is important to address, Soudien brings our attention to that which is often overlooked in the conversation about providing learners with access to education (Soudien, 2020:59). The discourse rightfully considers access to digital technology, but more fundamental to the conversation is understanding the main purpose of education, which is to facilitate the learning process. If technology and access to online platforms are instantly available, effective learning experiences are not a guarantee without carefully thought-out clear intention, a national strategy and effective execution. Understanding how people learn is an important place to start. Soudien points to the necessity of understanding the complexity of the individual learner's unique learning process as far as possible, as every person learns differently (Soudien, 2020:65). Soudien aptly describes the task as enormously difficult, perhaps even idealistic considering the workload of teachers in poor understaffed schools. Yet, as with the notion of democracy, action towards this ideal is necessary if we are to provide learners in this disturbingly unequal society with the best education we can.

The significance of art education paired with providing support care for learners as individuals is well documented in social justice, critical pedagogy, experiential education and citizenship literature. The Western Cape Game Changers After-School Programme is a co-ordinated approach to after-school learning throughout the province, through providing training and support to members of communities who have a passion for youth development through academic support, life-skills, the arts, sports and recreation sessions. These people become an integral part of life at schools, allowing learners to flourish and develop a healthy relationship in learning amongst peers, as well as facilitating a deeper connection with their school. I find the After-school Basic Training Programme Practitioner Handbook (2018) to be a useful resource as a facilitator working in both schools and community centres, especially regarding reflection inspiration and a visual diary.

NGOs play a crucial role in expanding access to after-school education by providing educational spaces for learners within and outside the structure of the academic curriculum. I started my first permanent position as an educator in February 2020, a month before the Covid-19 pandemic set in, and the after-school sector seemed to have come to a standstill. This, however, was not the case. The public, organisations and educators became mask-sanitiser-food-parcel packers and distributors. Strategising, acting, documenting and reflecting upon interventions during this time has been the greatest form of action research I have ever been a part of. Witnessing individuals, organisations, businesses and communities in collaboration offered a glimmer of potential for greater strides towards a more compassionate society.

3.4 My learning and teaching contexts

In this section I provide context to my learning and teaching experience. I cringe at the thought of others reading this, and know that words are merely signifiers and unable to capture every nuance in feeling or memory. Although fear that words concretise the multiplicity of experience, I cannot resist the need to find some form of coherence. If the route to empowerment is affected by broader social, cultural, economic and political happenings, personal circumstances and narrative perception (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010:3), I choose to look at my own learning and teaching context as a start.

I am a South African of mixed ancestry. During Apartheid most of my family was classified as coloured. Growing up, I often heard about my western heritage from my elders, which seemed to contradict their passionate anti-racist, anti-apartheid politics. Some family members spoke proudly of German, Jewish

and Scottish bloodlines; others frowned or even looked down upon this as a kind of desperation, and proclaimed to have Khoi, Herero or Indian roots.

As a young child, and I can imagine for many South Africans, contradictions are a part of growing up during the transition into democracy. Most of my family identify as 'coloured people' a term the apartheid government used to refer to people of mixed racial heritage. My grandmothers have played an integral role in my growth and development, being the most stable individuals in my life, compared to my young, loving but at times seemingly irresponsible parents.

In the South African context learners who grow up with grandparents as influential forces in their lives, particularly as guardians after school, such learners tend to stay in school throughout their secondary schooling and fare better academically due to this stabilizing presence in their lives. This protective force is a privilege I have only genuinely come to recognise in my mid-twenties.

Having been a child who battled to learn to read and write, I can say unequivocally that my grandmother deserves all the credit for my academic progress at school. Growing up with a grandmother who was a grade 1 teacher provided me with the kind of learning environment that to some extent protected me from the effects of trauma induced by addiction and gender-based violence that I experienced in the home as a young child. My grandmother, inspired by her mother's love for reading, became a teacher who initially taught in farm schools where she grew up. Later she taught in peri-urban areas around Cape Town. She and her sisters were determined not to work as domestic workers "in die wit man se kombuis" like the women before them.

Given the history of alcohol abuse that still plagues many families in the Western Cape, it has been predominantly the work of mothers and grandmothers who provide the protective factors that support the development of the youth. Education has been the driving force behind upward mobility in my family, which is the chosen pathway for many families. Although my parents did not graduate from college or university, their commitment to life-long learning has been a constant reality. There, however, is still a huge majority of people in this country who are financially excluded from furthering their education. Many learners still battle against the odds, with limited computer literacy as well as limited exposure to career guidance.

I learnt about environmental care from my female elders; saving and reusing bath water, recycling and upcycling old clothes, and paper and plastic containers is how I aim to live. Like many cultures around

the globe that respect the planet, my elders live(d) the zero-waste lifestyle before the trendy appeal. Growing up, I genuinely thought that my grandmother, collecting and repurposing every kind of material she came across had a few screws loose. I thought of my grandmothers and aunts as a cult of extremists. For a long time, I could neither relate to nor understand my grandmother's seemingly obsession with "trash" which became the topic of heated-arguments.

As children, my siblings and I were not allowed to scratch or tinker with her prized possessions. I could not understand why she found it necessary to mention to my siblings and I – I wanted nothing to do with all that waste taking up space – until the day I felt empowered by my ability to rationalise my actions as an act of courage. I was confused yet excited by all the talk of liberation, anti-domination, fairness and equality while *I* was held hostage by *trash*, that was taking up what should be *my* studio space, that inhibited *my* ability to think clearly and make art in an aesthetically-pleasing environment.

Then I committed the unthinkable! On a Wednesday morning, premeditated because that was *bin-day*, I, in a rage I took it upon myself to make a statement about access to space. I threw away most of my grandmother recycling collection, which I rationalised as a selfish colonising of communal space at home.

This kind of action while living with the family matriarch did not, as you can imagine, end well. After pensively listening to my entitled reasoning, without even looking up from the old sock she was mending with matching colour wool, she schooled me to tears. Apparently, I had 'no idea'. She spoke slowly in Afrikaans[5] about the generation who has no idea. I had no idea how all this so-called 'trash' helped to keep me in my fancy English school with my fancy English friends, and keep the lights burning in this fancy house I confidently claim as my own. In fact, I had no clue. Now, I do understand something about being called out for my previous arrogant entitled immaturity. It's a lesson that life shows me – a lesson in humility, in not assuming that I have all the evidence at hand. I understand a little about how women kept families educated, clothed, and fed. They did their best to protect us from addiction and abuse often perpetrated by traumatised men, previously little boys who long since had their vulnerable emotions beaten out of them.

3.4.1 The *Good* School

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[5] Afrikaans, a language that I hated growing up and did not want to associate with. When I heard Afrikaans I thought of struggle, poverty and everything connected to deprivation. I was caught up in a classist English superiority complex. These days, the language sounds like music to me, mystical, metaphorical, but at the same time real, grounded, earthy.

I attended "good" schools which, according to many people of colour were schools previously known as Model C schools – former 'whites only' schools. Despite the weekend dysfunctionality, my young parents always did their best to support my siblings and I through school. At primary school I could choose from a spectrum of after-school activities and in high school I could join sports and cultural society clubs. Yet for a long time I felt like a victim of an education system that crushed my self-esteem. I struggled academically, especially in primary school. I had to repeat grade 5, a euphemism for *failure*. As for many learners who struggle, the classroom became a space of tension and fear of humiliation which created a negative feedback loop that seemed to confirm the worst assumptions about my capacity to learn. *Soon everyone in class will learn the truth, that I am a slow learner.*

I was dumb in the eyes of my teenage self. It was very difficult to focus in class, as my mind and body felt tightly wound up, inflexible, my spirit about to slip on icy tiles and crack open. Learners, even teachers, laughed like hungry hyenas in my attempt to grasp what was written on the page. Emotions seemed to erase the words right off the page… sensory overload… before it even was my turn to read aloud. I tried to sound out the letters through the cold blurry whirlwind before my eyes, while attempting to contain what felt like a scalding pot brewing within. The colours shifted from black and white pages, to illegibly violent red corrections. The room went from quiet to rattling laughter, then a screeching painful white noise that continued long after the moments had passed. Someone else was reading. Some white noises were still ringing in my ear. I noticed that I had been holding my breath all along. I was assigned to the remedial class.

This experience of trying to fit into a high stakes academic system that for some fuels anxiety and panic attacks, motivates me to keep trying to establish an open-minded, compassionate educational learning environment.

To mask the shame once I arrived home after sport and after starting the evening meal with my siblings, I would work until at least 10 pm to keep on par with the rest of the class. Having established this discipline, and once I tasted the sweetness of high marks, my hunger for better grades became insatiable. Being someone who does not easily climb academically, I wanted high marks at all costs.

The real cost subtracted from my sleep and family life. My entire weekends were reserved for academics. My books travelled with me to every family event. I felt exposed without them. I saw the fruits of this academic anxiety reflected in increasingly high scores, but this of course did not breed confidence or a healthy relationship with myself or others. As I got older my parents took out far too

many loans to keep us in good schools, which was extremely stressful. There was no question about what privilege I enjoyed and the sacrifice it was for my family to keep us in these 'good' schools. In our household during the week, school work and school activities came first. And weekends, like clockwork, were frighteningly carnivalesque to say the least.

I can never claim to relate to my learners in any way, but I do understand a little about not feeling in control of my life. What I could control was how hard I worked at school and in my creative pursuits. This gave me a sense of my agency, a sense that my focus and action could have a bearing on where I end up and how far I can go.

3.4.2 After School

It was only in the after-school recreational space where I started to develop confidence as a creative person, and even as a leader among my peers. One thing I could do was draw. I spent mornings and late nights collaging, writing and drawing in old phone books, or any book dense enough to satisfy and sustain my creative appetite. I brought some of my art journals to school and used them as resource books for art projects. The privileges of Model C schools did not stop with amazing facilities and interesting extra-mural options. We went on excursions to galleries and museums that blew my teenage mind. On a visit to the National Gallery, I softly spoke to the educators there and made friends with the security guards. It was the most magical place to me. I was surrounded by bold and intricate African sculptures, and travelled through the different periods of Picasso.

3.4.3 Educational Public Spaces

In the computer area at the Bellville Library, I waited in line for my chance to get online. I was nervous about whether I would remember how find and log in Gmail. I searched the contact details and emailed the National Gallery art educator, accurately utilising my newly-acquired formal letter writing skills. After meeting with the art educator, I realised that I could create opportunities for learning outside of the classroom.

After almost two years of experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic, I am reminded of the crucial role that education and recreational public spaces (such as libraries, community centres) play in providing the public with services that assist people in personal development, networking, accessing learning and employment opportunities.

3.4.4 Gap year

During my gap year I worked at retail stores six days a week, having only Thursdays as my day off. My goal was to apply at a college or university and save up enough money to register. I was determined not to waste the year. Every Thursday at 7:15 am I was on route by train from Stikland to Cape Town to volunteer at the IZIKO National Gallery. Here I met a complex, fiery character, the art educator, who accurately criticised my life drawings, saying "Terri, I can see that you are far too lazy to look!" I apparently was not observing the subject matter with sufficient attention, but recreating what I assumed to be there. This was the first honest critical feedback I had ever received about my drawings up to that point. I loved it. This woman cared enough to express her truth without pretending, patronising or offending me. I was not expecting to be really seen and listened to in this grown-up world of art. Struggling to find my voice in this intellectual environment and, despite painstakingly choosing my words, it surprised me that an older white art educator considered my opinion.

3.4.5 Stellenbosch University

I distinctly remembered a drive my family took to Stellenbosch when I was a young girl in primary school. Pointing to the buildings, white Dutch-style walls, oak trees and green spaces, my father said, "I can see you studying here someday". Figure 3.1 represents that day. At the time, I could not imagine living and studying in a space that looked like a film scene, until the day when, weeks after I applied, I received a call offering me the recruitment bursary. I did not know anyone who received a bursary for university, let alone one of the most prestigious universities in the country. My first and best friend at university was not only white, but Afrikaans.

Figure 3.1. Terri Dennis. *Day Dreaming*, ink, graphite on paper

I met her on my first day at my residence, Huis Lydia. I could relate to her immediately over our shared interest in art. Generally, I really struggled to feel comfortable or fully expressive around so many people whom I considered different. The racial demographic of the art department made up of mostly white Afrikaans- and English-speaking people was the first thing I noticed. The only people of colour in my class consisted were (including me) *coloured* learners and there were no black learners. Initially it was difficult to tell whether my white classmates and students in my residence were being genuine with me. I found it confusing if students jokingly spoke to me in an obviously phoney *coloured* accent. A student also mentioned that I was not *really coloured like the other ones from Elsies River or Manenberg.*

Comments like this frustrated me or made me question my accent and mannerisms. From my first to my third year, I slowly assimilated the culture around me. There was a moment of rapture, however, an explosion of anger and hatred towards people and environment, but mostly anger towards myself for feeling at war within myself. Upon reflecting, I recognise that these students were far from vindictive or demeaning, they were just ignorant. And I was often culturally ignorant, so I could choose to educate them or just let it go. As someone who is light skinned and privileged to be at university, I know that this position might seem like a weak cop-out to resisting racism, and an easy way out compared to dark skinned people who continuously experience the horror of racism.

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The reality of racism is real and has deadly generational consequences. There have to be different ways to fight for the same cause, ways that do not affect one's blood pressure or feed into our disposition for other chronic illnesses. Most young people I meet at university seem to want to genuinely connect and break the boundaries between one another. We all need to be made aware of how our words and behaviours affect other people while maintaining respect and destroying the psychological walls that make it difficult to see the good in others.

3.4.6 A gallery in Stellenbosch

During my undergraduate studies I first got a job at a well-known retail store in Stellenbosch, then later in a local art gallery as a sales assistant selling art to tourists. I struggled to make sense of the performance we had to maintain and how I was expected to send out poor black and coloured children who were without parents, even those who expressed interest in art. The assumption from the eye in the sky, my boss, was that they had the intention of distracting one in order to steal. This apparently might have been the *responsible* thing to do at times, considering that theft had occurred in this way at the gallery, but this form of racial profiling did not sit well with me. I wanted to answer the children's questions about leopards and eagles, and not chase them out.

Resentment of the gallery owners started to brew within. I did not want to recognise that they were in a difficult situation, having to protect the business, pay rent, pay the artists, keep the staff employed and make a profit. At the time I could not reconcile my obligation as an employee with the feeling that I was acting against my morals. As much as I admired the self-proclaimed self-made women who ran the show, I knew for certain that this was not a place to establish my roots.

3.4.7 NGO Work: Working in different communities

I longed to be the kind of person who does not simply talk or demand change, but someone who does something to make a difference. For three years I volunteered as an art facilitator for organisations that work in schools as a part of their after-school or Saturday programme. Every organisation I have worked with has strengths and weaknesses, but all are committed to improving the lives of people with the limited resources, personnel and time available. The communities I have worked with thus far are uniquely beautiful, each with particular challenges.

The legacy of apartheid is inscribed in the geographic location of these communities close to dumpsites, loud factories emitting pollution, the airport and other undesirable elements deemed unfit for white people. Each community has a unique story and I am still in the process of learning more. All, however,

have a significant level of youth unemployment, substance abuse and crime. Chronic illness such as diabetes, asthma, constant high blood pressure is far more prevalent in communities located near dumps or factories and experience (on-going or historical) trauma and insecurity. Covid-19 or the fear thereof significantly affects people with chronic illnesses. Learning about this can make any person who is presently or historically impacted by the legacy of racism angry.

