

“For a Seed to be Born”
Exploring the Links between Emotions and Everyday Creativity in Elementary Teachers’
Classrooms in Peru

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Abstract

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Exploring the Links Between Emotions and Everyday Creativity in Elementary Teachers’ Practice in Peru

This qualitative study explored the links between emotions and everyday creativity in elementary teachers’ practice in Lima, Peru. Although extensive research has been conducted on creativity, little investigation has been developed for understanding creativity from the vantage point of practicing teachers. The purpose of this study was to help bridge the distance between creativity scholars and educators, in favor of collaborative research. Another objective was to explore if the workshop’s approach to emotional creativity could enhance teachers’ confidence in their capacities for nurturing the emotional realm of their students, while also reducing the perceived barriers to creativity in the educational setting. The study followed an arts-informed participatory workshop approach, framed by phenomenology and memory work. Three elementary school teachers participated in the workshop: Heart Swirl, Seed, Super Keka. The participants created their own pseudonyms and symbol to represent themselves. The research questions were: What sort of emotions do teachers find in their classrooms? What type of emotional memories do teachers hold from their own schooling experience, and in what ways do these influence their pedagogy? What elements lie at the heart of the creative teaching process? In what ways can they enhance the emotional creativity of their students? Collage inquiry was used to explore these issues. James Averill’s theory of Emotional Creativity –a social constructivist everyday creativity perspective– was utilized as a heuristic device to explore different dimensions of the link between emotions and creativity in teachers practice. Thematic analysis was used to investigate the underlying themes that facilitated the development of emotional creativity in the participants. A creative synthesis of the experience was created in the form of poetic inquiry and the composition of a musical piece to accompany the poem. This study suggests that collaborative research that focuses on the subjective experience of practicing teachers might be most productive for the development of a pedagogy that fosters emotional wellbeing, creativity and the empowerment of teachers. It also proposes that memory-work is a powerful path to develop teachers’ consciousness, which is necessary to exercise an emotionally-enhancing pedagogy, one that will make children grow up into loving, secure, autonomous and ethical adults. It suggests that a creative approach to consciousness allows educators to develop pedagogical responsibility; understood as the ability to respond in tactful ways to the needs of each particular child contextually; and that this process is as beneficial for the child as it is for the educator. A teacher who engages in creative self-work will nurture children in their self-discovery path, while at the same time, finding his or her own emotional freedom.

Résumé

“Pour qu'une graine puisse naître”

Explorer les liens entre les émotions et la créativité au quotidien dans la pratique des enseignants du primaire au Pérou

Cette étude qualitative a exploré les liens entre les émotions et la créativité au quotidien dans la pratique des enseignants du primaire à Lima, au Pérou. Bien que des recherches approfondies aient déjà été faites au sujet de la créativité, peu d'études ont été menées pour comprendre la créativité à partir du point de vue des enseignants en exercice. Le but de cette étude était d'aider à surmonter la distance entre les spécialistes en créativité et les éducateurs, au profit de la recherche collaborative. Un autre objectif était d'explorer si l'approche de la créativité émotionnelle de l'atelier pouvait améliorer la confiance des enseignants en leurs capacités à enrichir le champ émotionnel de leurs élèves tout en réduisant les obstacles à la créativité dans le milieu éducatif. L'étude a porté sur des ateliers participatifs avec une approche basée sur l'art, encadrée par la phénoménologie et le travail de la mémoire. Trois enseignants du primaire ont participé à l'atelier: Heart Swirl (Cœur Tourbillon), Seed (Graine), Super Keka. Les participants ont créé leurs propres pseudonymes et emblèmes pour se représenter. Les questions de la recherche étaient: quelles sortes d'émotions les enseignants trouvent-ils dans leurs salles de classe? Quels types de souvenirs affectifs les enseignants retiennent-ils de leur propre expérience scolaire et de quelles manières cela influence-t-ils leur pédagogie? Quels éléments sont au cœur du processus d'enseignement créatif? De quelle manière peuvent-ils améliorer la créativité émotionnelle de leurs élèves? La technique d'enquête par collage a été utilisée pour explorer ces questions. La théorie de la créativité émotionnelle de James Averill –un point de vue constructiviste social de créativité au quotidien– a été utilisée comme outil heuristique pour explorer les différentes dimensions du lien entre les émotions et la créativité dans la pratique des enseignants. Une analyse thématique a été utilisée pour étudier les thèmes sous-jacents qui ont facilité le développement de la créativité émotionnelle chez les participants. Une synthèse créative de l'expérience a été créée sous la forme d'une transcription poétique et de la composition d'un morceau de musique pour accompagner le poème. Cette étude suggère que la recherche collaborative qui met l'accent sur l'expérience subjective des enseignants en exercice pourrait être plus productive dans le développement d'une pédagogie qui favorise le bien-être émotionnel, la créativité et l'autonomisation des enseignants. Elle propose également que le travail de la mémoire est un puissant moyen de développer la conscience des enseignants, ce qui est nécessaire pour pratiquer une pédagogie qui met en valeur les émotions, qui amènera les enfants à devenir des adultes affectueux, stables, autonomes et qui ont une certaine éthique. Elle suggère qu'une approche créative de la conscience permet aux éducateurs de développer une responsabilité pédagogique; perçue comme la capacité de répondre avec tact aux besoins de chaque enfant dans son contexte; et que ce processus est autant bénéfique pour l'enfant que pour l'éducateur. Un enseignant qui s'engage dans un travail créatif va encourager les enfants dans la découverte d'eux-mêmes, et en même temps, va trouver sa propre liberté émotionnelle.

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Chapter I: Introduction

I grew up in a household that deeply cherished creativity and the arts in many of its forms. I learned from my father his love for music, ballet and the opera. The countless hours we invested in appreciating extraordinary concerts, sitting on the green velvet couch of my parent's house, are some of my most beloved childhood memories. But my father didn't just appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the operas or ballets. He wanted me to be able to capture the complete picture. Therefore, he read and explained to me the arguments, as we commented on the stories that imparted life to the music we loved.

These stories were emotionally complex, and my understanding and interpretation of them evolved as I grew up. What was always clear, though, was the connection between emotions, creativity, and the arts; and the ways in which emotional expression transformed the experiences of the characters, leading either to their liberation or condemnation. Artistic expression was the vehicle and the path to emotional transmutation. Emotions and the arts were mutually dependent: emotions needed the arts, and the arts were nourished by emotions. During this period, most of the operas we enjoyed didn't leave room for emotional nuances. You could either sing your way towards a happy ending, or sing your way to the depths of human despair.

I learned more about emotional shades and the possibilities the arts brought for emotional transformation through the study of classical piano. This was a gift of my mother. Thanks to her, my childhood was also filled with children's stories, such as the Brothers Grimm tales, and many other traditional narratives. My mother was quick to note how stories captured my attention, and encouraged me to invent my own narratives to accompany and make more entertaining the long hours we practiced piano. Through her, I would have one of my first lessons about the necessary relationship between

creative teaching and *teaching for creativity* (Craft, 2005). *Creative teaching* refers to the ways educators innovate in teaching strategies for the sake of sustaining and enhancing students' motivation. For example, my mother used creative teaching techniques with me by experimenting with different rhythms as we practiced scales and arpeggios, or by singing the notes out loud in an exaggerated way, mimicking an opera singer. *Teaching for creativity*, on the other hand, is more student focused. It has to do with the discovery of the creative process that the learner undergoes. When my mother encouraged me to invent stories and characters for every piece we worked on, she was teaching me for creativity. A comprehensive education that nurtures creativity combines both methodologies, transferring them to the student, until she is empowered and can use both approaches at will. As a music student, I learned to produce my own creative teaching strategies and learned to identify the elements that enhanced my creativity.

The stories I created to reflect the music I played, filled the process of studying piano with colors. Learning to play the piano can be at times very gray and repetitive, because of the technical challenges you need to master in order to express yourself through the keyboard. By integrating narratives into my piano studying, I could vividly feel and experience the emotions I felt the music wanted to communicate, compensating for the domain-specific skills I was still developing. The narratives allowed me to feel the music deeply. This strategy allowed me to access the emotional experience as a complete phenomenon that would have remained elusive otherwise.

Apart from the love for classical music, my household was also emotionally rich in a rather less common way. I was the last of three siblings. My two older sisters were born with a cognitive handicap. This reality made my childhood home a sort of laboratory of complex emotions and it demanded extra psychological effort from all of the members of our family. Social integration, for example, was a challenging task, as

many people are not familiar with the experience of disability. As I learned throughout the years, the attitudes and reactions of others, which as a child and teenager I felt were un-sensitive and many times hurtful, had more to do with a lack of understanding of the emotional world, than with a “negative” intention. Empathy, the capacity of a *creative* emotional awareness, was the privilege of a few who shared a special kind of sensibility or similar lived experiences.

My life with my sisters involved dealing with a lot of difficult feelings, such as anger, shame and anxiety. Once again, the main medium through which I worked on my emotions was through the arts and music. I was quite resourceful and enjoyed creating “methods” for handling my emotions. For example, I remember trying to pour big doses of frustration and anger into technical work, practicing countless strong and loud scales and arpeggios. I would also connect with my sadness through “blue” pieces, allowing me to walk *out* of my sadness, transforming it into hope or simply relief. With the help of music, I could remain open to my emotional world, which is one of the most important elements for creativity (Averill, 1999a; Maslow, 1967). After finishing school I became a piano teacher, studying Communications in university. Many times I have wondered: Could some of the emotional difficulties of my childhood have been diminished if my music teachers had had better skills for social and emotional teaching and learning, starting with consciousness of their own emotional world and its influence on wellbeing?

It was also through the study of music that I learned about phases in the creative process, as described in Wallas’ (1926) creativity theory: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. Creativity requires preparation in a specific domain, in this case piano technique and musical knowledge; which would take many years to develop to an optimal level. Preparation, the first phase, involved more physical elements than the other ones, such as technical skills and neurological maturation.

Incubation was the time a piece was put to “rest,” and just as a cookie dough does, started to transform, its elements combining through the unconscious, leading to the emergence of constituent properties. During the illumination phase, the distinct characteristics that make every musical piece unique, the *voice* or the *soul* of the piece, suddenly appears crisp and clear. At this moment, the *leit motiv* of the piece was so present that I could describe its colors, textures and scents. From a phenomenological perspective, I could access its essence and depict it in turn in different forms: through poetry, drawings and narrative, and sometimes through a private emotional process (Moustakas, 1990).

Until this point, all phases were harmonious and integrated. It was the verification phase that was disruptive, because it implied confronting external standards that were centered on the “final product”: execution of the piano piece. Every time I had to play in public, in a formal, informal concert or an exam, I could feel the familiar mixture of erratic emotions, anxieties and expectations stirring in my stomach. As I write today and reflect on these experiences, I realize the inadequate emotional strategies I had for handling the validation phase, which led me to a state of mind and heart where I “forgot” all the other phases I had walked and worked through, generating a disconnection from my own creative process. “Forgetting” my process, made me feel disconnected from myself and from the things that were authentic and important for me. This experience, many times described as “stage fright,” is quite common.

But the verification phase was not always conflictive. There *were* some times where I felt an almost magical connection with the audience, and a dialogue between us, –so clear that I could have transcribed it into words. When I connected with the audience, I felt as if there were a magical thread between us. I learned to recognize the fiber of the thread, and even managed to re-connect it through interpretation. When the

audience lost interest, the thread was lost. But then, if I was confident enough I *could* re-engage in this dialogue. During most of my performances, the experience of feeling connected with my audience happened in *sections*, bits and pieces. Generally, after the initial anxiety had diminished, I was able to feel assured that I *knew* what I was doing on that stage. I remembered, at an emotional, experiential level, the process. What was bewildering for me during all those years, as I couldn't find a "rational" explanation for it, was that when I practiced alone, visualizing myself playing in public, I could feel that connection with myself and the "others" or with life itself: with existence. I could maintain the authenticity of my creative expression. What I played felt as a true reflection of my inner being. Why was it so hard for me to experience this, in a sustained manner, during the "real" show? It took me many years to understand that the root of my anguish during the verification phase was a lack of emotional awareness. What I most craved for in the world was to feel socially accepted. As a child, I didn't have much capacity to distinguish myself from my sisters. Many times, I felt that "the others" perceived the three of us like a unit. At the same time, my perceptions and projections about how others received "us" as a "different" family, because of my sisters' handicap, made me feel that the only way I could fit in was by being "outstanding." In a way, I felt I also had to be "different" in order to be accepted or even recognized as an individual. As I tried so hard to be "brilliant," I became so tense that I lost my ability to share and to feel emotionally comfortable. Had I understood this psychological mechanism sooner, might I have been able to disassemble it and find in public the flow I felt in private? As I studied the creativity theories for the present study, I confirmed theoretically that extrinsic motivation affects the emotional balance, hindering creative outcomes. It was the pressure of feeling evaluated by an audience, and the desperate desire to be evaluated

in a positive way, that obstructed my emotional enjoyment, and thus, my creative experience (Amabile, 1990).

Throughout the years, I have wondered many times about the role of the many different music and school teachers I had, in relation to my emotional wellbeing. I still find it strange that, although I did have many good and loving teachers, not one of them connected emotionally, neither with me nor with most of my classmates. As I remember my own childhood and adolescence, and the experiences of some of my friends in school, many of us had big emotional needs, and a teacher that connected with us on a more personal level would have been a “game changer” for most of us. The fact that these issues weren’t even addressed became a subject of inquiry for me. Why do good, dedicated educators “disengage” from their role concerning the emotional and creative nurturing of their learners, and what can we do about it? Is it because they don’t feel prepared to handle the emotional aspects of the children they work with? Is it because they need specific training in the emotional domain? These experiences were some of the most important ones that generated in me the urge to investigate how we can develop a pedagogy that encourages emotional wellbeing through creativity.

As I grew out of the student role, taking the place of the piano teacher, I tried to be as conscious as possible of the emotional aspects of my students. To develop a pedagogy that promoted the integration of emotions was a challenging task. Emotions and creativity required time, space, and flexibility to grow. Many times I would invest extra hours in order to achieve this goal, because it was one of my biggest personal motivations. I wanted my piano lessons to be a safe space where my students could develop their emotions creatively, but the 60 minute framework resulted many times in a straightjacket. As a young private piano teacher I had the luxury of investing more time and effort than what was expected in the contract, and I willingly did so. Still, at times, it

didn't seem fair, as the work went unrecognized. Mostly, I couldn't imagine how to "scale up" a pedagogy of this sort in a more formal and institutionalized educational setting.

The ways in which creativity and emotional wellbeing should be integrated in the pedagogy or curriculum demand serious reflection and study from educators, psychologists and policy makers. Beghetto (2010) has written about the concerns of renowned investigators in the educational field, such as Craft, Gardner and Claxton (2008), who have warned of the risks of a "creativity mandate" as a curricular goal. Difficulties abound with discerning what a "creativity-in-education policy means," because of the ethical concerns regarding a "western globalized market approach to creativity in education" (Craft et al., 2008, p. 449). What might be productive, though, is to encourage collaborative work between practicing educators and researchers, developing strategies to include creativity in a more significant way in the classroom, which is one of the main objectives of this study.

A pedagogy that fosters emotional creativity has a difficult time flourishing under the impositions of the rising accountability mandates and time constraints so popular in our times (Craft, 2005; Robinson, 2015). I believe that at the heart of this contradiction lies the need to have a serious discussion on the purpose of education as a society. Is the purpose of education to form emotionally integrated, autonomous, creative individuals? Or is it to form individuals that are proficient "test-takers" experts in successfully converging with the given standards and norms? I believe this is a discussion that needs to involve all actors, particularly educators *and* students. If the goal is to form integrated, autonomous, creative individuals, which I believe *is* the purpose of education, we need to relinquish the fantasy of control that relies on quantitative indicators as the most important measurement for "success." We also need to give back the power to educators

and recognize that they are the experts by experience (Freire, 2016). To accomplish this goal, a first step is to redefine students' and teachers' success in more inclusive terms, where the voices of teachers and learners are truly represented.

Most of us may agree that the overarching goal of education is to give children a fair chance to be successful in life. As pedagogues we may understand “success” in an holistic way, where young people will develop their cognitive, emotional and social skills harmoniously, becoming ethical citizens who exercise their freedom of thought in a constructive way for themselves and society. The question that lies behind this is what qualities do teachers need to nurture in themselves to accompany their students in this journey? How can we create dynamic spaces where teachers and investigators work together, generating new alternatives for investigation and innovation in the educational realm?

Although there is a large body of research on creativity, very little research focuses on the subject from the educators' vantage point. Much of the research done including teachers' voices, has been centered in identifying the most pervasive barriers to creativity in education. While this is important, I believe that the barriers are symptoms—consequences of underlying emotional themes—and not the cause of the problem. I hope this study will help illuminate some of these underlying themes.

A starting point to envision possibilities for the development of a pedagogy that favors emotional creativity, begins with the conscious exploration of the teachers' emotional worlds, by accessing the most important memories they feel marked their creativity and emotional wellbeing. This intuition is based in a phenomenological worldview. These notions stem from my own personal experience. My concern with and interest in emotions and creativity are a consequence of the conscious and sustained emotional work I engage in my daily life, since I was a child, due to my familiarity with

disability. As a teacher and educator, the more conscious I became about the ways in which my lived experiences had shaped my emotional domain and creative capacities, the more tactful and caring my pedagogy became.

James Averill (1999a) framed his three criteria for emotional creativity (novelty, effectiveness and authenticity) in an encompassing fourth element that he named “emotional preparedness.” Emotional preparedness is the sustained, conscious effort an individual invests in her emotional domain. Just as in any other field, emotional creativity requires preparation, and preparation begins with the exercise of consciousness.

Inspired by the famous quote attributed to Carl Jung: “Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate,” we cannot teach what we don’t know; knowledge is grounded and built upon experience (Rogers, 1951; Polanyi, 1969). Therefore, this study seeks to explore, through a qualitative participatory arts-informed methodology (Tao, 2009), the ways in which three primary school teachers experienced the relationship between emotions and creativity in their daily practice. I am interested in the following related sets of questions:

EMOTIONS: What type of emotions did these teachers find and experience in their classrooms, in their students, and in themselves? What sort of emotions did teachers remember from their own schooling experience? In what ways (if any), did the emotions teachers experienced as children influence their practice?

CREATIVITY: What memories enhanced teachers’ creativity as children? How did they perceive the “creative student”? In their perspective, what elements lie at the heart of teaching for creativity?

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN EMOTIONS AND CREATIVITY: How did emotions and creativity interact and communicate with one another through the educational process? In what ways could teachers enhance the emotional creativity of

their students? How did the dimensions of freedom, consciousness and the caring relationships between teachers and learners interact with emotional creativity?

