

CONSIDERING CALYPSO: STORYING BARRIERS TO ARTS ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND VISUAL CULTURE EDUCATION

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
2020

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
GRADUATE COLLEGE

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## **Dedication**

To my mother, and all the Black women who have held me up, throughout my life. And to God,  
for making us this unapologetically amazing.

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### **Abstract**

In response to the exclusionary practices of national surveys in their approach to research on arts equity, this study looks at the life stories of art educators as a site of inquiry in understanding the barriers to arts access and participation, and as a means of re-humanizing the discourse. It positions the art educator in place of power and thus works on the premise that teacher reflexivity could help foster better more empathetic, accepting art pedagogy. Thus, this project asks what can be learnt about the barriers to arts access and participation through story, namely using a new Calypso methodology.

Studying the life stories of three art educators, including the researcher, self identified barriers to arts access and participation are explored within the context of contemporary research on arts equity. Results point to the complexity of the relationships between the home, the family, arts educational institutions, community and personal identity. The study emphasizes the need to consider the role of nuance and context in better understanding the barriers and privileges persons encounter throughout their lives in relation to the arts. Finally, the study utilizes the agency of film as a performative tool in widening the discourse about its findings to a larger group.



## Chapter 1: Introduction

*There is a pressure within academia to fit a mold. I face this struggle, even as I sit here to explain a project that has come organically from me, from God I believe, and now to you. I am afraid. My hands feel heavy, as I worry about fitting in, never thinking that there would be a space for this work, this writing, my voice and so there is this desire to edit, edit away every trace of vulnerability as a student and as a researcher; to frame every word perfectly. To present research--a narrative that is without struggle or trauma in feeling like a worthy participant in an academic space, a discourse you've been made to feel so left out of. Yet still, I enter boldly with my story and the stories of those who will participate within this study, with the understanding that our stories are worthy of being heard and that they are rich and wordy and relevant to the conversation. A conversation that's been about us, yet not with us, we enter.*

### Overview of Study

A deficit—a gap rather—exists in the way we understand and analyze systems of inequity within arts education. The vignette above represents that precise space, where the voices of those who often provide data for analysis, become obscured by the re-representation and re-interpretation of their storied experiences. This study troubles the exclusionary practices of art education and national surveys, in their approach to both qualitative and quantitative research on arts access and participation, which through this model of overgeneralized data collection, analysis and representation, reinforce notions of exclusivity and displaces the inherent value of voice, lived experience and the power over one's story. Thus, this project asks what can be learnt about the barriers to arts access and participation through story, namely using a new Calypso methodology. Additionally, due to my own positionality as researcher, student and pre-service educator, with my own specific history of arts access and participation, the study further asks what this reflexive methodology could reveal about the nuanced relationships between self identified barriers and pedagogy in my own life, and the lives of other storytellers, in varying stages of their art education careers.

### **Motivations for Research**

*My mother has done a lot for me. Took me years to see her hand in everything I've done and who I've become. I struggled for years to appreciate her. When I was maybe eight or nine, she put me into these art classes in a nice neighbourhood, with kids who weren't from where I was from. She put me into an environment, I'd never been in before and one I now know we struggled hard to even afford. My mom changed my life with that sacrifice, and I guess it took me way too long to figure that out and to know... and to be thankful*

That one act on the part of my mother, that one memory, is what stood at the core of my desire to embark upon a project like this. It signified one piece of an unfolding narrative; my experience with arts access and participation. It personified the awareness I had come to in my adult life, of the complexity of experiences I had had as a child, and the future experiences I would have traversing the disparity in arts access through my own students.

The contrast between private school, in terms of resources and opportunity, and the reality of the public school experience, in my early exposure to art education, left me winded. Teaching in both settings reminded me of the realities of access and privilege, but also of sacrifice and inequity. So that as an educator, I straddled two environments—one that was obviously privileged and one that was so obviously not—both in my personal and professional lives. I resolved to attend to this divide, but first I had to see more clearly, understand more deeply, how and why, these two groups of students, would be afforded or denied, privileged or disenfranchised by their experiences. It took me years to acknowledge the sea of disparity I had been wading through my entire life, and thus it became one I purposed to understand. It is this desire to understand that motivates this study. What I encountered would not only rearrange my preconceived notions about access and participation, but expand my boundaries on what such an inquiry would look like. This is where the confluence of narrative, arts access and arts participation began and continued to intersect in a variety of ways.

### **Framing the Problem: A Literature Review**

The aim of the literature review, and this study as a whole, was not to provide an illustration of some form of solution to the issue of arts access and participation. Nor was it's hope to provide a comprehensive list of sources, throughout which the prevalent theme of arts equity is quickly weaving its way into. To attempt to present such an exhaustive database would have proven impractical not only for the length of this chapter, but also the scope of this study. This project was not aimed at expounding theories and notions cast into text, seemingly permanent, but to provide a theoretical framework which leaves space for new thoughts and theories to arise out of the narratives themselves.

To saturate, rather oversaturate oneself with ideologies as “answers”, is tempting, however this review operated with the aim to instead frame “questions”. As such this section focused specifically on speaking to the “why’s” and the “how’s.” That is, the reason and ways we conduct research on and about arts equity, specifically issues of access and participation.

#### ***Why(s)***

It is no surprise that there has been an abundance of literature in the field of art education on the benefits of arts engagement at all levels, such as K-12, higher education, community settings (Knight & Schwarzman, 2017) and “third age” learning environments (Garnet, Sinner, Walker, Esmat & Yi, 2018, p. 283). Such discourse pointed to the agency to tap into our instincts, to express, reflect and develop dialogue about our life’s experiences (Brown & Korzenik, 1993). One of my favourites, being more abstract, was the inherent ability of art to transform those involved into, “agents of language” (Brown & Korzenik, 1993, p.8), contributing to the culture of words in the world. More so, Knight & Schwarzman (2017) posited creativity as the actual extension of self, intrinsic, like a muscle, which is flexed in everyday experiences of navigating and surviving life. One could say it was a notion well enough understood.

However, the U.S. President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (2011) added that,

While we found a growing body of research to support positive educational outcomes associated with arts-rich schools, and many schools and programs engaged in such work,

we also found enormous variety in the delivery of arts education, resulting in a complex patchwork with pockets of visionary activity flourishing in some locations and inequities in access to arts education increasing in others (p. v)

Though a decade later, the statement still rang true even in the face of considerably different administration, and a shift in the attitude and budget considerations for the arts as well as the National Endowment for the Arts (Mink, 2017). Even so, many have connected this notable disparity in arts access to the declining rates of arts participation (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2012; National Endowment for the Arts, 2015). What was clear was that the situation had become a significant and relevant cause for concern, with national agendas such as the aforementioned President's committee's dedication to understanding and creating policy in response to the absence and decline of arts access in the nation.

One document of particular that interested me, though rather dated, was one published by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1995. Though it served as a guide for conducting arts participation research, its subsection on why people conduct said research is what I found myself interested in, where the authors suggest possible applications such as evaluation, the influence on funding decisions and advocacy among others. It was here that the author also argued that, in that time, "arts participation research [was] used less frequently as a problem-solving technique and more often to aid in policy development" (p.4). This to me also rung true to contemporary times. It is precisely why I believed that there was a gap between policy and the practical issues of access and participation, and one of the reasons why so much of the discourse on arts access and participation lacked the impact I thought necessary for me to truly connect to the issue.

In conjunction with this, I found the issue of who conducts the research on arts participation to be as much salient as it is troubling. This section of the aforementioned document goes on to list some of these key persons such as administration and policy makers, and most crucially leaves out the persons who are most directly impacted by the lack or absence of arts participation opportunities; the study's participants.. Though my judgement may have been harsh within the context of this dated piece, its mention of the importance of , "meaningful participation of stakeholders in all stages of research" (p. 9) really provided the impetus for a greater concern

about who the true stakeholders are when it comes to access and participation? Who were those whose lives are most significantly affected? Excluding the subjects of the study who are actually affected by the lack of arts access and participation, as valid stakeholders in the process, is where I could pinpoint a crucial mistake. Though again, I must mention the context of the literature I am so heavily referencing. I truly saw this outdated document (National Endowment for the Arts, 1995) as an apt case study on how some of the motivations, attitudes and methods used in research about arts participation, and by extension access, continue to permeate contemporary research. Which brought me to my fixation on the “how” of arts participation and access research — the core of the problem.

### ***How(s)***

Firstly, According to Kraehe, Acuff and Travis (2016), “arts equity research is scattered into silos, disconnected by methodological camps and sites of inquiry” (p. 220). I have found this to be true in my survey of literature both within and without the field of Art Education. I have also noticed that the scope of such a loaded term as equity, has only broadened the parameters of the discourse. Kraehe in her piece, “Arts Equity: A Praxis-Oriented Tale” (2017), outlined a model of understanding equity where she proposes a model that she suggests could help us discern inequity at multiple educational levels. This model highlights, “six principles of art equity” (p. 268), which include distribution, access, participation, effects, recognition and transformation (Kraehe, 2017). This design not only illustrates the diverse considerations that must be made when attempting to understand arts equity, but also points to why the body of research on equity continues to expand.

Consequently, what I saw is a spectrum of methods and methodologies of research, which has developed. At one end of this spectrum, one could consider large nationwide surveys such as the National Endowment for the Arts’ Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), and other U.S. governmental studies conducted through arms such as The National Endowment for the Arts and President’s committee on the Arts and the Humanities (2011). All of these in some capacity, have taken up the cause of understanding, most notably, the principles of arts access and participation. How these studies have often been conducted however, was by utilizing

understandably large sample sizes, even in the case of non-governmental studies such as Mansour et al. (2016). Though what is considered qualitative methods are used often in the form of interviews, with randomly selected respondents (National Endowment for the Arts, 2017), or questionnaires (Mansour et al., 2016). These studies were successful in providing a comprehensive picture, however low resolution that may be. Meaning much of the texture of the data was lost through the lack of, “detailed data [that] is needed to investigate the arts participation patterns of different demographic, geographic, lifestyle, and life-cycle groups” (National Endowment for the Arts, 1995, p. 30).

Additionally, due to the scale of these studies, and because of the obscuring of the actual voices in the research, or their hand in the research process, the general tone of many of these documents came from a place of knowing, and telling rather than leaving openings to things less easily understood. I found that the data took on a rather quantitative nature in its analysis utilizing statistical, computer generated tools to “sort” these large pools of information, which in the context of their aims makes sense. However, as a reader, it reduced the very lived experiences with the reality and politics surrounding arts access and participation, into codes, too neatly organized. Tuning a dynamic confluence of forces both loud and noisy; silent, static and without sound, simple, especially because, “no single study [had] considered socio-demographic factors across student, home, and school contexts with respect to their influence on arts participation in school, home, and community settings” (Mansour et al., 2016), factors I undoubtedly believed would also help add to this texture.

On the other end of the spectrum, there was a tendency for smaller scale studies such as Wilson (2014) and Milner (2008) to address less participants, and thus capture a richer narrative for each. In doing so, I posited that this was the fleshing, in literal terms, the re-humanizing of the discourse, that Mansour et al, had suggested, that we begin to ,”unpack the lived experience of how quantitative data operates, offering important additional insights to better understanding young people’s arts participation” (p. 240). It should be also noted that though Acuff and Kraehe (2015), in their survey of literature on equity within arts education, acknowledged the importance of components of equity such as access and participation found that there was very little literature

addressing connections to equity in their analyses and interpretations. Additionally, I found no accounts in literature of researchers presenting their own stories of inequity as a site of data, beyond stating their own subjectivities or motivations for their research. I thought this to be quite intriguing as it added to the dominant notion of separation of ‘researched’ and ‘researcher’—an often disenfranchising culture of inquiry.

These studies also represented an example, in the minority, of studies that utilized narrative, and allowed for a sense of collaborative storytelling. Such a trend framed the problem of who tells the stories of those who are analyzed on the basis of arts access and participation. Thus, it was clear that the gap in the discourse I had found was due to a problem that Ayodo and Michael (1995), in their analysis of the storytelling tradition of Black women, highlighted. They stated that the orature of stories help us understand the socio-cultural histories that underlie the mechanisms and interactions of present societies. In light of this, they problematized the misappropriation or mis-telling of the stories of others and proposed that avoiding this would mean, examining stories as they were.

The way these studies untangled the issue, silenced the sound of voices. The voices of those marginalized and their stories, in being coded by an(other), were essentially erased. Their lives, succinctly summarized, did not and could not, re-articulate the hybridity of their experiences, which are embedded within, “the social, cultural and economic fabric of our society” (Hayton, Haste and Jones, 2013, p. 1271). Though studies such as Kraehe (2017), Hayton, Haste and Jones (2015), Wilson (2014) who’s work notably leveraged narrative, and life history, have begun to unpack alternative modes of thinking about arts equity, access and participation, they exist at the other end of that spectrum I had mentioned before; I wanted more. A centering of voice, story, nuance and. I began to search for the connection between the arts, arts equity, and the spaces where these two predominantly came to a head. Based on my research, it appeared to be the classroom.

### ***More How(s)***

Thus, teacher narratives, and the inherent value of them became critical as a site for beginning narrative research on arts access. One major reason for this was the assertion made by

the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts', as articulated by Rabkin and Hedberg (2012), that, "Arts education had a strong relationship with adult arts participation across all four waves of the SPPA. Having had any childhood or adult arts education was significantly correlated with attendance at "benchmark" arts events" (p.12). This positioned the art educator at a crucial site of responsibility in the ways inequity operates and proliferates society.

This positioning came into view when considering what Rao and Pfeiler-Wunder (2018) call the, "landscapes of learning [which] are built on the individual narratives emerging from learners, teachers, and the continuous evolution of multiple forces impacting the culture of the classroom each day. One's personal experiences deeply impact how situations unfold in the classroom ..." (p. 33). Thus they acknowledged the impact of teachers and what they brought—their own histories and realities—to the ecology of the learning environment. Similarly, Luwisch (2001) looking specifically at issues of equity, elaborated on the impact of teachers' personal life stories on their ability to cross boundaries of misunderstanding, estrangement and even hostility. For her, "personal story is a powerful means of becoming aware of the taken-for-granted arrangements and constraints of one's own culture" (p.134). Her own experiences of modeling self reflection for her pre service students, allowed her to help others begin to unpack and acknowledge the stereotypes they had formed about one another in that context. More so, I discovered that even in fields of research as far as Physical education, teachers were coming to understand the cruciality of the self- reflection in pre-service teachers.

Dowling, Fitzgerald and Flintoff (2015) commented on sports education and adopting a similar reflective, narrative approach to teacher education. In addition, as teacher educators, they found that there was a general hesitancy as educators to have the researchers gaze upon oneself. They claimed that if this was not overcome, then nurturing critical and socially aware teachers would become impossible. In essence in the space of, "messy, biographical reflexivity with regard to [one's] own teaching practice... [we] can identify 'her/his' struggles in the narratives about power and domination, and the spaces of opportunity in between" (p. 1029). For, to begin reconstructing our practice into one that is more inclusive and empathetic, leveraging the position of power teachers have been placed within, we must begin with ourselves (Bradfield-Kreider,



2001). Studies like these, debunk the myth of a powerless teacher (Thomas, 2014) and embraced the fact that, “arts equity includes using one’s power as a teacher to promote responsive classroom ecologies that enable participation by students of all backgrounds” (Kraehe, 2017, p. 272).

### **Central Research Questions**

It was with this understanding, that I posed the following main question to myself and the participants of this study, as well as our stories and pedagogy.

1. “What barriers to arts access and participation have I, and others, experienced and can recall through retelling our life’s stories?”

This then led to two sub questions for the research. They were:

1. “How does the recollection of these stories impact on our views on the relationship between barriers to arts access and participation and teaching practice?”
2. “How do the stories of my own life and those collected in this study, act as counter narratives to each other and the dominant discourse?”

### **Definition of Terms**

*Where I come from, I am surrounded by stories and storytellers. It is something that has become baked into me. The agency of orality is inherited however, from one man free in Africa—perhaps the village storyteller—to an enslaved man. He has passed them to me, to help me tell my own*

The terms narrative, arts access and arts participation are and continue to remain prominently threaded through the following chapters of this study. Their understanding helped to contextualize their usage throughout this piece as well as situate them within this context of this discussion.

### ***Narrative***

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) have for years discussed the agency of narrative and thus have put forward this poetic yet succinct notion of what constitutes narrative. They described narrative as:

“...both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study. To preserve this distinction we use the reasonably well-established device of calling the phenomenon "story" and the inquiry "narrative." Thus, we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience” (p.2)

In this way, Connelly and Clandinin situated narrative as both story and the study of story, and thus thrust the lived experience of persons into a sphere of both social but academic validity. Similarly, Goodson (2006) further distinguished the difference and prevalence of the personal life story, over the grand narrative and how such an emergence reflected a dramatic shift in, “the scale of human belief and aspiration” (p.8). He put forward that change, even a movement into the “age of narrative” (p.8), is symptomatic of society’s slant and aims towards personal and self development (2006).

Additionally Connelly and Clandinin (2000) framed narrative as the way we make and contribute to meaning collaboratively in our world. As a post-structuralist armature of traditional literary narratology, narrative is described as both story and a, “mode of knowing” (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009) which involves storied sequences, involving plot lines, characters, and actions. As the use of narrative spreads throughout not just social sciences, but humanities and sciences. Clandinin & Rosiek (2007) suggested that this emphasis on narrative as story, and narrative inquiry as its study, comes from the push back towards positivist paradigms, in which researchers sought for “alternate ways of thinking about experience” (p.36). Additionally they suggested that the notion of story is not new, as stories have scaffolded our societies and existences throughout time, but that the emphasis on their importance, functions, and the place in our lives was actually rooted in the emergence of narrative inquiry methodologies (2007). Not dissimilar from that which was framed in this study.

### ***Arts Access***

The term “access” was one often used, and situated in a multiplicity of ways and formats. Many used it as a term of association with or to equity, or more broadly arts attendance

and arts participation (Hernandez, 2018). As a result of this, the term became flexible in many contexts. This could be expected, as Kraehe, Acuff and Travis (2016) set forth that understanding arts equity through a singular lens could be ultimately inadequate as the complexities that perpetuate educational inequities are often layered and interrelated. However, that also in their analysis, pair this assertion, with definitions that helped steer understanding away from ambiguity.

For this purpose I adopted Kraehe's (2017) definition which she articulated through her arts equity model (2014). She defined access as the, "availability of art education experiences and the ease with which members of any social, cultural or linguistic group could choose to participate" (p.271). Kraehe additionally problematized the notion that arts programming be thought accessible, just on the premise of its claim as public, and that experiences of access truly rely on factors both intrinsic and extrinsic to the person's experience. As found in Kraehe, Acuff and Travis' (2016) review of literature, references to arts access also predominantly focused on the role of policy as it pertained to persons' ability or disability to partake of particular resources. However it is acknowledged that understanding access is indeed more complex and takes into consideration other factors that have often gone under-articulated.

### ***Arts Participation***

Defining arts participation as a principle of arts equity, has received notably more attention on the national scale, with studies addressing this issue in very specific ways (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). However I have found that definitions of participation vary in their broadness of what activities that are considered in its study. Novak-Leonard and Brown (2011), based on the 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, concluded that the,

"conversation about arts participation has become a discourse more broadly accepted to imply multiple modes of engagement — including attendance, interactivity through the electronic media, arts learning, and arts creation" (p. 26)

Borup and Wagner (2007) argued that acts such as cross cultural activity, community-based participatory engagement and technological content production, broaden notions of participation and should always be included when measuring participation through the lens of cultural

engagement (as cited in Novak-Leonard and Brown ,2011). Thus the activities that defined participation constantly broaden.