Schools are sites where social class is said to be reproduced. In South Africa the learning gap is often spoken about in the context of education and the after-school sector. It is the hope that learners participating in after-school programmes learn life-skills, values, purpose and motivation through holistic approaches to education. The disparity between the schools I attended and the schools at which I teach at is undeniable. It is not just the extramural options of music, art, the facilities, access to computers, swimming pool and sports fields. There is no need to compare schools from different communities because each school and community is vastly unique and diverse.

3.4.8 Delft

Delft is located about 25 km from Cape Town near Cape Town International airport along the N2 National Road. This was one of the first places selected by the post-apartheid government for housing development for racial integration by allocating the area on a 50/50 basis for housing for coloured and black families. Delft is considered to be a crime hot-spot in the Western Cape, yet is one of the most economically active areas in the country in the informal sector.

Through an NGO and with the assistance of community members I work with a diverse group of learners, mostly primary school learners who are mostly coloured and black South Africans, with some learners from different parts of the continent and different cultural and religious backgrounds. Initially I stressed about how difficult it was to learn the names of the learners; there were far too many (50 to 90 children at a time) of them, with each week seeing new faces. It was overwhelming and I almost dreaded the idea of having to address everyone. With stimulation overload, I could not remember any of the YouTube attention grabbers I practiced at home.

The main community worker at the NGO is a strong and independent self-motivated woman whom I look up to. I admire her confidence and her conviction that she can do anything she sets her mind to. She coordinates different arts educational projects, specifically art and music, and supports community gardens and nutrition programmes in creches. I am a volunteer art education facilitator and have seen myself grow my practice working with primary school children. This is where I found a community of

practice, starting initially in the background by assisting with distributing the materials and taking photographs to becoming the main art facilitator. We are in the process of training a young woman from Delft who initially had been a learner attending the programme and now volunteers with us. The intention is to develop local facilitators to one day provide after-school arts education.

3.4.9 Bellville South

I worked in a community centre and primary school not far from where I live in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. I initially started working with a group of women at the community centre, a small building behind the public library and the community hall, as a part of my Service Learning. I found the people to be warm, which made it easy for me to be myself. Three women in particular helped me with an after-school girls' programme I hosted. The organisation provides women with skills development workshops as well as a place where they can network and find solidarity. The skills development classes consist of craft classes, family planning, business management, and connections with programmes with the City of Cape Town to assist with computer skills training. This is also a place where women can go to get information about services offered by local government and social workers. It is disappointing that there is a lack of financial support for an organisation that has so much potential.

My father's family is from Bellville South, and where my great grandparents, grandmother and aunts had the main family home. I grew up walking the streets of "*Sturvy Dorp*" the more affluent part of Bellville South where many teachers and young professional coloured people lived. There are also parts of Bellville South where people live in semi-detached houses, and backyard dwellings. The community is more mixed these days, with more black and African people from Zimbabwe, the Congo and Somalia living here.

The first workshop I hosted at the centre was a fabric printing workshop in which women created their own designs using stencils and printing through a screen. Their works came out beautifully, yet I struggled throughout the workshop to maintain order and keep track of where everyone needed assistance. It felt that everyone was calling after me for materials they needed and many complained about the difficulty of the printing process. Some women commented that they preferred their usual method. I realised that I needed to think about the women who were new to the arts and crafts and therefore needed more assistance, the women who were not interested in developing their own designs but wanted to learn the physical process of printing, and the women who might resist learning a new skill because it challenged them to do try something outside of their comfort zone. This was a reflection on all the things I did not consider before doing the project.

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Navigating the age gap between the mature women at the centre ranging from over 45 and myself, being in my mid-twenties, I realised that I needed to be aware of how this might be something I needed to mentally prepare for. As a facilitator, my role was to set clear boundaries from the beginning as to what was expected and how we needed to maintain respect for each other. Later I learnt about introducing simple workshop rituals to facilitate conversation about intention and expectation.

When I hosted the Girls' Programme, I realised that I had much to learn about facilitation, art education and how to stimulate conversation about the issues young women face. An uneasy feeling surfaced that said my upbringing, schooling and university had perhaps made me soft, quiet and disconnected from my roots. I felt trapped within my body, not living in the moment, and lacking spontaneity that engaged learners in the art class. I was not clear about my approach, and was not able to develop a curriculum that incorporated the elements of the original girls' programme that was created before I became involved there with creative artistic activity. I also struggled with anxiety, class discipline and feeling disrespected.

I recall that the staff were warm and supportive. In a moment of despair, I spoke to the centre co-ordinator with whom I had developed a mentoring relationship, and told her about the uncertainty about whether I was the right person for the job. She was able to instil faith in my ability to learn how to create the atmosphere for learning. She told me to focus on one aspect that I wanted to improve at a time, and I noticed small improvements that started to ripple out. Like an art teacher, she reminded me to trust the process. This was incredibly helpful. Right now, I still battle with my faith in my ability to develop a curriculum for young impressionable minds, afraid I might unintentionally send the wrong message.

3.4.10 Hangberg, Hout Bay

This was my first fulltime position at an organisation. At this organisation, I learn from experienced art educators. Hangberg is located on the steep mountain slopes between Sentinel Peak and Hout Bay harbour. In the 1950s the area was designated a coloured area under the Group Areas Act, which saw the removal of coloured and Khoi-San people from the beautiful lush Hout Bay Valley and Hout Bay Village to Hangberg.

Historically, before apartheid, people in Hout Bay worked in the lumber and farming industry. The community of Hangberg became known for the fishing industry, with most people working directly or indirectly in the industry. With the closure of significant factories and the introduction of small fishing quotas, (the commercial industry claiming much of the catch), unemployment has become rife with some of the community entering the lucrative but illegal abalone trade (Buhler, 2014:6). Due to the of a lack of affordable housing, people continue to build their own homes high up against the mountain. This makes them vulnerable to eviction by the local authorities. Hangberg is unique, yet reflects many of the social issues that many coloured communities in the country contend with, particularly the history of forced removals, recurring evictions, unemployment, alcohol and drug addiction, violence and crime. Most of the research centred on Hangberg revolves around the fishing industry, social services and housing issues. Despite the increase of women-led organisations in Hangberg, participatory research focused on the lives and empowerment of women is limited. Hout Bay is also home to various organisations providing educational and recreational programmes for the youth. I work once a week in a school in Hangberg where I facilitate a female empowerment arts class. The learners with whom I work are diverse in terms of race, temperament, languages spoken and creative interests such as dance, drama and poetry.

3.4.11 Imizamo Yethu

The community of Imizamo Yethu was established in 1991 in Hout Bay, in Cape Town, on a forest reserve, designated as a settlement for Black South Africans who mostly worked as domestic workers, gardeners, labourers and within the fishing industry in the Hout Bay area (Harte & eds., 2009:146).

The homes in Imizamo Yethu are mostly-self-constructed informal housing. When the Hout Bay Village area – prime property in Hout Bay – was declared a Whites-only area, black people were forcibly removed from the centre and cramped in the unfertile land nestled between mansion-style homes, pristine roads and lush flora. When compared to the surroundings, the lack of service delivery in Imizamo Yethu is undeniable, with little to no basic services such as a proper sewage system and electricity provided, especially for the people living higher up the steep slope of the mountain.

Many people in Imizamo Yethu live with the reality of fires, particularly in the winter months. The community rebuilds by supporting each other and receiving some assistance from disaster management and aid organisations. I teach at a school in the community where some of my learners have been directly or indirectly affected by fires. These are traumatic events that cause havoc for learners who may have to be uprooted to live with relatives elsewhere, which affects their schooling. I

work with high school learners of grades 8-12, all of whom are incredibly talented, culturally diverse, with some being local and learners from Zimbabwe, as well as other countries from the African continent. The classes I teach combine art and life-skills in a curriculum that is designed collaboratively with the team of curriculum writers of the organisation. Most of the classes I have taught over the past two years have been at this school, so I have developed a deep connection with the artists. I work with artists who have strong graphic design and entrepreneurial potential. A few artists also record their own hip-hop music. Once a week I teach a female empowerment creative arts class specifically for learners who identify as female at the same school. Even if I do not have a speaker, this class is filled with soulful song and rhythm.

3.5 Synthesis

In this section I have discussed the context in which this thesis developed, which includes my own context. It truly is a privilege to make art with learners in these communities. The diverse creative talent and intelligence of individual learners can easily go unrecognised in the traditional school system that often favours those who shine academically. It is my hope that I, in writing this thesis, I am able to grapple with my position, identity and role as an educator in these communities with the use of my visual diary practice to guide the discussion. I acknowledge that no text can fully capture the dynamic intricacies of each place and community, therefore I try to be mindful in my language so as not to stereotype people. In the next Chapter, I discuss the methods followed for this research study.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In this thesis I made use of autoethnography as a method and used my visual diaries to assist me in remembering and reflecting on my journey from an art student to an art educator.

4.2 Data collection and analysis

4.2.1 Autoethnography

Autoethnography, which is considered both a process and a product, is an approach to research and writing that aims to describe and systematically analyse (-graphy) personal experience (auto-) in order to understand cultural experiences (-ethno) (Ellis, 2004). Conducting and writing autoethnography combines autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011:273). Here stories are seen as complex, meaning-making, and drawing attention to questions of ethics and ways of thinking and feeling, thus helping people make sense of themselves and others (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011:274). The aim is to write an autobiography of becoming a teacher in order to illuminate the social political aspects of experience and how this may influence intention, and inspire questions about art education in the South African context.

Autoethnography recognises the countless ways in which personal experience influences research. Personal experiences may turn one in the direction of literature or push one to ask certain questions. Scholars began to acknowledge how experiences, assumptions and the multiple ways of speaking, valuing, and believing constitute doing and thinking about research. As factors of race, gender, sexuality, ability, education or religious affiliation of the researchers and participants within a social context shape the process and product, this research is never unbiased, impersonal, or objective (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011:274).

Auto-biographers often write about epiphanies – memories that have significantly impacted a person's life, such as existential crises that force one to analyse lived experience and after which life is never quite the same again. These are self-proclaimed transformative phenomena that linger in memories, feelings, and images long after a crucial incident. Layered accounts may concentrate on the author's experience together with data, abstract analysis, and applicable literature. Like grounded theory, layered accounts exemplify how "data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously" and situate existing research as a "source of questions and comparisons'', rather than a "measure of truth" (Ellis et al., 2011:278). Quite different to grounded theory, layered accounts use essays, reflexivity, multiple

voices, and introspection (Ellis, 1998) to urge readers to move into the "emergent experience" of doing and writing research.

Theoretical and methodological tools and literature need to be engaged, otherwise this exercise is would merely be "my story", a self-indulgent endeavour. It is important to consider how the reader may experience similar epiphanies to make the writing accessible and therefore be of value to others. It is essential that auto-biographers use personal experience to illuminate aspects of cultural experience and in doing so make sides of the culture and experience familiar to insiders and outsiders. To do this, auto-biographers may need to contrast personal experience with existing research, interviewing cultural members or examining relevant cultural artefacts.

The written autoethnographic text should also be aesthetic and evocative and entice the reader by using the conventions of storytelling, such as character, scene and plot. The text must reveal new perspectives on experiences, thus filling a gap in existing related storylines. Researchers seek to produce aesthetic and haunting thick descriptions of personal and relational experience (Ellis et al., 2011:277). There is a focus on both "showing" and "telling" so as to make the personal meaningful and cultural experience engaging, as well as accessible to a wider, more diverse audience. In auto-biographical work, the writer must read, explore and discover to create knowledge that is useful for themselves and the reader. When this work is judged by the reader as honest and valuable, the research could be considered credible.

4.2.2 Visual diaries

I use my visual diaries as reference to reconstruct my learning and teaching experiences. I think that we, as human beings, often have a deep understanding of our potential and our natural inclinations, and recognise what switches us on as individuals. With this understanding comes the fear that we might never reach our potential. What do we do with all the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves? It shapes the way we look at the world, how we perceive situations and other people. Our stories influence how we feel about our potential, and our luck. Our story moulds the understanding of the characteristics we have seemingly inherited from our parents or community. How can I bring this awareness to the lens that shapes my perception and memory?

The term "visual diary" is employed to refer to sketch books which combine creative processes such as drawings, collages, and written text. It is a space for expression and can be used as a research tool for planning artworks or other projects. 'Visual diary' is also referred to as a 'visual journal'. Journaling is a

medium for practising reflexivity. It is a generative explorative practice that has the potential to activate what Dewey (1958) called "reflective thought", which is an active reassessment of ideas and the grounds that support them. Reflective thought is an integral part of critical thinking.

My own attachment to books, diaries and journaling did not begin with story books but in recreating old phone books (See Figure 4.1) or discarded power tool manuals. Books can provide one with a space that is safe and where the plot is within one's control. I was interested in how the visual diary could play a role in my creative and intellectual journey. Research about visual journaling that I have come across does not consider this possibility. Kolb (2017) speaks of the significance of being open about successes, setbacks, and failures as educators. In writing this thesis I hoped to make sense of my intellectual journey so as to not repeat the same mistakes or pass on problematic thought processes to my learners.

Figure 4.1. Terri Dennis. *Visual Diary*, phone book, paper

Visual journaling stimulates knowledge generation through the connections between sensing, feeling, thinking, and acting. When used decisively, journaling becomes a useful tool in the artist/researcher's toolkit (Messenger, 2016:128). Thinking through the physical process of drawing and collage has the potential for facilitating reflection and introspection, which could, in turn, lead to new discoveries about oneself. With sustained intentional practice it may serve to facilitate a process of healing. Visual journaling is thus an accepted practice in art therapy and art education. The visual journal thus is a space for creative reflection as well as a research method. Dedication to the practice of journaling might

inspire a personal procedure or guidelines based on the individual's intentions, psychological state, resources, and aesthetic preferences.

My reflecting currently spans three visual diaries simultaneously; diaries that weave together a complexity of experiences; notes and summaries that pertain to my research and practice as an art educator. Generally, each has a different theme. In the first I reflect upon my teaching, facilitation, trauma and learning theories. The second focuses on research methodologies in education and teaching. In the third one I reflect on art practice. I think about projects I have done, meditations that were effective, as well as projects I plan to do.

The CAPs Curriculum national policy on art education for high school learners refers to the use of sourcebooks or workbooks for planning and concept development. There are no restrictions to the type or size of the books. The national curriculum stipulates that the development of the learners' final artworks needs to be planned and explained in sketch books or journals as documentary evidence of the experimentation and progression of the creative process. This is not the process I have followed. Mine is a documentary in the sense that I incorporate photographs and drawings of places I visit and people I meet, but I am not merely planning artwork to be admired by myself or others. These are process books for exploring ideas relating to art, art education, facilitation, grounding techniques, meditation, teaching and learning. I do not intend to keep these books for ever and therefore I do not use archival paper or expensive materials of any kind.

I also carry small drawing books around with me, sizes ranging from pocket size to A4. Some of my undergraduate visual diaries are cotton paper sketch books, but I prefer the small ones that are easy to grab and go. In these books I draw from life, memory and imagination. My current visual diaries are hand bound and made up of small signatures that fit in my handbag. My educational identity and journey into facilitation is mapped out unsystematically, sprawling like the nature of my journey thus far. In time I hope to find some clarity and direction in further reflecting on my art education and facilitation with this practice.