The research questions were framed as follows:

- What sort of emotions do teachers find in their classrooms?
- What type of emotional memories do teachers hold from their own schooling experience, and in what ways do these influence their pedagogy?
- What elements lie at the heart of the creative teaching process?
- In what ways can teachers enhance the emotional creativity of their students?

In the next chapter, I will explore the authors and theories that I consulted for this study. The theoretical chapter is divided into two sections. The first section concerns the theories of creativity and emotions that I investigated before the fieldwork. The second section concerns the emerging themes from the participants vantage point in relation to the development of their emotional creativity. Many of these themes were not present in the initial creativity theories I studied. Therefore, I had to revise the theoretical chapter in the light of the findings after the fieldwork.

In the third chapter, I develop the perspectives that inform my methodology and explain why I chose an arts-based participatory action research approach for the present inquiry. Chapters four to six consist of the narrative descriptions of the individual experiences and explorations of the participants through the workshop, following a chronological order.

The seventh chapter consists of thematic analysis, where I attempted to identify the overarching themes among the participants, in order to find the commonalities and

nuances among them. The eighth chapter engages in a meta-reflection, a conclusion, in which I reflect on why I believe this study is of value for the development of a pedagogy that can enhance creativity, emotional wellbeing and the empowerment of teachers. The ninth chapter concludes with the integration of the different narratives of the participants into a “creative synthesis” in the form of poetic and musical inquiry, where I tried to express the experience as a whole phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990; 1994).

Chapter II: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Little qualitative research has been conducted to understand the relationship between emotions and creativity in the educational setting from the vantage point of practicing teachers. Educational scholars have acknowledged the often profound disconnect between researchers and practicing educators as one of the main barriers for the fostering of a pedagogy that enhances creativity (Beghetto, 2007b; Craft, 2005). The little communication between researchers and practicing educators reduces the scholars' abilities to take into account the complexities teachers face in their classrooms daily. Some of the challenges teachers face every day in a classroom are: managing a class of thirty students; taking personal care of each individual learner (to the extent it is possible); building trusting relationships with the families of the children, all of this, while at the same time, complying with ever more constraining testing standards and assessments that diminish the scope of action of educators. The present study seeks to contribute to develop the bridge between theory and practice, from the vantage point of practicing teachers.

As there are many different theories around creativity, it is important to choose a perspective appropriate to the present inquiry. There is a general consensus among educators and researchers that the concept of creativity most useful in pedagogy is "everyday creativity" (Richards, 2007), also known as "little-c creativity" (Gardner, 1993), "personal creativity" (Runco, 1996) and "self-actualizing creativity" (Maslow, 1962.) This type of creativity refers to the originality we invest in our everyday activities. It lies in *how* we do our everyday tasks (Richards, 2010). Another perspective that informs the present inquiry is James Averill's (1999a) "emotional creativity" theory. The reason I chose this particular perspective is because it combines aspects of emotional intelligence theory and creativity research. Averill's theory focuses on the processes that allow creativity to emerge in the emotional realm. This approach requires diving into the

formative personal experiences of participants to explore how emotions transform their ways of approaching life events, and how they can master the art of using emotions in a generative way.

A phenomenological approach to pedagogy “involves us in distinguishing actively and/or reflectively what is good or right and what is life enhancing, just, and supportive from what is not good, wrong, unjust, or damaging in the ways we act, live, and deal with children” (Van Manen, 2016, Chapter 1, Section 4, para. 6). Following this notion, pedagogy is grounded in a relational ethical bond between educators and children. Relational ethics is based on the recognition of the vulnerability of the child, awakening our responsibility to guide him or her in the best possible manner. Recognizing the vulnerability of children requires connecting with the emotional development of our students, which demands from us to de-center from ourselves and truly experience the subjectivity of the other. At the same time, the fragility of the other (more vulnerable than ourselves) re-connects us with our own past and present emotional experiences, and with our own fragility. As we engage emotionally, we awaken our creativity, which can be understood as our capacity to innovate and to change, ignited with the hope for a better future for all of our kind. This consciousness of adulthood as an unfinished project is what allows us to accompany children in the discovery of life as a process of *becoming*. And in this process, children powerfully remind us of our own capacity for self-transformation.

Organization of this chapter

This chapter is organized in two large sections. The first section was primarily developed before the fieldwork and served as preparation for it. It seeks to be a general review of the research on creativity that I found most productive in light of the research

questions. First, I explore some of the challenges to the integration of the concept of creativity in Western thought and how these paradigms still influence the educational practice. Then, I describe the classical four-stage model of creative thinking, developed by Wallas (1926) which is seminal in the field. Following, I review the general concept of everyday creativity (Richards, 2007), as well as the concept of emotional creativity (Averill, 1999a). Next, I expose the main barriers to creativity that researchers have found in educational settings. Finally, the concepts of teaching for creativity and creative teaching are revised (Craft, 2004).

The second section of this chapter addresses the theoretical grounding of the most important themes that emerged during the fieldwork, from the perspective of the participants. These theories and themes were not salient in the literature I reviewed on educational creativity, except for some mentions in relation to everyday creativity, mental health and the arts. One of the reasons for this might be that most creativity theories, even the ones used in education, tend to be psychometrically oriented: identifying what's common among large groups of people. The other related reason may be that, as noted above, little research on creativity and emotions has been developed from the vantage point of practicing teachers. The qualitative nature of the present study sought to elicit deep subjective aspects of the development of the teacher's self in relation to creativity. These themes were so important for the participants that they required revising my theoretical framework in order to be able to integrate them. The themes investigated were: memory work as a pathway for enhancing emotional creativity in practicing teachers (Strong-Wilson, 2006); the influence of the perceived 'look of the other' in relation to the emotional development of the self (Van Manen, 2016; Winnicott, 1971); the construction of the defense mechanisms of the self (Freud, 1968); the role of

consciousness and imagination (Greene, 1995); and the importance of playing for creativity (Nicolo, 2015).

FIRST SECTION: THEORIES THAT INFORMED THE FIELDWORK

The evolution of the concept of creativity in Western thought

The concept of creativity in the West has always been related to the notion of dialogue. At first, between the Pre-Christian age and the Middle Ages, creativity was mainly conceived as the dialogue or communion between humans and God or other spiritual entities. Human beings were creative because they could *channel* what the entities wanted to communicate, not because something creative could actually *emerge* from them. Humans were always subject to the desire of the supernatural. Since the gods dictated to humans, the concept of originality or uniqueness was not considered a fundamental element of creativity during these early times (Runco & Albert, 2010). During the 18th Century, the conception of creativity shifted towards a more individualistic notion of freedom. Creativity became the symbol of an individual's right to investigate her own world on her own terms. The dialogue shifted from human—supernatural, to conscious—unconscious and interpersonal—intrapersonal (combining social and private dimensions). Creativity was always a conversation: with the supernatural, with ourselves, with others. As Richards (2010) noted, “creativity is truly a conversation, and it changes and grows with time” (p. 206).

Historical research on creativity demonstrates that it is a human potential that requires social fertile ground. Creative individuals are not disconnected from society. Contrary to myth, highly inventive individuals have always had access to a large network of support that includes the affective as well as financial support (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In Moran's (2010) words, “creativity comes from a community. For it to arise, there must be a confluence of both individual and societal forces” (p. 85).

According to creativity researchers, there are two major shifts that stem from the Enlightenment and still inform our current perspectives. The first one has to do with a general consensus around the link between freedom and creativity. Creativity cannot bloom in repressive societies (Kaufman, 1926; Craft, 2005). The second one has to do with the divide between emotions and rational or propositional knowledge. Positivism further depicted emotions as pertaining to a 'lower' rank, and therefore, emotions became theoretically disconnected from this particular conception of 'rationality' (Goleman, 1995).

Colloquially and for many laypersons, the mind/heart dichotomy is still present. Among researchers, though, there is general consensus about the ways in which emotions and intellectual processes are intertwined. Emotions have been found to be fundamental for many learning process, such as memory and thought (Goleman, 1995; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Despite this, until the early nineties, the disconnect between thought and emotion was one of the main barriers to the idea of an emotional intelligence, even in academic circles. This prejudice delayed the development of an education in favor of emotional wellbeing (Goleman, 1995). Furthermore, the concept of emotional creativity still finds resistance, as emotions continue to be perceived as 'thoughtless' and creativity is considered to be the 'highest' human process (Averill, 2011).

The divide between emotions and reason was bracketed during Romanticism, but this epoch also gave birth to the association between creativity and mental illness: detrimental for the healthy nurturing of creativity. As Runco and Albert (2010) noted: "Romanticism may have direct impact on the stereotypes held by artists, other creators, and audiences...pathology related to genius" (p. 11).

Research conducted after World War II focused on IQ, personalities and values of highly creative individuals, compared to more ‘standard’ people. During most of the twentieth century, psychometrical approaches to the study of creativity were favored. From this body of research, one of the most important conclusions for educational purposes, is that after a given threshold of about 115 IQ, creativity and intelligence are fairly independent abilities. These studies showed that as measures of IQ continued to increase, creativity measures didn’t necessarily follow. There are people very high in IQ that are not particularly creative, and there are people with a ‘regular’ IQ that are highly inventive. Even though there is no general consensus on the reasons for the relative independence between IQ and creativity measures, it is most likely related to the differences between convergent and divergent thinking, as well as with the emotional characteristics of the creative process, particularly with the personality trait of ‘openness to experience.’ People who score high in IQ tests are proficient in reaching *the* correct answer, favoring *velocity* and *convergence to the norm*. These answers are built on information that is generally well known. People high in creativity, on the other hand, are proficient in generating *fluency of ideas* and imagining *different possible outcomes* in a given situation. More creative individuals have also been found to be more honest in an intrapersonal way (with themselves), and having the ability to remain emotionally ‘open,’ accessing their subconscious processes and integrating them in their consciousness (Albert & Runco, 1989; Runco & Albert, 2010; Walach, 1983).

Throughout the last century, many theories about the creative process have been proposed. As a full revision of them is beyond the scope of the present investigation, I will briefly focus on Wallas’ (1926) classical four-stage model of the creative process, which is considered to be seminal in the field. Next, I will connect it to Runco’s (2010, 2015) meta-analysis of the common elements found among creativity models.

A model of the creative process

The creative process is broadly conceptualized as the “sequence of thoughts and actions that leads to novel, adaptive production” (Lubart, 2001, p. 295). Wallas (1926) developed the classic model of the creative process, which involved four important steps, identified as: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification (as cited in Lubart, 2001, p. 295).

Lubart (2001) described Wallas’ four-stage model as follows: the preparation stage involves the preliminary analysis of a problem. It requires conscious work and its quality depends on a person’s education, analytical skills, and domain-specific skills. During the next phase, incubation, there is no evident conscious mental work on the problem. Nevertheless, the unconscious mind continues making connections and combinations. Most of the combinations are rejected by the unconscious. Eventually, a promising idea breaks the glass ceiling towards the conscious mind, opening the door to the illumination phase. This illumination phase is also colloquially known as the ‘Aha!’ or ‘Eureka!’ moment (Maslow, 1962). This phase is tightly connected to intuition, as creators literally feel many times that the *idea is coming to them*. The final phase, verification, involves assessment of one’s idea, and re-elaboration if necessary. Even though Wallas’ model was conceived in a linear fashion, he considered that the phases could be recursive and even simultaneous (p. 296).

Some authors have criticized Wallas’ (1926) model and accused it of being linear and too simple, because it doesn’t address the sub-processes involved in each phase (Guilford, 1950, p. 451). Nevertheless, the model does provide a coherent general description that has served as an outline for developing theories regarding the sub-processes of the creative thinking model. It has also been updated in other theories, such as Amabile’s (1996) componential model of creativity, which is useful in the educational

setting, as it investigates the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in learning and creative outcomes. James Averill (1999a) also developed his emotional creativity theory inspired by Wallas' work.

Throughout the last half century, plenty of sub-processes pertaining to the different stages of the classical four-stage model have been identified. Despite the ongoing theoretical discussion, there seems to be a consensus among creativity investigators that there is not one single model that fits all creative processes. Some authors have suggested that the methods involved in each original task are prone to differ depending on the specific domain. It has also been proposed that different assignments in the same domain of work may involve a variety of combinations of sub-processes (for example, composing a symphony versus a short musical piece) (Lubart, 2001, p. 304).

Noticing this, Runco (2010) developed his 'parsimonious creativity' framework in an effort to understand the common elements across creativity research, particularly as applied to everyday creativity. Everyday creativity has been found to be most useful among educators and scholars, as it is a framework that considers that everybody has creative potential. To identify the common qualities among everyday creativity theories, Runco (2010) used a method of tactically *questioning assumptions* and *considering the opposite* in relation to each major line of creativity research (p. 247). The characteristics he identified as ubiquitous and necessary among existing theories in the educational setting were: autonomy, courage, wide interests, openness, tolerance to ambiguity and relative risk, originality, and authenticity (pp. 241-246).

Everyday creativity

Broadly speaking, everyday creativity involves two main criteria: originality and meaningfulness. A creative product or behaviour can be original in relation to oneself or to a group. Another condition is that it must also be understandable for others (Barron, 1969; Richards, 2010, p. 189). Everyday creativity is ubiquitous, and can be found in all human activities, epochs and cultures (Abraham, 2007; Sundararajan & Averill, 2007). It involves *how* we do our common tasks. Therefore, it is indispensable for our survival. It is a sign of our resilience, as this is the type of inventiveness we would exercise in the face of catastrophe. Our everyday creativity may well be our most valuable adaptive characteristic (Richards, 1998; Runco & Richards, 1998).

Some of the major contributions to the concept of everyday creativity stem from humanist psychology (Richards, 2007). Abraham Maslow's (1962) qualitative studies showed that the individuals high in self-actualizing creativity had little fear of social ridicule, were open to experience and had the ability to integrate conscious and unconscious processes. They were characterized as being open to their own impulses, emotions and thoughts, and being capable of exercising an intrapersonal honesty (Runco, 2015). Self-actualizing creativity can be observed in any healthy and secure child, especially through his or her playfulness. As a grown up, a creative person is able to integrate her secondary processes, those that are learned through socialization, to her primary, unconscious and more emotional processes (Maslow, 1962; Winnicott, 1971).

Everyday creativity, emotional wellbeing and the arts

A growing body of research on emotional healing through art therapy suggests that using a creative approach to work through conflict, depression, anxiety and the like is highly beneficial, especially if it combines visual arts, expressive writing and

interpersonal sharing in an emotionally safe and welcoming space (Zausner, 2007a, 2007b). Furthermore, creative self-expression has been found to be positive for the reduction of stigma of mental illness, which has been identified as the most difficult barrier to access emotional wellbeing (Richards, 2010; Sartorius, 2002). Everyday creativity is also necessary for resilience, because it supports the development of new ways of coping with emotional distress and alternative ways of integrating what the mind tends to repress, avoid or deny (Flach, 1990).

The arts offer alternative paths for self-expression, other than the linear and propositional procedures that verbal and mathematical reasoning facilitate. Through the language of the arts, the *ineffable* can be accessed and worked through. Therefore, artistic expression facilitates the integration of the conscious and the unconscious, in favour of mental health (Richards, 2010).

An example of this are the Pennebaker (1995) studies, one of the touchstones of creativity research in relation to creative writing, mental health promotion and memory work. The study compared two groups which wrote for twenty minutes daily during four sessions. The expressive writing group was asked to write about moderate traumatic experiences. The control group wrote about neutral subjects. The expressive writing group showed improved mental and physical health (even a higher count of white blood cells) (Richards, 2010).

Research also suggests that expressive writing exercises may facilitate the integration of fragmented mental structures, this increasing working memory (Klein, 2002). Even though emotional catharsis may be beneficial for improving mental health, studies indicate that it is the conscious processing, necessary for the construction of a *narrative*, that truly generates a deeper healing. The same has been found in relation to other forms of artful representations that elicit memory, such as visual creations through

collage inquiry, particularly when combined with an effort to explicate (McNiff, 2008; Richards, 2010).

Guided imagery, the interpretation of dreams through psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, are also forms of everyday creativity that bring the unconscious to the conscious, opening the possibility for profound transformations.

Emotional creativity: An everyday creativity theory about emotions

Emotional creativity is a social constructivist theory of everyday creativity or ‘little-c,’ developed by psychologist James Averill, that explores the differences among individuals and cultures in their ability to experience and express unique emotions (Averill 1999a). Emotional creativity studies ‘standard’ emotions; which may be recognized in ordinary language, under the names of ‘love,’ ‘anger,’ ‘fear,’ etc. For a response to be considered emotionally creative, it needs to meet the three criteria of novelty, effectiveness and authenticity. A fourth element, called ‘emotional preparedness’ —the sustained and long term effort an individual invests in her emotional domain— encompasses the prior three. This conception is similar to the classical everyday creativity theory revised above, where creative products, ideas or behaviors are required to be original and effective for oneself and the collective (Richards, 2010), the main distinction being the emphasis on the element of authenticity and preparedness. Averill (1999a) attributed inspiration for the preparedness element to Wallas’ (1926) four-stage model of creative thinking.

A creative emotional response can be original or novel in relation to oneself or to a group. The effectiveness criterion seeks to discriminate between responses that are simply bizarre from the truly creative ones. Therefore, for a behavior to be considered creative, it must be of “potential benefit to the individual or group” (Averill 1999a, p. 333). Finally, a response is considered authentic to the extent that it reflects an

expression of the self; meaning, a representation of the individual's own values and beliefs. Drawing a parallel with the arts, Averill explains that an authentic response is not a copy, as it has to be informed by identity (Averill, 1999a).

Emotions are “socially constructed syndromes or schemas” (Averill, 2011, p. 42), which are constituted by the combination of an individual's genotype (the sum of a person's biological heritage), in addition to his or her sociotype (the institutionalized symbols and elements of a particular society). Individual creative emotional behaviors become ‘institutionalized’ over time, when transferred from one person to another, until larger portions of society adopt the given behavior in a standard fashion. Averill's (2011) approach is attractive because it proposes that “what societies construct, individuals can reconstruct” (p. 42). Therefore, fundamental transformation is possible.

At a social level, emotions are regulated by two kinds of beliefs: existential beliefs and social rules. Existential beliefs can be factual or mythical. For example, the knowledge that the expression of anger usually seeks to correct a perceived wrong, would be a factual belief. Mythical beliefs, on the other hand, have to do with folk-theories about emotions; such as notions of ‘true’ love. For good or for bad, mythical beliefs are mostly responsible for the cohesion of social fabric.