Kraehe (2017) then prefaced her definition of arts participation as quite distinctive of arts access. She positioned participation as the presence and engagement, in or with art educational resources. I found that access did not predispose participation and that the two become intertwined in unique historically embedded ways (Kraehe, 2017; Thomas, Singh, Klopfenstein & Henry, 2013). Thus shifting definitions of arts participation from a more content based to a more contextual based framing.

Additionally, Wilson (2018) in her study on intersections of race and arts participation (p.407), spoke of the adoption of arts participation identities which include arts producers, presenters and educators. She framed and extended the discourse along racial lines, factoring in dynamics of participation that surround the assimilation, self determination and resistance embodied by marginalized persons adopting arts participation identities. Her framing of participation wove struggle and push back together, and necessitated the understanding of the embedded socio-historical relationship of friction between access and participation.

### **Methodology**

*When you come from a place where you think you have to get everything outside, you forget you have anything back home, that there's anything worthy there. I think that is how you separate yourself from home and from your story and start to forget who you really are, you know?*

As I came to further think of a methodology as a theoretical vehicle, I sought one that could respond to the ideas expressed in my previous reading in a unique way. So for me, considering voice, story and society and drawing from my transnational experience I made connections with something that felt authentic, home grown, familiar—calypso. A Calypso methodology, as I have coined it for the purpose of this study, is a hybrid of narrative an an experience of my own growing up in Trinidad. Calypso, is a musical genre, that exists as an extension of a nation enthralled with storytelling. It developed in response to the ever changing reality of living in a post-enslaved, pre-independent colony and standing as the nation's, “first

major song” (Greaves, 2009, p.324). Rooted in pre-enslaved African storytelling traditions, Calypso, even under the pressure of censorship and push back, celebrated the orality of interrogation, commentary and information. It was, and still stands as an uncensored vehicle for calypsonians (singers), to voice injustice and inequity through their own highly specialized subjective opinions and experience.

In a sense supporting, or co-scaffolding this experimental mode of understanding, was a narrative inquiry methodology, which entailed adopting a, “particular view of experience as phenomenon under study” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477), that is narrative. Connelly and Clandinin framed this “particular view” as one through the lens of Dewey’s theory of experience which emphasized the transactional nature of experience and the complex relationships between self and environment (Dewey, 1981). Narrative inquiry echoed the sentiment of calypso music, and thus a Calypso methodology, that story gives our lives meaning and structure (Goodson, Biesta, Tedder & Adair, 2010) and as such attends not just to the context of stories, but to the way they are constructed (Trahar, 2009).

The oration function of Calypso methodology is what particularly set it apart from others. The voice, the content of a calypso was not meant to be read in a singular way, but as a rich multimodal text; performed. Poised as a communicative tool (Lashley, 1982), it extends discourses such as narrative inquiry methodology, outside of its normative boundaries, towards the performance and orality of story. The confluence of the tenets of Calypso music and narrative inquiry, which both stood as vehicles to reflect, critique, deconstruct and orate the meaning of experience, provided for a new composite methodology that was defined by a focus on and care for voice through narrative and the positioning and analysis of stories as sites of data that can reveal the complexities and interrelations of experience and the collaborative performance of them, as a means of multimodal, multi sensory representation of experience.

## **Methods**

*You learn so much about so much. It all has to get detangled in some way, or else everything after is a mess. Kinda like my hair to be honest, have to start with a plan, then we're ready to go*

As such, in claiming this hybrid methodology, a similarly fusion-oriented set of methods came forth. These methods were largely informed by studies that have been concerned with teacher stories, pedagogy and arts access and participation (Blei, 2018; Etheridge, 2017; Markus, 2014), as well as additional tools that drew on my own research and arts based experience. Thus the method—that is the Calypso method—drew primarily on memory work (Kippax, Crawford, Benton, Gault & Noesjirwan, 1988), life story interview (Atkinson, 1998; Chase, 2005), and arts based research (Rolling, 2013). My inquiry oscillated between these methods through its various stages of data collection, data analysis, and ultimately its representation. These three strands facilitated a method that questioned traditional notions of legitimate knowledge production” (Stutelberg, 2016, p.23), invited participants into a collaborative research process, and situated narrative and voice as valid agents in understanding barriers to arts access and participation.

The study utilized the stories of three art educators, Teri, Keith and myself, within various phases of our careers, ranging from pre-service to retired. As supported by Applebee, who suggested that narrative inquiry is best sustained by relationships such as friendship, “which implies a sharing” (as cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.4), the two participants besides myself, were chosen based on their pre-existing acquaintance based relationships with me. The study also utilized my positionality as a transnational student, and drew on the positioning of one American participant and one Trinidadian participant as to enrich the variety of narrative. Similarly, I purposely chose not to delimit the race and gender of participants, as to broaden possible discoveries.

The Calypso inspired method, which used life story interviewing, as well as autobiographical memory work, utilized prompts to limit the borders of the data pool as well as keep the retelling of story within the thematic scope of this study. These prompts were inspired by Mansour et al’s (2016) model of socio-demographic and arts participation, as well as Buffington, Williams, Ogier and Rouatt’s (2016) theorization of, “hubs of experience” (p. 329). As such, storytelling responded specifically to themes of;

1. Identity

2. Home socio-demographics, access to arts and participation
3. Early childhood school socio-demographics, access to arts and participation
4. Tertiary school socio-demographics, access to arts and participation
5. Community based access to arts, participation and mentorship.

This method positioned arts based interventions as a primary and integral part of its narrative inquiry. Such approaches have been said to compliment Critical Race Theory approaches by unsettling, “emotional and cognitive barriers that limit the ability to empathize” (Hanley & View, 2014, p. 559). I submit that utilizing the agency of this approach throughout data collection, analysis and representation, by means of audio-visual documentation and exhibition of story, helped increase the depth, dimension and ownership of identity by the orators. This mode of research also echoed the duality of Calypso as both critical analysis and performance. As such data was collected, interpreted and presented in a multimodal way. Data was collected through recorded audio-visual interviews, my own field journaling, and the photography of physical artifacts as a visual field diary.

Data analysis was facilitated in layers. The first layer entailed listening and reflecting on the video footage as well as my field notes. In this phase participants were offered the opportunity to member check their narratives, which reinforced the idea that the strength of story and counter-narrative is in the autonomy one possesses over their retelling and its representation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Each participant and myself, within the last interview worked together in order to begin to make connections between their life’s stories and their pedagogy. The second layer analysis involved analysis of my journaled reflections, the selected transcriptions alongside the videos of each interview and the organization of selected transcriptions into their various hubs of experience through “cutting and sorting” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 94). The third layer relied on Chase’s (2005) suggestion to look for sub-stories, that are elements of stories that relate to larger issues of race, gender, class, or culture (as cited in Atkinson, 1998, p.16).

Concurrent with each layer was the editing of audio visual documents collected towards the creation of a film for performance of narrative to accompany the written text. This short film was released digitally to public for viewing, at the conclusion of this study, in line with the

ideology that video can help synthesize large concepts through the editorial process, as well as the notion that we operate in an increasingly visual (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018) and auditory (Bull & Black, 2003) world. As such, representations through film, such as this study hoped to embody, aimed to help engage viewers in,

“critical examination and self-reflection regarding how individual, institutional, and structural factors account for the social and personal circumstances in which we find ourselves” (James, Marin & Kassam, 2011, p. 354).

It is with this acknowledgment, that through the layering of sound, image, and movement, that this form of representation hopes to enable an alternative way of seeing and understanding, presenting an additional pedagogical resource, accompanying this text (James, Marin & Kassam, 2011).

### **Positionality**

*I ask myself who I am. It is perhaps the hardest question I have ever had to answer. I'm overwhelmed*

As a black, specifically Afro-Caribbean woman, who has been privileged with arts access and participation opportunities in varying degrees, most notably in admission to a foreign American arts program, I acknowledged my privilege as well as my connection to the discourse on equity as both an insider and outsider. This, based on my status as a minority and foreigner in a contemporary highly ‘raced’ United States of America. I also acknowledged my position as having benefited from the dominant systems that scaffold the discourse I critique through this study, and situated my interests in this topic as one who wished to use my privilege to expose the voices of those who are so similarly racially and socially situated as me, but yet lack the opportunities of arts access and participation as I have had.

### **Limitations of the Study & Potential Obstacles to Conducting this Research**

*I'm afraid, but I'm also worried about if this will actually work. I suppose that's two separate conversations*

The limitations of this research, which have been identified within the methodology of narrative inquiry, revolved around the ethics of representing narrative that is respectful of each



participant, while maintaining ethics regarding the identity of persons and institutions who must remain anonymous. Sikes (2012) spoke to the risks that researchers dealing with narrative inquiry take up on themselves, in terms of managing sensitive data and information as it pertains to how we interpret and understand the narratives that are placed in our care. Additionally, she referenced experiences when participants had shared things outside of the scope of the study; that she had had to intentionally think about the ways those details ultimately affected her analysis (Sikes, 2012). I also made considerations that in representing the narratives of the participants and in my framing of their lives through film and text, that I honored the representations that reflected the issue at hand in collaboration with each participant, not allowing my own fixations to override the true essence of each narrative.

Similarly, this mode of inquiry, involved what Marshall and Rossman (2016) described as the risk of interference, that is the possibility of inconsistencies when participants attend to refilling of memory gaps that may occur during their recollections. Another limitation lay within the time frame of this research and the mediated time participants wished to engage in storytelling. Though there were pre-established time frames for each interview, life story interviewing was often time consuming and laborious for both myself and participants. Secondly, I recognized that I also ran the risk in producing a large pool of data that could become overwhelming if interviews were not purposely limited (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

There was also the potential obstacle of participants not feeling comfortable sharing traumatic issues and experiences that directly reference occurrences of inaccess and lack of participation, as well as misunderstandings of questions and terminology. Thus, it was the hope that a collaborative methodology, as was planned, would help mitigate such risks.

### **Hypothesis, Benefits to the Field of Art and Visual Culture Education + Professional Venues for Research Dissemination**

*I opened my eyes during a rollercoaster. I thought I was going to die, I was overwhelmed, but I kept them open. I had to see what would come of this...and me*

Storytelling, as framed in the methodology and methods of this study, can provide agency to art educators at various stages of their careers in first, perceiving the barriers that have affected

arts access and arts participation in their own lives, as well as how these stories could act as, “maps of meaning into the geography of a complicated political culture” (Regis, 1999, p.xi), when considering arts equity and their own, past or future pedagogy.

This study positioned dominant modes of investigation on the barriers to art access and arts participation as limiting to our understandings, by overlooking the potential for insight gained through narrative inquiry and obscuring the voices of those who should rightfully own the agency and rights over their stories, storytelling(s), and the reflexivity and place in the discourse afforded them. Rolling (2016) adds that,

“It might even be argued that the most crucial of all human rights includes the right to make your mark, model your most valued experiences, and map out your affinities, aspirations, beliefs, and counter-stories. Without the liberty to tag oneself as a person that matters, to transmit one’s personal and social experience to others without censorship, and to make special one’s place in the world without assault, prohibition or diminishment, human agency is curtailed” (as cited in Wexler, 2018, p.20)

Inclusive of these rights, and beneficial to their growth and understandings, are art educators, who must understand and practice pedagogy that positions teaching as relational, social and political (Bradfield-Kreider, 2001), in order to meet the needs of the diverse realities of their students. Teachers need to first look to our own stories (Luwisch, 2001), in order to meet with the stories of students in ways that both acknowledge our power as educators to break down or perpetuate systems of inequity and meet with their stories in ways considerate of difference (Pace & Pizaña, 2004). Kraehe and Acuff (2015) further advanced that the way art education research attends to inequity, has broad implications on the field of art and visual culture education, including what and how future researchers and educators are trained to understand these inequities. In order to embody any form of social or political change, transformation must first occur in teachers, examining, “one’s relational self in connection to the outer world” (Campbell, 2011, p. 19).

Thus, I believe this study benefits the field of Art and Visual Culture Education, by pointing to the importance of acknowledging the validity of alternative sites and forms of knowledge, in this instance when looking at arts access and arts participation, but also in

understanding any instrumental force or factors that have and will affect pedagogy and the lives of students. Though it is not unlike the work of scholars such Milner (2008), Balliro (2016) and Kraehe (2012), that positions, “the storytelling process as a form of retrospective construction, and [validates] the authority of participant interpretations” (Balliro, 2016, p. 68), as a part of their guiding aims, it aims to add to this emerging appreciation for narrative and the growing discourse engaging factors of arts equity, such as access and participation, through storytelling and the body of knowledge that affects how pre-service teachers are taught and made to consider these.

It was also my hope that the dissemination of this writing, will in its various forms, whether through its “performance” through film, or its publication, will suggest that the answers to many of our deepest concerns and questions do not in fact lie as far away from us as we perceive. It is my wish that those who will become exposed to my story and the stories of the participants will be inspired to reflect upon their own stories and how that experience both in method and in outcome, can affect their understandings of the barriers to arts access and participation.

As related to the way we conduct research in our field, I would hope that the inquiry of this research through narrative, could also offer up the possibilities of research as a more democratic, inclusive act for all, just as arts education itself should be. Additionally, I would hope that the specific mode of representation through video, what I refer to as the “performance of narrative”, could provide inspiration to others about how we can share our findings, and attune our current modes of representation to meet the current visual and auditory culture of today. Tapping the agency of, “sounds, images of context and emotion” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 278) as provocative means of entry, in navigating an issue that will inevitably impact us all.

This is how we can decode arts access and arts participation,

This is how we decode ourselves,

Come, hear our stories.

## Chapter 2: Calypso Methodology

*Honestly I've been waiting to write my methodology, to really share a piece of me I've known and am coming to know more and more intimately as I study the inspiration behind my fascination with stories. I've already called my dad. I said, "Dad, what do you think about White people singing calypso." He paused and said. "I'll call you back." I can tell it will be an interesting conversation and I'm excited for when he does.*

If I could give advice to another who will embark on writing and designing research methodology and methods, I would recommend finding a channel or whatever one wants to call it, that feels genuine, even close to the researcher. For me, what I have experienced is a closeness and, thus, a sensitivity that is unrivaled by what I have ever felt with research, and I can see where it blossomed from: home.

In this chapter I describe both the theoretical and personal underpinning of creating a Calypso methodology. I begin by detailing the political and social climate that shaped the calypso music genre as a tool for push back in Trinidad. Then I define the historical and thematic factors that led to a narrative turn in qualitative research. I describe the implications of these changes on my personal turn to narrative. Lastly, I make connections between calypso music, narrative inquiry, and a Calypso methodology in the study of human experience, namely barriers to arts access and participation.

### Theorizing Calypso as a Research Methodology

For a substantial period of my childhood, every morning on the drive to school, my father's car and my ears became flooded with story--stories I would come to know as calypso, a genre of music popularized in Trinidad for its political and social commentary. These were stories that taught me about tensions ranging from immigration in Trinidad, to alleged political deception and the ways truth comes to light. I learned these stories unconsciously while singing along with my father morning after morning and learning from teachers outside of school. My father was one of these lyrical storytellers. He hummed the melody of his own tune, his own contribution to be performed in places my mother insisted we never go. He composed, wrote, and performed calypsos under the name Brother Weng, and criticized everything he could not normally, as a

policeman and employee of the same institutions he critiqued. It is as if he got to live a second life, an emboldened, outspoken one through his song. He never won any competitions for calypso. He was just glad to get his thoughts out there. I would say his heart, too.

I recall these memories fondly. They remind me of how embedded the tradition of calypso, which I describe herein, has become in the culture of my country and my own. It is this history that prefaced my recalling of home, Trinidad and Tobago, memories saturated with and in stories and storytellers. This history is baked into my culture, into the neighborhood street corners, parlors (shops), and people's tongues. The agency of orality was inherited, however, from one man free in Africa--perhaps a "griot" (Warner, 1982, p. 38), the village storyteller and orator-- by an enslaved man, telling stories to survive, communicate, and retain a culture lost miles away (Liverpool, 1991) and now by to me, his daughter, who still remembers the stories. This tracing of movement parallels the very history of Trinidad during its periods of colonialism, slavery, and independence (Guilbault, 2007).

Acting as a container, persevering and nurturing the culture of storytelling, has been calypso. This "urban vernacular performance genre" (Eldridge, 2005, p. 174) of music emerged in a way that no other tradition of storytelling has in historic and contemporary Trinidadian society. Somewhere between the everyday "tory" on the street, and the prolific tales constructed by performers like Paul Keens Douglas, the nation's language of story emerged in song. Fragments of calypso first reared their heads during slavery and colonialism. Its beginnings are thought to be deeply "embedded in a worldview of the African oral tradition in which the power of the word functions to persuade, inform, praise, comfort, invoke and reinforce" (Greaves, 2009, p. 324). Warner (1982), in his commentary on the Trinidadian calypso, noted the tradition's links to the "griot" of African societies. This was the forerunner, holding "sacks of words... secrets many centuries old" (Warner, 1982, p. 60). Similarly, Warner suggests a possible etymology of the word, stemming from a corruption of the West African term, "kaito, an expression of approval and encouragement similar to bravo" (p. 8), which perhaps in the transition of language and place evolved into Kaiso, the first name for what is known now as calypso. In that vein, these songs gave calypsonians the ability to orate the editorials of their own times in song.

During slavery, oral narrative gave to those in bondage a power that could not be suppressed by the systematic censure of their culture and education (Creighton, 2009). “Music was the medium whereby they could create moments of sanity, relaxation, and communal bonding necessary for survival” (Liverpool, 1991, p. 43). It was a form of resistance which remained throughout time, bobbing and weaving, punctuating moments of oppression, rebellion and victory.

Under the hand of multiple colonizers from the 16th century to 20th century, Trinidad became ripe for a mode of expression shaped by a culture of confrontation, building from tensions of colonial power shifts, the stratification of society, and the inconsistencies of governing administrations (Guilbault, 2007). Each colonizer had a vision of what the colony’s culture would be shaped to look like. What remained constant, however, throughout this shifting of powers was the hierarchical social system that was fast becoming centered within Trinidadian culture. As can be expected, the enslaved Africans and their descendants were and continued to be situated near the bottom, even after the abolition of slavery, the introduction of large waves of immigration which diversified the population, and political independence in 1961. Caught between the pressures to assimilate to European ways of being, and the desire to forge their own way out of frustrating social and economic positions (Guilbault, 2007), Black people sought the means to survive and fight their own causes. Calypso provided that.

Calypso since its inception has been enmeshed with distinctive notions of race and freedom, progress and morality. Its contours have been charted through verbal duels on slave plantations, challenge songs performed in the streets of Port-Of-Spain... following Emancipation, cunning double entendre composed for American sailors stationed in Chaguaramas during World War II, and sociopolitical commentaries electronically amplified inside Lord Kitchener’s tent in a newly independent nation-state. (Guilbault, p.29, 2007)

Thus, calypso managed to parallel every flex of time. According to Herskovitz & Herskovitz (1947), it was through the calypso that an average person could orate the political injustice, social inequity, and social commentary of the time (as cited in Patton, 1993, p. 55). The calypsonian, a

writer and singer, was engaged in a constant monitoring of his environment, using story through calypso to “expose to his listeners a point of view that is not only his personal one, but more often than not is indicative of what the man on the street is thinking about a particular situation” (Warner, 1982, p. 59). His strength was in the fact that he was a “regular man” (a notion I discuss further on). Calypsonians were predominantly Black, lower class, and male. They were seen as in tune with the daily grind of post colonial society. According to Regis (1999), as Trinidad struggled to shrug its colonial identity, calypso became especially important to the interpretation of the “puzzling happenings” (p. 73) in the society and to explain to his fellow regular man just how things were changing. The calypsonian became a source of true opposition to the swirling political and social atmosphere of the time.