I have created layered accounts, made use of reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection (Ellis, 1998) to invoke the reader to step into "emergent experience" (Ronai, 1992:123, cited in Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). These accounts are aesthetic and evocative and draw the reader in by using the conventions of storytelling, such as character, scene and plot. By reflecting on experiences and pages in my visual diaries, I engage with the theoretical perspectives in my literature review.

I acknowledge how these experiences packed with assumptions and distorted, different ways of valuing and believing constitute the doing and thinking about research. From my visual diaries I select experiences that illuminate the social political aspects of experience and how this may influence intention and inspire questions about art education in the South African context. Writing thick descriptions of personal and relational experience inspired by family history, memories, transformative epiphanies, artwork, and imaginative narrative scenes help to convey deeper aspects of experience (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011:277).

The data collection and analysis were done simultaneously (Charmaz, 1994110-117, cited in Ellis et al., 2011) and situate existing research as a "source of questions and comparisons" rather than a "measure of truth" (Ellis et al., 2011:278). Here I consider how the reader may experience similar epiphanies to make the writing accessible and therefore be of value to others. I make use of personal experience to shed light on aspects of cultural experience, in doing so making sides of the culture and experience familiar to insiders and outsiders.

4.3 Validity and Trustworthiness

Factors of the race, gender, sexuality, ability, education or religious association of the researchers within a social context shape the process and outcome, thus this type of research is never unbiased, impersonal, or objective. In autobiographical work, the writer must read, explore and discover to create knowledge that is useful to themselves and the reader. When this work is judged by the reader as honest and valuable, the research could be considered credible.

4.4 Synthesis

In this section I have discussed the data collection for and analysis of this research. I have unpacked my process of conducting autoethnography through reflections on experiences documented in my visual diaries. Lastly, I have considered the validity and trustworthiness of the research methodology.

CHAPTER 5: DATA AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the themes that have emerged from my own learning and teaching experiences. I present and discuss four themes: Firstly, 'containing my anguish in a drawing'; secondly, 'my journey before entering an art educational institution'; and thirdly, 'the studio practice space at an art educational institution, and art facilitation while working in various communities'. Lastly, I discuss how the use of these visual diaries helped me to understand my educator identity.

In light of the themes identified, I reflect upon the challenging aspects regarding the transition from art student to art educator. I also address the sub-questions, which are:

a) How did my own art and art education journey influence my educator identity?

b) How did my experience of working in various communities with different racial and cultural groups influence my educator identity?

c) To what extent did the use of visual diaries help me to reflect on my educator identity?

5.2.1 Containing my anguish in a drawing

Figure 5.1. Terri Dennis. *Hidden Scar,* Watercolour paint and pastel on board

Figure 5.1 was one of my first artworks that had a deeper meaning and that was not a copy of an image that already exists in the world. It expressed the unrepresentable horror of domestic violence experienced by South African women and children. This was my experience before the chain of addiction and trauma was broken in my own family. As a person who experienced instability, intense

recurring periods fear and violence as a child, I intimately know how important it is to be sensitive and caring. I also know that families cannot say the same when violence still continues or end in tragedy.

Containing my anguish in a drawing gave me a sense of control and pride in what I can make out of struggle. This drawing was a turning point in my life where I started to question who I was in the world, and this was also my first experience of how a drawing helped me make sense of my place in my family and society. My second phase of my life after school was my art education years, where I constantly used visual diaries as a medium to understand myself and the world around me.

5.2.2 The importance of mentors

After high school, I decided to work for a year to assist my parents financially. I was, after all, uncertain about how *realistic* a degree in Fine Arts was for someone who did not have financial security to fall back on. I did not know any artists or anything substantial about the industry. I got a job at a retail store, working shifts for six days a week. On Thursdays I volunteered at the National Gallery. I was a terrible, hopeless volunteer gallery guide. I was supposed to take tourists around the gallery and engage them in conversation about art and South African history, but in this environment, I was almost mute. Perhaps people thought I was wise beyond my years as I carefully mustered a few words while containing my nervous inner trembling. I somehow felt brain dead, unable to conjure any art-related thoughts. I was so afraid to say the wrong thing, that I had no access to my cognitive ability. I froze, without a tongue. I forgot how to speak, let alone speak about *Art*.
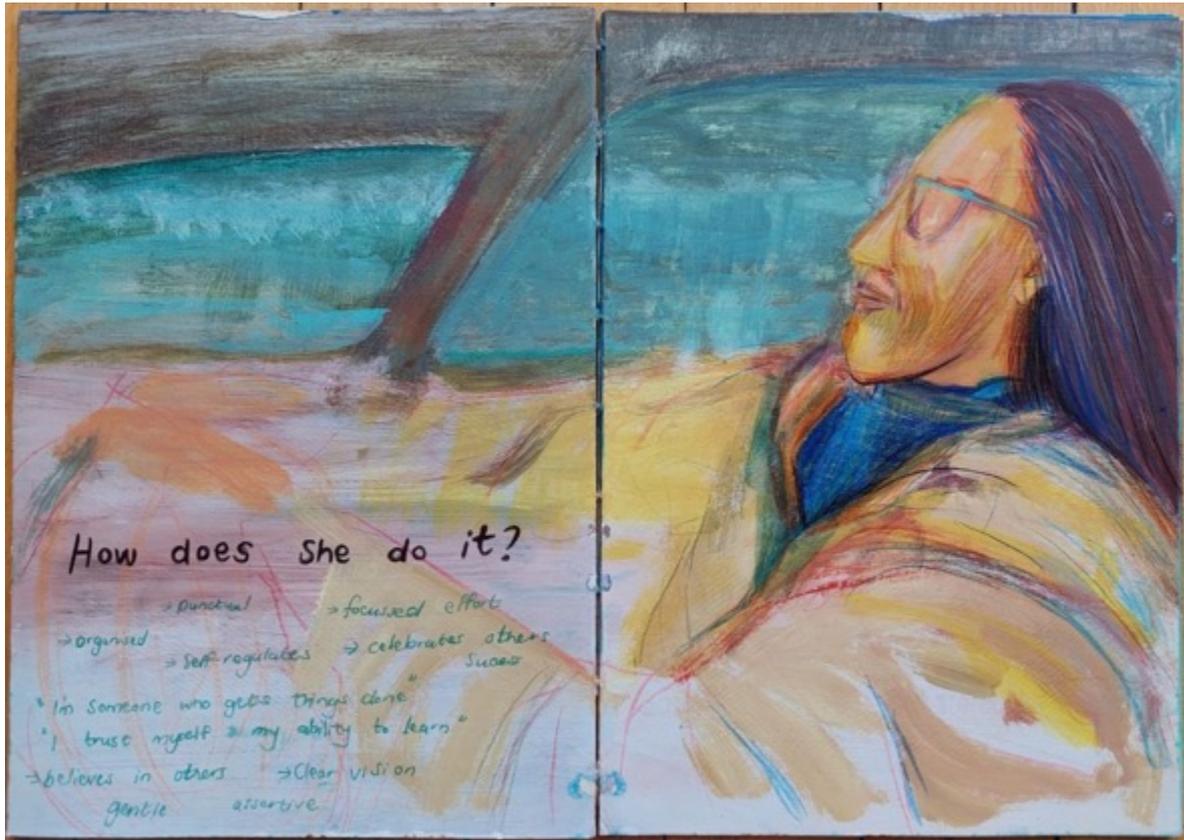
Figure 5.2. Terri Dennis. *How does she do it?* Watercolour paint and pencil in visual diary

At the National Gallery, the person who took me under her wing looked at my drawings before my portfolio submission period. She was incredibly critical of my life drawings which were shocking at the time, but fantastically accurate. I appreciated that she cared enough to look and tell me exactly what she thought. Apparently, my observational drawings were stiff interpretations, the product of insufficient time spent actually looking at the subject matter while drawing. I never thought I was bright, but in front of seemingly important people she spoke with genuine enthusiasm about my resourcefulness, which gave me a boost in confidence. I remember listening to her vent her frustration about how unfair the world truly is. I like to think of it as a mutually beneficial arrangement. Here I learned about the importance of mentors who believe enough in your resilience to give honest feedback. I learned that someone can generously speaks their truth, even if it is difficult for the other person to hear. This influenced me greatly as an art educator who cares enough for artists to be real with them.

Figure 5.2 is a drawing reimagining my mentors, be that at the National Gallery or at the various organisations that I have worked with. My mentors have mostly been women. In the drawing I ask:

"How does she do it?"

I go on to list characteristics and affirmations that inspired me about my mentors:

Punctual, organised, self-regulates, focussed effort, celebrates others' success

"I am someone who gets things done"

"I trust myself and my ability to learn"

Believes in others

clear vision, gentle, assertive

5.2.3 *TE_Quiney*

After my working experience, I applied for university studies and was accepted. With money or the lack thereof constantly on my mind, studying art is a huge risk for people who do not come from wealthy families. Studying art was not exactly a *realistic* choice to make. Throughout my upbringing, it occurred to me that I, as a female, was to embody the (socially constructed) role of carer and always to make decisions based on what would be best for the family, thus putting the needs of everyone else before our one's own.

As an art student I was interested in creative integrity, which to me meant making artwork that was honest. Confusingly this intention ran parallel to my obsession with getting good marks to secure a bursary and other opportunities such as the exchange programme that I planned to apply for. Every year I worked harder and longer hours than the next. What a privilege it was to have experienced this in my life: four years of making art in a studio. I woke up with hasty enthusiasm, quickly preparing for a full day in the studio at the Visual Arts Department, to get to the studio before anyone else. This was my quiet time for organising what felt like my only home on campus. I worked with a short break at 13 p.m., made art, worked an evening gallery shift, went back to the studio to work, and return to Lydia residence late at night or in the early hours of the morning. Keeping my art materials and desk space organised seemed to enhance the quality of my artworks. Studying and making art was also a radical shift from the rewards-based motivation towards understanding arts education as a practice of freedom.

5.3 Terri Dennis. *The Birth of Quiney,* lithograph drawing on cotton paper

Figure 5.3 is titled *The Birth of Quiney.* It is a drawing of my studio where I developed this character that inspired a series of artworks. Objects seem animated by her energy radiating through rich black marks varying in texture and tension on hot pressed cotton paper. I wanted to see myself as *TE_Quiney* and live through her imagined ideals. Years later, now that TE_QUINEY is all grown up, I see how she was the manifestation of my ego – the idealistic young Terri who wanted to change the world. Here is a writing sample from my visual diary during that time:

The birth of TE_Quiney represented a shift in focus from aesthetics towards a critical arts education perspective. She is serious about social justice, but has a good sense of humour, which puts people of different backgrounds at ease in her presence. Terri had questions about the world but did not know how to ask them. During her undergraduate years she gave birth to a leopard-skin, fur-scarf-wearing beautiful beast of a woman. She is larger than life. Literally. She, like the holy ghost, is omnipotent and omnipresent. She is coming out with her latest book, 'Speak It into Existence'; currently she is translating it into the 11 official Languages. Various independent news sources confirm that she is currently hiding in the stratosphere. She is wanted by the Hawks for releasing classified documents exposing evidence that reveals that the government is paying tech companies to spy on citizens as well as the sophisticated dissemination of propaganda about the political opposition intended to plant the seed of doubt in the minds of citizens. She works on projects that help to address issues of gender-based violence and the disposability of working-class people,

particularly black women during a time of unregulated late-capitalism, Covid-19 and the global climate crisis. Look out for her new organic unlimited edition fragrance called "omnipotence". It might take your breath away.
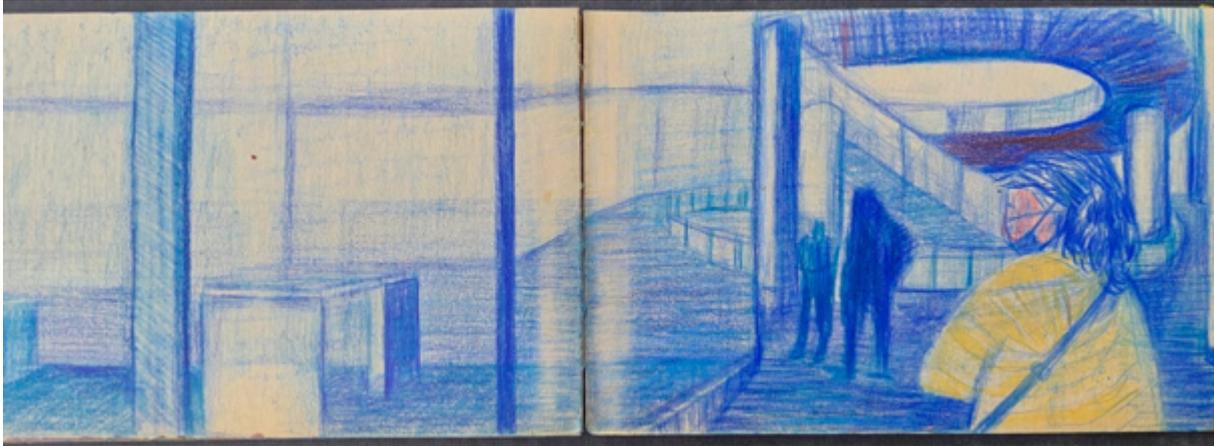

Figure 5.4. Terri Dennis. *Sorry, I think you just missed her,* watercolour drawing in visual diary

For a long time, I drew disembodied spaces, revealing the architecture and space of an environment. These spaces represented my yearning to find the strength I needed to navigate the world confidently. In this handbound journal I drew scenes that where somehow activated by this powerful spirit of woman. On soft cardboard surfaces with smooth velvet oily pencils, I sketched scenes that draw the viewer's attention to objects left behind – anything or movement that might be clues or traces of a character who we somehow just missed, in a fleeting moment. *"Oh no she has just rushed off. Sorry, you missed her."* Perhaps, we can keep up, through twisted corridors, down elevators and escalators in a transparent interior of a mall, university or office space. Figure 5.4 represents my journey to find and understand myself, portrayed in the image of a woman walking through a building searching for Quiney.
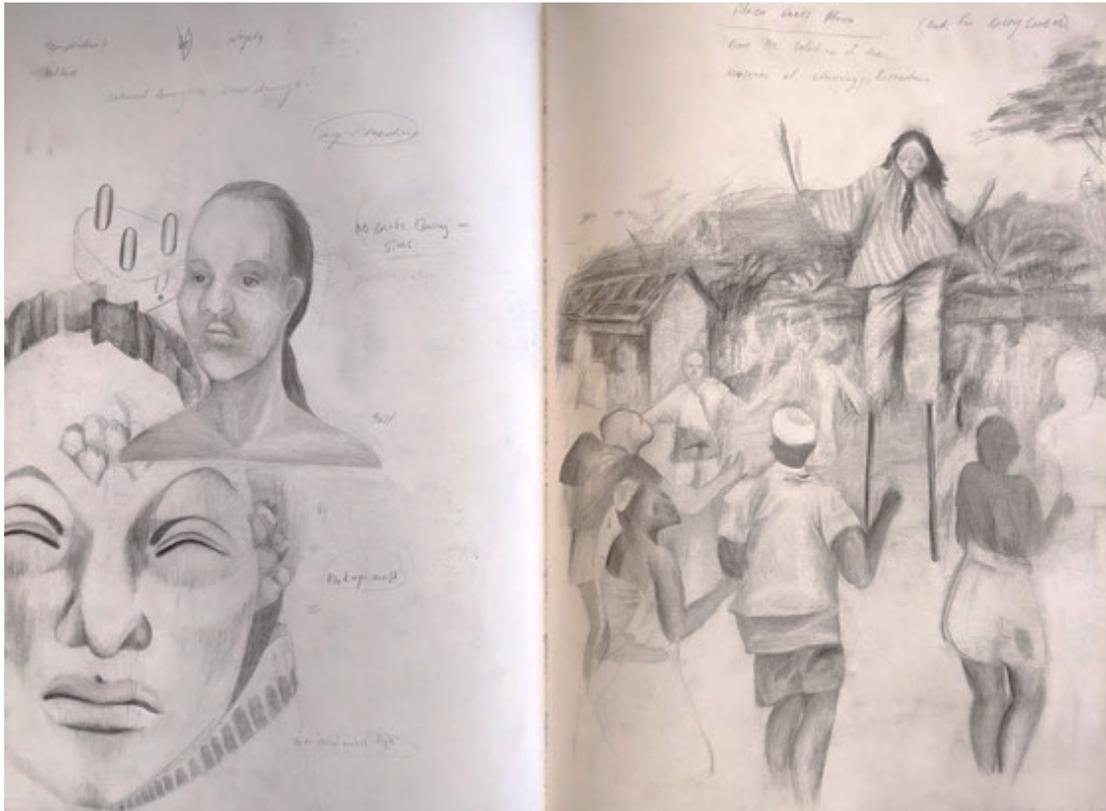
Figure 5.5. Terri Dennis, *On the Origin of Q*, graphite on paper

Her potency is old and has been passed down through the generations. I searched through history books and felt her presence moved throughout the continent. Figure 5.5 symbolises my search into the past, while reading about ancient women, elders and rituals and rites of passage. This is one of my first explorations of the spirit of Q. An African mask, a disconnected plug behind the bust of a young woman.