Social rules, on the other hand, are prescriptive and dictate what *should be*. Hence, they serve to regulate and enable emotions, and are a reflection of the set of values that governs a given society (Averill, Chon, & Hahn, 2001). At an individual level, emotional traits are a person's predisposition to respond in a determined emotional way. They are always unique, because they refer to the combination of the individual's genotype and sociotype, combined with the subjective experiences of each person (Averill, Chon, & Hahn, 2001).

From the perspective of emotional creativity, differences found in emotional responses across individuals, cultures, social classes, and genders are no casualty: they are deliberate socially constructed systems that regulate in which ways, moments, and by whom particular emotions are ‘appropriate’ to experience and express. This has profound implications in social transformation, since the expression of emotion enables us to act or hinders us from taking action. For example, Elizabeth Spelman (1988) has studied the ways in which the social disapproval for women’s expression of anger in different societies is a facet of their oppression. Applied to the classroom, social norms regarding ‘appropriate’ emotional behavior between girls and boys have been found to replicate these power structures (Nunn & Thomas, 1999).

In order to assess individual differences in emotional behavior, an “Emotional Creativity Inventory,” (hereafter referred to as ECI (Averill, 1999a), was developed. The ECI consists of a 30 item test, divided into three dimensions: preparedness, novelty, and effectiveness with authenticity. A shortened Spanish version of the ECI, the ECI-S (Soroa, Gorostiaga, Aritzeta, & Balluerka, 2015) has also been developed and validated in Spanish speaking countries. This version was used as a heuristic device during the fieldwork.

High scorers on the ECI are usually rated more creative, meaning that individuals are considered more creative by their peers. They are also more capable of expressing complex emotions symbolically (in words and pictures) (Averill, 2001; Averill & Thomas-Knowles, 1991). Emotional creativity has been found to strongly correlate with openness to experience (Averill, 1999a; Averill, Chon, & Hahn, 2001). Another interesting positive correlation has been found between high ECI scores and the capacity of benefiting from solitude; which is linked to creative production (Long & Averill, 2003). Research also suggests that high ECI scorers tend to have more coping styles.

Emotional creativity may be conducive of pro-social behavior in the face of conflict (Averill, 1999a).

When transferred to our everyday practice as teachers, the concept of emotional creativity might be a useful heuristic device for identifying the elements that may facilitate (or obstruct) the dialogue between emotions and creativity in our classrooms. Imagining the relationship between emotions and creativity may be a starting point to envision new ways of nurturing the emotional wellbeing of learners and teachers.

Research on creativity from the vantage point of educators

As has been noted before, there is little research about creativity from the vantage point of educators. Smith and Smith's (2010) qualitative study involving 48 primary school teachers and principals suggest that educators tend to view creativity as a means, instead of an end in itself. From the participants' perspective, creativity was considered important for improving problem-solving skills, enhancing motivation, and developing self-regulatory abilities. When asked about its role in the classroom, educators expressed ambivalent feelings. Even though they acknowledged that creativity was crucial for a series of learning processes, they found the disruptive aspect of creative behaviour difficult to handle in the highly structured and hectic atmosphere of a classroom.

When consulted about the significance of creativity in their practice, the educators that participated in Smith and Smith's (2010) study mentioned programs that target creativity. Specific techniques or tactics they taught their students (such as brainstorming, mind maps and thinking out of the box) were also cited. Many teachers recalled special activities, such as art or science fairs, in a sort of programmed and scheduled approach to creativity. Creativity was described as a sort of *product* approach, where creativity is something that needs to be *done*, instead of a way of doing, thinking or *a way of knowing*. Regarding creative teaching practices, educators mentioned trying to

remain “open to student’s comments and ideas,” even if they were “unexpected” (p. 253). Finally, the research identified that teachers felt they were teaching creatively when they communicated in a different fashion than they were used to. Originality in relation to themselves was perceived as a creative approach in their practice.

Barriers to a pedagogy in favour of creativity

Some of the main barriers to the practice of a pedagogy in favour of creativity are related to myths and beliefs about the nature of emotions and creativity and the conflicting emotions that creative activity can generate in a structured classroom. Research has also found that miscommunication between researchers and educators, as well as a lack of agreement on which frameworks are more appropriate, on issues such as a working definition of creativity and the purpose of it in education can also be critical elements.

The two main large themes identified as barriers for creativity in the classroom are: convergent teaching practices and the suppression of creative expression in the classroom and/or school. Both of them are related (one goes with the other), and associated to power issues, as well as to a dominant educational paradigm based on standardized testing and assessment. The notion that creativity has to be ‘useful’ and ‘serve a purpose’ is detrimental for its development (Beghetto, 2007a, 2010; Craft, 2005).

Convergent teaching practices can be summarized by the classical image of a teacher standing at the front of a classroom, reciting information in a repetitive way to a group of uninterested students. Even though this description might be cartoonish, creativity researchers have found that in the USA, about 75% of class time is usually spend on ‘instruction,’ 70% consisting of teachers talking *to* students. Just about 5% of this time required responses from the part of the students (Goodland, 2004; Beghetto,

2010). When responses were requested, a pattern known as ‘IRE,’ which stands for ‘initiate—respond—evaluate,’ was mostly used (Mehan, 1979). This pattern, considered by some researchers as the default option that teachers apply, is thought to be detrimental for creativity (Cazden, 2001). In Beghetto’s (2010) words: “...when this approach comes to dominate classroom talk, teaching becomes akin to a game of ‘intellectual hide-and-seek’ in which teachers hold all the answers and student success is contingent on correctly guessing what is held in the minds of teachers” (p. 450).

Convergent teaching practices are ubiquitous and have been found throughout Western countries. This suggests that there are deeper social factors to be considered, besides the individual teacher. From a sociological perspective, these practices are thought to be a consequence of the prior schooling experience of teachers. They are also a reflection of the power imbalance in regular schooling, where the educator is the authority and children have little or no say at all (Craft, 2005).

The suppression of creative expression in the classroom is related to convergent teaching practices. After all, original behaviour might interrupt the teacher’s IRE pattern (Mehan, 1979). Unexpected ideas of students are perceived by many teachers as disruptive and a potential threat to classroom order (Kennedy, 2005). Myths and beliefs around creativity and emotions may also be difficult barriers to overcome. In the emotional realm, Averill (1999a) identified that the idea of emotions being something ‘irrational’ is one of the biggest obstacles for the acceptance of the concept of emotional creativity. In the same line, some teachers consider creativity to be a sort of consolation prize for unsuccessful enterprises, in a sort of ‘At least it was creative!’ narrative. Other times, describing a child as being creative, might be a euphemism for being problematic (Beghetto, 2010).

Another impediment that has been identified is the lack of recognition of the social appropriateness criterion necessary for creative expression. This has been named the “originality bias” (Beghetto, 2010, p. 454). Without the effectiveness element, it is impossible to distinguish between eccentric or creative thought. Under this light we might understand why some teachers find creative behaviour to be disruptive.

Reasonable and flexible constraints are important for the development of creative thinking. Cropley (2006), for example, has studied the relationship between convergent and divergent thinking for creativity (Beghetto, 2010). Creativity is not a matter of pure disruptive thought or ‘out of the box’ thinking. It requires flexibility: going in and out of linear thought, to divergent thinking, and so on. One way of understanding creativity that might be useful for teachers is to consider it like a sort of dance between tensions: conscious and unconscious, convergent and divergent, original/different and appropriate.

‘Product bias’ or considering that creativity requires a *tangible product* is another barrier in educational practices. Even though products may be easier to evaluate, focusing on them overlooks the creative potential of young learners. Many students may be able to develop creative ideas, but may still need guidance to be able to manifest their notions proficiently through a particular object in a specific field. In this line of thought, ‘Big-C’ bias, which considers creativity only to be present in eminent or unquestionable creative outcomes (such as Mozart’s music or Einstein’s science), is another conception that conveys great difficulty. Teachers that hold this prejudice feel that creativity nurturing is not part of their standard responsibilities as educators, but that it pertains to the domain of “gifted and specialized” education (Beghetto, 2010, p. 455).

Students’ self-beliefs on their creative potential—their self-judgement on their personal ability to create—have also been recognized as problematic. Optimal and healthy feedback, and the development of a caring relationship between learners and

educators is critical for students to develop a coherent and positive sense of self-worth, in relation to their own perceived creativity. Positive feedback should not be understood as a ‘feeling good’ strategy. Constructive feedback requires honesty and tact (Van Manen, 2016). Constructive teacher feedback is also necessary for the development of a safe classroom space, where learners are encouraged to take risks through the sharing of their original ideas (Byrnes, 1998). Positive responses have been found to be the most important element for the development of students healthy self-beliefs, strongly supporting their self-efficacy and emotional wellbeing (Bandura, 1997; Beghetto, 2006).

Extrinsic motivators also suppress creativity. Amabile (1996) has studied how intrinsic motivation elements are the most conducive for creativity in different types of organizations as well as in the educational setting. Some intrinsic motivators may be enjoyment, interest, involvement and focus on personally challenging tasks. Extrinsic motivators would be rewards, competition and other elements that create social comparison and expectations (Beghetto, 2006; 2010). In the same line, Csizkszentmihalyi (1990) has found enjoyment and consciousness to be important elements that facilitate the creative ‘flow.’

The problem of assessment in relation to creativity is particularly difficult. Guilford warned in 1950 about how evaluations communicate to students what was *truly* valuable. Remembering his words might be very useful in the current standardized testing era, as the humanities and arts are progressively diluted from the curriculum: “Let us remember...the kind of examinations we give really set the objectives for the students, no matter what objectives we may have stated” (Guilford, 1950, p. 448). Alternative and flexible ways of evaluation, which include the voice of the learner as well as those of their peers, have also been found to be positive for the development of creativity (Craft, 2005).

The relationship between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity*

Based on firsthand observation of teachers' practice, some scholars have proposed a theoretical distinction between *teaching creatively* and *teaching for creativity*. The concept of *teaching creatively* is more focused on teachers' practice and on effective instruction. It involves using resourceful approaches that make learning more interesting and efficient (Craft, 2003). *Teaching for creativity* is more focused on the learners' empowerment and the strategies most useful for the development of creativity. These approaches are complementary and have been identified to be used in a combined fashion by creative teachers in accordance to their judgment (Craft, 2005; NACCCE, 1999).

Jeffrey and Craft (2004a) summarized *teaching for creativity* as:

Adopting an inclusive approach to pedagogy, inherent in which is passing back control to the learner and in which teachers and learners enter a co-participative process around activities and explorations, posing questions, identifying problems and issues together and debating and discussing their thinking (As cited in Craft, 2005, Chapter 4, Section 4, para. 7).

The necessary freedom and empowerment teachers require for practicing creative teaching and a pedagogy for creativity is jeopardized by the increasing pressures educators face because of externally imposed accountability mandates. The 'paradox in scaffolding' creativity in education has been observed by researchers, such as Alexander (2004) and Craft (2005). On the one hand, governments, business leaders and parents demand creativity to be a curricular or pedagogical goal, while on the other hand, standardized testing—which informs and shapes the pedagogy through its convergent and highly structured contents—is on the rise. This position has been described as “a desire to be offering freedom while in reality maintaining control” (Alexander, 2004, p. 15).

Scholars suggest that an organizational climate that is conducive to creativity requires students and teachers to feel encouraged in the production of original ideas, where they are able to take initiative and have freedom to interact with others. For these elements to flourish, a climate of tolerance towards uncertainty, where relative and appropriate risk taking is stimulated, is necessary (Amabile, 1988; Ekvall, 1991; Craft, 2005).

The theories that I had reviewed prior to the research workshops are the ones that have been proposed in the first section. They certainly did address many issues that were related to creativity and emotional nurturing in education and I could relate them to the narratives of the participants. Nevertheless, as the workshops unfolded, different theories emerged that were essential to the participants' experiences. These theories were more concerned with the particular and with the development of the psyche. In the next section I will briefly address some theories related to how the 'look of the other' influences the emotional and creative wellbeing of the participants (Winnicott, 1971), the three spheres of the psychic according to psychoanalysis (Freud, 1920, 1923), the defense mechanisms of the self (Freud, 1986), playing related to creativity (Nicolo, 2015), and imagination and new beginnings for the construction of community, consciousness and imagination (Greene, 1995, Spector, 2017).

SECOND SECTION: EMERGING THEORIES FROM THE PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES IN THE WORKSHOPS

The look of the (m) 'other' and the development of the self

The experience of 'being seen' by others is fundamental for the formation of our self-identity. Van Manen (2016) has written about this, naming it "pedagogical regard and recognition" (Chapter 8, Section 3, para. 6). Self-identity, or knowing that one is unique, he reminded us: "...means recognizing the formative potential between being and becoming" (Chapter 8, Section 3, para. 6). It is more than acknowledgement, it constitutes a confirmation of our existence as a 'true other.' Children and adults need to be seen, because it is through the look of the other that we become ourselves and develop a "healthy (inter)independence" (Van Manen, 2016, Chapter 8, Section 1, para. 1). Therefore, entering a pedagogy of regard implies understanding the central role of emotions in the educational experience.

For most of us, the experience of being seen (or not), begins with our relationship with our mother. Even though the pedagogical relationship between educators and children differs from the parent-child experience, let us remind ourselves of our pedagogical responsibility in helping our students become and realize themselves as unique human beings. In what ways do our students experience being seen and being known by us?

From a psychoanalytical perspective, we form our sense of self through the dialogue we engage with our caregivers. Reality is constructed through the ways in which the baby is 'mirrored' by her mother. The quality of this dialogue allows us to *feel real* in the world. "Feeling real," Winnicott (1971) stated, "is more than existing; it is finding a way to exist as oneself, and to relate to objects as oneself, and to have a self into which to retreat for relaxation" (p. 117).

A related concept, explored by Martin Buber, which he named *das Zwischenmenschliche* (literally “between human beings”), conveys that meaning is constructed through purposeful dialogue, where the ‘other’ is treated as a subject, and not as an object. We relate ‘with’ instead of ‘to’ the other in a reciprocal manner. In his seminal work “I and Thou” (1923), he explained that only when we engage and relate our own subjectivity with the subjectivity of the other, can we relate as whole beings (Praglin, 2006). It is in this in-between space that imagination manifests herself and creates community. In Maxine Greene’s (1995) words: “If we can link imagination to our sense of possibility and our ability to respond to other human beings, can we link it to the making of community as well?” (p. 38).

The quality of the mother’s gaze and the ways in which she relates to the baby, become “registered as modes or idioms of the self;” which require the recognition of the baby’s self as a unique, differentiated being, and not just as a projection of the fears and limitations of the caregiver (Joyce, 2015, p. 159). “Seeing,” stressed Joyce (2015), “is an active process and she [the mother] actively participates in the creation of her baby...not distorting through projective processes, but elaborating in her psyche her experience of her baby for him to see and of which he can make what he will” (p. 159).

This statement implies profound responsibility for adults in the role of parents or educators, since: “We are what we see, and what we see depends on the other’s capacity to see us” (Joyce, 2015, p. 201). Therefore, *whom we choose to see and how we see, depends on the ways in which we were seen ourselves*. This makes a solid case for the importance of memory work in relation to the ‘looks’ we received as children, from our own caregivers and teachers. Left unchecked, we may most likely replicate the (poor or in-existent) quality of the gazes we received, with all the implications this entails for the nurturing of healthy and emotionally secure children that depend on us.

The three spheres of the psychic according to psychoanalysis

The experience of being seen (or not) is at the foundation of the development of the self, and shapes the ways in which we relate to ourselves and to others. At the same time, the ways we relate to others and experience ourselves in the world, influence the internal dialogue between the different spheres of our psyche. This, in a reciprocal manner, since each sphere of our psychic has different needs, and follows different ‘agendas.’ Freud (1920) framed his theory by describing the three main spheres of the psyche and the ways these communicate (or engage in defensive battle): the id, the ego and the superego.

The id is the most primitive part of our mind; it is the realm of everything that tends to remain unconscious as we ourselves become ‘educated’ in the most traditional and pro-social sense. This part of the psyche responds to our impulses and biological urges. Operating under the pleasure principle, our id tries to convince us that each impulse should be satisfied immediately. The id doesn’t concern itself with reality, consequences, or the needs of the others (Freud, 1920). It combines biological components, sex instincts (related to life, also known as *Eros*), and the aggressive instincts (related to death or *Thanatos*). Our primary processes of thinking are mainly primitive, illogical and oriented to fantasy. Maslow (1962) stressed that primary thinking processes are the “source of creativity, play, love, enthusiasm, humor, imagination, and fantasy” (p. 133). Our creative force depends on our capacity to access and engage with our primary processes. Nevertheless, this is not an easy task, since as the id connects us with everything that is instinctive and ‘irrational,’ it also awakens our consciousness about the vulnerability of our human condition; about life and death, and that we too face the forces of creation and destruction (life—death impulses). Despite this, the strength of

the id is so powerful, that it always finds ways to percolate to the conscious —the realm of the ego and super ego (Freud, 1986).

The ego, Freud (1923) explained, is “that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world” (p. 15). Many of the schooling and educational efforts attempt to strengthen the ego, so that it can control the ‘unreasonable’ and wild id (at least for the sake of peaceful coexistence). For example, it is the ego that reminds us that we should not grab the food of someone else, even if we were to be very hungry. Under the logic of the id, feeling hungry would be a legitimate reason to do this, since its aim is to satisfy our primary instincts. The ego, therefore, is the mediator between the ‘unrealistic’ desires of the id and the external world (where the ‘others’ exist). A healthy ego operates in accordance to the reality principle, finding realistic ways to calm the demands of the id. It is the ego that assists us in exercising the delay of our instant gratification needs, considering social realities and norms. Just like the id, the ego also seeks to satisfy pleasure and tries to avoid pain. The difference is that the ego is a strategist, whilst the id is rather un-reflexive. It is important to note that the ego doesn’t concern itself with moral matters. Something is good, to the extent it achieves satisfaction, without inflicting pain to the ego or id. Sigmund Freud (1923) used a metaphor to explain the relationship between these spheres of the mind: the ego “is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse” (p. 15). The ego will try out all sort of methods to tame the wild beast until a solution is found. The ego masters the art of horseback-riding through reality testing, trial and error and the progressive development of higher and more specialized problem solving skills.