This oration did not come, like its ancestors’ renditions on the plantations before them, without resistance. In the 1930’s some calypsonians, who by this time could read and write lyric and music, were required to have their compositions checked for approval by the police, much in the same way planters tried to hush the expressions of slaves (Greaves, 2009; Warner, 1982 ). Pre-independence politician, Albert Gomes, noted that

The calypso is the most effective political weapon in Trinidad. The singers- all of them- are men reared in poverty and oppression, and they sing of the life they know. Thus it is that even when cleverly camouflaged with wit and banter, the sharp tang of social criticism is evident in their songs. (as cited in Warner, 1982, p. 61)

The calypso became push back, a place for shaping social and political consciousness (Warner, 1982). In a 1982 analysis on the calypso as a form of mass communication, Lashley (1982) highlighted the major role of communication itself, which operated primarily for the welfare of the society and for communication as a “surveillance-information-news function” (p.195). In his analysis, aided by interviews with then calypsonians, Lashley concluded that, based on self definitions from singers, calypso did indeed serve as a mass communicative tool in Trinidadian society. Because of this “governing sound” (Guilbault, 2007), calypso became a key part of society, as those in prominent positions began to understand the intrinsic power of these storytellers. Calypso became a tool of management for a social and political space that was very

highly policed. Calypsonians had the capacity to attend to and affect ideas about “race, sexuality, gender, class, language and religion” (Guilbault, p.61, 2007). As such, calypso was a methodology for a nation to counter the lingering rhetoric of colonialism, a story written for a people by its people. It was a genuine voice for a nation that for so long had been struggling to find its own.

It is also important to note that this tool of communication did not start off as the inclusive practice it is today. Inspired by Guilbault (2007), whose work I have referenced heavily and have consequently become enthralled with, I reference the work of a calypsonian as a brief case study to illustrate one fairly recent yet poignant consideration of calypso. It concerns gender. C.L.R. James, wrote that, “a supreme artist exercises an influence on the national consciousness which is incalculable. He is created by it, but he himself illuminates it and amplifies it, bringing the past up to date and charting the future” (as cited in Guilbault, p.91, 2007). With this in mind, I considered Calypso Rose.

Calypso Rose, born Linda McArthur Sandy, was not someone I grew up listening to as much as I remember Sparrow and Lord Kitchener, as she was not featured in my father’s everyday curations. The exclusion of her music was telling of the nature of Calypso and society during the era my father most heavily drew upon. Though the late 1940’s into the 1960’s and 70’s, the period of time he (my father) described sampling from, was rich in story, it nonetheless was missing very important voices--those of women. Guilbault (2007) described the significance of Calypso Rose’s career, as a way to understand a few key issues within the art form specifically the force of traditional patriarchal conventions of gender on female artists and the ways identities intersected to affect sensibilities. Rose’s compositions widely addressed gender, feminine sexuality, and sexual agency through double entendre and satire. Her work “transgressed received notions of women’s place and behavior in society” (Guilbault, p. 103) and bred life into a new conversation about what a woman’s place in a male dominated art form could both sound like, through her oration, and look like. Her performances disrupted traditional ideas about the calypsonian, as well as what a person with power over their narrative, body, and sexuality could



look like. Today, she is known as the first woman to earn the title of Calypso Monarch, a calypso competition held annually, as well as other numerous titles (Gill, 2012).

Rose embodied the sentiments of many female artists. Like Rose, Lady Trinidad, Lady Beginner, Abby Blackman and Lady Iere and Singing Francine (Laird, 1981) also attempted to voice a form of personal politics, give reverence to the notion of “native intelligence” (Smith, 2004), and orate the issues that were entangled within their lived experiences and the broader movements of women in society at that time. In Smith’s (2004) consideration of the ways gender has been performed in Trinidad, she speaks to the seemingly insurmountable challenges that colonialism had left on local society and its attitudes towards its own indigenous culture. And though Calypso was helping to reposition this lens, females hoping to enter into this male dominated discourse would not only have to reorient the attitudes of men towards women, but also in and through their actions push back against the pseudo-civilizing efforts of the upper class, to reform the particular ideals of womanhood and femininity.

As such, the women who have taken up these causes, like Calypso Rose, who still continues to write and perform calypso well into her seventies (Meschino, 2009), exemplify Gill’s (2012) assertion that music truly is “an important means for making and contesting cultural claims about identities . . . [and] also an important means for thinking and generating feelings about such claims” (p. 143). Also, as Calypso has expanded to become more inclusive, it continues to speak to my own time and context. With the qualities inherent to the calypsonian (Rohlehr, 2001), most notably the understanding of the “other’s right to discourse” (p. 26), genuine social concern, and a spirit of contestation rather than passivity, this tradition inspired me to become more aware of my own agency as a member of a rich culture, as well as to offer it to others.

Simply put, by refashioning calypso as my research methodology, I found that it is possible to write one’s own calypso of sort, stories that counter dominant narratives, contest and resist historically prescribed identities, and tap into the agency of “native intelligence” (Smith, 2004). Through one’s performances of story, it is possible to achieve deeper understanding of such the storyteller’s identities. In my research, storied identities became essential and rich sites

for understanding the ways in which people's lives are entangled in broader social, cultural, and political pictures. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall described calypso songs as "maps of meaning into the geography of a complicated political culture" (as cited in Regis, 1999, p.xi). As a storytelling methodology, I employed Calypso to map the experiences of and barriers to arts access and arts participation. In doing so, I realized that people are all "word-containers. We are memory of man. By the power of the word we give life to the king's actions for the benefit of the young" (Hall, 1972). Thus, "data" in the form of stories is re-associated with its source, with its containers.

### **The Narrative Turn in Qualitative Research**

To elaborate a research methodology that could honor the inspiration of calypso, its emphases, qualities, even its personalities, I found narrative inquiry to be most in line with what I envisioned. Narrative inquiry provided the necessary scaffolds for this project with its embrace of "the dynamic process of living and telling stories, and reliving and retelling stories, not only those of participants but those of researchers as well" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xiv).

For me, understanding this methodology had as much to do with broadly defining it, as it did with unpacking the qualitative research climate it emerged from and understanding what exactly this emergence, often referred to as a "narrative revolution" (Clandinin, 2012, as cited in Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p. 298) or "the narrative turn" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Riessman, 2008), looked like. In considering this turn, I came to classify the change in conditions on three major levels which seemed to parallel each other at various times and continue to: historically, thematically, and personally.

#### ***A Historical View***

On a historical level, the trajectory of narrative inquiry was rooted in a variety of tracings by various scholars (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Czarniawska, 2004 ;Miller, 2000; Butler-Kisber, 2018). However, one thing that links these analyses is their acknowledgment of the role that social and political movements played in ushering shifts not only in society but also academia. One example was the upheavals and wrestlings for liberation in the 1960s and 1970s in the US (Miller, 2000; Wells, 2011). By plotting the turn in ideologies historically within the field of social science research, I was able to look at instrumental events and periods that may have been

obvious, but also less visible and dramatic movements. For example, second wave feminism in the US in the 1960s to 1980s centered an interest in narrative as a means of re-situating agency that seeped into the progressive postmodernist era of the twentieth century (Miller, 2000). These ideas helped “the academy [open] up in a way that made space for narrative inquiry. Put another way, we are describing the creation of an environment in which narrative inquiry [could] flourish” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012, p. 3), as well as a space for pushback against the dominant “malestream” culture of academia (Miller, 2000) as expressed through positivistic and reductionist research paradigms (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990).

It is from this vantage point that I took into consideration the impact of moments such as Jerome Bruner’s (1984) address to the American Psychological Association, when he called the research community to consider narrative modes of thinking. His writings proved consequential as they called attention to the power of narrative as a vital part of the meaning making process (as cited in Barrett & Stauffer, 2009). Bruner (1984) suggested that developing sensitivity to narratives could help people navigate notions of self, their sense of others, and the world around them (as cited by Barrett & Stauffer, 2009). The establishment of narrative psychology is largely attributed to his work (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009), and Bruner continued to be a leading voice in narrative inquiry. Another moment in the narrative revolution was the shift in what was predominantly considered narratology in the 1960s, defined by the field of literature as classic narratology. It became a more inclusive “application-oriented academic approach to narrative” (Meister, 2009, p. 329).

Czarniawska (2004) plots what she considers to be the proliferation of narrative modes of thinking throughout various field;

By the end of the 1970s, the trickle became a stream. Walter R. Fisher (1984) pointed out the central role of narrative in politics and of narrative analysis in political sciences; Jerome Bruner (1986) and Donald E. Polkinghorne (1987) did the same for psychology; Laurel Richardson (1990) for sociology; while Deirdre McCloskey (1990) scrutinized the narrative of economic expertise. By the 1990s, narrative analysis had also become a common approach in science studies. (p. 3)

Seeing these individual moments as a part of a larger sequence of historic events not only helped me to understand the progression of thinking throughout time, but established that narrative, historically defined, reflected the “persistence of inquiry for more than four decades... [and] testifies to its cohesion as a system of scientific practice” (Meister, 2009, p. 329). This enabled me to then go on to understand the narrative turn thematically.

### *A Thematic View*

Pinnegar and Daynes (2012) address their experience of attempting to trace a trajectory of narrative inquiry and its formation into a sort of conglomeration of social scientists recounting their own narrative research and the ways they “situated themselves and their methods historically in the accounts they provided of their work” (p. 6). In light of this, the authors found that they could identify and develop a framework of themes that generally brought about, or impacted upon those narrative turns. To preface these themes, it was paramount to understand again, the climate of qualitative research surrounding shifts towards narrative inquiry in the 1990s, which was characterized by the embodiment of criticality towards dominant social structures, including positivist research paradigms, via postmodern and post-structuralist modes of thinking (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Miller, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012). Additionally they found that, “these themes could be conceptualized as the individual and collective historical bases for the turn toward narrative inquiry, the bases on which a space for this kind of inquiry opened” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012, p.6).

The first theme, which is characterized by a change in the relationship and dynamics between researcher and research participants, was one that truly resonated with the spirit of my own research interests, and the one that I invested the most time unpacking. I was most interested in its emphasis on repositioning oneself as researcher from a place of objectivity and a positivistic stance towards one more focused on interactive and collaborative understanding and interpretation (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012). In this way the researcher understands research as a relational process of co-construction and representation of meaning (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009, p.10), a process that is highly dependent on forming genuine connections with the participants and “developing ongoing and trusting relationships” (Butler-Kisber, 2018, p. 3). Most importantly

for me in this thematic basis for a turn towards narrative was “the sense that things being studied are real and that they exist independently and are not brought into existence by the act of studying” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012, p. 9). I have found a subtle undertone of this culture within the social sciences, where cultures and phenomena are treated as only valuable through the “verifying” lens of the researcher, as though he/she has won a prize in unearthing some exoticized truth. I found the spirit of such a relational turn to be beneficial in breaking down this almost colonial attitude towards discovering phenomena and the imbalanced power dynamic that is often at play in academic research.

Such a stance also rejected the similarly discomforting ideas of the realist perspective, which espoused the notion of researcher objectivity and the ability to work in ways that treated the person being researched as if they were static and unchanging, encouraging the creation of separate forms of knowledge, rather than co-constructed ones. The narrative turn however, rearranged and aimed to balance that dynamic, demystifying the idea that the researcher and the researched can exist in vacuums of one another. Lastly,

in this turn toward narrative inquiry, the researcher not only understands that there is a relationship between the humans involved in the inquiry but also who the researcher is and what is researched emerge in the interaction. In this view, the researched and the researcher are seen to exist in time and in a particular context. They bring with them a history and worldview. They are not static but dynamic, and growth and learning are part of the research process. Both researcher and researched will learn. (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012, p. 11)

I realized that for narrative inquiry to become a valid part of any research, the design dynamics must change. However, doing so required the consideration of something that is often taken for granted: power. Conducting narrative research brought to the forefront questions about power and representation in research and the ways imbalances perpetuate the silencing of voice in research (Butler-Kisber, 2018). A voice that not only referred to that of the research participant, but to the researcher, in sharing moments of exchange, fostering an environment that is highly dialogic,

implying a process of negotiation between the two co-participants--in other words, a sincere collaboration (Squire, Davis, Esin, Andrews, Harrison, Hydén & Hydén, 2014).

The additional themes within the narrative turn had to do with a shift in the kinds of data collected, the focus of the study, and the kinds of knowledge a researcher adopted. I believed all three themes developed as a result of that first reorientation of the relationship between researched and researcher. To speak to the shift from numbered data to worded data, researchers moving towards narrative inquiry came to a place of understanding “that in translating experience to numeric codes researchers lose the nuances of experience and relationship in a particular setting” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012, p.15). Pinnegar and Daynes (2012) discuss the interesting relationship between researchers, numbers, and the notion of reliability, naming the embedded desire to validate or prove research through labeling and numbering, whereas it was generally understood that people experience phenomena in a plethora of complex ways that are not often easily to generalize into neat categories. They posited that steering away from this behavior entailed a personal coming to terms with the limits of numbers in addressing particulars of people and phenomena, as well as the ways “numbering” experiences restricted the ways persons could approach, mediate, and experience the lives of others. Numbering research, uniquely enough, was not an interest or agency that we came to as adults, but from the very ways we are thought to evaluate as children.

The rules of that govern counting highlight the limits of numbers in accounting for the particular, local and contextual in human relationships. When children learn to count a set of things, they learn that each item must be counted separately...Furthermore, these properties of counting highlight the static, atemporal, knowable and controllable aspects of things so valued by positivist researcher.s (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012,p. 18)

The field of research broadly taught the cultivation of neat pathologies and connections for readers, rather than providing the depth of data that could complicate the horizons and margins of human experience. Taking a narrative turn, meant taking the risk to open up the discourse, to make it vulnerable in a sense, to the last two thematic shifts--on the focus of the study and the broadening of different kinds of knowing. For me, these concepts were inseparable. Focusing on

a narrative inquiry approach, using words instead of numbers, honoring “native intelligences” (Smith, 2004) rather than glorifying a top down power dynamic between researched and researcher, necessitated again a personal shift in the ways one comes to see research, how their outlook develops in response to often positivistic, disenfranchising and numbered methodologies, in order for such a change to occur.

### ***A Personal View***

Understanding the narrative turn thematically underscored the journey a researcher must undertake in navigating what practices in research truly resonate with them (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012), but more so which nick at the concerns that make doing this work uncomfortable. I stated this to say that my experience in unpacking my own concerns have led me here, to this place, to my own narrative turn.

Connelly and Clandinin (2000), prefaced one of their first major publications on narrative inquiry by outlining their own individual stories, the bends and turns that brought them to thinking in narrative. They plotted their discomfort with the overwhelming “reverence for numbers” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. xxiii) and the disconnect between social science’s focus on the lived experiences of people. They found themselves discontented with methodologies that reduced lives that were “filled with complexities, with hopes, with dreams, with wishes and with intentions” (p. xxi), and merely focused on the correlations and theories to be unearthed. The two authors eventually found the language to describe the feelings and experiences they were having as researchers, drawing especially from educational philosopher John Dewey’s theory of experience. Dewey conceptualized experience, as a source of learning, essentially relational, contextual, and continuously changing (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). This notion transformed the Clandinin and Connelly’s ideologies on what education, and educational research could look like, particularly in relation to the basic goals of such forms of inquiry: understanding lives. “A Deweyan view of experience allows for the study of experience that acknowledges the embodiment of the person living in the world” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42). The pair found that narrative inquiry could help them better understand and develop their interests in experience, and so did I.

Reading about Clandinin and Connelly's experiences, gave me that same feeling that I got when I listened to calypso. It was a feeling of finding a rhythm and a story that I share with so many others, yet feels my own. It was interrogative, inquisitive, and most importantly, transformative in the lives of researchers, students, and all those who will inevitably benefit from methodologies that help validate life experience as fierce and formidable sources of knowledge. I framed and developed my own Calypso research methodology by drawing on these essential principles of narrative inquiry. For,

those who most fully embrace narrative inquiry are those who, like Clandinin and Connelly (2000), simultaneously embrace narrative as a method for research and narrative as the phenomenon of study. For narrative inquirers both the stories and the humans are continuously visible in the study. (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012, p. 7).

Thus, story became centered, focused, for me to see, truly see.



### Chapter 3: Research Design

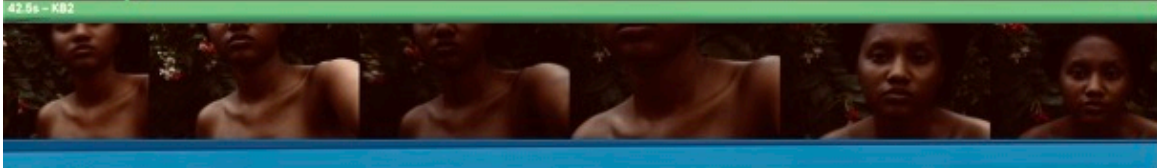
*I see myself as a doer, I want to be out there, not in here. Talking; talking is what makes me happy, being with the people, that is the research. Also, I think I'll dedicate this section of my writing to the IRB, who mirror outdated positivist paradigms of regulation, for good, but oh dear, how reductionist. I can't.*

The research design used in this study was a fusion, as was the Calypso inspired methodology discussed in the previous chapter on methodology. For me, finding methods that supported and echoed the aims of the study, which was to better understand the barriers to arts access and participation through narrative, without delimiting the voices of those involved in the inquiry, was extremely important. Finding such methods, however, reminded me of the care and intentionality required when planning and conducting a study of this nature. With the assertion that, “qualitative research is more likely to elicit issues in practice owing to the freedom with which participants talk” (Maynard, 2017, p.3), I found myself concerned with the ethics of each method and the fact that developing this process, relied not only on its ability to ‘answer’ this inquiry’s questions but also in meeting participants, as collaborators and as humans, ethically. Ethics having referred to my moral responsibility as a researcher for my choices throughout every part of the research process (Edwards & Mauthner, 2012).

In this chapter, I first examined the ethical considerations that underpin my articulation of Calypso-informed methods. Then I described how data was generated, both collaboratively and in my own autobiographical work. I briefly elaborated on the interplay of text and videography in the data collection process. This was followed by a description of the way life story interviews would be conducted with participants, analysis of data generated therein, and finally, the utility of film in the representation of findings.

#### **Feminist Ethics of Conducting Qualitative Research**

Following Burgess-Proctor (2015), my study problematized the dominant ways we have historically treated human research subjects, with an air of hierarchy and the pretense of neutrality and objectivity. I saw the need for methods that rebelled against this, as it pertains to how I, as researcher, could conduct my own research. In her writing on feminist methodology and



ethics, Burgess-Proctor placed emphasis on how feminist considerations of ethics, specifically the ethic of care, “creates opportunities for more collaborative, egalitarian relations between researchers and participants, which may reduce the likelihood of participation exploitation” (p.127). Edwards and Mauthner (2012) echoed this sentiment in their discussion on the relationship between justice and ethics as complementary practices. They defined justice as respecting the agency of participants over their data and care as considering researchers’ responsibility for participants’ wellbeing and safety (2012, as cited in Maynard, 2017). Further, this feminist ethic of justice and care was centered around understanding and respecting the dynamic confluence of experiences that was embedded in the story of life, as complex and involving emotions which needed to be dealt with. Edwards and Mauthner (2012) called this careful attentiveness “nurturance” (p. 7). In making public what was intimately private (Daly, 2007), I engaged methods that could encompass my motivations for honoring the stories of the participants, as well as ones that would intentionally and empathetically support the benefits of reflexivity for this study and their lives.