Figure 5.6 Terri Dennis. *Who she be?* Graphite on paper

In Figure 5.6, I imagine how she might look, who her tribe might be, and questioned whether she might in fact choose to stand alone. With a soft pencil I plot a confident red lined figure that is superimposed on shiny graphite drawing. Is she an independent woman or interdependent, in the process of establishing a community of practice?

Figure 5.7. Terri Dennis*. She lives within you,* graphite on paper

Figure 5.7 represents listening to people's life stories in search of clues to find her. Here I drew from life women listening to each other. I tool note. I asked my lectures, neighbours and people in my family, young and old, whether they had seen her. Apparently, she cannot be seen, but rather, she lives within. All beings, if we listen, and observe close enough.

Figure 5.8. Terri Dennis. *TE_Quiney*, Ink on newsprint

TE_Quiney inspired me to make protest art, as if possessed by a force that was not my own. I am aware that this sounds absurd, perhaps predictable amongst the famous art alter egos. I asked all the questions I did not dare to express aloud or publicly. I questioned what I thought people around me (students, department, faculty) took for granted. She gave me generative power, the *power to* create. The questions I asked were all in reaction to what I saw going wrong, but without asking or thinking about how things might be different. This was the influence of doing humanities subjects such as Philosophy and Visual Studies but looking back I did not know how to ask serious questions, to take this drive for understanding violence, power, abuse, colonialism and racism deeper – all topics that I tried to speak about in my work. 'Q' came to stand for questioning everything I simply took for granted, identity and systems of power. Q inspired a series of drawings and prints I made in the final year of my fine art degree. Figure 5.8, titled *TE_Quiney*, represents my shift towards understanding what questioning and criticality is really about. Looking back, I am proud of the courage I had to ask where the black or coloured female lecturers were and why they were not a part of the art faculty. After my undergraduate studies I began to feel extremely embarrassed about the work, because I was making work at an incredible pace and writing in cryptic language that did not make sense even to myself.
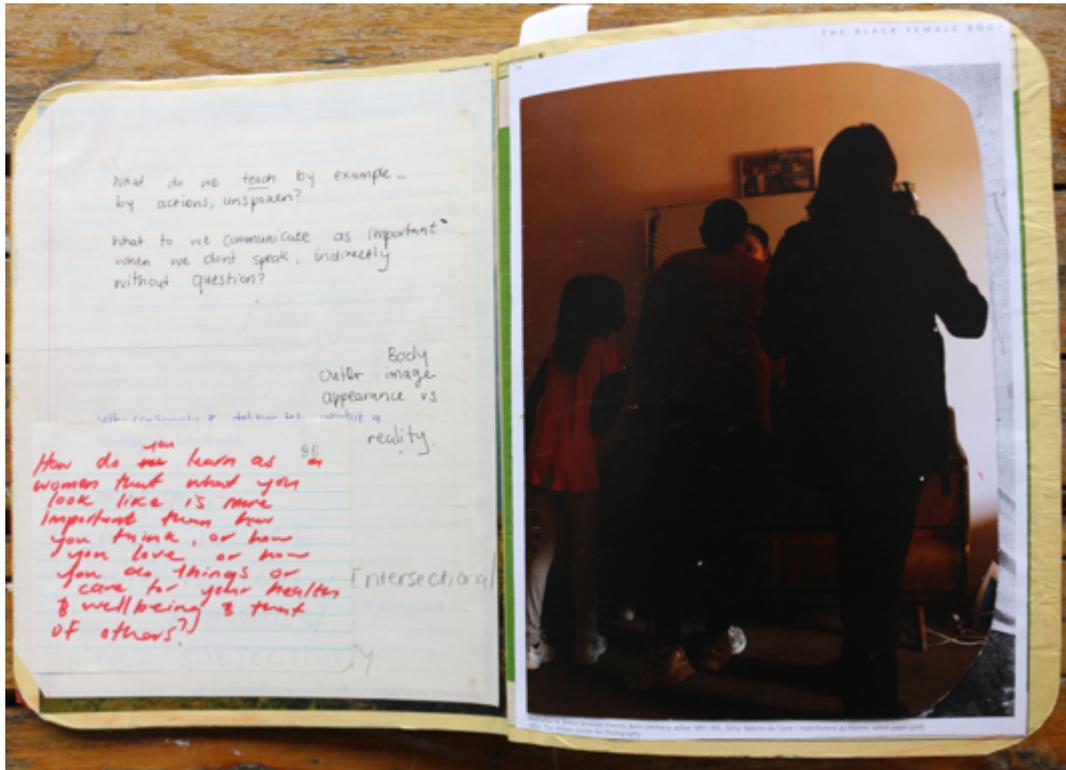
Figure 5.9. Terri Dennis. *How do we teach?*

Photograph in visual diary

The works of bell hooks spoke to me – as a woman and person of colour – about radical love. Reading bell hook's *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) gave me hope for the potential of school and university to be a place where young people can find joy in learning, rewrite their identity as a source of strength, play with ideas and escape the trauma of the outside world with teachers who have learners' best interests at heart. As much as school can be a space of control and repression, school also has the potential to be a space of freedom to imagine, freedom to test one's ideas and reinvent oneself.

In Figure 5.9 I explore the idea of education as more than what takes place in educational institutions, but also what happens at home or in the world between families and friends. I was particularly interested in the conflicting messages that society sends women about their looks and intelligence and who gets to write history.

My lecturers challenged me to think about how my chosen medium, print-making and drawing, spoke metaphorically to the content of my work. One lecturer pointed me in the direction of printmaking, considering my love for life drawing. Printmaking forced me to slow down as the process involved

planning and procedures that took time to master. In my final year as an undergraduate I specialised in print-making to translate my first love, drawing from life, into a different language. The processes in print-making are challenging, but in every workshop I created something I was proud of. It was like learning to read and write from scratch. The difference was that I could make the learning environment my own – late nights, early mornings, drawing, preparing, organising, inking, etching, alone. The lecturers and assistant print-making staff used encouraging words; without being idealistic they affirmed artistic qualities I did not know I would come to possess. I experience such joy in learning from artists, it is my intention to pass it on. It was like restoring faith from a space of honest generosity.

I struggled to express myself in conversation with most of the lecturers I engaged with at varsity. This had something to do with the fact that I regarded lecturers as people very different from myself. The fear of being misunderstood by classmates and lecturers was real, having not developed the tools to express uncertainty and anxiety about difference. It would have helped to have more black or coloured lecturers. I did not notice at first the shift towards feeling subservient, apologetic and desperately wanting to impress and prove myself through my art and persona. I did not think that being coloured at SU would be something I was going to have to grapple with. I had assimilated into the culture around me. I am light skinned. White people do not always realise that I am coloured, and I have too often been in the presence of those who say offensive things about people of colour. The other disturbing thing was when classmates would jokingly speak 'coloured' slang to me out of the blue. It used to boil my blood, but I have outgrown taking offense to such culturally insensitive behaviour. With enough self-reflection I realise that I am not morally superior or immune to ignorance when relating to people who are different from me. Upon deeper reflection, all the anger was rooted in the realisation that I at some point forgot who I was. This is a section from my visual diary:

> Remember when you viscerally felt like you did not belong in a particular space? Where were you? Could you stay? I forgot I belonged to the earth, with humans, plants and all beings. Feeling a strong sense of separation is an illusion.
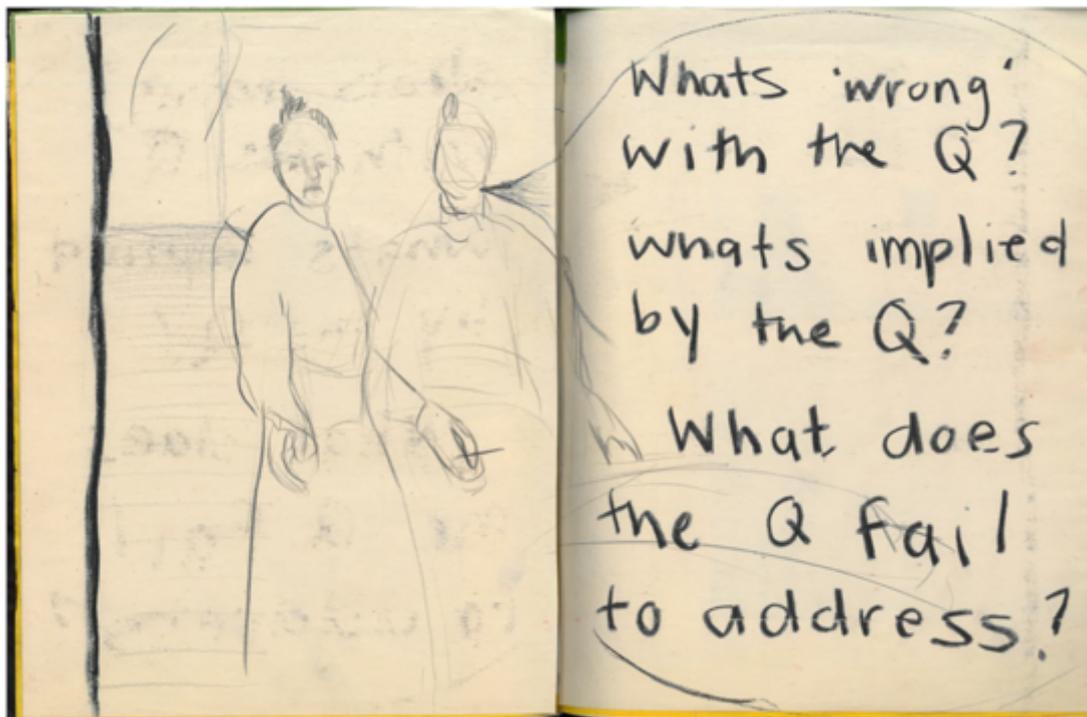
Figure 5.10. Terri Dennis. *What's wrong with the Q?* Charcoal on newspaper in visual diary

I oftentimes I felt as if I did not belong at university and those thoughts became a self-fulling prophecy. I could spend hours justifying and reassuring myself that I deserved to be in these circles and be heard. I worked hard during my undergraduate years, trying to prove that I deserved to be here. Figure is a drawing of constantly driving myself to ask more questions. Productivity became my second name. *Terri of the Projects* was my nickname – a manifestation of the human need for belonging. I learned that belonging must first be ignited from within oneself, otherwise no place or community can feel like home.

My introduction to activism was as a member of *Open Stellenbosch*. Students of all backgrounds at the university came together to share stories and ask questions about practices on campus that were problematic, even racist or patriarchal, such as initiations often incentivised by a team or individual point-ranking systems. Racist, sexist and predatory practices experienced by students on campus were called out, loud, for all to hear on the *Rooiplein*[6] (see Figure 5.11) with the rise of *Open-Stellenbosch*, *#Rhodesmustfall* and the *international Me-Too* movement. Much was gained from these movements, yet the battle for more just institutions is not over. With the rise of the pandemic and the global climate crises, there is much at stake.

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[6] This is the Afrikaans nickname of the central area on campus at Stellenbosch University that leads to the university library.

Figure 5.11. Terri Dennis. *Die Rooiplein.* watercolour monoprint

I loved the notion of questioning, which pointed to understanding of the necessity of being critical. Despite this understanding I struggled to put inclinations and uncertainties about social, political and environmental issues into words. When I looked deeper into the notion of questioning as a part of the readings prescribed during the art and citizenship module in my master's degree coursework, I learnt about the Socratic method. I never fully grasped Socrates' method during my elective undergraduate philosophy classes but remembered that he was considered the most intelligent being in all of Athens by the Oracle of Gadfly. When Socrates was faced with a philosophical statement or question in his discussions with people, which was his preferred way of *doing* philosophy, he always proceeded with more and more questions, in order to trace back to the assumptions and biases that underlined the question or statement. Figure 5.12 presents a page from my visual diary where I asked the question concerning how my visual journaling influenced and drove my actions.