As said before, the id and the ego do not concern themselves with morality, right or wrong. This higher, more abstract function is a prerogative of the superego, which incorporates the values, social norms and ideals we learn through the different figures of

authority we relate to (parents, the government, religious institutions, teachers) (Freud, 1986). The superego is the highest instance that decides what is right from wrong, despite the feelings of pleasure or gratification an action may convey. It combines two systems: the conscience and the ideal self. When the ego gives in to ‘improper’ demands of the id —especially if these demands are behaviors that may alter social structures— the superego punishes the ego through feelings of guilt. These ways of thinking are molded by the example and lessons of figures of authority. In the context of the classroom, for example, children are educated (and instructed) to follow pro-social behavior, such as avoiding hitting their classmates when angry. Once this concept has rooted in the superego of the child (which usually develops between ages three and five), the superego takes charge and external supervision is less needed for children to follow the ‘proper’ behavior. Just as the superego punishes through guilt, it rewards the ego through feelings of pride, which is why we may feel immensely rewarded when doing a good job *just for the pleasure of doing it*. It is a reflection of a value our superego treasures. The second component of the superego, the ideal self, is the imaginary picture of how we ought to be, it is what we aspire to become, the type of person we want to be recognized as, and is mostly influenced by our role models.

One of the biggest responsibilities of parents and educators is to represent a human, flexible and fallible superego for children. Anna Freud (1968) wrote extensively about the power educators have to free children from the pain of mental health problems, by paying attention to the messages children internalize. The messages children internalize from their caregivers constitute their superego. Therefore, adults need to offer the child “a real image of human beings, with their weaknesses and a tolerant attitude

towards the instincts, instead of representing a moral code so rigid that it becomes impossible to put into practice¹” (Freud, 1986, p. 65-66).

Following this line of thought, Winnicott developed his concept of ‘good enough mother.’ Joyce (2015) reminds us that: “...to be good enough is not to be perfect and, paradoxically, perfection is not good enough. To be human is to be fallible, and this is an ingredient of the care provided by the ordinary devoted mother. *Good enough, but not perfect* (p. 161, emphasis in original). Transferred to the relationship child-educator, what would make for a ‘good enough teacher’? For once, understanding that the child lives in a world and society that is, inherently, fallible, complex, uncertain—as is the very nature of human existence. To exercise ‘good-enough’ teaching, an educator should promote a classroom climate that welcomes mistakes and tolerates what is disruptive, because she understands that trial and error is the mere process of learning and necessary for creativity and emotional development.

The self and its defense mechanisms

As the psyche develops, the three instances of the mind tend to engage in ever more complex battles and discussions. The impulses and desires of the id—the unconscious—are constantly seeking gratification and ways of expressing themselves. The ego also wants to please the unconscious, only it recognizes that at the same time, it has to please social norms. When the desires of the unconscious and the social regulation norms are contradictory, emotional conflict appears. The superego takes charge—and as a board of qualification would do—criticizes, evaluates and judges the behavior of the ego. *It is hard to please three masters with different agendas.*

Because the ego wants to please the id and the superego at the same time, without inflicting suffering upon itself, and because the ego is not concerned about morality, it is

¹ Translated from Spanish by the author.

² Figure 7: “Emotional Reactions” (translation to English of the text, from left to right): “Somebody who listens

very resourceful at creating all sort of defense mechanisms. The work of the psychoanalyst consists in understanding these defense mechanisms, what (or whom) they respond to, and what purpose they are trying to pursue. As it is always the unconscious that is trying to ‘get away with it,’ and since the unconscious is a very simple structure based on the pleasure and death principles, there are a limited number of defense mechanisms the ego can create. Despite this, understanding the psyche of an adult is a complex process, that may resemble the peeling of an onion, layer after layer, since one defense mechanism builds upon another one (Freud, 1920, 1923, 1968).

According to Anna Freud (1986), who studied the construction of the defense mechanisms of the ego in children extensively, the most common mechanisms are: repression, projection, denial, displacement, sublimation, identification with the aggressor and reaction formation. We repress when we suppress disturbing unconscious thoughts, avoiding them to become conscious. We project when we attribute to others what we cannot accept to feel, think, or intent. We deny by refusing to emotionally experience an event that is too painful. We displace when we satisfy an impulses with another object. When an aggressor is too terrifying for us to confront, we identify with him by adopting the very characteristics that make him so scary, in order to survive. We sublimate, when we satisfy an impulse with an object or activity that is socially accepted. We exercise reaction formation, when we act out in the opposite way as what we truly feel (for example, instead of hurting someone we don’t like, but are forced to be close to, we take extra care of him or her). These mechanisms are quite simple and straightforward. What is complicated is to understand how they relate to each other, and how one may cover up another one (Freud, 1923, 1986; Joyce, 2015).

Anna Freud (1986) explained that the child is afraid of her unconscious impulses, because she fears the reaction of her parents or caregivers. Therefore, essentially, the

child's primary processes are not a threat to her psyche. As this child grows up, she internalizes the values and rules of her caregivers, and these become the very structure of her own superego. If these norms and values represent a superego that is too rigid, the child will need to alienate herself from her own unconscious, through various defense mechanisms that may not be healthy for her emotional development. Her superego becomes her own 'prison guard.' *It is difficult to imagine a more effective jailer than one that lives inside our own hearts and minds.* In every single instance, Freud (1986) stressed, psychological conflict arises when the ego refuses to accept a part of the id or unconscious. When the psychoanalyst succeeds in breaking the defenses of the ego, the unconscious is forced to enter consciousness, leaving the ego and the superego the task to resolve the conflict between the unconscious and conscious in a more productive, healthier way. Awareness of this process is important to understand the ethical responsibility we have with children's emotional freedom, creativity and wellbeing. What type of examples are we being as teachers for the children we care for? Are we 'prison guards' or are we loving companions of the adventure of learning? In order to investigate these questions, we need to access our own formative experiences: we need to reconnect with the child within ourselves.

Consciousness and imagination for the making of community

Recognizing the child within the educator is an exercise of consciousness, which may well be developed through imagination and the possibility of transformation. When consciousness opens the door to imagination, it also opens the path to a more creative, freer and engaging community. Consciousness, or being awake in the world, as Maxine Greene (1995) reminds us, is a process that involves an integrative attitude between the past that did take place, and the opportunities the future offers. It is through imagination

that we are able to access “that there is always more in experience than we can predict” (Warnock, 1978, p. 202, as quoted in Greene 1995, p. 14).

Imagination and creativity are also about new beginnings. Maxine Greene (1995) quoting Hannah Arendt (1961) said; “it is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. The character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings” (p. 169, as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 21). Consciousness about the concrete possibility of new beginnings can also be understood as Paulo Freire’s (2016) notion of a pedagogy of hope. Hope is tightly linked to the act of “applying an initiating, constructing mind, or consciousness to the world” (Greene, 1995, p. 22). When hope isn’t present, it’s impossible to imagine, hence to create. Creating involves an act of faith —faith that we may somehow succeed in our enterprises, even if things turn out different as initially imagined. Imaginative consciousness kindles hope, and when we hope we are able to engage in transformative action, which is the engine of a thoughtful, creative community.

Maxine Greene has written about how imagination can activate us and make us leave behind the “social paralysis we see around us” (Greene, 1995, p. 35). This paralysis in education has to do with the technologically-driven paradigm predominant nowadays, with the race to be ever more ‘productive,’ ‘efficient,’ “successful.’ What is little discussed is what it really means being productive, efficient and successful. Standardized testing and policies that seek to *train* rather than educate, to *instruct in necessary skills for the 21st Century*, instead of trying to wake up the talents of each individual have a narrow definition of these terms. An education for freedom, consciousness and creativity cannot flourish under this paradigm. Moreover, the idea of a caring community is also jeopardized if we are not able to be free in our own minds and hearts.

Imagination is essential for community, because it “feeds one’s capacity to feel one’s way into another’s vantage point” (Greene, 1995, pp. 36-37). Teachers lacking imagination are also probably low in empathy, and how could we know what this particular child needs in this particular moment if we cannot empathize? Greene asked an important question: “If we can link imagination to our sense of possibility and our ability to respond to other human beings, can we link it to the making of community as well?” (Greene, 1995, p. 38). In education, an ethical imagination needs to be nurtured. An ethical imagination concerns itself with the possible and also with our responsibility for each of the children we relate to (Spector, 2017).

The notion of community described above requires new beginnings, which need openness to experience and courage. Considering different options and questioning our worldviews involves risk at an individual and collective level. We all know it takes bravery, as Desmond Tutu said to “look the beast of the past in the eye...in order not to allow it to imprison us” (Tutu, 1998, p. 22, as cited in Mitchel et. al., 2011, p. 2). But the price of conformity is much higher, as everyday creativity researcher Ruth Richards (2010) reminded us. If our classrooms don’t facilitate the ‘questioning of assumptions’ and ‘considering the opposite,’ Runco (2015) suggests, where will children and young people practice the ability to stand up for what they truly feel authentic in themselves and important in their lives? Where and when will they exercise the ability to “reinterpret their early experiences...as carrying out the possible...rather than the necessary?” (Greene, 1995, p. 21).

Playing and creativity

Maslow (1962) described his creative self-actualizing patients as individuals that were un-frightened of the unknown, and indeed, many times, even attracted to it. This is an interpretation of the most ubiquitous personality trait found among all creativity

theories: openness to experience (Runco, 2010). People high in self-actualizing creativity were able to integrate their primary and secondary processes. Primary processes, for Maslow, were linked to the mental and emotional, and to all that remained hidden or unconscious: “it is the source of creativity, play, love, enthusiasm, humor, imagination and fantasy” (Maslow, 1962, p. 133). Secondary processes, on the other hand, pertained to the conscious mind and to all the behaviors that were socially accepted. Education’s role, traditionally understood as the means by which individuals are ‘socialized,’ stresses secondary processes, and represses primary ones. Maslow (1962) warned that being “well adjusted” implied many times the rejection of the “depths of human nature... the person turns his back on much in himself because it is “dangerous” (p. 133). Through this process, so many times confused as ‘good education,’ the individual loses much of his ability to enjoy life: “by protecting himself against the hell within himself, he also cuts himself off the heaven within” (p. 134).

For Winnicott, playing was at the heart of the experience of creating the self, and it took place in the potential space, between fantasy and reality, in a constant encounter with the other (Nicolo, 2015, p. 23). Potential space, according to Schacht (1999), “emerges in the intermediary space between the visible and invisible, between the mysterious and the evident, between the playful and the serious” (p. 180, as cited in Nicolo, 2015, p. 23).

Playing is an essential part of all human existence and it’s not constrained to childhood. Adults may play in different forms; through artistic engagement, humor, the way in which they chose their words when they speak (Winnicott, 1971d, p. 40, as cited in Nicolo, 2015, p. 40). Community or engagement with the ‘other’ is also a fundamental aspect of playing. As Nicolo (2015) noted, when we are playing, the presence of the

other, real or imagined is necessary: “Playing always presupposes the other: as witness, as guarantor, as playing companion, as the person at who activity is directed...” (p. 33).

Playing manifests itself through action; it is ‘doing’ and therapeutic in itself. A traumatized child will not play naturally, but given the proper circumstances, such as safe space and a trusting relationship with the educator or therapist, “a child can acquire the ability to play even if he or she has lost it before or had never had it at all. This means overcoming the blockages and inhibitions that present him or her from laying, first of all mentally, and then in reality” (Nicolo, 2015, p. 30-31). This reflection can be applied to adults, and through playful exploration it is possible to recover and ignite our ability to integrate ourselves. Playing allows us to incorporate our painful experiences in a tolerable way and to merge them with new elements, generating a more healthy representations of self and reality. “Playing,” Nicolo noted, “is equivalent to being free within our own minds” (2015, p. 27).

Conclusion

We might never know for sure why and how we create. What we do know, as teachers and researchers, is that creativity develops between tensions; such as the tension between hope and risk; or the tension between the individual and the collective; between the conscious and unconscious. We might understand these relationships as concatenated causes and consequences: in an ongoing dialogue in the search and conquest of our freedom.

As human beings, we all have the potential to exercise our creative freedom. But we cannot exert it, unless we are given the chance to develop the ability of working through our fears and emotions. As teachers, we have to become free in relation to ourselves, to our own emotions, worldviews and personal narratives. To the extent we integrate our conscious and unconscious processes will we be able to encourage creative

freedom in our students. As Maxine Greene (1988) says: “A teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own” (p. 14). Understanding the relationship between creativity and the emotions, from the vantage point from teachers’ practice is a journey that cannot be avoided for a conscious reflective practice.

To conquer our freedom, we need to overcome visions that promote false dichotomies, and give up rigid frameworks, in favor of a more integrating pedagogy. May we work under the model of ‘choosing creativity’ (Sternberg, 2003), or as Runco (2010) encouraged us, let’s *be creative about creativity* in our practice. May we come closer to choosing creativity by placing courage at the heart of our pedagogy; *questioning assumptions* and *shifting perspectives* about our own memories and practice.

Choosing creativity may be a most powerful tactical approach for the empowerment of educators. A pedagogy that fosters creativity is embedded in active faith of human potential, or hope. As we all have potential, the whole educational community (and society) will benefit from our creativity. In Runco’s (2010) words: “All students deserve an education that will help them to develop an optimal freedom of mind” (p. 249). I would add that all educators deserve to exercise their creative and emotional freedom through their practice, fulfilling their potential as educators and as human beings.

Chapter III: Methodology

This qualitative study was created to explore the ways in which elementary school teachers experienced the relationship between emotions and creativity in their daily practice, through the exercise of their everyday creativity. I wanted to explore the phenomenon of emotions and creativity, and the dialogue between them, from the vantage point of teachers' practice. For this, three elementary school teachers at private school "Tangananana School" (pseudonym) in Lima, Peru were selected. This particular school was chosen because it invests in the emotional development of their students and teachers. I also wanted to create a design that could serve as a heuristic device for the expression and investigation of the creative process of the participants.

My methodology needed to investigate the subjective experiences of the participants. Therefore, this study was informed by phenomenology, particularly by Van Manen's (2016) notion of pedagogy: "distinguishing what is good or right from what is bad or wrong in our ways of acting and interacting with children" (Van Manen, 2016, Chapter 1, Section 4, para. 6). Van Manen also reflects about "pedagogical tact," which has to do with the thoughtfulness an educator requires to be able to act on this fine discernment. Pedagogical tact refers to the intuitive elements present in teaching, which involve improvisational actions and a capacity to discern 'on line,' or as the events of the story unfold. It requires us to be attentive to pedagogical needs, recognizing that these moments have the potential to mark students deeply. They keep on living in the emotional world of children, even as adults, which means that pedagogical moments imply a *latency*: they may remain like imprints in the hearts and minds of each person (Van Manen, 2016). The latency of pedagogical moments reminds us that the ways in which we relate to children, how we look at them (if we even do), and how we respond to their needs, which are many times unspoken, have a long lasting effect on the lives of the

children we work with. Pedagogical tact may be understood as the embodied empathy that thoughtful teachers develop through their practice.

Another important approach in this study was the notion of heuristic research methods (Moustakas, 1990). Heuristic research methods are qualitative experimental ways to engage in a subject of inquiry. They are characterized to be open-ended. Different type of vehicles may be used in alternative fashions. Heuristics is related to phenomenology, because it seeks to discover the particular and to draw attention to the experience of the self in relation to a subject. Heuristics is heavily influenced by intuitive processes, therefore it requires flexibility to frame and re-frame the course of action as the investigation unfolds (Moustakas, 1990). This study also incorporated an arts-informed action research approach (PAR) (Tao, 2009), combined with memory work (Mitchel, Strong-Wilson, Pitthouse, & Allnut, 2011; Pinar, 2005). Data was analyzed using narrative inquiry and thematic analysis (Reissman, 2008).

A phenomenological approach to pedagogy

Phenomenology is "...an attitude that relies on the attentive perceptiveness, creative insight, and interpretive sensitivity of the person" (Van Manen, 2016, Chapter 3, Section 5, para. 3). As mentioned before, a phenomenological approach to pedagogy can be described as "distinguishing what is good or right from what is bad or wrong in our ways of acting and interacting with children" (Van Manen, 2016, Chapter 1, Section 4, para. 6). In this light, pedagogy is grounded in relational ethics, where the adult is sensitive to the *particular* situation of each child with whom he or she relates. It is a special way of being attentive and learning to respond to the needs of each child in a contextual and temporal manner. In Levinas' (1969) words, the ethical experience is one "wherein you cannot help but to respond responsibility for the other" (as cited in Van Manen, 2016, Chapter 3, Section 4, para. 3).

Doubt and questioning are fundamental elements of ethics. We take decisions and follow courses of action that are directed to accompany or assist a child based on our interpretation of the unfolding events. But we need to perceive what is happening and the needs of the child we are relating to accurately, which leads to a constant questioning of assumptions and of what we give for granted or appears in our minds and hearts automatically. To what extent is our judgment precise? Are we perceiving this child's needs truthfully? Are we projecting our own needs and lived experiences in this child? What does this child really need from us in this given moment? Doubting and questioning depend on our ability to be conscious. To be conscious about the vulnerability of the child we care for requires to awaken our eyes to our own needs, limitations and internal structures. The experience of confronting ourselves with the vulnerability of the child we care for, prompts us to act, because it moves us emotionally. We connect with this child's needs, with his or her story. As we embrace the other, we also embrace ourselves and our unfinished businesses. Ethical relationships grow on the fertile ground where we allow doubt and questioning to take its place. Not so that ambiguity paralyzes us, but rather constantly remind us of our possibility to be wrong and our responsibility with the healthy development of the other. Embracing the possibility of error is what allows us to change, reframe our worldviews and actions, so that we become better at the task we are invested in.

Van Manen (2016) says that pedagogy *is* this questioning and doubting. As adults relating with children, we cannot avoid becoming an example to them and to embody different ways of living in this world. To do this in a positive way, we must understand that adulthood is an unfinished project. Only then, will we question our own ways of living: "Because I live with and love this child, I can no longer live comfortably with my own self. The education of the child turns into self-education" (Van Manen, 2016,

Chapter 3, Section 3, para. 6). The educator who considers his or her education complete is not capable of learning from children. A phenomenological pedagogy demands from us constant reflection and growth. In the recognition of the needs of the other, we shed light on our own necessities. As we embody the best possible way of living we can, the landscapes of our students change and ours within them.

The importance of reflexivity in teachers' practice and formation is continuously stressed. Nevertheless, the nature of the thoughtfulness that educators exercise is not always investigated. Teachers need to exercise an active reflection, as the classroom situations unfold and present themselves as pedagogical opportunities. To be tactful, we must have feelings for the other. We must see, hear and respect each one in his or her own uniqueness. Tact is not a tactic, Van Manen (2016) warned. A tactic seeks to accomplish an end, whilst tact is always "at the service of the person toward whom the tact is directed" (Chapter 6, Section 10, para. 4). The purpose of being tactful is to be good with and *for* the other.