Lastly, to preempt defining the specific methods for this study and their adaptations, I wanted to briefly discuss a discourse that I have found helpful in grounding the significance of the data collection methods outlined herein. Borer and Fontana (2012) in their discussion of postmodern trends in interviewing described the ways in which postmodern thinking have affected the way research is traditionally conducted. as it pertains specifically to the relationships between the research as investigator, inquiry design and participants. They posited that researchers who became influenced by the postmodern ideologies engaged with a greater sensitivity to issues that had been inadequately addressed. Additionally, they argued that such sensibilities questioned and troubled the absolute nature of theory, and as such positioned researchers as increasingly interested in the blurring of boundaries between themselves as interviewer and interviewee, the ways the identities of their participants are represented in the

data, as well as the nature of respondents, as “faceless numbers whose opinions we process completely on our own terms” (Borer & Fontana, 2012, p.47).

To me, these articulations by Borer and Fontana (2012) closely aligned with my own as well as other scholars’ concerns with the obscuring of identity, power, and silenced narratives (Kraehe, 2018, Milner, 2008; Stutelberg, 2016; Wilson, 2014). Heron (1996), troubled the notion of whom research really benefited, and how decisions are made in respect to research design that aligns with varying outcomes. In his discussion of the issues of traditional qualitative research, he suggested that one pitfall was the exclusion of participants in the processes of the research, basically disassociating them with their power to self determine their options and their agency in being not just a passive object, but an actual beneficiary of the research. He found that participants’ involvement in the data should go beyond informed consent, and involve collaboration, rendering them the power to truly benefit from the study of their lives and practices. He described this as their “cognitive rights” (p. 29) in having a hand in how data are shaped, acknowledging the fact that they should have a say in how they are studied and represented. Though Heron made broader claims towards entirely cooperative inquiry, I was impressed by his problematization of exclusionary research practice and his reaching towards one that truly honored the voices of all participants.

It was with this understanding, and my consideration of a feminist ethic of justice and care, and the methodological framework advanced in Chapter 2, that I look to various tenets of individual memory work, life story interview, and arts based research to craft a composite method, the Calypso method, named after its methodological inspiration. It is one that speaks to data generation, analysis, and representation.

### **Sampling**

My study focused on life story interviews with two participants, Teri and Keith. In choosing these two people for my study, I drew on criterion sampling and opportunistic sampling strategies (Patton, 2002). My specific sampling was informed by the work of Wilson (2014), who worked with life history interviewing, not dissimilarly to life story interviewing (Atkinson, 2002). In her research on Black artist-teachers, Wilson (2014) posited that the selection of participants



should be focused on depth rather than breadth due to the time and energy involved. Similarly, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that emphasis should be placed on already existing connections with participants, such as friendship, to support the dynamic of sharing more easily and carefully.

Thus, in selecting my participants, I first relied on a form of opportunistic sampling, whereby participants were selected based on “on the spot decisions” (Patton, 2002, p. 240). However, unlike traditional opportunistic sampling, these decisions were not made during the fieldwork, but throughout my interactions with persons already in my personal sphere. This method was admittedly widely based on intuition and opportunity, which I acknowledged as a valid process in determining who already shared stories that intrigued or drew me in as researcher, as well as those persons who were willing to engage in storytelling.

Criterion sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) helped structure and scaffold my intuitive strategy by delimiting these opportunities to art educators in various stages of their career and their situation in either Tucson, Arizona or Trinidad. This geographical connection was essential to me since I was undergoing a transnational experience while conducting this research, and I wanted to access both geographic spheres to enrich my understanding of the role of site-specific contexts and influences. Thus, my criteria stipulated that one participant had to be situated in Tucson and one in Trinidad. Outside of this, no other factors such as ethnicity, age or gender were used to delimit selection of participants, as not to prematurely make assumptions in the relationships between these factors and arts access and participation.

### **Data Generation**

Memory work interested me as method, for my own storytelling, due to its roots in feminist discourse and its connections to the value of individual lived experience. The method arose within a group of feminist researchers in West Germany, who first sought to “develop a non-positivistic research method where the division and hierarchy between researcher and

research subjects were eliminated” (Widerberg, 2016, p. 1936). Their aim was to re-situate themselves within a collective method that made their own common experiences the object of their research, with issues that were often taken for granted (Widerberg, 2016). Crucially they took into consideration how memories of individual experiences contributed to similar common and problematic realities, such as with sexuality and gender (Stephenson & Kippax, 2017).

### ***Memory and Collaborative Story-telling***

Widerberg (1999) defined memory as the means whereby structure is given to past and present, and I extended this to include future experiences as well. My method employed memory work, reflection specifically, through individual episodic storytelling on an agreed upon theme. I also focused on the dis-identification of narratives, and most notably group interpretation and analysis towards action (Berg, 2008; Onyx & Small, 2001; Widerberg, 1999; Stephenson & Kippax, 2017). This meant there was a blurring of the lines between the researched and researcher (Berg, 2008). This blurring was an important aspect of my data collection because it enabled the research to destabilize the normative power relations between myself and my participant collaborators. So that the two entities were able to “work with the productive tension that arises from being positioned both as subjects and objects of research” (Stephenson & Kippax, 2017, p. 143). Researching utilizing this collaborative method underscored the risk in overlooking the complexities of experience that do not neatly align into preconceived theories, and acknowledged these experiences as the place of departure (Stephenson & Kippax, 2017). This method was unique in its intention of bridging the divide between social theory and one’s own experience, by repositioning the researcher(s)/participant(s) as both producers and analyzers of data (Berg 2008). This is what inspired the decision to also include individual memory work as a part of my own storytelling process.

Memory work has been posited to be useful in unpacking, gender, race and class, echoing key ideas of intersectionality in admitting the plurality and complexity of identity (Widerberg, 1999). Reflecting this, it has been shown to be widely adaptable in its application within various research contexts. (Haug, 2008; Onyx & Small, 2001). Haug et al. (1987) argue that,



The diversity of our methods, the numerous objections raised in the course of our work with the stories, and the varied nature of our attempts at resolution, seemed to suggest that there might well be no single, “true” method that is alone appropriate to this kind of work. What we need is imagination. We can, perhaps, say quite decisively that the very heterogeneity of everyday life demands similarly heterogeneous methods if it is to be understood. (1987, as cited in Onyx & Small, 2001, p. 70)

One example of its flexibility was Davies’ (1994) adaptation of memory work to include oral storytelling. The orality of story was thought to aid the process of writing and interpretation (Onyx & Small, 2001). Additionally Widerberg (1995, as cited in Berg, 2008) adapted memory work for individual storytelling. She centred this decision on the utility of in situating oneself into the research and thus making the “I” more visible. Thus this study aimed to similarly form its own variations of memory work.

### ***Researcher’s Memory Work***

I proposed that the utility of memory work could actually be two folded; in scaffolding the recollection of memories, through storytelling but also in helping prepare me for the processes I would engage in with the other storytellers within this story, thus situating myself within the research. Crawford et al. (1992) described memory work as an alternative method that questioned traditional “notions of legitimate knowledge production” (as cited in Stutelberg, 2016, p.23). Having acknowledged both this and the scope of my study, I modified memory work to include my own episodic, oral storytelling captured through video, and my own analysis of these narratives. The autobiographical nature of this data generation method meant that there was no interviewer or dialogical partner for my own story-telling. In the absence of a partner, the video provided “reflections of a different depth in the subject” (Widerberg, 1999, p. 152).

### ***Videography: A Tool Beyond Text***

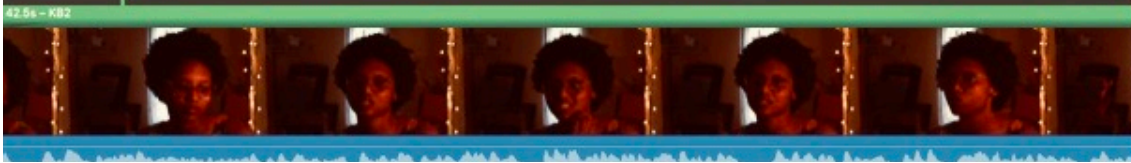
I used videography to record the stories of my two participants and I. Videography was important because, more than written words alone, videos captured nuances and gestures that text sometimes fails to do. Zundel, MacIntosh & Mackay (2018) explored the value of videography in their application of a video diary method. They concluded that,

Audio or written diaries might capture similar reflections, but in our data we observe the use of props (e.g., showing an academic paper, flicking through it, tossing it aside) as well as being able to see how the participants dressed in different situations, where they worked, how they furnished and kept their environment, and how they composed themselves. Moreover, at least in the case of two of our participants, video diaries prompted sustained, critical, and sometimes revelatory recordings whose honesty and openness surprised us (p.398).

The agency videography afforded participants struck me as beneficial. However, the reality of the equipment and set up required for individual audio-visual and written memory work, as well as how strenuous and time-consuming such a process can be (Berg, 2008), weighed heavily on my decision to only offer only videoed interviews to Keith and Teri and the more traditional video diary style for for my own autobiographical contribution. These parameters were set as to generate a wealth of data but also fit into the timeline for the completion of this specific inquiry (Berg, 2008).

### ***Jamming with Reality***

For my video work I utilized a concept inspired by discussion with my documentary mentor, Professor Beverly Seckinger; jamming with reality. She framed this concept as a way, to think about how we as filmmakers bring our own sensibility and intentionality to the process of filming and editing fragments of lived experience, such that the resulting footage or sequence reflects my best effort to capture and represent that reality as I see it, within the always unpredictable technical and logistical constraints. There is always an element of serendipity, of trial and error and experimentation, as with any kind of art making (B. Seckinger, personal communication, June 6, 2020)



For me it refers to balancing the real, moving, often chaotic factors involved in the process of filming and creating documentaries, with the theory of the process itself. This was the overarching principle which guided not only the types of content I collected and utilized in my video work, but the way I filmed and worked with subjects, and my eventual style of cutting the final film.

In terms of content, jamming with reality meant merging footage of interviews with both observational and archival materials. I saw this combination as crucial in developing the visual language and vocabulary necessary in representing my vision for this film, which was to help viewers meet the subjects of the research through their stories, thereby humanizing them, and creating a channel to contextualize their narratives. Archival material such as calypso songs, audio-visual samples from the film “Calypso Dreams” (Dunn, Horne, Schwartz, Thiermann,, 2004), was used in order to anchor the Calypso methodology and provide further insight into the origins of the calypso art form and its connection to storytelling. Thus, I worked with the interviews with my subjects and videos of my own storytelling to facilitate these goals.

Cutting or editing the film (Bricca, 2018), required another jam with reality. Utilizing iMovie editing software, an interface accessible to entry level film makers, I began the process of organizing, editing and subsequently building the final cut of the video, using over ten hours of interview footage and archival material, both visual and sound, into sequences for each participant. By first organizing audio visuals by participants, I was able to truly focus on representing the narratives and content of their specific stories. Working with the obvious limitations of the physical filming and sound equipment present on the filming sites, it became essential for me to weigh not only the usefulness of certain footage in telling the story, but the quality of each audio-visual element. This meant, critically thinking about volume levels, frame composition and how the audio and visuals flowed and meshed together, in order to produce a truly cohesive piece once each participant’s footage came together.

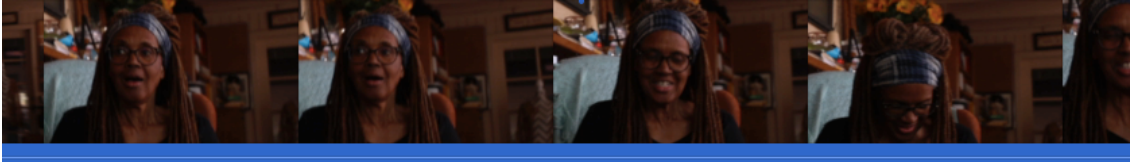


Another important aspect of the video editing, was the use of contextual footage which not only helped place each narrative within their specific geographic context, but facilitated the visualization of the cultural and thematic contrasts between myself, Teri and Keith's situations. This juxtaposition of visuals also importantly spoke to the study's, as well as my own, straddling of two different environments and alluded to that sensitivity and the possible connections to the narratives presented in the video. So that was my goal for the aesthetic of the final film, was to indeed portray the balance; that of the rawness of my own amateur skills, and the strength of the unexpected moments I was able to capture — jamming with reality. I believe this was accomplished by purposefully leaving some of those near perfect shots, especially those with shakiness, giving a sense of my hand in the making of the film, a reminder of my won subjectivity.

### ***Looking for Stories***

For the participants of this study, I knew the interviewing method had to explore the mode of storytelling as authentically as possible. I found that life story interview, as articulated by Atkinson (1998, 2007), most closely complimented my view that story was a valid and rich source of data and could leave the agency of the retelling in the hands of its orators.

Miller (2000) distinguished between life story interview and life history interview methods on the premise that life history interviewing was centered around the arrangement of life events, arranged in a linear, chronological order, whereas life story entailed a retelling more so ordered by themes mediated by the participants as they tell their various stories. Wilson (2014), referring to Miller's theory, posited that the two became differentiated when situating the stories within historical contexts. Drawing from Langness (1965), Atkinson (2007) suggested that life history interviewing had less to do with with the exact articulation of the informant's account, rather it was an "edited creation of the interviewer" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 227). This was understandable given that life history interview methods heavily rely on the reconstruction of a history by the researcher based on interviews that take into account contexts, as theorized and applied by researchers.



Atkinson (2007) further posited this method of life story interviewing as different in that, regardless of the application or theorization based on the story, it paid specific attention to the articulation of voice, as narrative passed from participant to researcher. Wilson (2014), again in speaking to the mode of differentiation utilized in her own study, put forward life histories as renderings of life stories that have had an added layer of contextual interpretation. I, on the other hand, like Atkinson (2002), found there to be very little difference between the two. Titon (1980) suggested that the difference ultimately lay in the balance in power over the stories being told. Wherein life history interviews were more oriented towards researchers' editing, "towards a coherent whole" (as cited in Atkinson, 2007, p. 233), life story positioned researchers as facilitators, sympathetic to the subjective meanings and interpretations of life experiences by the teller. This sensibility was articulated through the verbatim representation of the stories in the research. (Atkinson, 2007).

My final conclusion on the matter, however, was that though an analysis of the larger historical contexts indeed could add a richness to the data, it did not truly reflect one of the main goals of my research, which was to allow the participants' stories to speak for themselves, rather than foreground my re-synthesis of their narrated experiences. Atkinson (1998) described this as the most distinguishing element of them all; the way this method "keeps the presentation of the life story in the words of the person telling the story. The finished product is entirely a first-person narrative, with the researcher removed as much as possible from the text" (p. 2). In the end, I decided to move forward with life story interviewing.

### ***Life Story Interviewing***

Life story interviewing placed an emphasis on subjectivity, on the storying of life's experiences in an atheoretical manner (Atkinson, 2007). This meant that the stories people told were not derived from pre-established theories, but instead acted as the basis of knowledge in themselves. They provided a "vantage point" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 5) from where the researcher

could see how someone subjectively experienced their life, and from this articulation identify connections between multiple persons' stories. Baddeley and Singer (2002) described the ways storying lives could engender critical interpretation of what Bluck and Habermas (2001) referred to as, "autographic reasoning" (p. 178), where we can take the necessary step away from our lives to "draw inferences and lessons from the stories" (as cited in Baddeley and Singer, 2002, p. 178).

Life story interviewing encompasses three stages, which include planning, the actual interviewing (including recording), and the transcription, first in its raw form to be checked by the storyteller, with only their the participants' flowing narrative, and again when the final draft is completed, an analysis can be completed (Atkinson, 1998, 2007). This process, helped to retain and respect the narrative in its original form, one of the main goals of this research endeavor, as well as aid in the de-privileging of the traditional undemocratic power relationship between researcher and researched (Fotana, 2003)

In utilizing this process, I aligned my mindset as researcher and participant with those of Denzin (2003). He outlined his aims, throughout the interview process, as being patient in his listening and looking, in a way that was respectful and dialogic, placing intrinsic value on the dialogue as a site of discovery and the researcher's role as that of an, "empowering collaborator" (p. 47). So, too, it was my aim to

understand others' positions in life or description of themselves and their relation to others, to let their voices be heard, to let them speak for and about themselves first. If we want to know the unique experience and perspective of an individual, there is no better way to get this than in the person's own voice. So I have held to a story told in the teller's own words. (Atkinson, 2002, p. 124)

With the understanding that like memories, interviews commonly produce large data sets, and require substantial time and energy (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Therefore, I interviewed each participant over the course of two months, facilitating three separate sessions, which were spaced according to their schedules. Also, due to the limitations of this study's timeline for completion, life story interviewing was abridged. As such, each session was delimited to a maximum of two (2) hours, which according to Atkinson (2002), could still provide large amounts of data and be



more easily undertaken for students like myself. The final interview was used to offer participants the opportunity to member check (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2012) the transcripts of their life stories.

Interviews took an informal conversational structure (Patton, 2002) in order to properly utilize the life story method. Informal conversational forms are synonymous with unstructured interviews (Atkinson, 1998; Patton, 2002). This unstructured approach facilitated what Shuy (2002) described as the “naturalness” (p. 541) that is inherent in a face-to-face interview, which fostered an ease of conversation and comfort, wherein people could “more fully express their humanity” (p. 541). Though this style offered the necessary flexibility to allow each person to tell their own story, it was not completely devoid of focus and thematic direction. Each interview was guided by five (5) broad themes, which I framed as “triggers” rather than questions for both my individual memory work and these life story interviews (discussed further on).

Patton (2002) described the researcher as a facilitator who, in the process of unstructured interviews, as having to “go with the flow” (p. 343), letting the story lead the questions and in general being led in the direction the participant desired to take their telling. As such, probing with follow-up questions which were similarly open ended, prompting further depth. Atkinson (2002, 1998) similarly described this process as demanding of spontaneity and adaptiveness. He described the importance of remaining present and responsive throughout the process:

The interviewer is thus much more personally invested in this type of interview compared to many others, as it might also include some degree of mutual disclosure. For the interviewer, this could mean everything from an opportune sharing of deep thoughts and feelings that are relevant to what the storyteller has just offered to the not so subtle signals given through facial expressions and body language. All of these ways of communicating what matters to you and what doesn't are important to the person telling the story. (Atkinson, 1998, p. 42)

I recorded each interview audio-visually. This component was essential in both data analysis as will be discussed hereafter, and most importantly the final data presentation of this study. In addition to this, I took photographs as a form of visual field journaling, taking into consideration contextual clues, as well as for documentation of any artifacts participants saw as necessary in helping to frame their stories, adding further texture to their retelling. Lastly, following each interview, I engaged in a post-interview review (Patton, 2002) in order to reflect on the interview content and process. This review involved journaling specific points of interest from the stories, through the video and photographs collected, as a means of reflection and elaboration.

Thus, it was these aforementioned data generation methods, which were adapted and subsequently woven together that enacted a Calypso methodology. I relied on a set of guiding themes, or triggers, in order to both prompt, guide and limit the borders of the data pool as well as keep the retelling of stories within the thematic scope of this study. The themes were broad enough to allow for the flexibility required for life story interviewing (Atkinson, 1998, 2002), yet narrow enough to focus the selection of stories which could more directly coincide with this study's overarching questions. Each prompt was framed and informed by both Mansour et al.'s (2016) model of socio-demographics and arts participation, and Buffington et al. (2016) theorization of "hubs of experience" (p. 329). Each thematic prompt was, for the aims of this inquiry, purposely semi-sequential. This meant that they progressed from childhood to adulthood, a sequence long acknowledged in the analysis of the ways reality develops and changes over the life's course (Baddeley & Singer, 2002). As such, storytelling was guided by the following themes:

1. Identity
2. Home socio-demographics, access to arts and participation
3. Early childhood school socio-demographics, access to arts and participation
4. Tertiary school socio-demographics, access to arts and participation
5. Community based access to arts, participation and mentorship.