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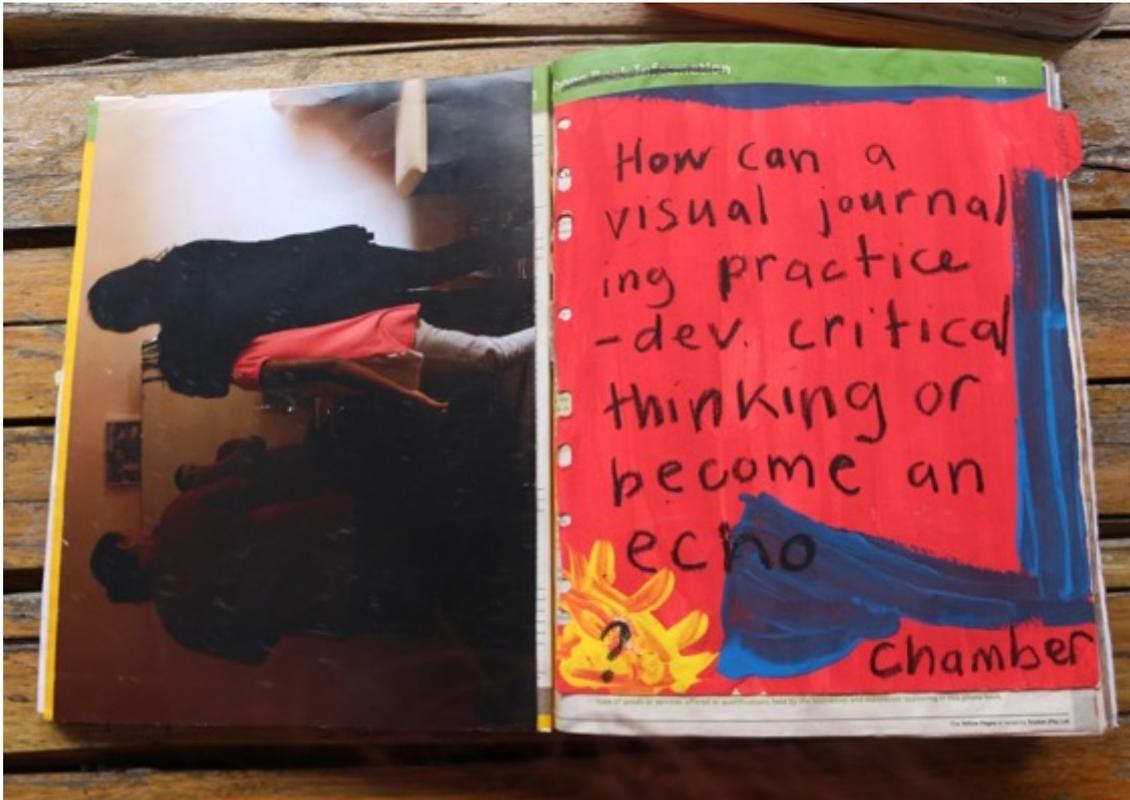
Figure 5.12. Terri Dennis. *How can a visual diary practice develop critical thinking or become an echo chamber?* Page spread in visual diary

Without critical thought, there is a risk that this practice can become a kind of echo chamber that reinforces problematic ideology, assumptions, beliefs, and prejudice. During #FeesMustFall, the passion for the idea of representation, social justice and revolution was stronger than my drive to think of solutions. Just because I recognised the need to be thinking critically, did not mean I was thinking critically. I knew I had to ask the *right questions* and try to understand, but I was fuelled by rhetoric which lacked critical thinking on my part. *Open Stellenbosch*[7] helped me to feel a sense of community and it was important for many students. I was surrounded by interesting people who had a vision for a South Africa without extreme poverty where people lived and were treated with respect and dignity. We spoke of education as being the best route. However, what kind of education would suffice? The way I went about making art about complicated issues was a fusion between my personal struggle for inner strength during my years at university, intertwined with my anger against racism, violence against women and children, for the state of inequality and extreme poverty still reflecting apartheid South Africa.

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[7] Open Stellenbosch. I witnessed young students put into words the questions of ethics, institutionalised racism, social engineering through school ritual and routine.
What was a hunch, an uncertain feeling about the nature of my agency within a rigid system tainted by old-fashioned ideas of obedience, became an epiphany? The obsession of obedience had a political function.

I was too lazy to think of solutions, however noble that mouthful. I also thought I was really clever with my tactics, which in retrospect is hilarious. I wanted to rebel against a society that is racist and violently unjust, but at the expense of intellectual work needed to offer solutions or take a step towards the ideal situation. I had a few important things to say, in addition to a mental tug of war between righteousness and uncritical, hateful as well as meaningless statements. Words have power. South Africa's history is littered with words used to separate and dehumanise. In art there is room for conflict and contradiction, but one has to be careful about sharing one's progress, or ideas still in the process of being worked out, if one's intention is to be a part of the making of a more open, tolerant and respectful society.
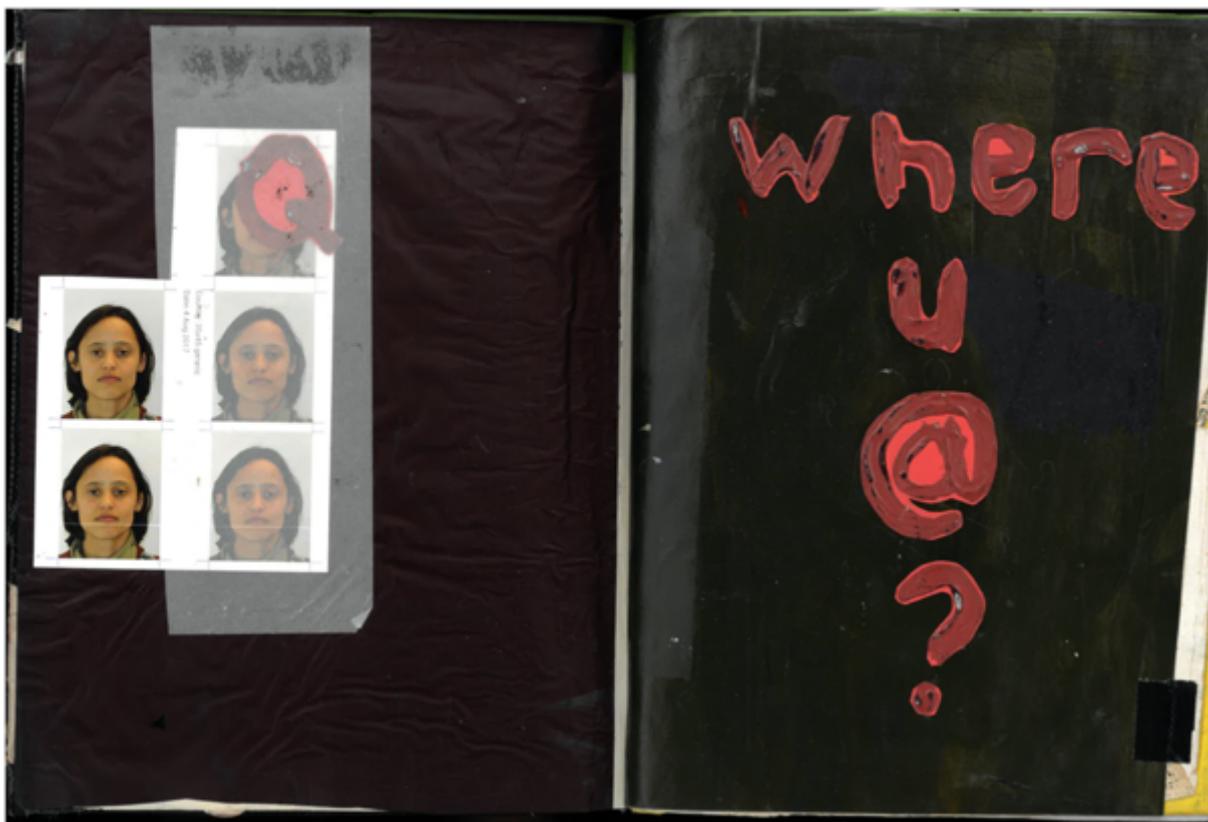
Figure 5.13. Where u @? Acrylic paint on carbon paper in phone book

Hatred of others can be rooted in personal pain. If I think about the hatred of others, the symbol of the farms in South Africa has the connotation of white domination, and black and coloured dispossession, not the breadbasket of the nation. I struggled to look at my peers who enjoyed these places, wine farms particularly. I developed a hatred of all things Afrikaans and even Western. I once walked down Church Street in Stellenbosch screaming "Get the f**** out of my country". I was angry about how easy it was for these European tourists to come to SA, and how difficult it was for Africans who are labelled invaders and aliens and are attacked. I was out of my mind until I spoke to a friend whom I respected and who

grew disillusioned with the us-against-them politics I was caught up in. This friend, simply looked at me after I explained the moment of *revolutionary protest* (I spoke so proudly of my reactionary xenophobic hate speech) with disgust in his eyes asking, "Do you seriously believe that?" I just cringe thinking back. With that comment I could see how hateful, ignorant and uncritical I had become. As if this was *my* country and as if these tourists came to South Africa to do harm. I was not fighting for social justice; I was just being irrational and xenophobic. In fact, tourists obviously supported job creation and the economy. These were not the people towards whom my frustration was to be directed. I did not critically understand politics, economics or history. The words that described my feelings at that stage were: *I did not feel like myself any more. I was crazy with emotional reactions and lacked genuine critical reflection. I knew the catch phrases that sounded like the language of critical thought, but did not know how to use or act it.* This longing to find myself and get my thought and action in alignment with my beliefs and values is portrayed in Figure 5.13.

The women on campus got together in groups on the *Rooiplein* to protest rape culture on campus and in South Africa at large. Countless cases of rape and sexual harassment had been reported by Stellenbosch students, as well as grotesque and high-profile cases reported on national and international news.

Figure 5.14. Terri Dennis.

An education, Charcoal pencil drawing in visual diary

Figure 5.14 was one of the first drawings that I made outside the studio space during my studies. This drawing represents my longing for understanding art as a practice of freedom. I recognised the value of us coming together to tell our stories, yet the challenge regarding what to do with our grievances in institutions remained. Here the formal elements are not the point. There is no way to represent what women in South Africa and what women in the worlds go through. The issue is not representation. The struggle is almost unfathomable and difficult to put into worlds. Part of it involves understanding our power as citizens of this country. Part of it involves taking the action needed to inspire people to come together to find solutions on a small scale, within local communities, combining the symbolic and the pragmatic. Listening is most important.

Figure 5.15. Terri Dennis. *Questioning Rape Culture on campus*, Charcoal pencil drawing in visual diary

Figure 5.16. Terri Dennis. *Her multiple voices,* Watercolour monoprint

Women coming together to share their experiences, call out perpetrators and demand protection and justice ignited a creative force within me and the designers and performing artists with whom I collaborated. This is depicted in Figures 5.14 to 5.16. Making art and creating conversations around complexity and depth of gender-based violence in South Africa gave me a sense of hope and possibility for a vision of a different kind of future. Collectively thinking about how to deal with GBV is enacting education as a practice of freedom, concerning which we have a long way to go.

I distanced myself from #FeesMustFall activism before I became too radicalised by us-versus-them politics. The movement started with good intentions, and ended for me when hatred towards our fellow students was not sufficiently dealt with in public forums and debates organised by students. Hate speech and the silencing of critical voices became the norm. I gradually noticed egos enlarge, highlighted by coded language and the silencing of voices of people who did not fit the apparent racial profile of martyrdom. In my thoughtlessness, I had played a part in opening the floodgate for people with obscure political agendas to take centre stage. As time progressed and people who started the movement left, I noticed a growing intellectual vacuum. I refocused my energy on my goal to become an art facilitator.

5.2.4 Resisting hopelessness

I recall this period of being infected by anger and seeing this side of myself, recognising that I did not want to pass hate and pain along to anyone through my words or actions. People of colour in South Africa have a legitimate right to be angry. I have come to the realisation that fuelling the anger does more harm to one's mental health and locks one in a reactionary state. There are forces that still need to be challenged and art can play a part in educating and exposing exploitation (intolerance of difference, greed, corruption, poverty, disposability of people, extremely rich and poor). As an educator I am interested in how creative work can inspire joy, healing, and self-empowerment, as well as be an outlet for darker human emotions such as anger or grief. An outlet, is not enough to inspire systematic social change towards a more just world, but it an honest start. It is not idealistic or romantic. In attempting to become a critical citizen, I try to put an end to all personal reactivity in blaming certain groups based on racial and cultural lines. I also do not prescribe to Instagram activism, which is often more about a spectacle than being a part of real change.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement has given me such hope for the world. Activist work starts within, but has to manifest in real life changes for the marginalised, disenfranchised, and subjugated. After Open Stellenbosch (OS) and the #FeesMustFall (#FMF) Movement, I chose to resist the immobility of hopelessness. The world almost seemed corrupted beyond repair, yet uniting against Covid-19 has reinforces the possibility of a movement towards regeneration. Due to the historical legacy of past institutional cultures that perpetuate the provision of learning, current education mostly serves the upper and middle classes. Much as I do not like to admit it, I am a part of this class marked by and benefiting from quality education, technological connection and mobility. I am of the kind who could easily fall ill with the need to save or 'help' by erroneously imposing my values and worldview upon those who *desperately need* me.
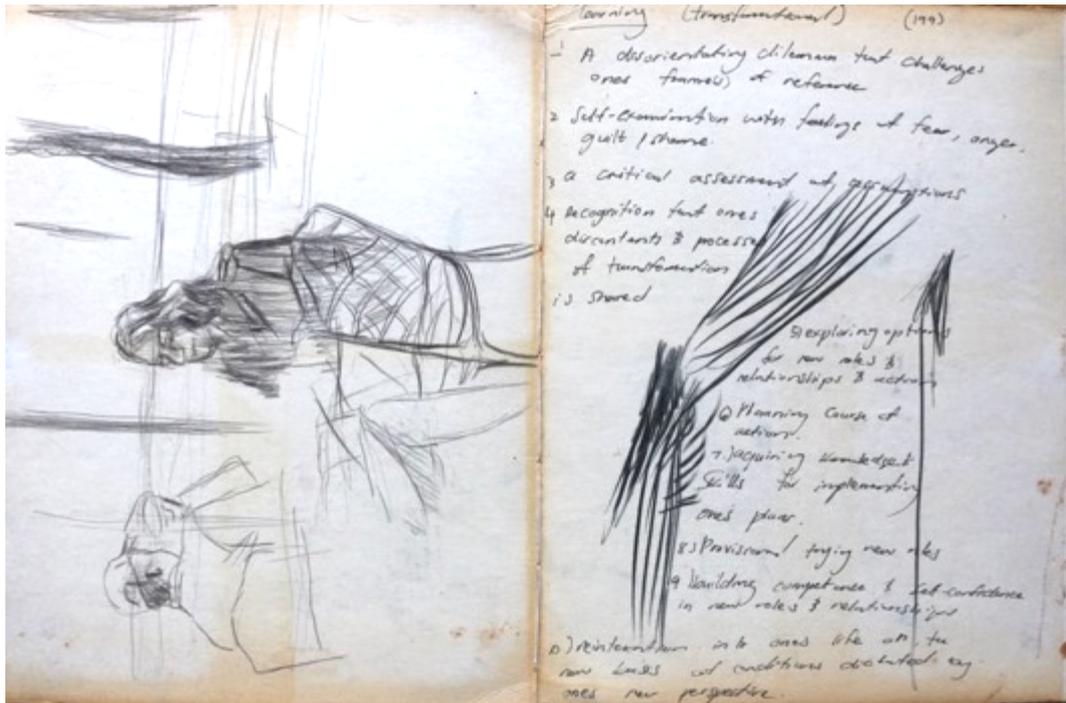
Figure 5.17. Terri Dennis. *Transformational Learning*, charcoal in visual diary

What really brought me down to Earth? Having to synchronize a class of 80 young learners who collectively made a good joke of me. I soon realised how out of touch with reality I could be. I attended university, travelled Europe on an exchange programme, attended lectures on global histories, global cultures, geopolitics, contemporary warfare and the like, but nothing prepared me for acting like a goat, then a fish in front of mixed group ranging from energised toddlers to pre-teens, while most of them effectively shredding through the shimmering red cardboard I had painstakingly selected from the material inventory, and rather chuffed with myself, cut to size a week in advance. In visual diary spreads such as Figure 5.17, I explored educational philosophies using notes from literature and conversations to better understand my role as a facilitator, as well as some practical steps I could take to improve my facilitation skills.
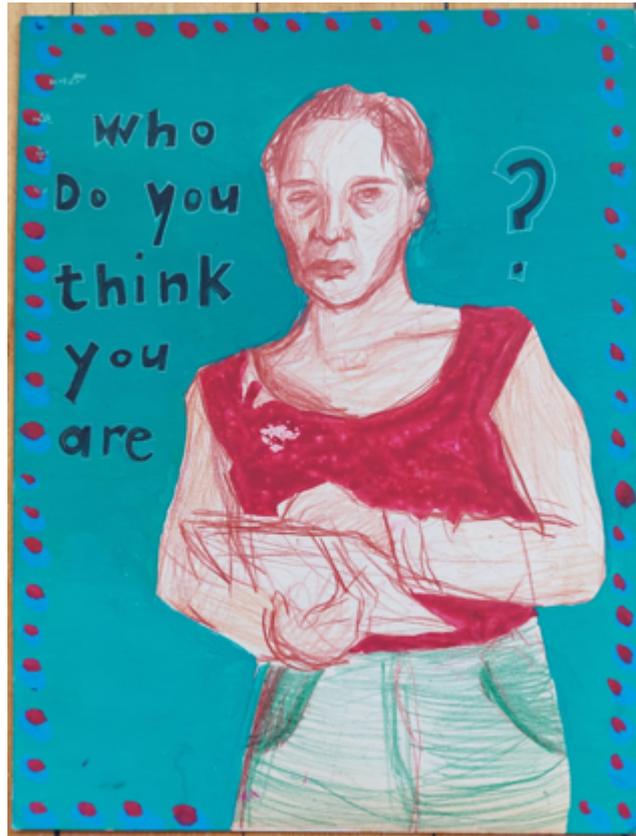
Figure 5.18. Terri Dennis. *Who do you think you are?* Watercolour and pencil drawing in visual diary

During that time my visual diaries served as a place to make sense of mounting complexities that I was facing in my journey toward becoming an art facilitator. Here are some memories from my own writing in the diaries:

> As a young person I often feel powerless and paralysed thinking, speaking and learning about the upward battle ahead. The more I inform myself, inspiring hope in a better future can be hard work. Slowly I am stripping through the rhetoric, the lies, the promises, the violence inflicted upon the nation by the state. I feel like I can never know enough to speak confidently about politics, economics and social issues but I have to try and be open to correction. I have become overwhelmed with problems presented to me, gotten side tracked because of not understanding my role as an educator.