What is fascinating about the notion of a pedagogy of tact is that it requires thoughtfulness thus, theory and practice. The practical aspect of a pedagogy of tact is of intuitive nature, grounded in practice and in the moments we are actively relating with the other. For example, we may know by facts that a child is passing a difficult family situation. At the same time, we may not know in what ways this situation is affecting her, and what kind of marks —permanent or transitory— is this leaving in her heart and mind. Our intuition, our capacity to perceive and feel what is not possible to grasp objectively, is what allows us to gain access to the child's internal world. Consciousness about this intuitive knowledge is what creates the bridge between what we know and what we don't know yet, but need to know, in order to accompany this child to become a strengthened, healthier, and better version of herself. To follow our intuition, Polanyi (1983)

reminded us, is what allows us to create the bridge between the tacit and explicit. As educators that relate ethically to children, understanding and accessing the tacit dimension is necessary to remove the elements that pose threats to the seeds of talent and potential that live inside each child. We cannot access the internal or tacit dimension of the other if we don't embrace our own mysteries and secrets. As we do our gardening job with the child we care for, cleaning up the weed, watering and removing the earth, we continuously identify our own weeds in the process. If we remain honest and open in the ethical relationship with this child, for whom we cannot help—for good or for bad—being an example, we polish our hearts and minds to be more free, more conscious, or *wide awake* (Greene, 1995).

Creativity through heuristic research

Heuristic research is heavily influenced by the notion of intuition—conceptualized as the bridge between tacit and explicit knowledge—which is crucial for the relationship between creativity and emotions. Intuition is essential for the creative artistic process. In Moustakas' (1990) words: “Intuition makes immediate knowledge possible without the intervening steps of logic and reasoning” (Chapter 2, Section 2, para. 1).

Moustakas (1994) proposed six steps for heuristic research, which are similar to Wallas' (1926) creative process. It begins with an initial engagement with the subject of inquiry and immersion into the topic or question (as in the preparation stage). It is followed by an incubation stage where the researcher takes ‘time off’ the subject of inquiry. The next phase is called illumination, which is where sense is finally made and the ‘essence’ appears to the researcher. Essential qualities appear many times through the “clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question...opening the door to a new awareness, a modification of an old understanding...or an altogether new discovery...”

(Moustakas, 1990, Chapter 2, Section 3, para. 1). The next phase is explication, where the researcher examines what has “awakened in consciousness” (similar to the verification stage of the creative process). The final stage involves a creative synthesis, and usually takes the form of a composite narrative depiction, but may also be expressed through other forms, such as art work, poems, drawings, paintings, and other creative forms (Moustakas, 1990, 1994). These six phases of heuristic research guided my fieldwork. The description of Moustakas’ illumination stage, where the essential qualities of the subject of inquiry appear, and enter conscious awareness, was of particular interest to me. The notion of a creative synthesis resonated within me and guided me towards poetic and musical inquiry.

Methods used in the construction of this study

The methods used in this study were individual pre-interviews with each of the three participants, participatory workshops (conducted over three sessions), followed by a final individual interview. The interviews and the fieldwork were conducted in Spanish. The interviews and the sessions of the workshops were audio-recorded. I transcribed the data immediately after each interview and session and translated it to English, so that the information would be fresh in my mind.

The process of accessing the school was as follows: the school Principal sent an open letter to elementary and primary teachers inviting them to enroll in the workshop. Six teachers responded with interest in the workshop. I contacted all six teachers and held initial interviews with five of them. After negotiating schedules for the workshop, the remaining group consisted of three elementary teachers. Voluntary participation of teachers was deemed extremely important, since as Strong-Wilson (2006) noted:

“...teachers (like anyone) are more likely to become committed to change if they are not

told what to do, but become actively committed to a learning process of their own choosing” (p. 102).

The fieldwork (recruiting participants, interviews and workshop) was conducted over a period of seven weeks. One month after finishing the fieldwork, I went back to the participants and shared the chapter I was creating for the purpose of receiving feedback and ensuring credibility. During the first two weeks of the fieldwork, I contacted the Principal and sent an invitation letter in which the objectives of the study were delineated, as well as the potential benefits for teachers who decided to participate. During the third week I conducted individual interviews with each of the participants. The fourth, fifth and sixth weeks were invested in the workshop (one session per week). During the seventh week I conducted final interviews with the participants.

The location for the workshops was an elementary classroom provided by the school. The pre and post workshop interviews were held in the teachers’ offices, according to their schedules. The three teachers that constituted the group expressed during the initial interviews to be very interested in having a safe space to explore and share their creativity and emotions. Two of the participants had invested many years in psychological therapy, which is interesting to note because the purpose of the workshop and the investigation was to generate safe spaces for investigating the formative emotional experiences of the participants. As explained in the previous chapter, everyday creativity is an important part in psychotherapy (Maslow, 1967). At the same time, following Averill’s (1999a) emotional creativity theory, ‘emotional preparedness’ (the sustained long-term effort people invest in their emotional realm) is what allows individuals to be more creative with their emotions. Therefore, the teachers who had gone to therapy, could possibly have had more emotional resources, thus, preparedness.

Participants were given consent forms and asked to sign them after agreeing to them. To protect the identity of participants I asked each of them to create a pseudonym and a symbol that represented them. I didn't want to impose a name or a label on my participants. Allowing them to create their own pseudonym and symbol was a way of recognizing their own voice in this research, in a way that they truly felt comfortable. It also served as a heuristic to gain insight into aspects of their personality and story. All three participants created a symbol that represented them, and two of them created a pseudonym (Seed and Super Keka). The third teacher created a symbol and refused to create a pseudonym. First she said that she would think about a name that would represent her. After I reminded her about her pseudonym, she said that what was truly important for her was her symbol. Unfortunately, my participant recently died because of an aneurysm, leaving a huge vacuum in the school's community, as she was loved dearly by colleagues, students and parents. A part of me feels that she didn't want to hide under a pseudonym. In order to protect her identity I will call her "Heart Swirl," which is a description of the symbol she created for herself and that was so present during her narratives.

Super Keka, Seed and Heart Swirl (pseudonyms) were the teachers who participated in this study. All three of them worked at the elementary level. Super Keka was in her early fifties and had a background in communication and in the arts. She had been an art teacher for the last seventeen years in the school. More recently, she also became a tutor. Tutors are special advisors for children in this school. They are required to have some preparation in clinical psychology. Seed was a 32 year old English teacher, with a background in communication studies and theater, who recently moved back to Lima, Peru from Buenos Aires, Argentina, with her husband. Teaching elementary children was a new adventure for her, since in Buenos Aires she used to teach English to

college students. Heart Swirl was the chief of the department of elementary education in Tangananana School. Because of her administrative duties she no longer taught a class of her own. She did conduct play workshops for elementary children, based on the work of famous educator, Bernard Aucouturier (2007).

Eliciting childhood memory as a method

Memory work has been identified as a promising way for bringing back attention to the teacher-self and to contribute to the empowerment of educators. As our emotional experiences are unique, the only way to enhance emotional creativity is from working from our subjective experiences as teachers. To do so, we must access the child within the educator.

The method of *currere* developed by William Pinar (1975/1994) and Madeleine Grumet (1991) is a pedagogical effort characterized as “work(ing) from within” (Pinar, 1972/1994, p. 10, as cited in Strong-Wilson, 2015, p. 614). The essence of the method consisted in writing stories about educational experience, considering that these could take place inside school, but most of the times, outside of it (Strong-Wilson, 2015).

Strong-Wilson (2015) reminded us that:

By opening the doors to the particular and concrete details of lived experience, *currere* challenged the traditional lines between subject and object, in which we have been given to understand that we study something and not ourselves whereas what is the case is that we study something (a subject) and we study ourselves (as subjects) in it. (p. 615)

The method of *currere* has been developed for writing, but it can also inspire alternative methodologies, such as the one proposed in the present study. How do we experience creativity and emotions as educators? Which lived experiences were most formative for our teacher-self? These questions were addressed during the workshops.

Currere always starts with telling a story about oneself. Grumet (1976) called this step excavation: “a process of reflection that reveals self-as-object through reflective self-representation” (p. 69, as cited in Strong-Wilson, 2015, p. 621). Memory work is not straightforward, neither is it a linear pathway to the past. In Grumet’s (1976) words, autobiography is “...an elaborate detour that travels through once upon a time in order to reach now. Its truth is provided in its fictions” (p. 73, as cited in Strong-Wilson, 2015, p. 621).

In the present study, participants were asked to remember their childhood experiences related to emotions and creativity through collage inquiry. They were then asked to explicate their artefacts, in a verbal narrative, meaning that each participant would explain to the rest of the group what their collage meant to them and the story behind it. I was inspired by the method developed by Strong-Wilson (2006) called “Bringing Memory Forward” (hereafter called BMF). BMF builds upon Gendlin’s (1965) notion about the experience of writing: “to explicate is always a further process of experiencing” (p. 132, as cited in Strong-Wilson, 2006, p. 104). ““Bringing memory forward,”” Strong-Wilson (2006) explained, “consists in both ‘memory tapping (Greene, 1995), or recalling formative stories and juxtaposing those stories with other narratives...the juxtaposition generates a space for thinking” (p. 105). In the case of this study, this ‘space for thinking’ emerged while the participants were engaged in collage, reflecting on their formative experiences, to connect their own stories to the stories of their students.

When the participants shared a story about their collage, which was always a story about themselves, there was an energy of discovery, of re-interpreting their lived experience, even if at that precise moment it wouldn’t seem clear enough to articulate it

verbally. Usually, the next session of the workshop would pick up on that re-interpretation.

Maxine Greene has written about how teachers may become more reflective, and on how this enhanced consciousness promotes the transformation of practice. To the extent teachers become aware of their own stories, and how these influence their present, become awake to their “own landscapes of learning” (Greene, 1995, as cited in Strong-Wilson, 2006, p. 102).

Chambers (1998) has also found memory work to be useful to *revitalize* teachers’ practice: “to create and recreate; to remove the blockages which prevent energy and truth from flowing in and out” (p. 15). A workshop approach to memory work should create a safe space where teachers are able to share their lived experiences, perceptions and feelings. This might allow them to find new meanings, reconciling with themselves and their past.

Memory work is (self) reflection. But what is reflection? Dewey (1973) described it as a process that involved “perplexity, confusion and doubt,” “conjectural anticipation and tentative interpretation, examination, inspection, exploration, analysis of all attainable considerations,” “elaboration of the tentative hypothesis suggestions,” and deciding on a “plan of action” (p. 494-506). He also mentioned emotional qualities, which coincide with the traits associated to creativity, such as openness to experience and authenticity (Dewey, 1964).

Van Manen (2016) has written extensively about the multidimensional nature of reflexivity in teachers’ practice. The context in which reflection develops shapes the process in itself. For example, reflecting about past experiences is different than anticipatory reflection. The type of reflectivity that teachers exercise in their practice is embodied or ‘active.’ Therefore, the type of memory work that requires us to ‘stop and

think' is also a reflection of our ability of "thinking on your feet," as Donald Schön suggested (1983, p. 54, as cited in van Manen, 2016, Chapter 4, Section 2, para. 3). In this way, a generative cycle is created, where the meditative reflection on lived experiences nurtures the active one, in a reciprocal manner.

The threads of our lived experiences may feel loose, lost, or simply too painful to deal with. Through memory work, they may find their way towards a new, fresher pattern. Reflection actualizes us, and in this sense, it also re-vitalizes, as Chambers recalled, reminding us that it grants us "the possibility for revising and reinterpreting not only the stories themselves but the lives to which they are connected" (Chambers, 1998, p. 14). Memory work begins with acknowledging the latency of our formative experiences. Acceptance opens the door for transmutation. This is why "Bringing Memory Forward" (Strong-Wilson, 2006) can be such a powerful method for transforming the present, and probably among the most important pathways for enhancing our emotional creativity. As we expressively shape our stories, in this case through collage, and then reflect with others about what these stories mean, we may connect to threads that remained hidden in our unconscious. At the same time, the 'other' serves us as a mirror, and their attentiveness to our stories helps us disentangle our own narratives. In Chambers' (1998) words: "Re-membering is self-work; it is the work that must be done on oneself and by oneself, and as such each must come to it on their own. Yet its benefits may be collective" (p. 14).

It becomes a generative cycle of reciprocal growth. In the case of this study, engaging first in collage helped participants to slow down and to gain more introspection. Also, by being able to *show* with their pictures, parts of their thinking and feeling helped to dig deeper and share more. Participants would frequently point to different sections of

their drawings as they were explaining and trying to verbally communicate what they were about.

Along the same line, resonating with psychoanalysis, Annette Khun (2007) has suggested the continuous nature of autobiography: “Memory work is rather like peeling away the layers of an onion that has no core: each level of analysis, while adding more knowledge, greater understanding, also generates further questions” (p. 290, as cited in Allnutt, 2011, p. 20). In this sense, it is an ongoing work in progress, as we ourselves, are trying to make “a home for oneself” (Chambers, 1998, p. 14). Making a home of oneself can be understood as making sense of all our lived experiences, which in turn, allows us to develop our ‘embodied consciousness’ or as Merleau Ponty (1962/1967) says “the capacity of going beyond created structures in order to create others” (p. 175, as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 55).

Teachers’ own schooling experiences have been found to heavily influence the ways in which they approach creativity. Sociologist Dan Lortie (1975) studied how teachers transfer their own schooling experience to their practice, including transferring unconscious deep structural beliefs and assumptions on what teaching is about (Beghetto, 2007c). Memory work may be one of the best medicines to find the individual barriers for the development of a pedagogy in favour of (our own) creativity.

An arts-informed participatory research approach

The workshops were infused with an arts-informed research approach. Its aim was not to produce ‘art work,’ but rather to recognize that knowledge comes in different shapes and forms. An arts-informed research approach is a way of getting closer to a subject of inquiry through different languages and ways of representation. The arts favor divergent, open-ended and non-linear processes. Therefore, an arts approach seemed most suitable to investigate the emotional and creative aspects of the participants. During

the workshop the main techniques used were collage inquiry and poetic and musical inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2007; Gouzouasis, 2008a, 2008b).

An arts-informed methodology is (or can be) participatory, as it seeks to contain an “action agenda for reform, that may change the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researcher’s lives” (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). A participatory perspective requires collaborative and practical methods to help individuals free themselves of constraints or barriers that serve the intention of maintaining the ‘status quo.’ Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) claimed that participatory research “is inquiry completed ‘with’ others rather than ‘on’ or ‘to’ others” (cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 22).

Following McNiff (2008), an arts-informed approach consists of the systematic use of the artistic process through the creation of symbolic artifacts or images as a way of understanding the experiences of researchers and individuals involved in a study. Arts-informed methods have been found to be particularly useful as participatory tools (Tao, 2009; Butler-Kisber, 2010; Mitchel, Moletsane, Stuart, Buthelezi & de Lange, 2005). For the present study, drawings and collage inquiry were put into practice (Butler-Kisber, 2010). These methods were combined, for the purpose of enhancing self-expression according to the participant’s own choices and creativity.

The use of images (symbolic, literal and imagined) was considered particularly useful because of the nature of emotions and creativity. Images capture emotions and experiences that may be difficult to express otherwise. A visual image communicates *different* aspects of reality than a literal one. Integrating diverse ways of representing reality is a form of recognizing and celebrating life’s creative nature. The aesthetic qualities may also provoke attention to features that might go unnoticed otherwise. Furthermore, images are powerful to elicit memory. The way we react to the images we

create may give us intuitive cues about ourselves and about our relationship with the world and others that might not be accessible for consciousness otherwise.

Finally, arts-informed research produces images that can act as a more democratic vehicle for the dissemination of academic knowledge (Weber, 2008). For example, after concluding the workshop, the school Principal asked me to do a presentation for the 80 school teachers of the school. Having so many images produced by the participants was a powerful way of communicating the content of the workshop, in a language that was accessible to all the audience. It also helped to show in a clearer, practical way, aspects of the theories that informed the study. At the same time, it was a beautiful way to celebrate the creativity and contributions of each of my participants. At the end of the representation, participants shared their thoughts and impressions about the work and it was evident that they felt recognized and were proud of sharing their process with their colleagues. As the presentation unfolded, it was evident that the teachers that were present, enjoyed seeing the work of their colleagues. Some teachers mentioned that after seeing this presentation, they felt that they too, could participate in a workshop of this style. In an informal conversation I had with Super Keka, she commented that she was glad to have been able to show her colleagues that she had been creating interesting vehicles for enhancing the emotional creativity of her students. As mentioned before in the theoretical chapter, one of the barriers for a pedagogy that truly favors creativity is the disconnect between researchers and practicing educators (Craft, 2005). Using the creations of teachers who participate in creativity research is a way of visibly recognizing their voices. Considering that our current technologically driven society is grounded in the sharing of audio-visual pieces and instant communication, artful representations of research are powerful vehicles to present novel ideas about education. Regular transcripts or traditional papers can lose the intensity of the tone, emotion and expression of the

participants' interventions. Artful representations of research, on the other hand, condense the emotional aspects of the experience. Furthermore, as the arts move us emotionally, our feelings draw attention to what is important. A powerful artistic representation is more likely to make us connect with the personal story of the participant, and through this connection, we may be more compelled to investigate the paradigms, theories and philosophies that the research is trying to elicit.

Data collection

This study was constructed to explore the meaning and significance of emotions, creativity, and the ways in which these elements dialogue in teachers' practice. Its structure consisted of an initial individual interview with each participant, followed by a three session workshop and a post-workshop individual interview. Between sessions, participants were asked to write and send me via email a reflection about the process they were undergoing. I responded to each of their reflections personally.

Each individual interview lasted between 20-40 minutes. As preparation for the initial interview, participants were asked to draw a picture, a memory map, or create a collage, which represented their relationship with a person, a place, an object or a particular situation that enhanced their emotional wellbeing and creativity. Next, a three session arts-informed workshop, where their ideas about emotions, creativity, and the way these relate, followed. Each session lasted 150-180 minutes. Finally, a closing individual interview took place, as a meta-reflection, where the initial ideas around emotions and creativity were investigated in the light of the exploration that took place in the workshop.

Interviews were audio-recorded and pictures of the artifacts developed by the participants were taken. The photographs of the artifacts, audio files and transcripts of

the interview were kept in a private password protected file, and the data was not accessed or used by any other person.

Interviews

Interviews were another important method for collecting data. An informal conversational approach was used. Dialogue, involving self-disclosure, is a preferred approach in phenomenological methods (Jourard, 1968). More recently, Reissman (2008) has written about the Mishler Model approach to interviewing, describing it as a conversation between two people who are “active participants who jointly construct narrative and meaning” (p. 35). During this type of interview, the researcher remains empathic, emotionally accessible and open to the interviewee, and may share some personal experiences, as in a friendly dialogue (Patton, 1980). As preparation for the interviews, Moustakas’ (1990) suggestions were taken into account to create a general outline of the questions I would ask the participants. My outline consisted of the following questions: What did you draw for this interview? What was the story behind your drawing? What experiences do you remember from your childhood that influenced your emotional development? How do emotions influence your practice? What type of emotions do you find in your students? Even though I didn’t necessarily follow the outline created, as the conversation took us to different questions than the ones I had previously imagined, having thought about the subjects that were important to investigate in the interviews was helpful for my own preparation as an interviewer.