Admitting to the use of specialized terminology used in the framing of these themes or triggers, participants and I had conversations prior to each interview, elucidating what was meant by each



theme, both to them and in the context of this study. Conversation began using questions that referenced each theme. For example, “Tell me about your relationship with the arts as a child”.

### **Data Analysis**

*I'm fearful of them losing their voices, ruining everything we've worked together on, for the sake of theory. I'm struggling with what I've thought about research, and the meanings that we 'create'. What do I do? I don't want to be a sell out, a hypocrite, I want to be honest.*

For me the data analysis was one the most sensitive of all aspects of a Calypso methodology. This process became difficult due to what I framed as the temptation to code what had already been coded. Coding referring to the dominant way inductive qualitative research is analyzed (Harding, 2013). However, within the discourse on story and narrative inquiry, it was acknowledged that “the stories that people tell represent the manner in which they make sense of events; narrative truth does not seek objective truth but to capture people’s own understanding of their lived experience” (Harding, 2013, p. 132). Thus, it was not my goal, nor was it the goal of this research to theorize the meaning of people’s experiences. They, through the retelling of their stories, were already engaged in their own theorization, construction, and analysis of their own (Daly, 2007; Baddeley & Singer, 2002). “They interpret our questions . . . are selective in what they choose to tell us, and, in their response to questions, are quite deliberate about organizing portrayals of their own experience” (p. 210).

Thus my goal was not to re-assign meaning, but to identify, fragment, highlight and make connections between portions of their stories that were significant in terms of contributing to a larger understanding of the potential barriers to arts access and arts participation. I did not ignore the fact that my transcription and analysis had an effect on the stories, but I did however see the analysis as complementary to emphasizing the richness of data and insight inherent in the chords of each participant’s story. My aim was to study these chords, as a means of situating them within

the research aims, not to recode or reconstruct a reality for them, outside of what they identified as meaningful to them and their experiences. The research may be considered reductive in this way, however, it stayed true to my goals for the inquiry.

Further, I took an “emic” approach, which looks to the unique ways people navigate their experiences, and the ways people view the reality of the experiences they are a part of (Daly, 2007). Such a perspective similarly supported the idea that by merely attending to the ways others experience the world, we are actually engaging in data analysis throughout every stage of the research (Daly, 2007). This meant that through sampling, collecting and facilitating storytelling, the processes of analysis were already taking place both on the part of the researcher and the participant.

Lastly, I wanted to elucidate the reality of how broad the discourse on narrative analysis is (Atkinson, 1998). I noted the variety of ways to go about conducting narrative analysis and that the approach taken affected the ways voice and power are articulated and navigated. My own purposes for this research, as stated before, ruled many of these dominant modes out, as I found them to be limiting in the way I, as a researcher, was posed as the revelatory agent. I did not want my analysis to be rooted in a sort of, “look what I found” standpoint but rather I wanted to adopt a, “look at what these stories have to say”, stance. I personally found these to be troubling waters to navigate. Thus, the layered approach I described next drew from a combination of my own motivations, as well as adaptations of other popular strategies.

### ***Layer 1: Listening and Reflecting.***

The first layer of analysis involved listening to the audio generated through the interviews, journaled reflections and the selective transcription of prominent stories. The collective review of these transcriptions between myself and the participants was offered as an option during this period. In this way, each storyteller could make the final decision on how their stories would ultimately be framed textually. This enabled them the option to add to the data set with their reflexive notes, annotation, and edits (Atkinson, 1998, 2002). Participants were also given the option to view footage of their interviews and photographs taken on site, at their



request. I saw this as a necessary step in helping each storyteller embody that sense of agency and autonomy over their narrative (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), but also over their representation. Facilitating this collaborative exchange implied the openness and trust necessitated by narrative analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Further, the last interview served as a site for reflection on the process of having retold their stories over the previous sessions, enabling them to assess any failures or possibilities within the method, as well as more critically reflect on what they truly saw as the most salient barriers or privileges to access and participation, based on the entirety of their storytelling. In allowing this process to be woven into the final session, participants were welcomed into a reflexivity that could further deepen their connections, from their story to their pedagogy. This sort of collaborative meaning making (Atkinson, 1998; Marshall & Rossman 2016), lent itself to pinpointing major life themes or strands (McAdams, 2008; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), which led into the second layer of analysis.

### ***Layer 2: Creating Episodes.***

The second layer involved the analysis of my journaled reflections and the selected transcriptions alongside the videos of each interview, as to help me understand all the nuances and gestures involved in the participants' retelling. This phase involved a process of organizing or sorting sections of the interviews into episodes based on their various triggers or themes (mentioned above) to facilitate cross comparison and help simplify the data into more easily analyzed portions. I did this by "cutting and sorting" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003), which essentialized the tactile nature of data manipulation, where I could separate and fragment the stories while maintaining the integrity of language and text of each participant. This process helped prepare the stories for the next phase of this layer, which was to highlight the collaboratively framed barriers or privileges existing in each episode. This process was also replicated in the sorting involved in the video editing process.

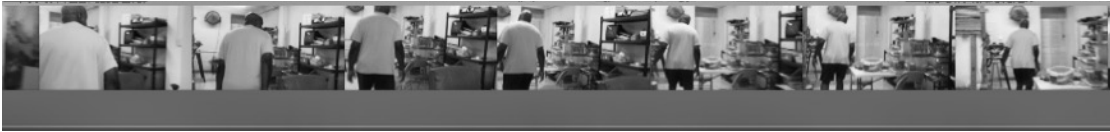


Upon proposing this project, and this layer of analysis. I was asked by my thesis advisor, how I would sensitize myself to “picking up” on these instances of privilege or inequity embedded within the stories. I thought this to be a pertinent element of inquiry. I framed my process of becoming sensitized based on Atkinson (1998) and Charmaz (2002). Both authors in various contexts pointed to the fact that researchers came to analysis with their own inherent assumptions and theoretical outlooks, from which we cannot naturally separate ourselves completely. Atkinson described these critical connections between research and story during the analytic process:

We can ask ourselves, What meaning does this life story bring to my life? What does it add to other lives? Is there a central theme or pattern to the story? We make these connections first by referring to our own internal frames of reference, then possibly calling on an external frame.(Atkinson, 1998, p. 67)

He further elaborated on how this analytic relationship persists even during the storytelling, when something resonates deeply with our own experiences, or our ideations of experience, we become drawn to it as a site for attention.

I did however understand that in engaging in a research field that thrives on rigor, that alluding to this sort of intuitive sensitivity and analysis could be problematic. So, I called upon McAdams’ (2008) framework, rather an adaptation of what he identified as the key scenes in the life story. He outlines many elements that sort a story through. Of those, I purposely thought about the low points, high points, turning points, wisdom events, spiritual experiences, and plans for the future. I would like to make it clear, however, that these characterizations did not become codes or categories (see Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2002) for analysis. Rather, my acquaintance with these as major elements of one’s life story sensitized me to the ways in which participants could frame significant experiences with privilege or barriers to arts access and participation. It was my belief that storytellers already performed their own coding in the way they framed pertinent experiences, and thus my mindfulness of how these are often packaged sensitized me to the nature of the events. This helped guide my looking and pursuit of the information their stories already hold.



### *Layer 3: Searching for Sub-stories.*

The third layer of analysis was not highly dissimilar from the second, however it placed the emphasis on searching out possible sub-stories embedded within episodes, which pointed to connections to ethnicity, race, or gender (Chase, 2005). Again, as a means of clarification, this looking for sub-stories was not an attempt at re-situating the participants' narratives within broader contexts, rather it was a means of helping readers tease out the confluence of factors that interwork in these narratives.

Concurrent with these layers was my editing of the video that later would come together in the form of a short film. I introduced and expounded upon the process of editing in the next section. This arts based data analytic approach was grounded in my own experiences of how the editorial process of video can help facilitate deeper immersion in the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). It also helped me further process large amounts of data in a multi-sensory way. Patton (2002), in his personal survey of qualitative inquiry over two decades, wrote about artistic and evocative criteria for analysis. He posited that "qualitative analysis involves both science and art" (p. 269) and that researchers who operated within this framework saw the world through a sort of mixed motif. For me, an artist and budding educator, this was why this process was situated in my personal ways of meaning making and analysis. "Artistically-oriented qualitative analysts seek to engage those receiving the work, to connect with them, move them, provoke and stimulate" (p. 269). It was in this vein that I conceptualized my data analysis and subsequent methods of data representation.

### **Data Representation**

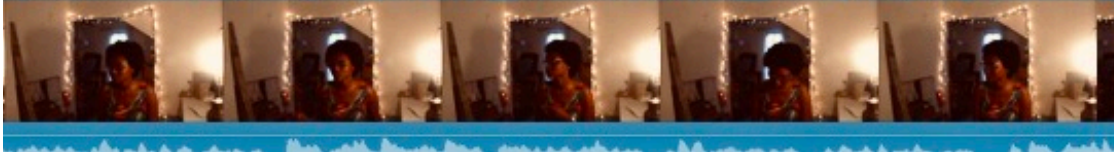
One of the crucial elements of developing a Calypso methodology was encompassing the duality of the genre as both critical commentary and performance. Thus, I centered my method of data representation through film as a "performance" of the data. I conceptualized this decision through my understanding of arts based research methods, auditory culture, visual culture, and representation.

Sullivan (2010) suggested that arts based research methods place, "creative and critical processes at the core of the research process so as to fully investigate the contexts that shape complex human thoughts and actions" (as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 20). Barone and Eisner (2012) also pointed to the agency of critical art education in the processes of "questioning and knowing" (p. 52) and argued that an arts based informed research practice is one that engenders inquiry that possesses sensory modalities, helping us uncover nuances that often go unnoticed. They also posited that arts based research could help to create shifts in dominant conversations, which could open up more questions and interpretations amidst spaces of absolute knowledge (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

Similarly, Rolling (2013) contrasted arts based research analysis and modes of data representation with the generalizations made from quantitative and qualitative inquiry. He situated it as adaptive to the specific phenomena being studied, helping researchers to understand and examine more closely the essence of experience. Thus, film in particular provided unique verbal and visual language for such.

The notion of "performing" data was not new within the discourse on qualitative research. Patton (2002) described these performances, most notably theatre, creative writing, and poetry, as attempts "to provide an experience with the findings where 'truth' or 'reality' is understood to have a feeling dimension that is every bit as important as the cognitive dimension" (p. 270). One thing that struck me through my survey of the literature of arts based data representation was the prominence of other forms of arts based representations over film. This was troubling since, according to Stuart Hall (1997), "The image itself – whether moving or still and whether transmitted by a variety of different media – seems to be, or to have become, the prevalent sign of late-modern culture" (as cited in Jhally, 1997, p. 5). With this understanding and my own navigation as a millennial through the worlds of society and research as a field, it was apparent that the language of today was not so situated in traditional text.

More and more, people were "reading" different types of "text." This was apparent in the popularization of social media platforms such as Instagram, which specifically targeted the utility of visual storytelling for a plethora of purposes, one of which is now most widely tapped:



business marketing (Walter & Gioglio, 2014). Aside from this, the upsurge in audio and visual media based texts, called me to acknowledge as a researcher just who I intended the data to be consumed. For me, my goal was not only accessibility throughout the field of research, but also to have the research fluid enough to cross those silent borders into the “real world”. I say the “real world” to articulate my opinion that much of the research that utilizes dense texts are not as approachable to those outside of specialist groups and fields, and often become permanent residents of journals that service them. Barone and Eisner (2012), in their discussion of audiences for arts research, argued that “the potential audiences for works of arts based social research are no doubt more varied than the actual audiences for quantitative and qualitative social science have been in the past” (p. 63). I believed that what film could accomplish was in making data more accessible to those who did not traditionally belong to specialised, academic groups. Film was already a part of most people's lives in some capacity or the other, from an Instagram story, to a YouTube video, to a multi-million dollar movie.

The fact was that we were living and operating in an increasingly auditory and visual culture (Sturken & Cartwright, 2018; Bull & Black, 2003).

In a world in which social media, visual images, and instant messaging are the everyday realities of today's young people, films and videos play a crucial role in developing a critical understanding of how social, economic, political, and cultural structures mediate the lives of youth. (James et al., 2011, p. 354.)

As such, I began to acknowledge the flexibility that qualitative research methodology fostered and the utility of film to evoke transpersonal experiences (Rothenberg, 1987). Which are those experiences that have been described as, “a process of awakening, or as a journey to self-healing and an inner wisdom in the awareness of all being” (p.1). Film's ability to perform this process, bringing to life qualitative research, confirmed that this was the most valid mode of representation for my own inquiry.

Finally, film's ability to capture gestures and other nuances that became obliterated through textual representations interested me. I believed it's capacity for layering sound and visuals (James et al., 2012) could allow for the growth of critical, analytic and empathetic relationships between audiences and this inquiry. As such, I engaged in filming as arts based data representation, utilizing the audio visual documentation collected through life story interviews. The film presented each narrative in creative and respectful ways, allowing each story to have its time to be heard. While I acknowledged the ways in which representations such as film can perpetuate negative paradigms of thinking about certain groups (James et al., 2011), it was also my understanding that video work could begin the work of reassigning power over representation. It was my belief that once these voices began to speak for themselves, that we could begin to have that similarly infectious calypso experience, one rooted in respecting and learning from each other.

As such, the following chapter, Chapter 4: Narrative Findings, provides unedited excerpts from my conversations with Teri and Keith on their experiences with the arts throughout their life, as well as my own autobiographical stories. The chapter is organised into three sections of narrative according to the speaker. The proceeding chapter, Chapter 5: Reflections on Narrative, shares personal analyses which correspond with the sequence and structure of Chapter 4.

**Chapter 4: Narrative Findings**

# keith

**Watchman**

“And as a matter of fact  
because of the tough financial situation at home,  
I literally worked while I was in form five  
There was a white english missionary  
who needed a watchman

From 6 in the evening,

to 6 in the morning,

outside of San Fernando, Cocoyea.

So I used to walk from Naps in the evening,  
go to Cocoyea, check in at 6 o'clock.

I had to do a few chores, and wait  
until she comes home about 9, 10 in the night,  
I lock up and  
then I could go to bed”

**Culture Shock**

“Parsons for me was an opportunity to learn as much as I could, because I recognized that our experiences down here in the art education world was extremely limited, so that is what drove me more than anything, like a kid in the toy shop, all this opportunity to learn and this was reflected in how I went about my four years there. And that was the beginning of another chapter. Parsons. prestigious, one, and very expensive. So, there was kind of reaction from Americans you know, how this black guy from the Caribbean coming to Parsons, you know, lots of rich kids around me, parents paying for them and so on. So that was the first culture shock. It was a school that is predominantly white, predominantly ‘bougie’, so to speak, and I had to fit in to that, so it was a culture shock in itself. when I sat and held discussions with them and talked about art and so on, the kinds of knowledge they were able to bring to the table I recognized that my experiences in Trinidad were very very narrow...”

## **Fifth Avenue**

“But there’s a flip side... the way in which Parsons operated they worked for fifth avenue, fifth avenue stores, designers, studios, came to Parson’s final show to see what’s the new talent, and the person who was in charge of the final year students the textile students was somebody from fifth avenue, she was teaching the course, supervising the course, and it stands to reason that she knew what fifth avenue was looking for and therefore tried to make sure all her students were satisfying fifth avenue, that is the reputation of parsons. I was, I’m not designing for Fifth Avenue, I was doing my batiks and my bright colours and my Caribbean motifs because I coming back to Trinidad to lick up de place. So I remember I was doing a collection of, I had four pieces of fabric to do based on Caribbean colours and so on and that lecturer didn’t like those colours at all. she said, “these colours won’t work.

I said I’m not designing for fifth avenue,  
I’m designing for Trinidad, the Caribbean.

She said, “well I was in Grenada a month ago and these are not the colours that I saw down there”

I said, “With all do respect I born and grow in the Caribbean and these  
are the colours that will work down there”

She dismissed me, I remember it was the first time, I got a B in her class,  
all the time I was getting A’s”



**Glitter & Glamour**

"He comes in one night just as the studio is closing up with all kinds of expensive paint and gold foil paper and curry and canvas and so on, spreads it out on a large print table, and by the results we saw the next morning it was clear that he and his partner, his girlfriend, whoever she might be, simply threw all of the stuff on the canvas, took their clothes off and rolled on it, made love on the table and that was his piece of art and the next morning the lecturer was like waw, and they begin to see things in it and we're like what the.... because we knew it was bullshit. You know. And he got away with it. Whereas we who didn't have this kinds of resources worked hard and you know you could understand where, the kinds of experiences we went through. And that in a nutshell is how I view, when i look at students, I have that understanding, so I'm not fooled by the glitter and the glamour"

**The Adjunct Scenario**

“Far too many adjunct lecturers. How that impacted on the program, so you had at one point for the first ten, twelve years of the program, Mr. C is the only full time lecturer, then everybody else was adjunct. Then you had Mr. P, coming in, in the early 2000s, so that was two full time lecturers, for about twenty something...Well, that was a whole scenario by itself, I remember myself, Mr. O, people like us who were in the program for a number of years, we applied, we never got a response but boom, this guy shows up as the lecturer. there was a number of theories at the time, who was principal at the time, I don't know if it was UNC or an east Indian president, principal you know. So the talk on the ground was you know he get a 'bligh' [because of his race], because none of us were even interviewed or anything like that...”

**Legacy**

“Perhaps your legacy is to take the thing forward as people in my group did two, decades ago”

**Gift to others**

Well I have one event that it is indelible, in my mind and I knew then that  
I wanted to be an art teacher.

I was probably in the third grade, and we had been given crayons and  
paper.

I can remember, this was California and I can remember, I don't  
remember the assignment, I don't know if the teacher had said draw a  
picture of your mother or what, but I do remember I drew a picture of my  
mother.

I really loved my mother and looked up to her and I remember distinctly  
she was this beautiful lady I drew, this beautiful brown lady in a red  
dress

and when I drew the picture all the kids came around me and started  
saying , "oh help me, draw mine", and you know, being that young my  
thought was okay, "I'll draw a picture for you"

I'm drawing everybody's pictures and helping them with their drawings,  
and it impressed me so, as a child. I probably would have gone onto to  
become an art teacher anyway

but I do remember that as being the first time I knew that, that was my  
gift,  
not just to me from God,  
but it was my gift to others.



**Ms. Tragna**

My high school mentor Ms. Tragna, wonderful woman. She took me under wing. When I arrived at that school, she saw my potential and she nurtured me, she made sure I had paper for everything I needed, every piece of paper, crayons, markers whatever, paint, and she nurtured the art in me, not only that in that high school, it was a nurturing high school. I had teachers and counsellors, who would actually hire me to draw pictures for them and it was just wonderful. I remember one of the teachers she just wanted, and this is interesting because she was an anglo-lady, she was a very sweet kinda grandmotherly type that I remember and she said, "I just want a beautiful picture of a black woman", she probably said coloured woman at that time, because you know that was the word, the coloured woman and I immediately thought of my Aunt Bertha... there was this picture of her that I loved of her, so I said okay. So I used that photograph of my Aunt Bertha and I drew her this beautiful picture. It was probably about an eight by ten size and it was done on a very good pencil, and it was a vibrant picture of the black woman, by Aunt Bertha and she paid me for this and she was so pleased with it. I had one of the boys P.E. teacher wanted a picture of a basketball player...