5.2.5 Learning experiences

I realised that my most effective form of activism happens through art. If only a selected few have access to art education, I could be doing my bit to try to change society and simultaneously indulge in the love I have for making art. Activism does not have to be loud and rebellious. Activism should take multiple forms. My role as a facilitator in the arts is a form of activism towards recognising humanity within ourselves as individuals and collectively, as well as reverence for the natural world.

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Education is about creating learning experiences. The following text explains a classroom experience by which I learned from a natural science teacher in the process of introducing the concept of energy. This memory made a huge impression on me:

> *After walking into our class, her left arm seemed to jolt up uncontrollably. Then, with surprise on her face, flung her right leg. Increasingly she began to move, faster and faster, almost rhythmically.*
>
> *Loudly she yelled out, "It must be the energy!! Energy. Energy. Energy…"*
>
> *Soon she was jumping screaming and streaming messy bun flinging into a stringy mop! Body shaking, fist-raising-crazy-white lady. With hair, electrocution-style and her smiling red face, she sat down and calmly looked for her glasses. She embodied the lesson and made us participate. At that moment, she was not the strict white Afrikaans woman I was so afraid of. She taught me that teachers are more human than I ever grasped. At that moment she was crazy, silly and intelligent all at the same time. She was real to me.*

As young learners in class, there was no way by which we could restrain our little bodies from laughing hysterically and joining in the yelling and shaking. Aesthetically, this teacher embodied the theory and experience of energy. How could I turn on her after I saw her outrageous humanity, her vitality and humility to get down to our level and have a blast with us as learners in Grade 5? There is something so refreshing about teachers that exude such excitement for their subject. Understandably, teachers and facilitators cannot always be happy and excited, but lessons that unexpectedly bring an element of surprise and shock have incredible value. Reflecting on this memory demands me to ask how else I could create impactful quality educational experiences.

I have had to look at myself and think of all the pathetic moments I had while feeling sorry for myself and my *sad* story. When I was going through a radicalised moment, I cringed at the comments I heard from faculty and the public calling learners entitled and ungrateful, ahistorical in our reasoning and unable to think politically. A part of me was entitled, thinking that the world owed me health, stability, security and comfort. I was entitled to be selfish and cruel in what I thought and said because I had dealt with violence, ignorance and judgement – as if the world owed me a perfect upbringing and understanding. I was trapped within my own reflection, in the habit of looking for someone to blame. But another part of me could see the injustices, cycles of violence and poverty, state corruption, exploitation, unequal opportunities. I became interested in how to bring about change.

I had moments of darkness and lacked of compassion. Yet now, teaching in poor communities for the first time, I questioned my race and privilege. People asked me whether I am white. This shook me. I was confronted with my own frustration and desperation to fit into a narrow understanding of what it meant to be 'coloured'. Teaching has provided me with more nuanced perspectives on power, race, identity and the relationship I have with myself and others.

During the first two years as an art facilitator in Delft and in Bellville South working with students and older women, I struggled to manage my thoughts, procedures and plans, and how to deal with disruptive learner behaviour. I initially was discouraged by my own self-judgement, thinking that I perhaps was unrelatable and too English-speaking to be effective in this environment. I thought speaking my way to relatability could work. Ripples and cracks appeared in the ground on which I based my identity. Some force shook me and turned me inside out when sitting with the uncertainty and instability of my identity. The words in my diary read:

> Who are you to do this work? Who do you think you are, caring about the environment here in our community when you don't even live here? What do you know about teaching values, mindfulness, self-love, etc…? When Terri you are such a mess?
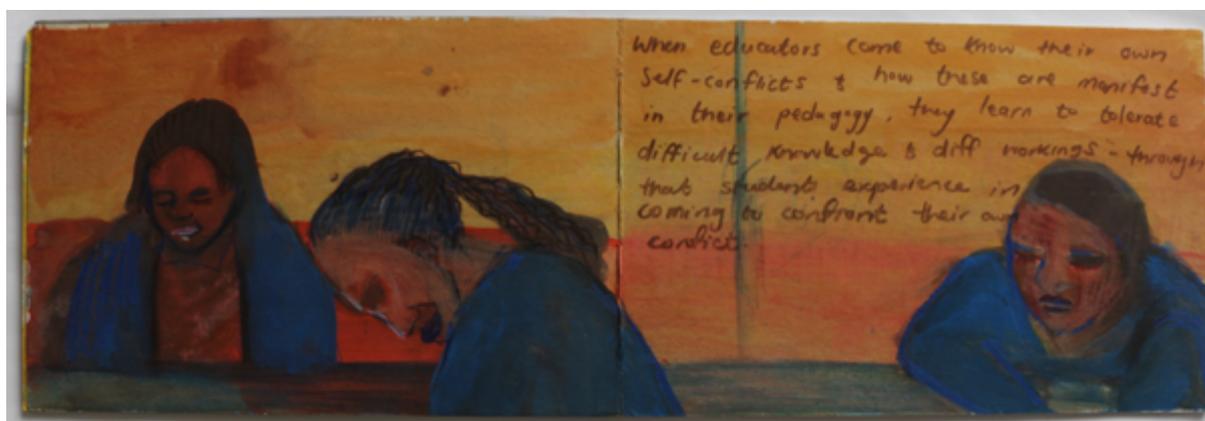
Figure 5.19. Terri Dennis. *Struggles of self-awareness*, ink and pencil drawing

The self-conflict I experienced regarding my worthiness to do the work, was rooted in fear of saying the wrong words or getting in the way of true social justice. As an outsider in Hangberg and Imizamo Yethu, what gave me the right to teach art-meets-life skills classes? I did not intimately know life in these communities from the outset. I needed to be compassionate with my struggle – as compassionate as I have learnt to be with other people's journeys.

Figure 5.20 presents an image inspired by the critical pedagogy notion of education being a tool for the transformation of the world, as a pathway to freedom. Critical pedagogues seemed to speak to me directly through bell hooks, Freire and Henry Giroux. It was the hype online hype and the powerful quotes of Freire and Hooks that I read that pulled me in shamelessly. This, however, was not research. Social media has a way of validating and drawing support for one's assumptions. Symbols of rebellion, resistance and revolution can create a cathartic release from the stress of the *isms* of racism, sexism, capitalism, etc., but this symbol remains abstract. It has the opposite effect in reality. Social media advertisements can sell you these experiences in exchange for engagement/views/likes (media) and remuneration (goods), while distracting people from critically thinking about their lives or ever addressing the social issues of the day. The language of domination, the oppressed, power struggles and inequality along the lines of identity politics made complete sense to me, yet I could not articulate my feelings in my own words. The nature of creative work, however, is often nuanced, and rich in contradiction and ambiguity which allows for the expression of feelings as fundamental elements within the work.
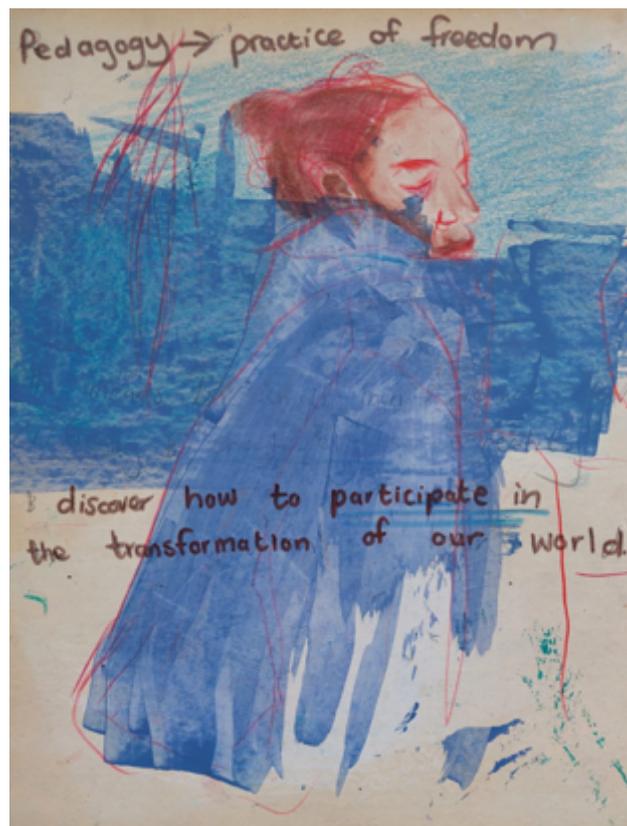
Figure 5.20. Terri Dennis. *Education for transformation and freedom,* watercolour drawing in visual diary

The works of Henry Giroux (2011) appealed to me through how directly he spoke about oppression and domination, capitalism and the exploitation of people and what drew me to the work of Paulo Freire (1972) was the hope that education, relationships with others and with the planet could be more equitable. Overlaying notes and drawings based on old sketches made during protest action, I bring together my moments in time and ideas/ideals by people I admire. If something could be better, I could work towards it. Connecting with people, developing and enacting solutions to local (home, community) and national issues is how we make significant changes.

5.2.6 Inspiring hope

Exploring human rights and critical citizenship education as part of the arts education curriculum can be challenging. I initially I presented these lessons in a way that bored learners and I realised I was out of touch with reality. Only apathetic eyes stared back at me. To move beyond the concealed "in-an-ideal-SA" expected recitation of citizen rights and responsibilities, we looked at different scenarios of how rights should be respected as well as how rights can be violated and what to do about it. The aim of the conversation was to practise our critical thinking about rights through scenarios that reflected real issues. Each creative session that delves into topics connected to citizenship education probes me as a facilitator with new questions. What should facilitators do about the hopelessness, the lack of faith learners express concerning the lack of justice, the weak justice system that does not serve everyone equally? How do I inspire hope for a better future where they themselves are just and ethical leaders?

Figure 5.21. Terri Dennis. *Power with(in)*, pen drawing in visual diary

When we explore the topic of Human Rights, which is fundamental in my understanding of citizenship education, I must encourage tolerance of opinion because the discussion often becomes heated. There is disagreement, contestation about whether there is any point in having a so-called idealistic Bill of Rights when the poor (who are the majority of the population) continue to have their basic rights and basic needs ignored and disregarded in South Africa. Such conversations are contentious. The topics of xenophobia, evictions, rape and gender-based violence often come up in discussion. Critical Citizenship education emphasises the importance of understanding history and facing it, while recognising that legacies of the past era and trauma are still with us.

Figure 5.22. Terri Dennis. *Searching for community*, ink and pencil drawing in visual diary

I am both apprehensive and excited about stimulating conversation about issues of justice and ethics regarding the school environment and society at large. Many of the young people I work with are critically aware of the reality of the state of inequality and corruption. An educated population is not measured by how many university graduates we have in a country. Educated people have cultivated the skill of assessing information and by reading between the lines. In a well-functioning democracy, the values of tolerance, fairness and respect for difference are some of the ethical codes that support

a nation characterised by diversity. In the classroom, I often experience concern during moments of debate, conflict, or hopelessness, or disillusionment with the politicians, police and legal system in general, all of which are meant to uphold the law and protect human rights. I wonder whether I have the effective words to steer the conversation in the direction of hope and possibility.

A critical citizenship approach encourages me to ask questions about my role as an educator working with different communities. What is the purpose of critical citizenship education? What is at stake if people in a society do not think critically about their role as citizens, as individuals and as public servants within institutions that serve the public? What values should educators aim to demonstrate in their interactions with learners, especially in multicultural settings? Costandius (2014) incorporates critical pedagogy, critical thinking, learning theories and theories of multiculturalism to explore how to promote social transformation in institutions of higher education, particularly at Stellenbosch University. Although this research focuses on higher education, I find various aspects that are relevant to the work I do as a facilitator in the after-school arts education sector. I am doing this work, yet I might not be fully prepared for it psychologically.


Figure 5.23. Terri Dennis. *Critical thought and action*, pen drawing

I ask myself, "What can I do as an educator to understand the needs and desires of learners in the classroom?" I can keep up to date with current teaching and learning interventions in order to provide the best arts education I am able to present. "How can I research curriculum and pedagogical approaches that promote the values and skills which might benefit learners, artists, activists, entrepreneurs, and critical citizens?" I can read, analyse and reflect on national education policy as well as internal organisation. It is not enough to learn how to implement policy. I need to develop a critical perspective of policies and practices. As a citizen in a democratic country, it is my responsibility to educate myself about the interventions in which I take part. It is my responsibility to identify gaps in policy in order to meet the needs of the artists with whom I work, as well as question why my actions may complement or contradict policy.

Critical citizens have to question the organisational policies and practices in which they participate. I need to develop the artful skill of asking the right question in a manner that softens and opens the listener to sharing and not defending. I also need to be curious when criticised or challenged by others, if presented with a valid case against my actions and intentions. I have to think about what ideas could mean, not in theory, but in specific contexts. Every school or community centre I have worked in and the people I have and continue to work with is a part of my growth and development. What we believe about our ability and potential to learn and grow influences achievement. How can I enact educational practices and processes to develop critical citizens who take action in order to change social, political and economic inequality and injustice that affect diverse members of society (not only their group)?

My discomfort with the idea of empowerment made me question it as an ideal process in the realm of education. As a woman, I am sceptical about all the neat opportunities for upwardly mobile educated women, like myself, to fill positions in the development sector focussing on this notion of empowerment. I thought the problem was the lack of lived experience regarding the very issues meant to be addressed and the asymmetrical power hierarchy that exists and is reinforced within paternalistic relationships. For this reason, the idea of self-empowerment has been slightly more appealing. I introduced the "Female Empowerment" art class that I host by saying that *I, Terri Dennis, as well as the artwork you make, will not be empowering you. YOU EMPOWER YOURSELF. Together, in this class, we will think about how we can do this.*

 I then ask:

> "*What* is *Female Empowerment? I know you are intelligent; you would not be in high school or sitting in class after school if you weren't. We must be there for each other, support each other but*

remember that we all have unique ways of becoming empowered so we must be kind and respectful of every person's journey."