Pre-workshop interview

The initial interview served to explore the lived experiences of the participants around emotions, creativity and the intersection between these elements, and to make conscious the influence of the themes investigated in the participants’ lives, beyond their

practice. For this purpose, a heuristic device that would help “ground” the subjects of inquiry in the participants personal lives needed to be developed. As a method for memory elicitation, participants of this study were asked to generate a drawing, collage or memory map about a person, place, object or situation that helped them develop their emotions and creativeness during their childhood or adolescence. Participants were asked to bring their creation and to reflect on how these memories enhanced or influenced their emotional wellbeing and creativity. I wanted to empathically connect with the child or adolescent within the educator. In what ways did this child or the young person evolve and grow up to be an educator who nourishes the emotional wellbeing and creativity of her students?

Participants were also asked to share their ideas about emotions and creativity. What type of emotions did they find in their classroom, and what type of emotions do they recognize that they bring to their practice? How would they describe these emotions? In what ways do they express their emotional creativity through their pedagogy? What do they consider to be creative forms of teaching?

Workshops

The workshops were designed with open ended methods and elements that would promote trust, openness and self-disclosure. Activities that would encourage relaxation, creating a sense of comfort were also used: meditation music, candle light and incense was utilized for this purpose. I also had fresh fruit and water available to take a snack in the middle of the work. The purpose of this was to encourage an atmosphere of playfulness that would help bring the unconscious to consciousness, necessary for creativity and emotional wellbeing (Winnicott, 1971).

Materials for the workshops were provided by the primary researcher, such as cardboard, crayons, colors, pens, scissors, glue, and other materials useful for the

elaboration of collages and drawings. As I wanted my participants to explore their unconscious, I decided to facilitate only using unstructured materials for the collages. Therefore, I didn't provide pictures of magazines. Rather, different types of papers, textures and materials (such as cloth, plastics, shiny paper, craft paper, ropes, and the like) were brought to the workshop.

Collage inquiry

Collage was used as one of the primary arts-informed methods in this study. The collage technique consists of selecting found images, forms or materials and sticking them to a surface to express a subject of inquiry. Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) explain that collage as a form of inquiry in qualitative research allows investigators to work in a ways that are non-linear and that favor intuitive insight. The evocative possibilities that collage entails may promote making conscious the unconscious, and opening pathways to new and deeper understandings (Davis, 2008).

Collage allows us to explore the relationship between the portrayed elements and systematic production of collages can be used as part of a reflective process, as a form of evocation or a method for conceptualizing ideas (Butler-Kisber, 2008, 2010). Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) recommend working intuitively, from the emotions to the intellectual idea. The evocative characteristics of collage encourage researchers and research participants to explore the 'feels' of an experience, which was particularly important considering the subject of inquiry and the characteristics of the creative and emotional process as described earlier.

Collaborative reflection

Strong-Wilson (2006) has written about the power of teachers reflecting in circles: "When we have more time to think and talk about what we are thinking, we can become

‘more wise and courageous actors in the world’” (Wheatley, 2002, p. 9, cited in Strong-Wilson, 2006, p. 103).

Each of the workshop sessions started with a moment of sharing, such as circle time. During the first 10-15 minutes, participants could start relaxing and enter a calmer, more thoughtful mood. During the first session, circle time was about the expectations each of the participants had about the workshop. During the second and third sessions, this circle time was used to share what each one had been thinking and feeling between the sessions. Between our weekly encounters, each participant wrote a small reflection sent via email, to which I responded personally. The personal communication I had with the individual participants via email, allowed me to have more elements to open the sessions. During the second and third session, participants continued to elaborate on the thoughts they had written about in the email. During the final interview, Seed told me that these reflections were important for her personal process and that she enjoyed having a personal space with me to organize her thoughts and feelings.

Outline of the structure of the narrative chapters

I decided to present the narrative chapters chronologically. The reason I took this decision was because I wanted to expose systematically every step of the procedure consistently for each participant. This way, the overlapping themes and processes would become clearer for the reader, as well as the nuances and differences among the participant’s experiences. Following a chronological and steady structure in the narrative chapters seemed a more organized way to prepare for the thematic analysis chapter. The study followed the following structure:

Introduction and interview 1

- Brief introduction of the participant
- Interview 1 and the drawing as preparation for the interview, in response to the prompt: “A memory that influenced my emotional wellbeing and creativity”

Workshop session 1: Emotions

- Circle time (if relevant to the chapter’s narrative)
- Representation and description of the drawing/collage in response to the prompt: “What are the emotions I find in my classroom”
- Representation and description of the drawing/collage in response to the prompt: “What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?”

Workshop session 2: Creativity

- Circle time (if relevant to the chapter’s narrative)
- Explanation and presentation of the personal symbol and pseudonym created by each participant
- Representation and description of the drawing/collage in response to the prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”
- Representation and description of the drawing/collage in response to the prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”

Workshop session 3: Emotional Creativity

- Circle time (if relevant to the chapter’s narrative)
- Representation and description of the participants’ creation for enhancing a dimension of emotional creativity, according to Averill’s (1999a) theory

Reflection journals via email

Final interview and meta-reflection

Workshop session 1: Emotions

The first workshop session was centered on exploring the notions the participants had around emotions in their daily practice. We started with a welcoming to the workshop, where myself and each participant presented themselves to the group, stating why they chose to participate in this workshop and what our expectations were regarding our participation. The prompts offered to the participants were as following:

- “What are the emotions that I find in my classroom.”
- “What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child? What is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?”

Purpose of the prompt “What are the emotions I find in my classroom”

Participants were asked to create a collage about the emotions they found in their classrooms. The initial interviews had already been very personal and participants had opened up with me considerably. I wanted the introspection process to begin in a more gentle way, where my participants wouldn't feel evaluated or that they were emotionally exposed too early, before the group had had a chance to know each other better and feel comfortable. Therefore, I chose an indirect approach to memory. Eliciting memory in an indirect way is less intimidating, as we are investigating about the subject but with some distance, through the ‘other.’ In this case, my participants were exploring their emotional perceptions through the lenses of their students, or through their perception about what emotions are present in their classrooms. Beginning the exploration through the ‘others’ (as in students,) would allow to generate “connections between the narrator’s life and the lives of those whose stories he tells” (Strong-Wilson, 2015, p. 625). The purpose of this first session was to discover what parts of the child within the educator was still present

in their practice. As my participants recognized emotions in their students, they also started remembering their own emotional experiences during their own schooling, which took us to the next collage.

Purpose of the prompt: “What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?”

Participants were then asked to create a second collage or drawing that represented the emotions they experienced as children in school. These movements, from the interpretation of the perception of the “other” toward the interpretation of childhood experiences, intended to elicit memory and imagination. How do the emotional experiences of the child within the educator influence the interpretation of the emotions they find in their classrooms? In what ways, if any, is that child still present, through their practice?

Session 2: Creativity

Creativity was the theme we explored during the second workshop session. The prompts used to begin the investigation were:

- “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity.”
- “At the heart of the creative teaching process.”

Purpose of the prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”

Participants were asked to create a collage or drawing, inspired by the prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity.” Initially, Heart Swirl found it hard to differentiate between the prompt for the initial interview (“A memory from my childhood that enhanced my emotional wellbeing and creativity”) and this one, but she was able to overcome this difficulty rather quickly. The reason might be that the pre-

interview prompt was “A memory that influenced my emotional wellbeing and creativity.” These questions are similar, but the latter is more centered on creativity. Seed and Super Keka were more at ease with improvisation and starting something “out of the blue.” Heart Swirl commented that she always had difficulty engaging in something new without given guidelines, but that this was something she was trying to master.

Purpose of the prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”

Participants were asked to create a collage or drawing, inspired by the prompt “At the heart of the creative process...” This collage would integrate the prior experiences they depicted in the first collage with their teaching practice. It would also serve as a starting point to investigate the ideas participants had about creativity in relation to teaching.

Session 3: Emotional Creativity

The third workshop session was designed to explore the relationship between emotions and creativity in a more practical way. Participants were asked to create a vehicle to develop a particular dimension of emotional creativity with their students. This exercise intended to explore the self-efficacy feeling of teachers on their own creative capacities to nurture emotional wellbeing.

A shortened version of the Emotional Creativity Inventory (ECI), the ECI-S, was used as a heuristic device in this session (Averill, 1999a; Soroa, Gorostiaga, Aritzeta, & Balluerka, 2015). The ECI-S consists of 17 items, divided in three categories or dimensions: novelty, effectiveness/authenticity, and emotional preparedness. We did a drawing and each participant was assigned a dimension. Using the corresponding items of each dimension as prompts, participants were asked to create an artifact that may help

enhance emotional creativity in their practice. The proposed artifact could be an activity for the classroom or an artistic object in the form of collage, drawings or mind maps. Participants were asked to share their artifacts with the rest of the group, and collectively reflect about the possibilities of their propositions.

Final interview and meta-reflection

The purpose of the final interview was to investigate in what ways (if any), the conscious working-through emotions, creativity, and the intersection of them, through artistic methods, transformed teachers' conceptions about emotional creativity and about their own practice. In light of the workshop, what did they learn about the relationship between emotions and creativity? What elements, which people, situations or memories enhanced their emotional wellbeing? What elements of their childhood experience did they recognize in their relationships with their students? Participants were also asked to share their impressions, reflections and suggestions about the experience and subject of inquiry.

Data analysis

My process for analysis used categorizing and coding strategies that were pulled together through a narrative effort, portrayed in the final creative synthesis of the thematic analysis chapter (Maxwell, 2013; Moustakas, 1990).

Pictures of the artifacts participants created were taken and initially categorized by participant, session theme (emotions, creativity and the intersection between emotions and creativity), and the prompt that initiated the collage, following what Maxwell (2013) calls descriptive "organizational" categorizing or "broad areas or issues that you want to investigate...often established prior to your interviews or observations" (p. 107). I printed the transcriptions of each participant, and organized in my living room the

artifacts produced by each participant, in order to get a complete picture of each experience. I read several times each of the transcriptions and color coded the themes that appeared in each individual transcription. These themes were described in each individual chapter under different subtitles, as can be noted in the next chapters, following the same outline. Once I had clear what seemed most important to each of the participants, I searched for overlapping themes between them. These overarching themes became the substance for the thematic analysis chapter. Before starting to write the thematic analysis chapter, I contacted each participant and shared the individual chapter with them for feedback. This process, also known as “member check” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 216), was helpful to ensure credibility, validation of the data by participants, as well as to reveal my own biases. These individual composite descriptions and collage portrays are described with greater detail in the next chapters.

Thematic analysis

As a second level of analysis, drawing from the individual depictions of each participants’ experience, the themes that emerged from each step of the research were fleshed out. For this purpose, I used an “open coding” strategy (Corbin & Strauss, 2007, p. 195-204, cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 107), which involved “reading the data and *developing* your coding categories, based on what data (including the participants’ terms and categories) seemed most important” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 107, emphasis in original).

The themes that emerged in the thematic analysis were: 1) the pedagogy of regard, 2) community, imagination and new beginnings 3) play and 4) the perceived barriers to emotional creativity from the vantage point of the participants.

The method I followed for my thematic analysis had two interrelated phases: one that identified similarities between the participant’s experiences, and another one that searched for “*connections*” or nuances between themes (Maxwell, 2013, p. 106,

emphasis in the original). Emerging categories were identified through colors and tags. Individual composite representations of participants and thematic analysis were pulled together and integrated into a ‘creative synthesis’ (Moustakas, 1990), in the form poetic inquiry. As a next step, I created a musical piece to accompany the poem and did an animated video with the pictures of the participants, so that each phrase of the poem would be appreciated with the musical section I imagined it with.

Poetic inquiry is “a form of qualitative research in the social sciences that incorporates poetry in some way as a component of an investigation” (Prendergast, Leggo, & Samashima, 2009). It involves the rearrangement of words, phrases or passages taken from other sources, such as field texts, interviews, narratives, and reframing them as poetry, by changes in spacing, lines, or by altering the texts through additions and/or deletions. In this case, words and phrases were selected from the narrative chapters of each participant.

Poetic inquiry has been found to be a powerful way of expressing and transmitting the feelings of the participants. Regular transcripts may lose the intensity of emotions and the essence of the individual’s experience among the colloquialisms of verbal language. Poetic inquiry has also been found to be useful to create an ‘amalgamation’ of the voices of researchers and participants, just as other forms of artful representations of research (such as collage), poetic inquiry may be a more democratic way of communicating insights and making them more accessible for the general audience. After all, it is easier for a large number of people to read a poem, instead of reading a whole thesis. Of course, the poem won’t replace the thesis, but it may awaken curiosity in a general audience, which might help disseminate the purpose of the research. In the case of the present study, poetic inquiry was considered a useful vehicle for communicating a synthesis of the study in an emotionally powerful manner. The poem at the end of the

thematic analysis chapter is my synthesis of the whole experience, integrating the voices and messages of the three participants, as well as my own voice, which was present in the selection of the phrases and the order of the poem.

Creating the music for the poem and the animated video was a different representation for communicating my synthesis. Gouzouasis (2008a, 2008b) has coined the term “epiphony” meaning “a realization that is evoked through sound, specifically music” (as cited in Lee & Gouzouasis, 2016, p. 345). My experience in creating the music for the poem was like a sudden intuition or epiphany. The melodies came to me in the same way as the poem had taken shape in my mind. “An acoustic experience,” Lee and Gouzouasis (2016) explained, “require both sound production and listening, to the self and to others, to comprehend a situation or a tale and relate it to personal and other experiences” (p. 345). In the creative synthesis chapter, I describe the process I followed to reach this creative synthesis in detail.

Representation of the findings

The findings of this study were presented in a thesis document that contained pictures of the artifacts created before and during the workshops. One chapter was dedicated to the composite depiction of each participant’s experience, grounded in the participant’s own words. The emerging themes that were found were analyzed comparatively in another chapter, in order to gain insight into the phenomenon as a whole. Analysis concluded in a creative synthesis in the form of found poetry. Following, a conclusion summing up the research findings was produced.

Chapter IV: Heart Swirl's narrative

Heart Swirl (pseudonym) was the chief of the department of elementary education in Tangananana School, in Lima, Peru. She no longer had a class of students because of her administrative duties, but she had been teaching in the school for the last sixteen years. Besides her administrative work, she conducted play workshops for the elementary children, based on the famous French educator's Bernard Aucouturier Psychomotor Practice methodology. For Heart Swirl, learning Aucouturier (2007) was a huge turning point in her life and her relationship with her own emotions and creativity, which influenced greatly her practice. Aucouturier methodology is based on playing. This allowed Heart Swirl to reconnect with her own playfulness and become more open to experience.

In the following section, all quotes are from Heart Swirl. Between the first and second sessions, Heart Swirl created a symbol that represented her. The symbol consisted of an orange heart, circumscribed by a spiral (the whirlpool). She said that since the first session, she had been thinking about how aggressiveness generated so much stress in her. She recognized herself trying to remediate this anguish by "shutting down" aggressiveness, trying to "compensate it with love." The symbol represented her commitment to integrating and accepting emotional aspects that felt like a whirlwind, relinquishing suppression of violence, resulting in a more natural coexistence between both forces, achieved through love. Heart Swirl didn't create a pseudonym for herself. She said she needed more time to think about it. After the last interview, she told me that she didn't really mind about the pseudonym, since it was the symbol what was important for her. Unfortunately, Heart Swirl recently passed away. I wanted to remain as faithful as possible to her wishes, so I decided to call her "Heart Swirl," because it was the description of the symbol she felt truly represented her.



Figure 1 – Heart Swirl's symbol

Interview 1 (29/08/16); hereafter referred to as: Interview 1, Heart Swirl

As preparation for the initial interview, Heart Swirl drew a small picture that represented her earliest childhood memories when living in the jungle with her parents and the local community. Her father was a railroad engineer. When she was only three months old, Heart Swirl's parents took her to San Martin (east of Peru), to the middle of the jungle. Her father was in charge of the construction of a railroad. This experience shaped her understanding of the world and planted the seeds of curiosity towards methodologies she felt an organic connection to, such as constructivism and play. She reflected on her relationship with her mother, the community in the jungle, and how this influenced her emotional wellbeing:

My mom was quite a rebel, and at the same time, very organized and controlling...I accompanied her to break with a lot of the things she had to break with (when moving from Lima, the capital of Peru to the jungle.) I feel that in the jungle she could let me be in a trusting place, in a safe place. When we came back to Lima, she kept us inside our grannie's house, because it was unsafe...in the jungle it wasn't like that, there was trust, support, there were a lot of people around her...the local population, they had children and my mother trusted them...my life was more free. I feel that living like that between children, taught me to resolve things as they appear...I always have this confidence that everything is going to be alright. (Interview 1, Heart Swirl)

Moving from the jungle camp back to the city of Lima was an emotional shock for her. She remembered asking her grandmother: “Granny, why is your house like a stick?” “I felt everything was so gray and horrible”, she said. The tension between the jungle and the “concrete jungle” may have shaped and influenced Heart Swirl’s relationship to fear, particularly to the pronounced fear she felt when someone else was angry or aggressive, as well as with her own rage.