I just felt so nurtured at this school.

**The Counsellor**

“It was there that Ms. Tragna’s husband was the counsellor, asked me, it’s my senior year, he said to me, “you know I know that you know that you’re finishing school this year, have you thought about college”, and I’ll be very honest with you my thoughts at that time, because there was no one in my family who had finished college at this point. So my dad went to eight grade. He was a very intelligent man, he read all the time, you know there were limitations for many of us as black people but I always, I did value education. So I said I really wanna become an art teacher, and so he said, “you know what, there’s this school...”

**Social Workers**

“Teachers really are social workers in so many ways. Teaching is more than just being in that classroom giving students what you know about your subject matter, there are so many ways you influence students and so many things that students bring into that classroom, in their own psyche, you have to be ready to confront and I believe that art can do it

Many of my students didn’t have running water in their house, in their homes. Some of the challenges these students had were very difficult. My first year I had to attend mass for a student who had been shot with a gun in the house...”

**To see yourself.**

“You don’t really understand students do look up to you as a role model, it is important that students, all students, see themselves reflected amongst the staff, amongst the teachers, amongst those people that they see everyday when they’re away from home most of the day. It’s important that they see themselves reflected. I can remember when I was in middle school and I can tell you today, the wonderful experiences i had and how I remember seeing a black art teacher. I can remember seeing that beautiful female art teacher, she had beautiful brown skin, she was just the most beautiful person I had ever seen and it was because she represented me and my community and I hadn’t seen that represented often as a small child”

**When you're Black.**

“...professors don't care,

and then you get the ones who do care, who are, they're so condescending in the sense of well this poor little black child. “I'll give her this test on art history but I'm gonna leave the dates on the slides, because she won't remember that”, and I didn't need those dates, I knew what I was doing. He meant well, but it was entirely wrong, because they make assumptions about you when you're black, they do...”

**I didn't know you were Black**

“I was in that school district for twenty seven years when I retired and I had never encountered that with a single principal, being sent out there by the head of our department and administration, who started as a teacher when I'd been a teacher, went on to administration, being asked by a principal at a school, can you get me an art teacher, I need somebody's who's really good, and he sent me. He knew my work, he knew my excellence, and to arrive and be told,

“i didn't know you were black”

**I know me.**

As corny as it sounds,

people don't care how much you know,  
until they know how much you care...  
and I don't think that ever goes out of style  
and I don't care who you're teaching.

And it doesn't make you a weak person to care,

there's great strength in caring

and there's great power in caring.



# Khaffi.

## **For my mother.**

My mom signed me up for these art classes in Trincity which was about twenty minutes from my house , maybe twenty-five minutes from my house, very different neighbourhood, more affluent, you know, people kids weren't naked in the street and it was very different from where I was living at the time and I was excited, I was so excited. I remember the name of the lessons were like DaVinci or something like that, and I was so pumped to go to these art lessons and there were all these like older kids, and it was just such a creative environment and I had never been in an environment with other creative people before and I just loved it so much, and I remember very vividly making a sort of like city plan if that makes sense and I remember there was like a huge table covered in this huge paper and it was like an ongoing, collaborative project and I just remember being so excited and I just really wanted to be a part of that, but was also like a little kid, and they were in high school, everybody else.

It was such a great environment for me.

**I want that to be me**

“My aunt got married to an architect and as a child that was my first big exposure to professional contemporary art as someone who collected paintings and artwork worth thousands of dollars, and I would paint as a child and I would do different things but going to their house and seeing like professional artwork in the bathroom and on the walls, and some of it had nudity and as a child I was fascinated and I was just like wow, all these artists, and

here there was someone who really was interested.

I just kept thinking to myself I want that to be me.

There was this one hand painted plate in the bathroom of a guy and it was this sort of line drawing and I remember going home and all the backs of the sketchpad, the chipboard part, once the paper was done, even if the paper wasn't done I'd like rip it off and use it and I'd make these black line drawings. I think I still have some and I would take regular chalk, not chalk pastels or anything fancy, regular school board chalk in different colours, and would embellish the line drawings, and I made a series of line drawings they were amazing

there wasn't anyone one like that in my family growing up

before, who was just apart of this completely different world”

**Miss**

I loved her

personality, she was open, she was young, she just created this bubbly welcoming, yet strict, environment where I just fell in love with her, I think I fell in love with the idea of growing and thriving and being creative and working on all these projects and I think that was one of the things I craved for in primary school was challenging projects.

I remember this one incident particular where I had made these paintings of these leaves or some exercise and one child almost ruined it and my teacher like blew up on her, she was like oh my God, and I just felt like she really cared about what I had made, you know. Like she was invested in protecting it as much as I was, it really felt great.

Having her in those seven years, she really nurtured me and grew me up. By the time I was like sixteen I felt very confident in myself as an artist.. I started taking myself more seriously as a maker. The art room was my happy place one hundred percent, it was where I could escape everything, its where I felt most confident, its where I felt needed, validated...

it was just my place.

**A plane ride.**

“I think one day I woke up and just realized that I didn’t want to put my family in debt for the rest of their lives and so I decided to stay and do the visual arts program at the university in my home country. I think that was one of the hardest decisions I’ve ever had to make, choosing not to go. And I thought that getting this illustrious BFA in the US was like my only hope for like having a career in the arts, for like becoming something, I really thought that was it my best option on paper, you know. I worked so hard to make that merit list, to be one of the best in the program and just do the most as we say but I couldn’t change my family’s financial situation and I couldn’t change the scholarships that were offered to me, I couldn’t change what was and was not offered to me, I couldn’t, all of those things were out of my hand and it was one of the first times,

I absolutely felt like I wasn’t in control of what I could be,  
I just had to accept what I had.”

**Time and place... and play.**

If you really sit down and consider the people who in my opinion were like really invested and consistently pumping out work for critique like, no excuses, were people who had studios, like studio spaces, and even though my studio space is small, I had a space where I could like get

messy

and it had people who had to

clean

like put down newspaper on their kitchen table, lay out their small things, and that's really restrictive but I didn't have any restrictions. I could see the difference that space made, in terms of what people felt comfortable doing and what people didn't, and like confidence to experiment in ways other people couldn't, so you could see the limitations in what people wanted to do versus what they actually ended up doing

because of the

space.

**Talking about Fulbright**

I was like very lost and confused after undergrad, I remember that discussion very vividly and I decided that yeah, this is something that I could do, and it was somebody similar to me, he wasn't older, he was in my similar demographic or whatever, so it felt like something I could do and he shared a lot of information about it in a way that made it accessible because I think a lot of the times when information is not like readily available, I think that the whole crux of the thing, when information isn't super readily available that there's definitely, it makes it harder. How can you take advantage of an opportunity, if you don't know it exists?

**The only Black person.**

I was the only black person in my program when I first moved there and for an entire year that bothered me, I remember having classes where I would butt heads with other people because I felt like I had to speak on behalf of other black people who were not present in the room, but naturally I'm that person it wasn't like, oh I'm the only black person let me take up this responsibility, like I think it's a natural thing, but there were definitely times where I saw others' whiteness very keenly, and I think my blackness made others feel their whiteness... I remember there being a time where there was this one gentleman where every time we had class he and I would get into it... he would say something that was uninformed, not always to do with race but a couple of times I knew that I felt as though his outlook was just mis-shaped because of his whiteness

and his lack of understanding of the perspectives of other people around and one time he confronted me after class and he said he feels like I always attack him, and I try to undermine him and embarrass him and

I apologized even though I know I wasn't wrong...

### **The silent space in between**

It was the moment I understood how many dynamics there are within the university that really put and keep people in their places, in their designated places in terms of how respect, resources are allocated. I was being told this is what your educational path will look like and

I felt powerless.

## Chapter 5: Reflections on Narratives

This chapter was arranged in three sections, where I offered my own reflections on the narratives of Teri, Keith and myself. At the beginning of each, I included a note to each person, thanking them for sharing their stories and lives with us. Each section outlined major themes I was able to identify in the stories.

Dear Keith,

Thank you for your stories. Thank you for being open and willing to say what you said, about anything. Thank you for telling me when my questions didn't make sense or needed to be rephrased. For calling me out on time. For listening to the planes go by, and hearing the familiar sounds of Trinidad with me, all over again. Thank you for these moments, for welcoming us in and most of all, for letting us sit in your fruit punch coloured gallery.

*As I set out to share Keith's stories, these gifts he'd given to me, I'm hit with shock, even anxiety; I am afraid. Afraid of the responsibility I have over these stories and how they're represented here in this text. Laying lives onto paper, Keith's life, with gratitude, and humility. I'm afraid it isn't effortless, that it's pretentious, that this entire paper is. This is something given to me, to us. This is Keith.*

### Streaming & Choice

One of Keith's earliest recollections of his childhood and the arts was that of being "streamed". As we sat in his office, which doubled as his music room, he recalled consciously understanding that he was being placed in a specific academic path by his teachers based on specific abilities, or lack thereof, that they had observed over the course of one year. What he recalled, though briefly, is in many circumstances still a prominent fixture in many secondary



schools in Trinidad, whereby students are put onto certain “tracks”, whether that be a sciences, mathematics or humanities track. Oftentimes the premise for this is to allow students to focus their energies in a more intentional and specific way. However, hearing this story and another he described about witnessing his future students being streamed highlighted a few crucial areas of concern. It was from this vantage point, that I began to think about the value of choice, and further ask: what other decisions are made on behalf of students, instead of by students, that disproportionately distribute access to arts opportunities? Furthermore, what are some of the silent, often invisible ways streaming is conducted in the U.S. and elsewhere? Though Keith was streamed in the direction that would allow him to develop his art making, and positions this as a positive shift in his childhood, I could not help but wonder: what if he had not been “lucky”? How would his life have been different?

### **Family, Finances & the Fear of the Future**

Though having shown promise in high school, Keith highlighted the ways in which the strain of his financial situation at home molded the way he operated then as a student and later on as both an art maker and burgeoning teacher. One such recollection in particular, spoke about the hours he worked (see Chapter 4, “Watchman”) in order to help support his family and the tight schedule he maintained during his time in high school. From this, one could see not only the impact of financial strains on students’ time and material resources, but also the role familial responsibility plays in the hierarchy and decision making processes of a student. His story highlighted the unique tie between the home, the family unit, and the choices or experiences students are not only unable to access, but make conscious sacrifices to forgo as a result of these relationships.

Another thing that truly struck me was the way Keith described the decision he made to leave high school earlier than his peers. “Because of my home situation I was very much intrigued to start working”, he detailed (K. Cadette, personal communication, December 19, 2019). Though he would continue on to pursue his art making at the advanced high school level without the structure or support of school or its resources, a feat he owed to the support of his community of friends, the weight of his decision, and the pressure he felt to make it was worth a

closer look. It was important to see Keith's ability to independently complete the high school requirements, reading and teaching himself what he was not able to return to school to access, as revealing of a resiliency in him. This provided another example of the way barriers to arts participation often compound one another in interesting ways. Keith's working while enrolled in high school and his decision to cut his time short while there, were not results of disconnected or isolated factors operating in his life. In fact, what became clear was that the impacts of his home/family financial situation, personal responsibility, as well as social pressure intersected in ways I had never taken the time to contend. Time was proving to be a resource many people could suffer from a lack of.

Then, finding himself in an entry level art teaching position at a secondary school in the south of the island, which required a two-hour commute back and forth to his home, Keith revealed another telling recollection:

Even personally as an artist going through our educational system here, I recognized that I didn't know all that much, I mean I could draw good, I could paint, but you know for a fact art was more than just that and that was part of my internal struggle (K. Cadette, personal communication, December 19, 2019)

It was here that another challenge surfaced: the unavailability of arts programming. Though this seemed like a struggle of the past, I could see this picture replicating itself as arts programs continue to disappear (see Chapter 1, "Framing the Problem; A Literature Review") For Keith, not having any programs available for him to develop his interest in art education stood as yet another roadblock. It was one that meant losing the opportunity to grow in his profession and to feel validated in his career. It was this factor that drove Keith even as he later on obtained a position to develop art education programming in Trinidad, to provide those same opportunities that were not accessible to him. As programs and opportunities disappear, I wondered if the drive and love for the arts wanes in the face of no outlet.

### **Scholarship & Scholar-ship**

Keith's story soon after took another interesting turn. As the tides of society, government, and politics shifted, an opportunity unlike any other that had previously existed presented itself.

According to his recollection, the government's strides towards diversifying education opened up a program whereby teachers could attain the opportunity to travel abroad (to the US) to attain the skills needed to construct new programs, particularly in the arts. Securing this scholarship opportunity and earning his place at Parsons in New York City opened up a new chapter for Keith.

As he began pursuing his BFA in textile design, a few realities about his trans-cultural experience became clear. In addressing these, Keith opened up about the culture shock he faced as a Black Afro- Caribbean male in a predominantly White, affluent institution. This highlighted the textured realities for students traversing multiple cultures, involving changing dialects, practices, and perceptions. As a result of this, I am caused to wonder about the tools and coping mechanisms students develop, unbeknownst to educators, necessary for them to perform dual identities in the classroom, navigating more than the art experience itself but also their place in communities and spaces, in many ways, unfamiliar and alien to them (Balliro, 2016; Connor, 2006; Kraehe & Acuff, 2015; Rolling & Bey, 2016 ). It is another layer of experience that complicates the ways students enter into educational spaces, as well the notion of spaces that scaffold either inclusive or exclusive arts experiences for students.

Another memory of Keith's performed just this, one where his aesthetic choices, informed by his cultural identity came into friction with his then, American lecturer (see Chapter 4, "Fifth Avenue"), and the way he felt his grades suffered as a result of her lack of understanding. Though in the situation, Keith was able to push back in defense of his design choices, I think about how similar encounters play out today in arts environments and the types of knowledges that are prioritized, glorified, or acknowledged in these academic settings. More so, I wonder about how Eurocentric and Americanized forms of knowledge and a person's lack of cultural initiation into these forms of knowledge, provide the means for exclusion, alienation, and perpetuation of insider/outsider culture. I also wonder what this could mean for students who do not see their own forms of cultural knowledge reproduced in these spaces, such as arts classrooms, where knowing is so interwoven with identity.

Keith's ability to visit artist's studios while at Parsons, however, presented an instance for him where he felt advantaged by the opportunity to learn directly from those working in the same field as he. The fact that, as we sat in his studio that day, he was able to recall the names of artists and designers he had had the privilege of observing and the pride in his voice as he recalled the projects he was able to be a part of, is a testament to how impactful this experience was for him and the respect this time at his program commanded. What was of note was how he was immediately able to connect this experience to the students I had seen in his home studio. Seated there amongst all the screen printing apparatus, the laser printer, and the weaving looms, I felt the echo of his time in those studios, right there in Trinidad. I could hear the lectures, the tutorials, the demonstrations that happened at these tools, outside of the walls of the university he would come to work at for most of his career. This was now his own practice of facilitating students in his space, sharing with them as those artists had shared with him. This later became one of the first major connections Keith made for himself between those years and his teaching practice, as well as the power of resources in his own life and the lives of his students. Such that, even in the face of stark contrasts in the material resources during Parsons (see Chapter 4, "'Glitter & Glamour'"), the impact of those experiences, the ones that felt inclusive, served as the most invaluable resource of them all.

### **Becoming (an) Academic**

Finally, as Keith transitioned into recollecting his memories of returning to Trinidad, he recalled his first big disappointment in finding that the governing bodies over education were resistant to his enthusiasm and plans for introducing the skills he had acquired abroad into classrooms, a goal their initial program was designed to address. He said,

Clearly if there are fifty schools the country with looms and printing material and so on, and I was the only one who did textile design, it dawned on me that it would be smart of the ministry to send me around to these schools to impart this knowledge so that everybody could learn how to use it. I went into the ministry, they said good idea, write up a plan, which I did and that's the last I've heard (K. Cadette, personal communication, December 27th, 2019)

Here Keith offers us a perspective not previously considered in my analysis on arts equity and the barriers to arts access and participation: a look into the encounters an arts administrator faces in his own journey to provide greater opportunities for others. The push-back Keith encountered however, was not his last. He recalled how discouraging the social environment at that time was, in contrast to before he left. Returning to his old position at a high school in the south of Trinidad only exasperated his frustration at the walls between himself and his goals for art education in Trinidad: “after going through all that and you come back raring to go, nothing happened” (K. Cadette, personal communication, December 27th, 2019).

This was why his transition into becoming part of the team that birthed a certificate program in the visual arts, the first of its kind on the island, made sense as his next move. As if it were by design, Keith found himself working alongside those others who had been offered the same study abroad opportunities as he had. However, in the same vein he began to experience another facet of experience akin to his positioning as an arts administrator, the barrier that was the large scale “adjunctification” of higher education. For Keith, as the years went on, and the program developed into a full fledged degree under the labor of himself and other founding members, the absence of a permanent lecturer position became resoundingly apparent, especially in the face of new hires quickly joining those ranks, unaware of the university’s longstanding inaction in this area.

This event represented more than a mere snub for him, but stood as both a racial and political move on the part of the university, as well as an outcropping of its systematic favoring of some over others based on their race (See Findings: The Adjunct Scenario). As one of the last stories Keith recalled as we concluded our final session, this interestingly was the only time he ever pointed out his race as a barrier to him whilst navigating a decades long career in the arts and its various spaces. What I think this particular story highlights, and Keith’s entire narrative as well, is the way people choose to frame or contextualize obvious barriers to their own access and participation in arts activities and academic spaces. Keith’s feelings about his inability to progress, being tied to his race and the public issue of the adjunctification of universities, causes me to wonder about the generational implications of minorities in academia and the lack of

mobility in academia offered to them. I think about the ways in which role modelling and representation in these spaces operate, and how seeing, or not seeing, those like ourselves, perpetuates silent barriers to accessing similar opportunities, even aspiring towards them.

Again, Keith offers us a chance to see into his story, riddled with pushback, chance, resilience, and reflection. His position as a founding member, lecturer and coordinator of the visual arts department at the main university in his country, welcomed me into an unconventional conversation about the ways multiple factors compound to perform barriers to arts access not just to students but also to practitioners committed to making change, that in his case was slow, incremental, but impactful on his outlook on the arts and the possibilities of them for all people. On legacy, Cadette offered an admonition, which I believe encapsulates his steadfast vision throughout his life to do something with his talent, that could be remembered despite the hurdles and struggles he faced along the way. He said, “Perhaps your legacy is to take the thing forward as people in my group did two decades ago” (K. Cadette, personal communication, January 7th, 2020).

Dear Teri

Thank you for kindness, and openness. Thank you making me tea and always making sure I ate before our sessions. Thank you for telling me about your own mother and the amazing one you came to be. Lastly, thank you for cheering me on, even when I saw you outside of my research. For reminding me that I would make it out alive, and that I could do this amazing thing. Thank you for seeing this project, and me, as worthwhile.