I aim to develop curriculum and create the conditions in the class that dignify the learners' history, culture and language, while at the same time remembering, as McLaren (2007:214) suggests, that empowerment is not merely self-confirmation, but also involves inspiring learners to question and select aspects of the dominant culture that can provide them with the foundation from which they can define and transform society.

Identity informs how educators engage with citizenship education, as well as how open educators may be to curriculum reforms in general. Educators may lack allegiance to national strategies, policy and reform based on a lack of faith in governance. Educators, like myself, are often firm advocates of the values enshrined in the constitution but lack training and confidence concerning how to clear the way for open and honest conversation about issues such as social justice and democracy. Much of my struggle in this regard relates to my perceptions of how learners truly see me. What has helped was shifting the focus away from myself and towards interest in the lived experience of the artists I work with, especially with regards to their education and hopes for the future. An important aspect in my facilitation is ultimately to remind artists of the power within themselves and the change they can realise for themselves, family and the community at large.

5.2.7 Keep journaling

I was introduced to the idea of a visual diary as a process book for artworks and a space to store evidence of one's creative explorations by my high school art teacher. Using old phone books back then, I integrated these into my daily life as a space for collage and writing about all the things I was interested in at the time. As a teenager I was obsessed with luxury designer brands and paging through old Vogue and Harper's Bazaar magazines in the Bellville library. Europe during that time represented class, beauty and upward mobility. I destroyed and reused some of pages of those old books as I went along, but today nothing remains of those earlier visual diaries. I went through the motions of longing, discovery and self-aversion and back to discovery as an art facilitator.

My love for drawing and books was again reignited when I connected with an illustrator\print-maker from Belgium who was an exchange student during my 3rd year at varsity. She recorded her exchange period in South Africa in small sketch books, often making drawings of me and our adventures together. Her unique ability to interweave her life into imagery simply astonished me. The vulnerability revealed

in how she spoke about her experience coming to South Africa, and her internal struggle with the history of Belgium in Africa challenged the hatred I developed towards the notion of *the West*. Here was a person who came from the West (of which I was obsessed over as a teen and later developed strong feelings of hatred towards) but was a whole person, and obviously so much more than a history or a grand narrative.

Initially my journals were not effective for reflecting and critical thinking. Instead of reflecting on my experiences or relating theory and practice, I created worlds disconnected from my teaching practice. When I did reflect on my teaching, it was disjointed and non-contextualised, making it difficult to evaluate how effective these attempts were. Returning these journals, and responding to them by drawing and writing over old pages enabled me to add newly gained perspectives to ideas with which I previously struggled, without erasing the evidence of my learning process.

I often catch myself not breathing properly, racing, pacing all wound up, my chest feeling bound up. I am not alone in this experience of anxiety. Some of us might need a practice that can helps us learn how to deal with the groundlessness of life. Drawing and keeping a visual diary can be a way to ground oneself. The power of drawing resides not merely in the act; what is also significant to the process is preparing my body and environment for something significant. To keep drawing helps me to become present, and share beauty, joy, or sorrow with myself and others. When I am drawing people, I meditate on the good qualities of the particular person. Drawing and creating short stories about characters can inspire conversations about social, political, environmental and ethical issues that people face. This is an exercise in imagination – picturing the story. Drawing, like any creative act, does not belong to a certain social class only, but is a form of human expression. People throughout history have used the practice for different purposes.

I often used small journals while moving around to take notes during curriculum meetings and later overlaid drawings in them. These visual diaries allow me to be creative on the move and in tiny doses. Binding my own small books made of recycled cardboard facilitated a different quality. I am able to return to drawings with paint later when I have time. Facilitators need to be dedicated. This is challenging work. I cannot put 100% into my art practice and 100% into developing my facilitation practice at the same time. The small books allow me to make art, document and let go of the pressure of making *Art.*

In the visual diary I can link ideas that I come across from literature to the world around me by working this into life drawings. In some books I allowed myself to be honest and to struggle with my conscience. It helped me change how I viewed the world.

I could reflect upon the power of my emotions in an ever-changing environment.

Figure 5.24. Terri Dennis. *Power with(in)*, crayon drawing on water colour wash in visual diary

An aspect often present in school culture is judgement or constant low-level, bullying and insensitive comments aimed at learners. Learners who grow up under tough conditions often wear a mask or shield to protect themselves from being disappointed, or judged. At these schools, especially those at which I teach, artists might need to portray themselves as tough. I remember being laughed at for my small hand-me-down school blazer. Being different was considered as bad. I did not want my parents to spend more on me, especially for a uniform. I made a conscious effort to walk upright, chin up and proud. My experience as a learner and facilitator has shown that the school environment can be particularly difficult when it comes to public judgment and bullying. There often is little room for sensitive or vulnerable emotions. It can push people to believe in themselves and therefore build self-determination and confidence, but it more likely destroys confidence and belief in the power of one's unique abilities.

grounding oneself
listening to sounds in the distance
feeling sensations of the body.
feet connected to the earth
palms facing upward.
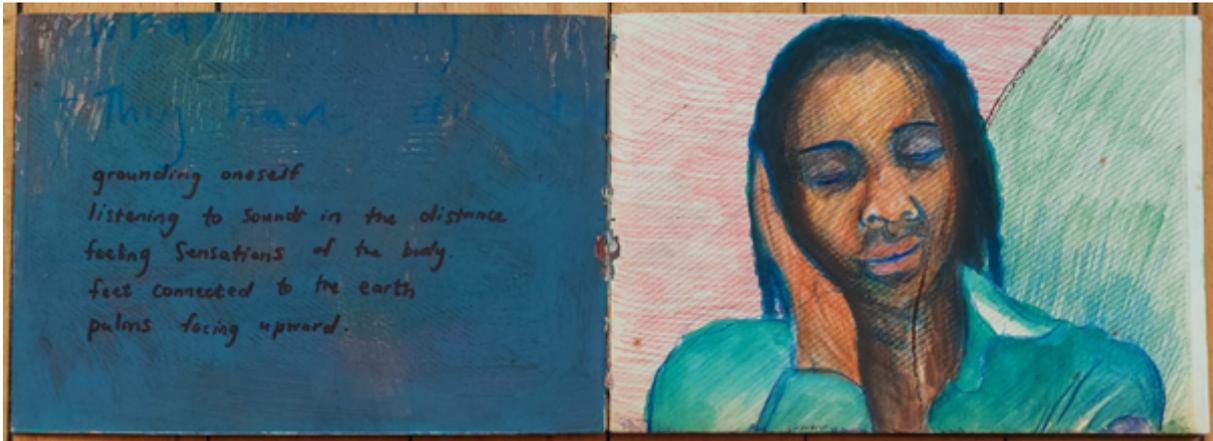
Figure 5.25 Terri Dennis, *Meditation*, watercolour pencil drawing in visual diary

My visual diaries provide a place to store inspiration for meditations as well as reflection on meditation conducted in the classroom. To meditate in the classroom is an opportunity to guide learners to feel deeply connected to themselves, each other and the planet. As I developed my facilitation of meditation, I have slowly become able to pose questions that engender deeper reflection about learners' actions and values.

Figure 5.25. reads: *Grounding oneself, listening to the sounds in the distance, feeling the sensations of the body, feet connected to the earth, palms facing upward.* Meditation provides an opportunity for grounding oneself in a practice of gentle listening to one's body. It is also an opportunity for silent contemplation, to reflect on one's innate goodness and realising how important it is that I express out loud that I see the learners' talent, creativity and potential, and that I am on their side. In class I try to be realistic with them by reminding them that success (their dreams, goals, hopes) will not be realised easily, but that they are capable and have people like myself on their side. During meditation, with music, tone of voice and good intentions as a creative medium, I can try to create a portal for self-compassion, self-awareness and self-acceptance.

Figure 5.26. Terri Dennis. *May our hearts and minds be open to learning*, watercolour drawing in visual diary

Makes me think of Aunty Joy, who prays for God's guidance before each class. She asked God to bless her with the best words and actions in class so as to bring out the best in learners and make a difference in their lives. Although I am not a particularly religious person, this gesture of humility and sincerity really touches me. In drawings in my visual diaries, I often write my intentions and hopes as a facilitator. These books remind me of why I decided to do this work and how to facilitate with the intention of care.
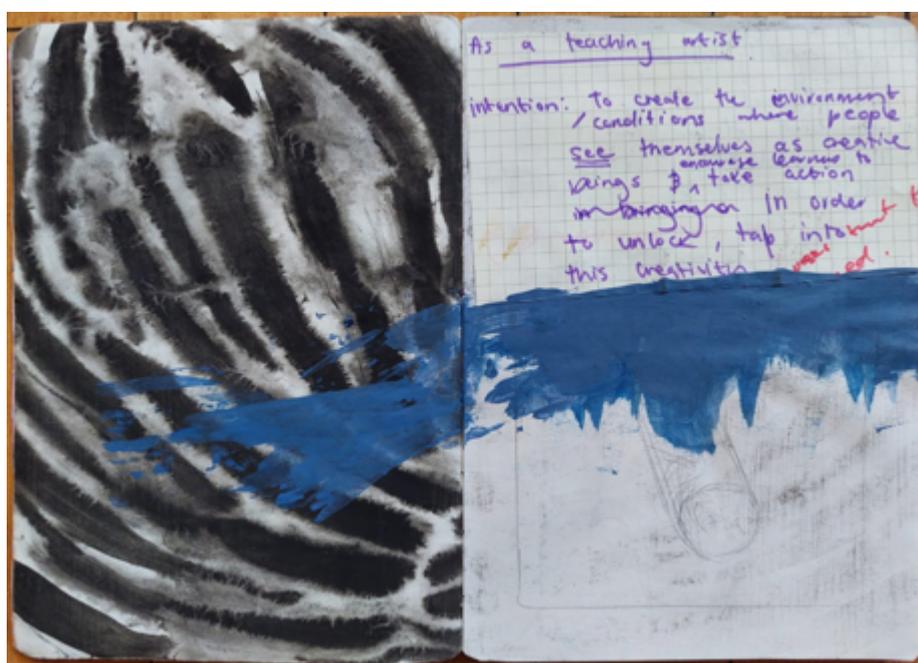

Figure 5.27. Terri Dennis. *Intention.)*, Pen drawing in visual diary

5.3 Discussion

If I were to reflect on my journey so far, the biggest challenges in my transition from art student to art educator has been developing confidence, building relationships with all learners, and developing structure and managing my time effectively.

Through my journey I realised that I should develop confidence in my own knowledge, and art and facilitation skills to be able to speak with conviction. I also learned to draw from stories, ideas and life experiences to make an argument. I learned during the last few years to speak mindfully with courage and sensitivity, self-awareness of my positionality, with the intention to encourage learning for all of us collaboratively.

Figure 5.28. Terri Dennis. *The solution lives here amongst us.* watercolour pencil drawing in visual diary

I learned to get over myself, to go beyond focusing on my own identity and others' imagined perceptions of myself. I still need to learn to manage my emotions better and strategically reflect on my life, for instance through being patient with myself. I now understand that learning new skills and understanding the world in all its complexity takes time. For me, empowerment would involve giving me the necessary pace and time for learning, and trusting the process. It is important for me to treat myself, my facilitation practice and creative work with much respect.

I realised that I should build and maintain authentic relationships with learners, parents, the staff at schools and with my colleagues, because it is as important as the content and artistic skills to be taught in class. I can connect with learners as artists and develop a deep and holistic understanding of their goals, interests, challenges and life in general. In doing so, my facilitation practice is enriched and deepens as opposed to relying on the surface level, content driven approach with which I started.

I learned to acknowledge and celebrate difference without feeling that I needed to be overly nice or to act in a way that saved me from being judged based on race, gender, class, or personality – I learned to avoid passing the pain I have experienced onto others. I need to listen and allow myself to be educated by people who live and work in the communities I serve. No degree equips me to make assumptions about and decisions on behalf of other people. I need to go back to the practices and processes of empowerment that already existed before I started working as a facilitator. My awareness and appreciation of the strengths of those in the communities where I work is necessary if I am to connect my efforts to the lived experience of artists, families, educators and community members. Figure 5.28. represents this connection and my quest to listen and learn with others.

In my working experience, I realised that working without a formal structure is difficult. When one begins the journey of facilitation, frameworks and learning theories on which to base one's classes can be overwhelming; every article that one considers is persuasive and so many theories are available. I have realised that I have to be selective and use the theories that my learners and I can relate to. Relating to structure, time management becomes much more important in a working environment. Prioritising has become a necessity – to become even more efficient at working on what is most important during working hours. Working strategically and crossing things off the list as soon as possible, has therefore become part of my journey. It is necessary to devise simple but effective administration systems so that the curriculum for the learners will be sustainable long after I am gone, and to enable effective evaluation procedures and monitoring.

Figure 5.29. Terri Dennis. *Empowerment?* Watercolour pencil drawing in visual diary

The transition from art student to art educator can involve a huge struggle. However, anything worth learning is difficult. As an art student, I was comfortable with doing the things I knew I could do well. I did not want others to see my struggle towards understanding myself in the world. My visual diaries

have helped me to make sense of my own being and ways of performing my identity as an art educator/facilitator. Art facilitation is part of my own critical engagement as a citizen of South Africa and making has taught me how to persevere. While I often get stuck, I catch myself and then keep going deeper, trying different things, until I get into the flow.

While growing up I, as now, continually confronted stereotypes that weave race, culture, class, gender into a shield of defensive intolerance and hatred. Writings that reflected this in my diary read as follows:

"You can never trust a white person, never!"

"Coloured people are the most racist people in the world."

"In the new South Africa black people only look out for their own."

"Coloureds are the slyest people you will ever meet, not to be trusted."

"You can only trust your parents, even your family will stab you in the back."

"White people are colonising invaders and are socially ignorant. Black people are entitled and want everything for free. Coloured people are lazy, immoral and have no culture."

Such sentiments add to the scars of past and present *isms*. I know it is comforting to resort to stereotyping. As a young person who grew up surrounded by conflicting messaging about racism, patriarchy, classist perspectives as well as progressive ideas, I have to admit to myself that there are ways by which I am consciously or unconsciously conditioned to see myself and others. As South Africans, our ideas about difference are to some extent tainted by past and present ideologies. My family often speaks about people along racial lines. While growing up, listening to how my parents and grandmother spoke about people was often confusing. Their language involved a mix between anger and hatred towards white people (of both Dutch and English descent) for colonialism and apartheid, anti-back and xenophobic sentiments, and being genuinely accepting of all people (the rainbow nation appeal). I had to unlearn the anger I felt towards white people for the past and present the reality of inequality, and look at the systems and structures that still concentrate wealth within the pockets of a minority.

My art education experience provided me with the freedom of time and space to simply create. Starting in first and second year with an introduction to different mediums and a constant focus on drawing, and observing, I saw my skills developing thanks to skilled educators who are also practicing artists. Even in an institution that is far from perfect, the opportunity is what one makes it to be. When reflecting on my art education experience and more recent facilitation, I recorded the following in my visual diary: "Artists have the right to explore and create in a way that feels enjoyable, useful and/or

important to themselves. This means that if learners deviate from the instruction and are enjoying their own direction, that is a success." Delving into education, I have appreciation for the Visual Art Department and all the people who were my lecturers. I am deeply grateful for the freedom I had to make bold statements through art once I was empowered to speak with my own voice. In retrospect, there was a kind of safety created for students that I did recognise at the time – safety to work out ideas through art, a kindness that I hope to bestow on all my current art learners.