Figure 2 – Drawing as preparation for Interview 1 in response to the prompt: “A memory that influenced my emotional wellbeing and creativity”

Ever since Heart Swirl could remember, the emotions that “worried” her “were the aggressive ones”:

When I’ve taught, I’ve always been very interested in creating a peaceful classroom climate, with songs, music...I used all my strategies so that the aggressive things weren’t there, because I was afraid. After I learned about Aucouturier, I realized that aggression exists...that I have to let it out, because if I don’t, it’s worse. At a personal level I had to dig deeply in order to take my own aggression out. It was hidden, it wasn’t easy to find...Now I am very interested in these encounters with aggressiveness. I want to be able to tolerate and receive aggression and give it back in a non-aggressive form. (Interview 1, Heart Swirl)

For Heart Swirl, it was surprising to find out about her “not so sweet and tender part,” as a grown up woman. Today she says she enjoys expressing her aggression, but that it is still very difficult for her to be angry with people she knows personally. She has found that driving in Lima’s crazy traffic is the best way of liberating these feelings. She

talked about the lack of remorse she feels when expressing her violence with people she doesn't know. To fully understand her story, it's important to know that the city of Lima usually ranks among the top five most chaotic and aggressive places to drive in the world. Public transportation is almost nonexistent and small coasters, locally called *combis*, pick up passengers literally in any part of the street, avenue or highway. It is telling that the national slogan distributed by the police department is: 'Always drive defensively.' Heart Swirl recalls:

When I drive, my psychologist has told me that it's perfect, I take all my anger out...people are aggressive all the time when you drive, so I become very alert, and then I feel happy. I can put all that anger in a proper space. It's because I can *hate* all the people around me without remorse...like the *combi* drivers. (Interview 1, Heart Swirl)

When I asked her why she felt it's easier for her to feel anger towards people she didn't know, she stopped a while and continued, in a playful tone:

Maybe because I stereotype them...if I could be in a movie and fight the villain of the movie and kill him, that would be great...I feel like a cartoon, with characters either super good or super bad. In that moment, when I'm stuck in traffic, between taxis and *combis*, they are the villains and there is just no way for me to feel that I have to understand them...just no way! They are evil, evil! (Interview 1, Heart Swirl)

When Heart Swirl drives, traffic becomes a place where she can allow herself not to try to understand, but simply feel, without filtering rationally. When she talked about the difficult emotions she found in her students, she described a process that began from emotional expression and behavior, progressing to higher thought processes:

Difficult emotions in children...the good thing is that they can learn to take them out without hurting others...without biting others or hitting, which is what children do...they can put their aggression in the objects, in play, and then they can transform them into things they can express, like screams, paintings, body language...until they learn to verbalize them. When the child is afraid, he frees himself through his body, through the concrete. For example, when he's afraid of jumping, but he still does it, and realizes that he will not break...that helps him as a tool in his life. I have felt that I have avoided that a lot in my life (the embodiment and the concrete), and I'd like to connect with it (Interview 1, Heart Swirl).

These reflections may indicate that Heart Swirl's work with children was also self-work, as she continued to find opportunities to engage with aggressiveness, receive it, and transform it.

When reflecting about creativity, Heart Swirl related her creativity as a way of trusting oneself. "Creativity is built upon trust...upon the trust to look at yourself without getting scared...in fact, my creative part developed so much after Aucouturier. Before that, I thought I had no aggressiveness inside of me!" She also connected trust and openness of oneself with courage and acceptance: "Creativity is a process of falling in love with yourself, to accept and to try. To look at what you have just done and say...yes, that's it. I accept it."

As an educator, Heart Swirl worried that many times, children's creativity is castrated: "I think creativity dries itself up or gets murdered...I think adults kill children's creativity when they want a correct answer, when you want the student to answer what you as an adult want him to say or to do." She also called attention to a graphic or visual bias. In her experience, for too many educators, creativity is primarily linked to the visual. For Heart Swirl, the creative child "is a child that solves a situation, working through an experience that can unbalance him...there are creative children with words, games, ideas, with the way they react to the vicissitudes of life."

Nurturing creativity requires respecting children's ways of expressing themselves. It involves relinquishing power. Heart Swirl reflected on this subject:

As teachers, we build many times children that are the antithesis of this (of creativity.) You want the child to respond to what you expect, you want him to choose between the three possible forms that you have taught him. You feel that you have provided the tools, the strategies, and that he is compelled to use them...you even want the child to use the tools the same way you would! You expect the child to rise to your standard of the "pretty picture" and sometimes children just need to play and we don't respect them. (Interview 1, Heart Swirl)

For Heart Swirl, the need for control that some adults have is detrimental for the nurturing of creativity in children. This reflection corresponds with the observations that creativity researchers have made about the disruptive force of creative behavior (Richards, 2007), and how educators may feel that order in class —understood as following a teachers’ instructions— is more important for “good” teaching and learning than tolerating the ambiguity and disorder of creative outbursts.

For Heart Swirl, when educators connected with their personal story, they found the pathways to nurture creativity in their students:

You have to recognize your inner child. You have to recognize that you have a story to heal from that inner child. If you are selfish about it, you will never see the ways in which the other child mirrors your own experience...you will become angry, and say that you can’t stand that child, because you haven’t recognized him in yourself. You don’t know that you are living a personal situation. To the extent you know where your devil is, you will know why those children mobilize you in such a different way...and just by knowing, the story changes (Interview 1, Heart Swirl).

She said we need to facilitate personal work for educators and called attention to the double standard or shared responsibility between educators and policy makers, particularly through teacher training and ongoing professional development:

We need to facilitate personal work for educators. There is too much theory, too many courses that are very superficial, focusing on the instruction of strategies for classroom management. Teachers feel very at ease when they receive instruction, but these programs touch teachers very few times in their personal story. It’s important to invest in transformation at a personal level. Because teachers are the ones that have the chance to massively touch children...parents touch their child, but teachers touch a lot of children, year after year. We should create groups of teachers where they can talk about their emotions. I wonder, what did they feel when that little child kicked them? Teachers are not been emotionally contained, they are expected to answer many tests...but when we support them emotionally, that person transforms herself and everything around her changes (Interview 1, Heart Swirl).

Spaces such as the workshop of the present study may be helpful for the emotional support of educators Heart Swirl mentioned. It is important to note that these workshops cannot be imposed: they need to resonate with the desire of practicing teachers

and be accepted by them to actually have an effect. Just as one cannot force somebody to go to therapy or a secular confessional space, workshops of this kind cannot be ordered. Integrating the possibility of participating in workshops that embrace personal stories of teachers to teacher's preparation —prior to in-service practice— may be a way of encouraging educators to keep on engaging in personal work throughout their continuing formation.

Workshop Session 1 – Emotions

The first session of the workshop was designed to be an exploration of the emotions teachers found in their classrooms, as well as the emotions they remembered feeling during their schooling years. The purpose was to investigate in what ways the child within the educator was present in the teachers' practice. In what ways did the early emotional experiences influence the way they perceived emotions in their students? After the initial circle time, where each participant shared their expectations about the workshop, participants were asked to create a drawing or a collage responding to the following prompts:

- “What are the emotions I find in my classroom?” (Hereby: Heart Swirl, Session 1, Drawing to the prompt: “What are the emotions I find in my classroom”).
- “How were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and my teacher-self today?” (Hereby: Heart Swirl, Session 1, Drawing to the prompt: “How were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child?”)

Heart Swirl, Session 1 (Emotions)

Prompt: “How were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child and what is the link between my emotions as student and my teacher-self today?”

Heart Swirl chose a big white cardboard for her first work. She began by slowly drawing a big brown swirl. She took her time, as if she were entering a familiar place.

She used acrylic paint, colors and crayons. At the top of the whirl appeared a brown horse. A beautiful and strong animal. At the center she drew a heart. To the right, an eye watched, lovingly, and a hand extended itself towards the heart. She described her depiction:

I have a touchstone in my life as an educator. The children that have left a mark in me are the ones who moved me the most to face things that I didn't like to recognize about myself. That is why, at the beginning, I understood it like something I didn't like "about the other", which was violence, intensity: the whirlwind. Those children have always caused me to feel an initial rejection, and then an attraction to connect with them and transform that situation; so that through contact with that other little human being, these feelings can be transformed. (Heart Swirl, Session 1, Drawing to the prompt: "The emotions I find in my classroom")



Figure 3 – Heart Swirl, Session 1, Drawing in response to the prompt: "What are the emotions I find in my classroom"

The story behind Heart Swirl's drawing concerns a little boy who highly irritated her. She felt rejection towards him because of his aggressiveness and impulsiveness. One day, the children of the class were asked to complete a task that consisted of painting some ice-cream sticks and leaving them to dry. They were going to do a handicraft with them the next day, for Father's Day. Heart Swirl and her colleagues collected all of the children's sticks, and they organized them into the shape of the handicraft that the children would have to decorate. The next day, when the little boy came back to school

he ran to his seat and screamed: “Why did you transform my horse into a wall?!” tears in his eyes. This moment was important for Heart Swirl, because she felt connected with the child’s emotions. She felt for him, and thus, could transform her relationship with the little boy:

This anecdote represents for me how I felt moved for this particular child, and connected with him, and all the children that I’ve had like this since. It’s always a challenge to connect with them, but they are the ones that mark you the most. The ones that look for you the most when they are bigger, and the ones that remember you the most. That memory made me draw this eye, this heart and this hand, which is what we have to do as teachers. Contain our children, love them, look at them from the heart...because a look that judges, a gaze that has rigid standards, that cannot look at the child as another human being, with everything he can bring with himself...that look doesn’t allow you to open your heart so that you can find yourself with this and transform it. Not so that the child changes...but so that you change in relation to how you receive this child. (Heart Swirl, Session 1, Drawing to the prompt: “The emotions I find in my classroom”)

What Heart Swirl described as the latency of the pedagogical moment, Van Manen (2016) described in relation to the pedagogy of regard. The look we cast (or don’t) upon children may remain present throughout a lifetime. The ways in which children feel seen (or unseen) may mark them during a lifetime. The quality of the gazes we received as children live within us, they are buried inside our hearts. A child who felt invisible for his father may always crave that recognition and validation. A girl that felt judged by her mother might always fear being criticized and might decide to hide behind whatever responsibilities she can take hold on, such as work, for example. This is one of the biggest responsibilities of an educator—or anyone who cares for a child. It is through the look of the ‘other’ that we confirm our existence, and as Winnicott (1971) stressed, the experience of being seen allows us to feel real. When the child connects with the gaze of the educator, what she sees is a reflection of herself. What do we communicate to the child about herself through our eyes? Are we capable of seeing and receiving this child as a unique other, whom which we are willing to relate to, open

heartedly? What sort of emotions and memories does this child awaken in ourselves? And how do the feelings connected to our reactions to the child influence the way we mirror her? For example, if a child makes us feel particularly irritated, how does our ability to perceive him or her as a unique human being change? Are we able to separate our conflicting emotions with the identity of the child? Are we able to recognize that this child may push some buttons in ourselves that relate to our personal stories and unfinished businesses? These are some important questions that arise from Heart Swirl's reflections.

Heart Swirl, Session 1 (Emotions)

Prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?"

Heart Swirl's second drawing responded to the prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child and what is the link between my emotions as student and my teacher-self today?" The intention of this prompt was to investigate how the emotions participants felt during their schooling influenced their pedagogical relationship with their students. In the first part of the workshop, participants had explored their emotional perception through the children they worked with. This second movement wanted to call attention to the ways, if any, in which participants mirrored their own formative experiences in their students.

For this second piece, Heart Swirl chose a small pink cardboard. She began at the top left of the cardboard, and drew a pair of judging eyes, surrounded by a dark atmosphere. The eyebrows formed a rigid triangle. Their gaze had a punitive expression. Underneath this look, she drew objects that she used in her play sessions with children: fabrics of different colors, cubes, circles and other shapes. At the right extreme of the cardboard, she drew a bamboo. She commented:

When I was little, sometime during my childhood...I don't know exactly when, I started to feel that the look from "the other" caused me a lot of...expectation. I thought this look was judgmental, permanent, and I feared to be misinterpreted. I feared that the things I did might be misinterpreted, and that people would think I was bad. I never wanted to do anything that could give the slightest suspicion that I wanted to be bad about something. So I was always good. (Heart Swirl, Session 1, Drawing to the prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?")



Figure 4- Heart Swirl, Session 1, Drawing in response to the prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?"

Heart Swirl said that as a child and as an adult —until she started working with Aucouturier— she had to feel extremely sure of what she was going to do, if it were to be observed by someone else. She felt that if somebody looked at her, there was the possibility that this someone might think she was bad. The simple thought of this filled her with fear. It was better “to go unnoticed” (quote from Heart Swirl). This judgmental, castrating look, connected with what Heart Swirl expressed during her initial interview, about her difficulty of expressing anger with people she knew. Showing her anger might have revealed that not everything about her was “good,” therefore, she preferred to deposit those feelings in activities such as driving.

Counterpointed to the judgmental look, the fabrics, colors, shapes and bamboos expressed the ways in which Heart Swirl had worked through her initial anxiety of the look of the ‘other.’ Through her work as an educator, by accompanying the children she

met in the expression and transformation of their difficult emotions, she redeemed these “phantom traces” (Wilson, 2015) of her childhood. Through her work with children, she felt that she allowed herself to heal that hurtful, scary gaze. Once again, memory of place (one connected to nature) informed Heart Swirl’s process, as she remembered the bamboos from her school, and how they collided in a windy day. This sound, she said, connected her with her early experiences in the jungle.

Through play, she consciously puts on a welcoming look for each of the children she works with. She talked about “reading children’s language in its just dimension,” and “curing that look,” so that her own look won’t be judgmental, “interpreting actions in the worst possible way, but trying to understand them in their best form.” It may be that a child might misread her actions, feeling it as a long-lasting castrating look. Reflecting about her role as an educator and the importance of self-work, she added:

You have to look at yourself first. And it was interesting, this self-work, where you have to look at yourself, because all the work you do in the classroom, with others, with children, always comes through yourself. If you are not able to look inside of you, and you have fear, limitations...then you can’t look at the other. You will always be on a stage, looking at the others as “poor little things” (Heart Swirl, Session 1, Drawing to the prompt: “How were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child?”)

For Heart Swirl, emotional self-study can restore the power imbalance in teaching and learning. Only through self-acceptance and self-work, can a teacher aspire to connect with her students, understanding that they are *both* teaching and learning.

Session 2: Creativity

The second workshop session was about creativity. This time, the exploration started with the participants’ own memories about an event, place or person from their childhood that ignited their creativity. The intention of this exercise was to investigate the concepts around creativity participants had. Following, participants were asked to

create a drawing, collage or activity about what they felt was at the heart of the creative teaching process. I wanted to know how they grounded in their practice their creativity notions. After the initial circle time, were each participant shared what they had been elaborating between sessions, participants were asked to create a drawing or a collage responding to the following prompts:

- A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity (Hereby: Heart Swirl, Session 2, Drawing to the prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”)
- At the heart of the creative teaching process (Hereby: Heart Swirl, Session 2, Drawing to the prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”)

Heart Swirl, Session 2 (Creativity)

Prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”

Heart Swirl selected a medium sized white cardboard for the first collage. She started by sticking a small piece of lined paper at the left bottom of her sheet. She decorated the rest of the page with different shapes such as waves, triangles, clouds, pieces of plastic, and paper. She used different textures and materials to create a sensation of movement.



Figure 5- Heart Swirl, Session 2, Drawing in response to the prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”

Her collage represented a memory of herself as a five year old. In the artwork, she imagined that she had recently gone back to the capital city, Lima, from the jungle. The transition was difficult as it was shocking for her to pass from a natural environment where she felt so free, to the constraints of an urban middle class house. A friend of her mother asked her what she would like as a present. She asked for a blank notebook. Until then, she had never had a notebook of her own. She was learning how to read and write, and her parents and uncles would share their used papers with her, so she would re-use them.

Heart Swirl told us that when her mother's friend came back with the notebook, Heart Swirl felt truly bewildered. She had imagined a lined notebook, but she had received a notebook full of blank papers. Absolutely white: "Nothing! A beautiful notebook of absolute white paper," she said. After struggling with the present, hiding it in her drawer and then staring at it, wondering what to do about it, she decided to confront the white sheet: "I discovered that I didn't need lines to create. That I didn't have to write, I could also draw, or do whatever I imagined," she recalled. In a way, she felt this was one of her first encounters with freedom, with all the unstructured and endless possibilities of play she would keep on exploring throughout her lifetime. Aucouturier's methodology uses unstructured materials, such as cloths and big and colorful blocks of foam. Every session begins with children running and colliding into a tower of blocks of foam that the adult (teacher or play facilitator) had constructed. In a way, the lined paper could represent that tower that needed to disappear so that the creativity of Heart Swirl could express itself.

Heart Swirl, Session 2 (Creativity)

Prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”

For the second collage, Heart Swirl chose a yellow piece of see-through plastic as her foundation. She created different shapes of various materials that represented the children she worked with. Each of them had different colors and pointed in different directions. At the bottom left was a big green shape, representing “deconstruction.” “Creativity happens when the child has the right to decide what she wants to do. Everything is possible, to the extent that it is contained in that space...anything is possible with unstructured materials.” Heart Swirl shared a typical Aucouturier session. She would start by constructing a large tower made of huge foam blocks, as tall as it could possibly be:

It all starts with destruction. They have to destroy a tower that the adult has constructed. They need to know that they are authorized to tear apart what the adult has constructed, in order to create something new, whatever it may be, as individuals or as a group. (Heart Swirl, Session 2, Drawing to the prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”)



Figure 6 – Heart Swirl, Session 2, Drawing in response to the prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process.”

A typical Aucouturier session has generally three movements: the initial conversation, play, and the moment children “descend to the tranquility of representation.” Action shifts from the movement of the body, which is play, to the

movement of the mind—which is another way to play, symbolically—that allows children to build, draw, and verbalize. The initial ritual of destroying the tower the adult has built is fundamental for children to exercise their freedom and autonomy: “It’s always freedom that prevails. This is the primary element of creativity. It’s what allows them to be creative,” Heart Swirl reflected.

The unstructured elements used in this approach, such as foam blocks and fabrics, allows children to ‘charge’ the materials with whatever they desire: “If everything were figurative, like little cars, for example, children would not be able to project their imagination in these objects,” she explained. When children play in an Aucouturier session, foam blocks and fabrics become castles, crowns, cars to pull a friend, beds, tunics, nets to ‘catch’ a prisoner, and so on. The destruction of adult constructions and creations, gives birth to the child’s self-affirmation: “There is no way you can create if you don’t break the adult. If you don’t break the teacher, your mother...if you don’t rebel,” concluded Heart Swirl.

Session 3: Emotional Creativity

For the third and final session of the workshop, participants were asked to create a vehicle to enhance a dimension of emotional creativity. The intention was to “put into practice” the personal aspects investigated in the prior sessions regarding emotions and creativity. Using Averill’s shortened Spanish version of the Emotional Creativity Inventory (ECI), developed and validated by Soroa and colleagues (2015, p. 235), we did a drawing, each participant would receiving one dimension of the inventory. The inventory is divided into three dimensions: “Emotional Preparedness,” “Originality” and “Authenticity/effectivity” (Averill, 1999a). The “Emotional Preparedness” dimension fell to Heart Swirl and included the following items:

- “When I have strong emotional reactions, I search for their reasons”

- “I think about my emotional reactions and try to understand them”
- “After an intensely emotional experience, I try to step back and examine my reactions objectively”

Heart Swirl started by saying that the working week had been intense, because teachers had been giving reports to parents. Because she was the director at the elementary level, the most difficult appointments usually fell to her: “When teachers feel they need extra support, they call me in...this is part of what I like about my job, but it can also be tiresome, emotionally,” she explained. The prompts of the emotional preparedness dimension made her reflect about the ways in which she helps children to work through their difficult emotions.