*As we sit in the empty church together, dimmed by the evening's quick escape. I am reminded of what a privilege it is to have met Terry in this place. Unsuspectingly, I had been sitting next to the person I would learn so much from, for months before she revealed an inkling of her story to me. Here are some more from her.*

### **Role Models**

One of the first things that really caught me about Teri in the first of our meetings was the reverence with which she spoke about key persons throughout her lifetime, one of those persons being her mother and the remarkable life she lived as a musical writer, poet, artist and storyteller. Teri recounted her mother's story:

She... always wanted an education, could never do it, because of family and lack of income but my mom was a very highly intelligent woman. I'm very proud of the things my mom has accomplished. . . . I remember things that she told me about. She played chess with James Baldwin, way before your generation. I don't know if you're familiar with James Baldwin, a black writer, very prolific wonderful writer. She's deceased now but she always wanted to get an education, so she worked at it and one of my proudest moments, that is a proud moment for me and a proud moment for my children in the value of education; my mom at the age of 68 received her bachelors from Grand Canyon

College. It was college at the time. It's now Grand Canyon University. She then enrolled at ASU [Arizona State University] in their masters program in writing, she was working on a degree in writing when she found she had cancer, and she passed that same year (T. Epps, personal communication, November 19, 2019)

The emotion in the empty church where we met was palpable. As tears came to her eyes, I began to realize the impact of generational history and legacy on the decisions of youth and adults as they seek to engage or disengage in various activities and environments in life, a thread that would go on to weave its way through much of her proceeding stories. Seeing her mother go through the trauma of her own childhood, and the sacrifices her mother made to support not only herself and her children, but her creativity, was definitely impactful on Teri and her outlook on life. It is interesting and important to acknowledge just how much these familial ties, in this case, in the form of role models, help to support or scaffold certain forms of expression and, more so, to welcome others into certain ideologies. For example, Teri never felt as though a career in the arts or art education was unattainable to her or outlandish as a professional avenue. Also, as Teri's story progressed, her appreciation for the opportunities afforded to her echoed her affinity to remembering role models like her mother and those she met along the way.

Having that person who pushed through their own struggles was instrumental for Teri, the witnessing of it all. Now the idea that the presence of role models, or lack thereof, stands as an undoubtable factor in young people's decisions is not a new or striking one, however it is one worth noting, especially as it balloons into other related issues, issues that have led me to ask two major questions. What are the effects of role models in the relationship between persons and their access and participation in the arts, and what happens with that identity as role model becomes intertwined with racial identity? Others of Teri's stories begin to offer some answers to both questions.

### **Community**

Besides her mother, another notable female in Teri's life was her art teacher, Ms. Tragna. As she explained in her recollection (see Chapter 4, "Ms. Tragna"), Ms. Tragna was someone who believed in and supported her during her formative years as a young adult navigating high



school. Again the respect attributed to the woman who supported Teri's interest in the arts, offered another advantage to Teri's access to not only resources for art making, but to her confidence in developing her skills and professional desires. During her time with Ms. Tragna, Teri found in her company another crucial factor: mentorship and community. For Teri, this community of persons stemmed from that formative experience with Ms. Tragna, to the gym teacher as well as others, openly supporting her pursuits, even monetarily. From this vantage point, I can clearly see the influence of this synthesized community on her growing interest and engagement in the arts.

The story involving the high school's counsellor seeking Teri out to discuss her options for college, inviting her into a conversation about the possibilities for her future (See Chapter 4, "The counsellor"), also validates the argument for the positive impact of a supportive community. The counsellor helped Teri to consider pathways and outcomes that she had not for herself considered at all. Though her aspirations were rooted in her desire to pursue a degree in art education, she found herself unsure about the means to those ends. As she described the enthusiasm with which this counsellor directed her to the necessary resources, and guided her through the application process, which would eventually land her a place at university to study art education, I saw the gratitude for this experience well up in her. This makes me wonder about the current "counsellors," official and unofficial, who support or collapse opportunities for students. I begin to consider the ways in which a student's path, or space in society, their professional outcomes, are ascribed to them, but more importantly I think about gatekeepers. Gatekeepers in terms of arts opportunities, spaces and education, and the persons that welcome others into these experiences, through their guidance, counselling, or simple faith in a person despite their race, class or social background.

These wonderings bring me back to those two questions I posed previously about role models. What I have excluded for the purpose of this reflection is the fact that Teri grew up, went to high school, and recalled these stories from a time when racial tensions in the US were overt and often openly violent. One example of this was obvious in her story when she mentioned how Black people were still referred to as "Coloreds" during her upbringing. Another fact is that Teri is an African-American woman and that the community of persons before described were all

White. Now the nuances of the first two of Teri's stories, as transcribed in the findings section of this thesis--specifically when she recounted choosing Black women from her own family as the subject matter for drawings, a pattern replicated even in some of the later personal work she showed me at her home in Tucson--caused me to ponder the relationship between Teri's art experiences, her role models, the all white community she was nurtured by in high school. It pointed me towards one of the first major barriers Teri experiences as an aspiring maker and educator: the lack of representation.

### **Representation + First Generations**

I began to observe from the two stories Teri shared the relationship between her art and the representations of the women she admired in her life and the role models of her early childhood, who based on their descriptions also identified as Black. However, it was revealed that it was only up until middle school that she had not had the opportunity to witness another part of herself, the art educator that looked like her, really replicated in her life. Until she did. In Teri's story about her meeting what she recalled as the first Black art teacher she had ever met, the same nostalgia and admiration warmed in her voice, as it did when she described her mother that first day we sat down to speak. That experience was transformative for her as a young girl. In ways unlike the professional guidance of the counsellor, or the support of Ms. Tragna, or even the commission from the gym teacher. Meeting and seeing a Black art educator provided Teri with a picture of herself, the opportunity to see someone who she could be.

As she goes on to describe the implications of this encounter on her late professional life, it was obvious to see the link between her passion for representation in art educational spaces. It was on this she pondered the impact of intuitively feeling that Black educators cared about her. She commented,

I was able to see what I could become one day, and they instilled this sense that you can be great, you are important, you aren't just a person in a seat with no identity. You had an identity in those classrooms with those teachers...but when you don't see yourself represented you stop and think well why am I not valuable? (T. Epps, personal communication, December 2, 2019)

Her statement and concluding question made me consider exactly what the ramifications of not having this transformative experience, of having the privilege to see someone like yourself in the position you would hope to be in, or even consider as a possibility? For so many students where this may be reality, drawing on my previous analogy, who then welcomes them into spaces and opportunities within the arts? Who initiates them, and performs possibilities? So then the question I posed, about the essential relationship between role models and race, comes down to a matter of representation and the ways the presence or lack thereof in a space can in many cases inspire and direct, or disenfranchise.

In many ways related to this issue, another key factor arose in Teri's stories. As she embarked upon her collegiate years, she found herself feeling lost in the system, and unsure of how to navigate this new and challenging space. This drew me back to the role of representation for Teri, but also the value of seeing experiences replicated by others in your social, racial, or familial group in order to help placate feelings of disillusionment, as well as to demystify new, often traumatic experiences (Acuff, López & Wilson, 2019; Wilson, 2014). Perhaps, having known someone in her own family, perhaps someone she closely identified with could have prepared Teri for the confusing reality of entering higher education, even art education. I feel it safe to speculate about the initiation that often takes place between generations of persons, through transmission of knowledge, between those that have been afforded access to particular experiences and opportunities and the contrast to those who have not and potentially disadvantaged by their exclusion in these established networks of information. Perhaps a stretch, however Teri's story suggests some truth to this in the way that her being a first generation attendee affected her.

### **Race**

By the time Teri was able to enroll in graduate study in art education at another predominantly White institution, the lack of representation and passive racism within these environments began to take a toll on her mental health. She described a few of moments where she was confronted with these realities: "I remember going to some events that White people had at their house and just being ignored. . . . it made me feel invisible. They didn't speak. They were

so unkind”, “I was just another student [there], the only Black student. I was so isolated. I felt so isolated. I have to tell you, Khaffi, it was the grace of our heavenly Father that got me through. I mean isolated to the point, it was just a miserable feeling. . . . They just dismiss you, and ignore you,” and “you don’t feel comfortable because nobody there is embracing you as a human being” (T. Epps, personal communication, March 2, 2002). Additionally for Teri, she felt the unwritten, often unvoiced assumptions about her were made by not only her peers, but her professors, too, during her art education program, a space I thought should be forward thinking, inclusive even. Of these assumptions, one specifically mentioned in, “When you’re black,” (see Chapter 4) she began to see and experience the first of many doses of prejudice and stereotyping throughout her career.

More specifically the feeling of isolation, as she recalled, was the most crippling result of systematic, embedded racism during her collegiate years. I found this experience, both enlightening and all too familiar with my own and a growing number of my peers. I pondered this familiarity and thought about the lasting effects of racism in learning spaces, especially art education spaces, and how we often date experiences like Teri’s, burying it within the context of “that time long ago,” when many were not privileged to think like this, ultimately having to live and relive similar narratives even today. However, what stood as a buffer for Teri, during both undergraduate and graduate years, was her need and dependence on community. Again, more so than the community provided by Ms. Tragna, her high school mentor, and her counsellor, Teri felt the keen need to be a part of communities of Black people, which she intentionally sought out during this time. At one point, she recalled being a part of an underground Black newspaper that often commented on the racist culture and student experiences at that institution. As she told the story, her demeanour visibly changed, as did her tone, marking her involvement in this community as an empowering one that indeed changed the course of her collegiate years.

Later on in her career, the waves of obstacles often rooted in racism and prejudice, continued to crash upon Teri. In one school district in particular, she told the following story:

I went to that interview, knowing this was a very Anglo district and that they did not hire many Black teachers. The year I was hired I think they hired two to three hundred new

teachers, but before I tell you what that room looked like, I'll tell you how I went to that interview. You know I'd always been taught to go conservative. . . . I wore my hair in cornrows, which was not very popular at that time. I had cornrows and beads. I could actually show you picture. . . . And the reason I wore my hair that way, I wanted to make a statement that I was a Black woman teacher and I was proud of who I was as a Black person and if they didn't see it there, then they would probably be better off not hiring me (T. Epps, personal communication, December 2, 2019)

As she progressed through the hiring process, the reality of what she would be confronting as a Black teacher continued to unfold. She often came into contact with overt hostility because of her race, even in the later years of her career when she had become known for her skills. Her story, "I didn't know you were Black," (see Chapter 4) presented one specific moment where her skills, even her worthiness, were questioned just based on her skin color. These moments of trauma connected a long series of moments where Teri had had to confront racism and prejudice throughout her entire career as an art educator. She lamented that, "As a Black woman, what has been one of the most difficult situations, [is] having to deal with people who have prejudged you by your skin color" (T. Epps, personal communication, December 2, 2019).

What is to be duly considered from Teri's experience is the connection between a group of factors that complicate the already dynamic experience of people of color in art educational spaces, both as students and as teachers. The matter of Teri's race, and her experiences with racism, were intertwined with her status as a first generation attendee, the lack of representation she saw, and the lack of community she felt. These issues intersected and connected in various ways that, to me, began to paint a more dense picture of the ways barriers to arts access and participation operate in the lives of students and more importantly the ways we look at these.

### **Teaching through Trauma/ Teaching Trauma**

Teri's stories are robust, lively and animated. They also often were recalled in flashes. On the way to one of our last sessions, almost too quick for me to catch, Teri mentioned an experience she had had with a racist principal.

So I look at the things I've had; I look at the racist principals I've had. . . . I had one . . . who told me I should just, [that] it would be okay to fail the Spanish girl because she's probably just gonna get pregnant anyway (T. Epps, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

As a part of a larger conversation about her career and racism, I wanted to mention this example of what I would call teaching through trauma. From Teri's stories I can see the trauma she described in dealing with unjust teaching cultures that ultimately put pressure on her response to dealing with her students' personal traumas (see Chapter 4, "Social Workers")

Speaking to trauma was another interesting window of experience illuminated by Teri's career as an educator. I think that the expression of inequitable, unjust, exclusionary work environments on the practice and pedagogy of teachers is a point of which we must take note. The racism and exclusion that Teri experienced is what I would undeniably label as a barrier to her access to particular experiences in art educational spaces as a practitioner, a dynamic I believe often goes unconsidered. These barriers ranged from her understanding of her unlikely chances of being hired into certain districts because of her race, to blatantly being doubted for her skills based on her skin. Teri's recollections were riddled with the trauma of facing these struggles. The place she found herself at, at the end of her formal art education career, was one of peace--peace with what happened and the effects of such, but not forgotten. This is why I think mentioning institutional trauma is noteworthy. In a similar vein, what stood out to me as I listened to the brief story I mentioned before was the racist advice of a principal. I wondered about the long term effects of being exposed to harmful rhetoric like that as a young teacher, knowing that the mold you were expected to adhere to is an unjust, bigoted one. Teachers may endure a strain when operating within cultures that go against their own beliefs and identities, especially when working with students whose lives come into friction with the mainstream culture of said administrative environment.

Hearing Teri's reflection reminded me of the hurdles educators face in arts environments, where they are placed into positions of power, adjudicated and policed by forces often larger than themselves. For Teri, her struggle to deal with the combination of this trauma, as well as the

responsibility placed upon her, was a difficult burden to carry. How does one stay true to themselves in the face of these hurdles? To me going against dominant institutional cultures presents a great obstacle, one possibly unique to persons of color. For Teri, this meant consistently meeting institutional opposition with resiliency and theology of kindness, which she explored and explained in “I know who I am” (see Chapter 4).

To Myself,

I say, “You did it”. You were brave enough for this moment. Be careful with the stories, but most of all be careful with yourself as you break away pieces one by one, to give to others. Keep something close, and know that this is worthwhile.

### **Secrets of Sacrifice**

Within my own stories, I found an interesting thread that has made its way throughout my life: my mother’s sacrifice. In one of the most personal stories I documented of my own, I reflected on the sacrifices my mother made in order to expose me to art. Quoting from that specific moment of recollection, I know that:

My mom changed my life in that she put me into those lessons to show me what art making looked like collaboratively, and just being in a creative space and having that be acceptable and not feeling odd in a space where i was really concerned with making things and just being around other people, my mom fought for that for me because, I mean, only later in life I realized that we, that was a luxury, that wasn’t just something that we could just afford

The revelation that my family could not afford the art classes I had been enrolled into as a child only came to me as an adult. My mother was never one to complain, and her telling me about this truly impacted me in a profound way. Her secret helped me to begin thinking about the privileges that we take for granted, that have been afforded on the silent sacrifices of our parents. How often do we find out about these selfless acts, and actually consider the ways the specific acts changed the very trajectory of our lives? From this story in particular, I also began thinking about the breakdown in my family life and the strain that period of time placed upon my mother. The separation of my parents caused my mother to essentially become a single parent and take on the financial responsibility of my schooling both through high school and undergraduate education. To understand the ways my mother prioritized the needs of my own dreams over hers necessitated my acknowledging this as privilege--acknowledging the profound advantage it is to have a



supporting, sacrificing parent. Through my recollection, what was also made clear was the amount of autonomy over my own life's decisions my mother's disposition allowed. "I feel like I was privileged in having parents who just let me make a lot of decisions for myself," but also who deeply cared about me and, thus, my dreams. So that, even though we could not afford those lessons, and every year of high school and undergraduate study, the required materials lists continued to grow, my mother pushed through. She made the effort, and she provided me with an opportunity I never knew I needed, but now understand as invaluable. As I listened to and reflected upon my own stories and the stories of the other participants in this study, I can see how crucial this foundational role of the family is. I have seen it for myself, and I wonder, in the absence of these persons at home, these forces, how can educators fill those gaps? How will we/they sacrifice?

In tandem to this, and referencing the story "A plane ride" (see Chapter 4), I think another dimension that is worthwhile to mention is the secret sacrifices students are forced to make, not as a result from any pressure, but due to a sensitivity to their family's situation. My decision to abandon studying abroad was in fact a painful one. As I recalled this story I became very emotional, not at the thought that I wished I could change things, but just remembering that feeling of watching what I had always felt was a viable option for me, in fact what I thought was the only option for me, slip by. I believe one of the reasons that experience weighed so heavily on me as a young adult was because it was the first instance in my life where I had to make a decision based on the outcome for others. It was the first time I had to truly put myself last. This would be the first of my own secret sacrifices, my first experience where I could not center my dreams, make it the focal point, because the overall picture of my reality was entirely less simple and idealistic than I had hoped. It was messy, but I learned that that day.

### **Early Exposure**

Speaking further on family engagement. I want to reiterate a point that was mentioned in Teri's narrative through a particularly meaningful recollection of my own. I believe that this memory in particular comes into an interesting conversation with Teri's about her mother being an artist, and helping her understand in a first hand way how she, too, could be involved in the

arts. My story of my uncle (see Chapter 4, “I want that to be me”), represents a similar experience with exposure to the arts at a crucial time in my life. As a child meeting someone, more so having someone close to me in my life who was initiated into the professional art world, made a career for myself there viable, tangible, real. I use this word ‘initiated’ for a variety of reasons. As I briefly touched upon already in my reflection on Teri’s transition into undergrad education, having allies, personal contacts, and even family who belong to these specific groups of people in society facilitates a very crucial transmission of culture and knowledge that help ease the burden of certain social transitions. For myself, my uncle being initiated meant that he belonged. He was a part of the tight knit circle, understood the norms, the culture of a group that seemed highly impenetrable to me growing up.

As I recalled that experience, it stood out to me the way I described him as introducing not only myself but my family, to “a new world.” This meant that in my mind then I saw a clear division between the art world and my own world. How was I able at a young age to consider and make this designation? I believe it was because I recognized the difference in cultures, and thus understood then and now, the inherent value in having someone to pass those very specific knowledges towards me, and the privilege belonging to this group afforded me as I got older, as well as the ways this chasm between worlds continue to disenfranchise many others. It’s something I’m grappling with and hoping to work towards amending, even if it is through helping demystify the art world through my own life.

### **Re(sources)**

Another major thing that stood out as I recalled my time in university was a great sense space or, rather, a sensitivity to the spaces in which people create. In “Time and place... and play” (see Chapter 4), my acknowledgment of the benefit of space, though in relative hindsight, became especially meaningful to me, even as I sat in my studio, thinking about the hours I was able to spend uninterrupted during those years of undergraduate studies developing my practice. This draws out three very relevant issues around space and time; physical space; and time and mental space.

For me having a studio at my house was something that had been afforded to me early on, early enough for me to easily take it for granted. An entire room where I could make a mess, and explore, floor space, table space. I had unlimited access to this. It was my own. However what became apparent to me was the connection between this physical space and the scale, consistency, and medium of the bodies of work I saw burgeoning in my cohort. It soon became clear as we sped towards the thesis show, the obvious disparity between those who could lay out floor to ceiling paintings, drawings, sculptures, and those who were just managing with what they could make on their kitchen table or on the floor of their apartments. As easy as it was for me to ignore the disparity as a student, I often wondered if my lecturers and teachers at that moment were able to see it either. In terms of time/spaces, the capacity to truly be devoted and focused, I recalled consistently

there were people who were working. I didn't have a job, but my parents allowed me to go to school, you know, for free. My parents decided that they would support me and put me through undergrad and because of that most of my time was really truly devoted to building my practice and spending hours in my studio because I wasn't interrupted by like everyday life, whereas I had friends who used to have to come to class and then rush straight off to work whereas after critique I might come straight home and like actively work and process whatever I got in the critique like in my studio, in that moment. I always had a constant flow of materials so it didn't ever feel like I was wasting anything and I think when you're not feeling like you're wasting materials you're more open to experimentation rather than you have this like precious limited supply, that you don't wanna mess up because this is all you have.

This memory is what served as an example of the confluence of the privilege of space and time, as well as how those resources affect crucial arts based practices, such as play and risk taking. Open ended experimenting, exploring and pushing boundaries in art making are not solely dependent on one's resources, however I can see how they are inadvertently affected by them. I have found that there is privilege even in play. So, then, the crux of this matter for me lies in an art programs' acknowledgment of these dynamics, just how unlevel the playing fields in arts

educational spaces actually are, and whether or not success in these educational environments privileges persons with particular sets of resources, rather than accounting for the reality many persons face.