Figure 5.30. Terri Dennis. *Respect, care, share.* Watercolour drawing in visual diary

I solidified my story that learners could almost smell my desperation to be accepted. My dairy read: "I need you to accept me, to like me." I would imagine that learners had to be thinking "look at this smiling privileged English girl." I must have looked like an outsider from a wealthy family. This need for approval manifested in most relationships I experienced, with me always wondering why they looked at me and what they saw. All this overthinking could not extinguish the desire to do meaningful work, but surely slowed me down. Although this fear of not being accepted or not measuring up inhibits access to much of one's creativity (humour, intelligence, problem solving skills, memory), and one experiences a certain level of discomfort at the edge of one's comfort zone, the unknown is opening up the possibility for learning and personal growth.
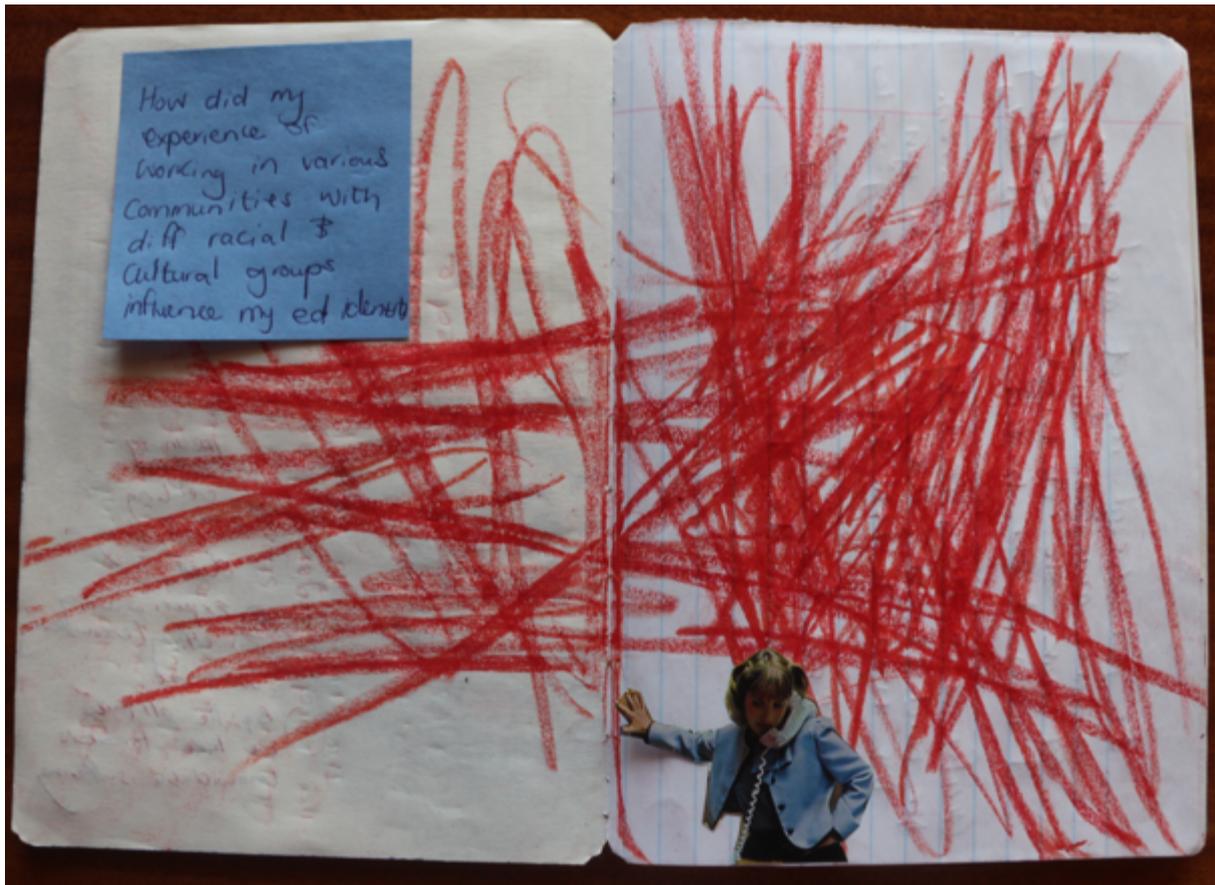
Figure 5.31. Terri Dennis. *Am I the person I think other people think I am?* Watercolour drawing in visual diary

In my visual diary I battled with my assumptions of what the young learners thought of me. I was confused about who I was, felt unstable and groundless in different contexts: In Stellenbosch I was adamantly black. In Italy I was "mixed race", and now I'm coloured again. I could claim different identities, but struggled to see who I was. I often caught myself thinking that learners would not accept me because I am a coloured, insincere, nervous, inexperienced little girl, too English speaking, too soft, too rigid, too… and I recall all the things that I have experienced so far in my life, my childhood upbringing, my art education years that play into who I am now as a facilitator who creates spaces for learning for others, my learners.

Figure 5.32. Terri Dennis. *Am I the right person for this job?* Watercolour drawing in visual diary

Figure 5.32 represents a moment in my journey where I was not sure of being the right person to do this work. At the time, I stressed about being liked by the learners. Once I started focusing on developing my practice, being assertive and consistent, the work became rewarding and I felt respected in the classroom. Over time I have come to realise that I have to be frank about who I am and what I am about. I need to be direct while respecting people of all walks of life. I cannot say that I have arrived at some kind of sweet spot. Even after a successful art class during which the artists had respectfully engaged with their art and peers, I might still have a worrisome feeling that something might happen to disrupt the peace between us. Aiming for valuable learning experiences outweighs aiming for peace.

No matter the language or cultural difference, it is not wise to only focus on the difference. One has to recognise and acknowledge differences but also consider connections. In the past I have cemented barriers in my own mind. People could sense when I was nervous about how I fitted in, or in turmoil about wanting to be accepted, or trapped within thoughts or holding tightly onto an idea or outcome. I do not need to be accepted as a coloured person or based on any perceived identity to be a good facilitator. Initially I desperately wanted validation from people, from my partner, teachers, and learners. But now, fluctuating between feeling present and grounded or feeling like someone floating in uncertainty, the desperation is gone, but I still need to arrive at an ultimate empowered destination that does not exist.

Figure 5.33. Terri Dennis. *Reflection.* Watercolour drawing in visual diary

Reflecting on my naïve understanding of activism during my undergraduate years I see that strong emotions can provide one with the drive to take action towards changing oppressive conditions in one's life. Emotions can therefore liberate one, especially when emotions are connected are shared through story in dialogue and solidarity with others. According to Zembylas, educators can find power in solidarity with others, and connect personal and cultural narratives. Here emotions play a generative and bonding role in the production of knowledge between people.

Other people will not necessarily understand my journey. Some might laugh, or think the work is meaningless or pathetic, but my work goes on. I have to be concerned with my process, the transitions, and being entangled with others. As educators we can only focus on what is within our control. We cannot control what others think of us. I struggled to justify to myself what right I had to have any form of authority in class. I would let my learners run the show. I thought if I tread lightly, I would not be the privileged auxiliary coloured colonial dominator in the network of international NGOs. Yet, reading about and coming to terms with my own trauma, I have come to see the necessity of providing structure in the form of predictable routine, the importance of setting boundaries and supporting consequences

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for disruptive or violent behaviour to model a system of fairness and accountability in the classroom. That is the ideal, but I am still working on an assertive presence and on believing in myself. I do not want to be accepted in the communities in which I work on the basis of so-called identity markers, but rather for being an effective and inspiring arts facilitator.

Figure 5.34. Terri Dennis. *Power with.* Watercolour drawing in visual diary

Emotions can also distort one's perception and if one is not mindful, emotional reactions can be divisive and destroy transformation efforts. Figure 5.35 presents a mass of sprawling red threads that represents the potential of emotion that simultaneously may be force for personal and social liberation or a virus that corrupts the individual and social body of a people. Emotions, according to Costandius, must therefore be mediated by critical thought, especially if educators and curriculum developers intend to inspire people to be critical citizens who take strategic action to bring about social transformation.

Figure 5.35. Terri Dennis. *Unregulated Emotion,* watercolour drawing in visual diary

In remembering my 'Energy Teacher' I am reminded that it is wrong to assume that I am unable to do this work on the basis of differences of culture, race, language, gender, etc. that that seemed to exist between the learner body and me. When I was confronted with the first challenges as a facilitator, I thought it had to do with my 'social' identity and I, more importantly and most problematically, projected an identity on learners in homogenising terms. There is an assumption that the most effective education takes place when a teacher is from the same racial and cultural background as the learners. Black teachers, thus, are best at teaching black learners – this is what I thought on days when I struggled with myself and the learners. I think that the slow work of developing relationships with learners, parents, school staff, and communities, is significant. Making art in slow, quiet work without illusions of grandeur teaches me the perseverance that I need. I plant my feet firmly on the ground that I have watered and nourished with the help of people who have come before me and others who walk beside me. Sometimes I need to tread lightly into the unknown. There is no need to rush the process of learning.

5.4 Synthesis

In this Chapter I presented my journey of learning to become an educator, my exploration of my anguish and learning about the importance of mentors along the journey, my creation of the personality of *TE_Quiney* through which I used to speak during my undergraduate years and the steep learning curve that I experienced when I started to facilitate art processes for learners and tried to inspire hope for our situation in the current context. Going through my visual diaries reminded me of the stages that I went through and still go through. Liu et al. (2015) argue that identity is continuously reconstructed and in flux, and changes according to socially constructed contexts. As McAdams (2001) suggests, our life stories and personal narratives are psychosocial constructions created by the person but also the cultural context in which the person's life is immersed. I aimed with this chapter to construct a story of my life which is woven into my personal/social/political contexts. As McAdams (2001) says, identity is an internalised life-story. This relates to what I have presented here. In the next chapter, I summarise the main points and elaborate on the implications of this study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this autobiographical research I explored my journey from art student to art facilitator. I chose this topic because of my struggle with many personal and socio-political issues while transitioning from an art student and artist to an art facilitator. The main research question was formulated as: What are the challenging aspects regarding the transition from art student to art educator? The research was therefore intended to pinpoint the struggles and the highlights in my journey, and written up with the aim to assist other art facilitators in their transition with consideration of the complex historical context in which art facilitators may find themselves. This research is limited to my own experience and further explorations of other art facilitators could have enriched the study, but I consider this as a deeply personal journey and the reflection required of every art educator in getting to know themselves before exploring the journeys of others.

6.2 Conclusion and Implications of the Research

I conclude my exploration of the challenging aspects in my transition from art student to art educator. I consider how working in different communities has thus far influenced my educator identity and I discuss the extent to which keeping a visual diary has influenced my educator identity. Lastly, I touch on the implications of the research.

I struggled to overcome the longing to be liked. When one's relationship with oneself is not grounded in self-acceptance, it is difficult to trust others and mirror back people's goodness. Empowerment for myself starts inside-out. The power within is generated from self-awareness and self-acceptance. I used to get completely overwhelmed when things did not go to plan. I really struggled to deal with constant change. Regulating one's emotions, especially when situations change course, is difficult. Being flexible to sudden changes is fundamental to good facilitation. Strategically letting go of a tight grip of control is necessary in the art class. With regard to certain aspects such as daily routine. when control is stabilising, but for the most part, art sessions need to feel light and enjoyable. The time spent making art is time for artists to make their own creative decisions and find their own way.

I was stuck in emotional reactivity, neglecting my own growth and development in my facilitation practice. I steered away from doing things that were difficult and focused instead on the practical skills needed by facilitator. I did not dare pushing myself outside my comfort zone.

I struggled to inspire hope and confidence in myself and the artists with whom I was working. Though Meditation can be used as a tool for grounding and self-awareness. It can also be utilised to express and remind ourselves of the value each person brings and gratitude towards oneself, other beings and the planet. This enabled me to facilitate hope and confidence in the classroom.

Visual diaries recorded the people I meet, lessons I learned from people in the flesh, literature and moments of rapture. I found these books to be rich resources of the wisdom that allowed me to recall moments that had a lasting impression on my educator identity.

My experience of working in various communities with different racial and cultural groups had a meaningful influence on my educator identity. I was too concerned with being liked and accepted Initially. This slowed down my development. I needed to develop the self-awareness to recognise that I as a facilitator was operating in a reactionary way. What was more important than fitting into the cultural and social background of the artists, was developing my practice, doing the work of building relationships, being consistent and communicating my belief in and care for each artist as an individual.

In conclusion, visual diaries can provide a space for critical self-reflection, questioning assumptions and contradictions wrapped in personal and social identity. I used it as a tool for reflecting on my positionality and practice. When writing this thesis and considering these 'archives', I was able to reflect deeply and critically on my experiences, which continuously shapes my educator identity. Visual diaries provide a space to compile life experiences and draw from educational theories, which sparks new ideas and understandings. It creates a space for incubating of experience to create meaning. Working in the visual diary allowed me to brew new ideas, incubate my thoughts and feelings with the nourishment of creativity.

It has also enabled me to reflect on my values, actions and attitudes and kept me on track towards my goals. It has enriched my commitment to continue improving my craft as a facilitator. This is my continuous research approach. The visual diaries assist me in recognising where I became stuck, and where my perception of myself and my role as a facilitator was hampered. This process made rethink my perceptions of my personal history, the choices that I made and circumstances that cannot always controlled. I has helped me recognise the times in my life when I played the victim, which was destructive. The daily practice of writing, drawing and painting in my visual diary has introduced structure into my life, a form of self-regulation. It facilitates rewriting the narrative, to assist in

essentially redefining my identity. My conclusion is that, in my case, visual journaling introduced the potential to develop resilience for handling some of life's challenges for myself for the sake of the learners with whom I engage.

6.3 Further Research

Very little is written, especially in literature concerning the art world, about the transition from artist to art facilitator for learning. From my research I learned a great deal about myself and pinpointed the issues that helped, but also those that prevented me from growing as a facilitator in learning spaces. I would like to encourage other art practitioners/facilitators to engage in reflection to work through personal and historical social and political issues that affect our lives. I would also encourage other educators to keep a visual diary as a record showing the learning path but also acknowledging how far one has come, taking in consideration the complex history of South Africa.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

What drew me to Paulo Freire (1972) was the hope that the world, through better relationships between people and the planet could improve through education. Society can always be imagined as more tolerant and fairer; therefore educators can inspire thought and action towards that vison. Connecting with people, devising and enacting solutions to local (home, community) and national issues is how we realise significant change. It is a fantasy to think that educators who believe in social justice should be nothing but selfless martyrs, whose actions, dreams and desires never conflict with their values. I am far from being a martyr willing to sacrifice my life for others. I am not a *good* person. I am complex, like anyone else. I have my shadows and unconscious prejudices. I accept my fallibility and the fact that I might be unaware of how my experiences, desires and aspirations have a bearing on the kinds of questions I pursue, on actions I take and how I direct my own learning. It is not enough to learn how to draw and how to teach drawing. I need to remind myself to remain open to learning and being corrected.

Every day I am confronted with new challenges in terms of relationships, cultural differences, resistance and conflict. Boundaries between work time and personal life blur. Setting boundaries is important in order to maintain the physical, emotional and mental strength necessary to carry on doing this work. I love the work that I do and maintaining that joy is important to me. This is what I learned from the journey with my visual diaries.

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