### **Passing Privilege**

Speaking on undergraduate education, I want to touch on another story documented in my findings in the story “Talking about Fulbright” (see Chapter 4). It is about a lecturer whose own openness served as a catalyst to my involvement in the Fulbright program. In a small island like Trinidad, where scholarship opportunities are often the only way many can fund international study, one can imagine how critical information is. However something that I’ve come to observe is the way such information is guarded within and by those who have benefited from it and even sometimes the awarding body itself. I can remember “uncovering” a government academic funding opportunity, where during a specific political administration, was virtually impossible to find information about. Upon further review I found that all of the recent recipients were connected in some way to the previous cohort. So when my lecturer shared his Fulbright experience with me during undergrad, he openly went against the dominant culture I had observed of hiding opportunities. This truly meant a lot not only to me, but the other people with whom I went on to share the Fulbright experience with.

This dynamic of passing on privilege, as this section is titled, is one that has struck me as powerful in the chain of actions, that contribute to persons being able to access opportunities within the arts that not only propel their own careers but serve as catalysts for new chains of information within groups that would be otherwise excluded from these means. From this, I’ve come to understand that passing privilege is not only a mechanism for reinforcing systems of exclusion, but as one of the ways inclusivity is fostered. Influencing and co-creating counter cultures of sharing, and helping guide others through systems that were not necessarily designed for particular persons has been influential in my own life, and I can see how effective it would be for others.

### **Walls in the Room**

This section and its title reference “The silent space in between” (see Chapter 4). Adding a bit more context to that excerpt, I recalled,

there’s this stereotype of an educator not being an artist. I felt that in such a big prominent way... there’s just this unspoken divide between these two fields. I felt like I could not access MFA classes at one point, especially because the way I was treated by someone from their faculty. That bothered me all semester long. I felt rejected, I felt less than, I felt not good enough, I felt like she wanted to validate my ability, I felt like she had put herself and her program up on this pedestal and had put me and my program on a lower pedestal, and really made it as difficult as possible for me to even access classes, for me to develop my studio practice. It was very traumatizing for me, like I remember being upset. I was so intimidated and I thought about my peers . . . like how are we supposed to . . . I feel like we're discriminated against so like how are we supposed to continue growing if there are literally systems and a status quo in place to keep us separated, art from art education. I don’t know. I never felt so unworthy before.

This story and the title of this section is rooted I think in the reality that access and participation, especially in an arts academic setting, does not in any way mean that the struggles are won, or that the situation is somehow stable and neutral. Including this story of me talking about the persistent walls within rooms has to do with seeing inequity, and the barriers to operating within arts spaces as in some way interminable. It speaks to the nature of gaining entrance into a space, confronting the obvious hurdle, and its inherent ability to consist of additional more nuanced, less obvious obstacles. So for me, belonging to the program, gaining that, only opened up new (to me) issues of inequity and access. This is to say, some walls are unspoken, some walls you expect, and others appear in places they really never should belong.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

*Concluding is an interesting word to call what my aims are in this chapter. I'm at odds with the wording, because this is in fact not the end. Theoretically these people's lives still go on, their stories as well as my own. I see this space as the beginning of a work of reflection. A work I hope I will and those who will read, hear, see, this document continue to do.*

### Where We Began: Calypso

One thing that I have been reminded of by conducting this research, has calypso's ability to connect people. It was the reason it so heavily inspired the methodology of this project, and at last its influences have helped me to see the rich ways in which story has connected me to those involved in this study. This is because, what a good calypso has the ability to do is reach beyond borders of difference to connect people with common experiences. The lyrics, the melody, the rhythm of its commentary, sparks a cycle, a conversation between the singer and everyone who will listen to, and repeat his or her words; it becomes a common language. Seeing how my stories, Keith's and Teri's found a way to each other, regardless of the diversity of experience, the way they became intertwined echoes the ebbing of a calypso beat, the sound of collective experience, speaking up. I realize these stories became the lyrics, their truths, sometimes placating, problematic, but never apologetic, collected here on common ground. Here is the hook.

### Main Takeaways

In order for me to digest all that has been said thematically, I grouped some of the main factors that were indicated as either barriers or privileges to arts access and participation. Some of the elements that emerge from the stories of Keith, Teri and myself may seem obvious in some ways, and less so in others. As I have mentioned privileges, it would do well to define just exactly I have observed coming into play throughout the stories. Privilege, I have discovered, is far more nuanced in its manifestations. In contrast, when I began this inquiry, I conceptualised privilege as a situation of advantage. However, privilege has been shown to perform contextually, specifically to people, culture, time and place. These, like the barriers I have addressed from the narratives,

discard singular notions about who and how persons interact with resources, and what those resources pertain to.

### **The Family Milieu**

What became obvious through its prevalence in all the stories generated were the many ways the family unit played in the decision-making processes associated with both accessing and participating in arts opportunities, specifically arts education. What I observed in this realm were four main things in particular: the impact of family economic status, familial responsibility, familial support, and familial cultural capital.

The level of financial flexibility in all three narratives was instrumental in the ways each person was able to access particular opportunities at young ages. For Keith, this meant declining opportunities in the arts, while for myself this meant gaining access due to financial sacrifice on the part of my mother. This makes clear how family finances can act as both a barrier and privilege to access and prolonged participation. This is what I consider one of the simpler correlations, what is considered a practical barrier, as highlighted by the National Endowment for the Arts' 2015 (National Endowment for the Arts', 2015) report.

Connected to family economic status was the barrier of family responsibility. For Keith, being the eldest son in his family posed a unique challenge in terms of the role he felt he needed to perform as provider and to hasten his time as a dependent in the home. In his storytelling he connected his family's economic circumstances to the role he felt he had to assume. This informed his decision to leave high school and, thus, his opportunity for an advanced art education there. Unlike the barrier of family economic resources mentioned earlier, familial responsibility is not addressed in the surveys of literature, as it takes into consideration a specific patriarchal culture that may be highly contextual.

Two other factors in the milieu were family support and family cultural capital. Family support in my own story as well as Teri's was shown to be crucial. It may be that when children sense they are supported, they feel a greater sense of agency and ownership over their decisions, as it pertains to their progress in the arts. Although the education level of parents is a factor identified in studies on arts participation (Vanherwegen & Lievens, 2014), it is obvious that the

relationship between the parents' educational identities and their children goes beyond this factor. The kinds of knowledges that are passed down through family ties may have a significant influence on the transmission of cultural capital. Vanherwegen and Lievens (2014) define cultural capital as:

unequally distributed, highly valued, and monopolized cultural resources that shape school success or, in more abstract terms, institutionalized, that is, widely shared, high-status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion (p. 440; see also Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977)

Having family members or family acquaintances who are aware and adept in the culture of art making or arts spaces, privileges one with knowledges and other forms of cultural capital (include citation) that are crucial for accessing and participating in them. Cultural capital also affects what is described as a perceptual barrier, one defined by a cultivated feeling of acceptance into these spaces. That capital may serve as a means of currency in navigating perceptions about oneself and arts environments is crucial in developing sustained arts participation. This brings to rise friction when considering how young persons define themselves in relation to their home socio-demographic identity. The home, and by extension the family and their relationship with knowledges that are privileged oftentimes in exclusive arts environments may very well prove to be a hindrance or asset to persons in their early childhood to young adulthood. This became especially obvious when considering the issue of being a first generation university attendee. Though only reported as a barrier in one narrative of this study, the process of assimilation into higher education environments as a first generation attendee stands out as another possible barrier that may be connected to the family milieu.

Lastly, the family milieu may have implications on arts access during early childhood. Art education, which has been shown to be linked to adult involvement in the arts, is often the only way children may access formal arts learning. For myself and Kieth, our geographical location outside of the U.S. meant that our own access to the arts at that age was limited to personal exploration and other indirect forms of education through visual culture, one great



example being Carnival, a festival in Trinidad. However, as the landscape of school arts programs continue to shift around the world, Rabkin and Hedberg (2012) have identified the reality that outside of school, “children generally require both a financial commitment from their parents” (p.20) as well as the support in helping break down those perceptual barriers, which have to do with the way people may conceptualise arts identities based on the, “past experiences and the attitudes and expectations of their social and familial circles” (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015, p.13). If school arts programs are absent in the role of this support, then the responsibility to enable access lies in the hands of the parents.

### **Identity and Space**

As Teri, Keith and I began to transition out of early childhood and into early adulthood and arts experiences in university, three major issues arose: lack of racial representation within the art world (?), and overt racism and prejudice. The narratives of this study keenly addressed the relationship between a person’s racial and cultural identity and the barriers they faced in advancing their education, especially in arts educational spaces.

Representation, rather the lack thereof, emerged as a major barrier throughout the narratives of the study. Feelings of being unwelcomed as Black people in predominantly White institutions was prevalent among all three subjects. This finding echoes Wilson’s (2014) assertions about the challenges of navigating racial and professional identities in the art world, and arts spaces that are open yet “unwelcoming, uncomprehending, and unsympathetic environment[s]” ( p. 408). In her examination of the development of Black arts participation identities, I see a parallel with the stories of the participants in my study as they came up against the issue of racial underrepresentation and the ways it hindered and complicated how they navigated arts education and their professional careers as art educators. From instances of being the only Black educator in a room of hundreds, to entering graduate school feeling ally-less, to feeling as though one’s work is not understood, these examples represent the broad spectrum of instances where people may feel unrepresented in the arts, and thus they feel as though their academic and professional paths are being negatively impacted.

Wilson (2014) describes a phenomenon known as the hidden bias blind spot that points to what these stories about the implications of a lack of critical representation shows. Similarly I see the barrier of representation as described in the narratives of myself and Keith providing insight into what Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández and Carpenter (2018) describe as the connection between racism in post-colonial contexts, race culture and the value implicitly placed on some forms of art/knowledge over other forms. For me, I see this as an obvious outcropping of racism, and a lack of representation.

Wilson's (2014) review of the research on arts participation, crucially their lack of inquiry into the ways the "art world has been organized along the register of racial lines" (p. 409), again rings true for what has been revealed in this study. Though race has emerged as a factor in arts participation that also has been measured in larger surveys, the accounts within these narratives help bring home just how traumatic and raced arts education institutions were, and continue to be. As an extension to this, the prejudices experienced by my participants within these spaces further concretize feelings of exclusion and inadequacy. I realised that these assumptions performed along the lines of nationality or race everyday, could manifest themselves subtly, so much that we may fail to detect the trauma they may cause.

### **Community and Education**

The theme that seems to fully connect the family milieu with the ways the participants navigated identity and space as barriers to arts access is the concept of community. Their narratives show the influential role of community at every stage of their arts journeys, from childhood to adulthood. The stories of myself, Teri and Keith show that community affords peer and professional validation, mentorship, support, and leverage for utilizing resources.

In my review of relevant literature, I found a general lack of discourse surrounding community as a factor affecting arts access and participation. With its links to race, representation, and the home, its place in the stories of all the participants was as obvious as it was surprising. Acuff, López, and Wilson (2019) utilized trioethnography to talk to their struggles as women of color in art education. What they also accomplish in this sense of community, highlights the powerful force of community in facing the barriers they have encountered in their

journey in the arts. What such a community offered in their cases, and in the stories featured here, was a needed validation of experience. Peer validation operates in ways that largely have gone under-addressed. In the realm of arts education teachers and educators may encourage peer critique and encouragement, but may fail to consider the ways these experiences bolster and validate young people's and adult's interests and feelings of acceptance in the arts.

Professional validation serves a similar role. In Keith's case in particular, he searched for professional validation through acquiring a BFA, however earning that and remaining at an adjunct level at his country did not provide the validation he found himself in need of. This may suggest that feelings of validation provided by positive experiences with peers and professional counterparts serve larger roles in the development and sustaining of identities in the arts, especially within groups that already feel unwelcome, and oftentimes marginalized by their race and lack of representation in arts educational spaces.

What community in the arts also represents is the ability to leverage resources that are often only available under the pressure of a group rather than a single person. In the cases of low income schools, and budding arts programs, having a community of professional peers to be allies in the pressure for equity was shown to be beneficial. Lastly, community provides important mentorship that has, in the stories mentioned in this study, been found to be anchored in the progress of each person throughout their lives. Now, it should be noted that this community looks different in everyone's story, yet the stories in this study make the beneficial impact of community obvious, having the ability to change the trajectory of a person's experience with the arts. Also to be noted, is the fact that in these narratives, mentorship was not connected to a race in all cases, but interestingly enough, was defined by the relationship between the two persons, and the feelings of being heard, accepted and cared for, a relationship described by Kraehe (2017) as "recognition" (p.273). Mentorship offers the potential for admittance into arts spaces; it extends arts opportunity and most importantly, it models possibility and potential in the arts. Community serves as a compass, in helping to navigate worlds that are often riddled with struggle, for some more than others.

It is here that my first mention of Stuart Hall's description of calypso as, "maps of meaning into the geography of a complicated political culture" (as cited by Regis, 1999, p. xi) reemerges. Beyond the barriers, and privileges that these narratives have revealed, it has also helped uncover the potential flaws in the way I believe the dominant discourse on arts access and participation has gone about mapping them. What I can say based on my experience with narrative inquiry, and my survey of literature on the matter is that the research on this subject may have missed the pattern between the factors potentially affecting students. I have found that the barriers to arts access and participation converge and compound one another in ways worth attention.

As a comparison, I think about the ongoing research on intersectionality (Rao & Pfeiler-Wunder, 2018) and the ways gender and race, among other factors connect in often oppressive ways, and the kinds of research, like Acuff, López, and Wilson (2019), that are unpacking this through narrative. Like intersectionality, arts access and participation is complex in ways that demand opening up the way we think about them. A great example of this shortcoming is that of Mansour et. al's (2014) salient observation of how few studies had taken the time to consider all the hubs of experience, mentioned in the methods of this study, into consideration when examining arts participation.

What I have noticed about the way memories are recounted is how one memory might be connected to many different themes, or barriers, for instance, Teri's experience with racism in her undergraduate college experience. During her retelling of that memory, she referenced her race, her identity as a first generation attendee, and her desire for community. For Keith, his experience working as an adjunct arts educator was connected to not only to his race but the "adjunctification" of academia, and the politics of higher education. This pattern of layered telling is one that I think could benefit the field of art education insight not only into the way multiple forces impact on a person at once, but into the way stories are analysed.

The barriers and privileges to arts access, arts participation, and largely arts equity are not simple rhymes. They are complex rhythms, many instruments at once, and a cacophony at times. I think preparing ourselves as educators and researchers to listen to complex sounds may render

us in a better position, than assuming a position of casual easy listening. My complication of the matter may mean that we, as art educators, take a step back and feel the weight of simplistic analysis on the matter. However, when we as educators do begin again, it is my hope that we will see that such oversights have cost many, ourselves included, the attention, consideration, accommodation, and empathy experiences of inequity deserve. So when we begin to map the meaning of these barriers and privileges, we may begin to see the complexities, ask new questions about people, not just quantitative data. By taking an interest in people, their stories, and the weight of the multiple factor(s) affecting their journeys with arts access and participation I came to the crucial realizations that:

1. The people, systems, structures, cultures embedded into narrative make them more complex, and nuanced.
2. There is more going on that meets the eye as barriers and privileges can be subtle and appear in unexpected contexts such as the home, or educational institutions.
3. I, as a researcher interested in equity, must view people as agents of their own stories rather than imposing my assumptions about their experiences.
4. I, as a teacher, will encourage students to share their stories affirm their complexities and challenge my biases.
5. All of it, research, learning, teaching, is a work of listening, like Calypso.

### **Considering Calypso**

A calypso inspired methodology offers the opportunity to express unfiltered personal realities to an ongoing national political, racial and economic conversation. This remains true about Calypso even today in my country. To borrow a quote from one of my advisors, my composite Calypso methodology is an invitation to “dialog as a means to engage with our lived and shared truths. What emerges from our original conversations with one another are connections to our past, which in effect inform our present and future experiences” (Acuff, Lopez, & Wilson, 2019, p. 22).

Keeping in mind the goals and benefits much literature has described as inherent in narrative inquiry, I believe my greater understanding of Calypso, helped to ground my own

respect for the stories that have been shared. As a methodology, it is what has allowed me to recognize how truly diverse this narrative landscape was. It allowed for a necessary openness to people, and in turn I directly connected the witnessing, the opening up of not just stories but of homes and hearts. One of my favorite quotes from Teri is, “As corny as it sounds, people don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” (T. Epps, personal communication, December 2, 2019) Through the act of listening, I could see this in action. The carefulness with which people spoke about things so personal, and the care they undertook in making me understand who they were, was their response to my caring. Just as it is true that calypsos are not written for just oneself, but for many others, so too must research methodologies attend to people. They must, in essence, show care. For in the end, the research is about them, for them.

On the matter of pedagogy, and the ways stories have influenced teaching practices, I have learned that these transfers are subtle, and often go unnoticed by teachers. To summarize this, I again draw on another of Teri’s quotes. On this transfer, she notes that,

“you will do it often, its unconscious. I mean you plan it into your lessons. I believe teaching is effective and affective, so you build it into your classroom whether you know it or not” (T. Epps, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

Teri’s quote highlights an important point about the unconscious ways our stories seep into our lives and the biases we may cultivate and feed as a result of them (T. Epps, personal communication, March 2, 2020)

This key point highlights the necessity of methodologies that consider what may be learned from stories. This Calypso methodology has enabled me to do just that. My experience with it leads me to wonder how more studies could change the way the barriers to arts participation are understood and the role educators play in access to arts education. The value of teacher reflection is something about which I did not find conclusive evidence based on my conversations with both Teri and Keith, nor do I wish to supply an answer without their input. What I can say of my own reflections is something that Teri began to allude to: the process of

looking into my own story was as a result of a willingness to do so, and respect I give to experience as a valid site of knowledge. Teri's thoughts on inequity in schools were that:

They [teachers] haven't found themselves, or they haven't been looking for themselves. I think that's why we're in this time we are as a country right now. We cannot afford to be selfish human beings, and I think we're in an age of me, me, me, selfish, and as a result we're losing our humanity. . . . It affects what our classrooms look like.

Her statement resonates with my own thoughts. A problem may be that researchers and educators may not be taking the time to take stock of what they bring to the proverbial table. Another flaw may be that they are unaware of the value of such a reflexive practice and its impact on pedagogy, or it may be that we, myself included, have only developed the practice of looking at the lives of others through a narrow lens, missing the value therein, and the opportunity to learn about ourselves in the process. As dizzying as this sounds, this is a balance I am still working to articulate--how much we look in and look out.

On the matter of Calypso methodology and the film that was born out of my time with Teri and Keith and their stories, I have found the idea of jamming with reality, a concept I have mentioned in the Methods of this document, continues to ring through, in its articulation of a reality of working, filming and documenting real life. For me it connotes a chaos, an uncertainty, and a spontaneity that is inherent with the fact the like calypso music, and thus Calypso methodology, documentary film making is about real people and their real, nuanced, complicated lives and the cruciality of allowing these realities to be performed for all to see. This to me has been the connecting link, that chord, between the music, the methodology and the storying and performing of the barriers to arts access.

I think the calypso, its origins and functions, provide a tremendous backdrop for thinking about social issues and how we can begin to respond to them in the public sphere. For me, the allure came from observing this tension, of looking in and looking out, but it also came from seeing the triumph of surrounding voice, identity, and the celebration of speech.

Calypso music and Calypso methodology speaks to the disruptive and productive force of storytelling, again a balance, taking in, letting out, writing and listening. I see this process of

seeking the sounds of calypso in the stories of real people, as necessary in order to begin to understand together and bridge the disconnect between theory and praxis, and between the people and the data. But in order to do this, to write, we as researchers must like the calypsonian, listen. For there is power in truly listening, for it is here that learning can begin.



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