“My office has an open door policy, and children know it. When they look for me, they are searching for resolution. They know they can come here and that I will listen to them,” she said. Throughout the years, she has developed a method for working through emotional conflict with children. It all starts with listening. The child enters her office and tells his/her version. Heart Swirl then starts asking what happened before, and what happened before that, in a step by step journey to the past. As the child explains, she either draws pictures to illustrate what the child was expressing or asked the child to draw instead. As the story advances, the child confronts the storyboard and checks on the facts. Pictures serve as memory aids, and at the same time, children use pictures to construct new possibilities. Children re-interpret the experience, attune their emotional reasoning, think about it more accurately and express their anger through graphic expression. As the facts unfold, Heart Swirl asks what could have been different. Children imagine different outcomes and possible solutions. As there are always different children involved in the same conflict, the others implicated are usually asked to join the conversation. Each one is given the chance to express their point of view.

Therefore, children learn about different perspectives on the same matter: “This way, we open the possibility for change...I tell them that things happened in a way, but they can happen in another way. It can be different, it can be better next time,” Heart Swirl explained. She drew a concept map of the steps she identified as the most important for developing emotional preparedness. She named her activity “Emotional Reactions” and described them in the following order:

1. **Attentive listening, without judging:** “You have to respect his/her voice, their pauses. They need to know that they can express their anger, their fear and their sadness,” she said.
2. **Remembering what happened:** “I try to go as far back as the child is able to. Sometimes, the reason for the conflict is evident, but other times, there are hidden causes,” she explained.
3. **Fact-checking:** As the child remembers, she draws what he/she is explaining. Sometimes, the child himself chooses to draw. As the story advances, the child “checks” the facts and confronts them with his/her memory.
4. **Imagine different outcomes:** With the help of a storyboard, the child visualizes and graphically expresses different possibilities and consequences. In this stage, children also realize that mood or emotions influence the way they think.
5. **Share and compare perceptions:** If it is possible, the other children implicated in the conflict participate in the same sequence. Heart Swirl said that this is what usually happens, as they search for her in order to “resolve” the problem. When the children realize that each one has had a different perception and version of the same event, they exercise empathy.

In her reflections, Heart Swirl wrote that she felt it was good for her to have a space where she could re-connect with herself and to “explore my feelings through drawings, through colors...besides of the opportunity of using words to complement the expression.” She also mentioned that she felt comfortable with the group, and emotionally contained by each of the participants, meaning that she felt she could express herself freely and that her colleagues were not judging her. Feeling welcomed and accepted by the group allowed her to “explore and take things out that are buried deep.” Also, by sharing her stories and listening to others, she was able to identify similarities between participants as well as notice the “differences in what’s similar.” She felt this process was enriching and helpful to “awaken the eyes and heart, allowing us to break with what’s taken for granted, amplifying our capacity to see and to listen.”

Final interview (26/09/16), hereafter referred to as: Final interview, Heart Swirl.

The final interview was intended to be a space for meta-reflection about the whole process, from the pre-workshop interview to the last day. Heart Swirl said that she felt truly comfortable with the group of people who participated: “I feel that each one of us nurtured one another’s process. It hasn’t been just opening up, but receiving. I feel that the pieces have fitted in, somehow”, she said. Knowing that she would have “a time during the week to explore my more visual and graphic side” was also important for her. She appreciated being able to express herself through drawing and collage. She connected the workshop experience with her own psychological therapy process: “The workshop felt like when I used to go to therapy. It’s like getting to a place where things that are deep inside of you can be explored. It’s an opportunity to look at what’s there, but that you are not really watching,” she said.

Heart Swirl identified an apparent contradiction, since she felt that during the workshops, the most difficult part of the process was “getting started.” This was new for

her, since it's very easy for her to organize her thoughts and begin a new activity: "I had to relax and connect with myself. It made me get out of my comfort zone, and that was good. In this situation, you couldn't succeed if you started by thinking. You had to feel first," she explained.

She commented on the transition from the first two sessions (self-exploration about emotions and creativity), to the last one, where participants were asked to create a vehicle for enhancing emotional creativity. She said it was a process in which she reconciled with the "lined paper," which she perceived as her more "structured part." She felt that creating her dynamic for enhancing emotional preparedness was like organizing what she let loose in play. In a way, what Heart Swirl is referring to is the tension between convergent—divergent thinking that characterizes creative behavior and thinking (Runco, 2015). She felt that during the last session, the exercise of delineating a step-by-step process to enhance emotional preparedness, she made "peace" with the lined paper.

Heart Swirl felt that the workshop helped her to reconnect with her "state of alertness", and with her "capacity to catch the messages that come from within and from the outside world." Her process felt like "connecting the old with the new, in order to find the process...like with the lined notebook. At the end, it's what we try to do through education...to connect previous knowledge with new ones, generating a new conclusion," she reflected. The workshop helped to remind herself that this process needs to be done "all the time, in all the aspects of your life, and not just through the more formal aspects of schooling." Finally, she felt that the workshop could last "a couple of months, at least," and that she would like to continue to have this space and time to explore her emotions and creativity.

Chapter V: Super Keka's narrative

Super Keka (pseudonym) was an art teacher and a tutor for elementary children in Tangananana School, where she had been teaching for the last 17 years. Her background was in communication studies and the arts. For her, being a tutor was a privilege, and she was even considering learning counseling in order to be able to accompany her students better.



Figure 8 – Super Keka's symbol

Super Keka created a badge of a superhero as the symbol that best represented her. She had been thinking about her need to “save” others, and it had made her go back to her childhood. She was the eldest sibling of four. Despite being very close in age, she always appeared to be much older than the rest of her brothers and sisters. When her parents divorced, her mother went to live in another country, leaving the children with their father. During the first interview, she remembered that her father put his hand on her shoulder and told her: “Now you are my right arm.”

From that moment on, she felt an “immense load of responsibility.” After finishing high school, she went to live with an aunt in the USA. From Lima, she received discouraging news about her siblings. Her father had tried for them to live as a “new

family,” without success. Each of her three siblings was now living at a different house, with a different family. Her father told her that, if she came back to take care for her siblings, he would pay for an apartment for them to live in. Super Keka didn't want to leave the USA: “I remember I left Peru crying, and came back crying too...how could I ignore the needs of my brothers?” she remembered.

She believes that her feeling of having to ‘save’ the children comes from this initial experience. Somehow, she transferred her sense of responsibility from her siblings to her students. About the responsibility, she said: “It's not something I dislike now, but I feel that at some point it was too much and scary.”

Interview 1 (30/08/16), hereafter referred to as: Interview 1, Super Keka

Super Keka's artistic background was evident from the start. With a medium size, black ink marker, she drew a tree that stretched itself outside the margins of the page: “I've always had the need to extend my drawings, to take them out of the paper,” she said. She recalled being very fond of drawing trees, and feeling that this image represented her. Her drawing focused on the center, with a spiral condensing its energy from the inside of the trunk: “You told us to focus on something that influenced us...and that would be for me maternity...this is my daughter.” She pointed to the center of the figure.

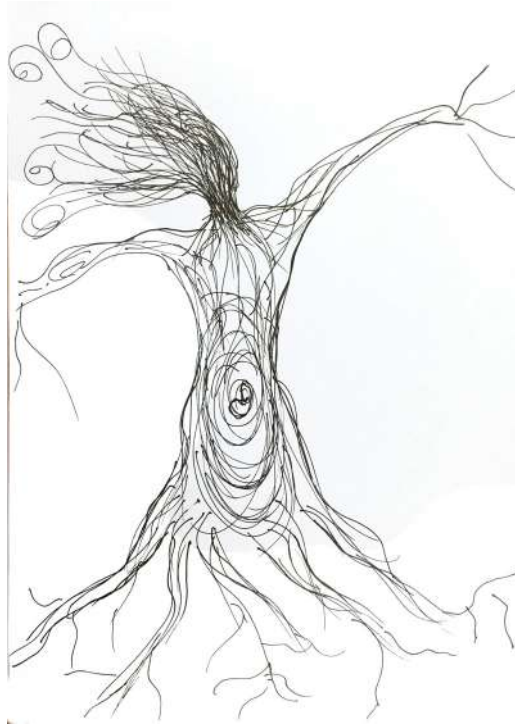


Figure 9 – Super Keka, Session 1, Drawing in response to the prompt: “The emotions I find in my classroom”

Super Keka continued to travel in time, and remembered her childhood as a very difficult, confusing period. There was her mother leaving, and she, being the oldest, helped to take care of her brothers. Then her father remarried, and they had to adapt to a new “mother” figure, which never worked out. When she told her father she wanted to go to Art School, he convinced her to study communications first. After finishing her degree, her father supported her dream of becoming an artist. Nevertheless, she felt somehow tricked by him when she left school. She said: “my dad convinced me to study communication. He said, “you like the arts, design is in publicity and publicity in communication. And he convinced me! I just passed semester after semester...I felt so lost.”

In order to “survive university,” Super Keka enrolled in every single art course she found. After finishing communications, she convinced her father to support her in pursuing art school. She also got married, pregnant, and divorced. Being suddenly

“alone” with her daughter, she was forced to look for a job. She heard that there was a position for teaching art at the elementary level and applied. She feels that having her daughter helped her to “settle down.” She also reflected that this could “have a connotation of lack of movement,” but she quickly discarded that thought: “No. It’s not like that. We are mother and daughter. She helps me, we complement and organize each other,” she corrected herself.

Teaching at Tangananana School was like an anchor for her creativity. Super Keka enjoyed creating materials for the children she works with. For her, creativity was related to a “coming and going.” It is a “reciprocal relationship,” where children give the “clues,” through their behavior, especially through their body language. She stressed the importance of the trust her superiors had in her and the rest of the teachers. For her, teaching creatively means being able to improvise and “get out of the script.”

Super Keka worried about some of her teacher friends. She said that many times she had been “accused of perceiving anything a child does as beautiful.” For her, everything a child does is beautiful:

When they feel you reject what they bring to you, you annul them. There are obviously some children more creative than others, or more skilled. But for me, it’s all about the process. Besides it is your job to create strategies. For example, there was this child who was afraid of drawing the human figure—which is one of the most difficult things to draw. I let him do a collage. He stuck a human figure and then decorated the page. The next class, I convinced him to use only the head and try to draw the body. This way, the child lost his fear of the human figure. (Interview 1, Super Keka)

Super Keka thought rigid standards of what constitutes “creativity” or “beauty” were some of the main obstacles for creativity. She felt that some teachers were not aware of the “weight” (quote from Super Keka) of their comments on children’s work: “They don’t realize the responsibility of their words, gestures, reactions with a little child...you can mark her for the rest of her life...just one look.” In this reflection, Super Keka is also referring to what Van Manen (2016) calls the latency of the pedagogical

moment, and to the importance of how children experience being seen by their caregivers, as in Winnicott's (1972) and Anna Freud's (1986) work. Just as Heart Swirl mentioned in her initial interview, the theme of the 'look' adults give children emerged as a central aspect for nurturing or impeding creativity and emotional wellbeing.

Super Keka, Session 1 (Emotions)

Prompt: "The emotions I find in my classroom."

Super Keka, like the rest of participants, chose a big white cardboard for her first collage. She began by cutting a series of blue wavy figures to represent the emotions she finds in her classroom. The figures went past the surface of the paper, as her "hand usually guides her" to do. At the bottom left corner, she drew a spiral. She placed herself inside the spiral: "the spiral has no beginning and no end...but it has a way in and a way out." She felt that emotional wellbeing was related to this ability to enter and leave different emotional states. As a teacher, she said she tries to accompany her students in this transition: "You can't retain them, you can't control them. You have to go in and out with them."



Figure 10 – Super Keka, Session 1, Drawing in respond to the prompt: "The emotions I find in my classroom"

Super Keka, Session 1 (Emotions)

Prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?"

As with the other participants, the second exercise required more introspection. Super Keka chose a small piece of blue cardboard. With a black marker, she filled the landscape with mountains, hills, a tower where a long-haired girl was trapped, and a pathway with the same long-haired girl finding her way out:

It's complicated, and I'm obviously in two places. Here, in the tower, I'm not only representing myself but 90% of my classmates...this was such a strict regime. Most of the time I felt alone, despite being surrounded by people. Teachers didn't look at you. I was normal. Nobody looks at normal. You look at the one's that annoying, spoiled, the book worm, the one that has money. I was nothing of that. I was just an entity.



Figure 11 – Super Keka, Session 1, Drawing in respond to the prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?"

She partially compensated for loneliness with her group of girlfriends. Still, she recognized herself as the “regular child,” the one who would “never fail a course...I would never allow such a thing...I was alright there, with nobody watching.” She also remembered suffering for the sake of her more visible classmates. When catching up with old school friends, they usually talk about the neglect they felt many teachers had towards them. Super Keka suffered because she didn't have the courage to stand up and

defend her classmates. She remembers recently having spoken to a school friend and confessing:

I suffered for you, because I remember that time in English class, when the teacher would come and look at you. I suffered because of what I saw, not only between teachers and students, but between classmates. Children can be so cruel...and then you feel impotent, because if you open your mouth you are screwed. You appear on the scene, and you don't want that to happen...you feel frustrated, tied up. It appears that there is no way out (Super Keka, Session 1, Drawing in respond to the prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?")

Super Keka did find the way out of this emotionally dark landscape. Through her work as an educator, she felt that she had become some sort of "savior." Nowadays, she recalled that she felt she could do for other children what she would have needed her teachers to do for her. It is kind of a redemption story, a story of empowerment: "I want to empower children, those children that nobody looks at, because they are timid and talk quietly. I want to wake them up, make them feel that they can talk. I make them scream what they didn't like. And then, you make that giant, that bully, turn into a little ant...under the evidence that he is mistreating a friend," she said.

There is a call for justice and a need to protect the "other" in Super Keka's narrative. At the right hand of her drawing, she depicts herself again, now free and triumphant, as she owns her childhood story: "I know it is dark...I know it is black...but there is a light, there is a pathway...and there is a way out. Now I feel I have to rescue. I feel that there are many things to be done."

Super Keka, Session 2 (Creativity)

Prompt: "A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity."

Super Keka chose a medium sized white cardboard for her first collage of the second session, dedicated to creativity. She painted a blue dove, surrounded by wavy shapes colored in yellow, red, and orange, which made the dove stand out visually. She

remembered that as a child, her parents took her to the art museum to attend a workshop. She loved the museum the moment she stepped foot in it. Suddenly, she saw herself in the middle of a large table, children all around her. A teacher gave her a piece of clay. She wasn't sure of what to do at first, but then she decided to create a dove. She remembered that this was the first time she felt she had done something that was "truly recognized." The emotional reassurance she felt from the teacher greatly influenced her love for the arts, she elaborated:

The teacher came to me, congratulated me. It was the first time that I felt that I had talent...I've never really thought of myself as talented. I've always needed to be reinforced. I need the other to tell me "yes, you are talented," and then...then I say "no, not really." It's not because I don't want to believe it...it's just that I look around me and there are so many people doing beautiful things...why would anyone be surprised at my work?



Figure 12 – Super Keka, Session 2, Drawing in respond to the prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”

When I asked her why she didn't see herself as talented, she recalled that going to art school had been her lifelong dream. When she finally got to go to art school, she felt completely unrecognized by her teachers. Teachers were “very demanding and hard...I just concluded I wasn't really talented,” she said. She remembers that one of her paintings was selected among many others for an important art exhibition. But external

validation and criticism interfered with her experience, making it impossible for her to truly enjoy the exhibition:

I said to myself ‘I don’t mind’ the criticism...but it did affect me. My comfort and reward today is that I draw and create all the materials for the children I work with. I never print. Still, I always say that I have to go back to art school someday. I feel I have to draw again.

Even though Super Keka tries to nurture the creative process in her students, the expression of creativity in herself is linked to what is recognized in the public sphere as extraordinary. It seemed as if she needed her art work to be publicly recognized as outstandingly creative, in order to feel that she had “true” creativity. Because she is conscious about how external validation and criticism—the evaluative phase of the creative process—diminished her self-efficacy feelings about her own creativity, she does her best to encourage expressiveness from her students in a loving, welcoming fashion.

Super Kekar, Session 2 (Creativity)

Prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”

When thinking about the creative teaching process, Super Keka felt that the best way to express the elements involved in it would be through origami. The idea of origami made her remember a game called “Little Chicken” that her students enjoy playing very much. It consisted in an origami folded-like four squared figure. Each corner of the figure represented a different color. When children played, they chose a color, then they called out loud the color, divided in syllables, for example: “Yellow.” Next, the figure got folded in the same number of syllables, in this case, two. Inside, there was a surprise element. Super Keka doubled the surprises, because she wanted to express the “superposition of elements in the creative process.” She connected this to

flexibility and openness to experience: “You have something to begin with, your plan, your color...but then, you have to let the surprise elements take you wherever you have to go.” Sometimes, children guided and surprised her; on other occasions she surprised them with a novel idea.



Figure 13: Super Keka, Session 2, artifacts created in response to the prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process



Figure 14: Super Keka, Session 2, artifacts created in response to the prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process

Super Keka, Session 3 (Emotional Creativity)

In the last session of the workshop, where the intersection between emotions and creativity were to be explored, Super Keka got the dimension of “Novelty.” The prompts involved were:

- “I can imagine myself feeling sad, anger, and happy, all at the same time”
- “I sometimes experience feelings and emotions that cannot be easily described”
- “I have felt emotions that other people probably have never experienced”
- “I have emotional experiences that would be considered unusual or out of the ordinary”
- “I would have to be a poet or novelist to describe the kind of emotions I sometimes feel. They are so unique”
- “I can experience a variety of different emotions at the same time”
- “The range and diversity of my emotional reactions sometimes exceed my ability to describe how I feel”
- “I am able to experience a large number of different emotions” (Soroa, Gorostiaga, Aritzeta, & Balluerka, 2015, p. 235).

Super Keka created an activity that she named “The Labyrinth of my Emotions.” She drew a sketch of a labyrinth that she imagined as of a natural size, so that children could actually walk inside it. The labyrinth’s pathways could be created with stones, drawn with chalk on the floor, or could even be “alive,” with natural plants delimiting the borders of the path. At the center of the labyrinth she drew a tree. There, children would find different tokens. These tokens could consist of stones or other natural objects that would represent something special for each child. At the center of the labyrinth, each child would stop, take a gift, and “charge it” with a memory, a feeling or a dream. This

would be a time for personal introspection, like a mindfulness exercise. After taking some time to connect with themselves through their symbol, each child would exit the labyrinth. After the whole group moved through the labyrinth, they would sit in a circle and share their experiences with each other. She explained her activity as follows:

I imagine this like a ritual. The labyrinth can be useful to find the solution to something, or as an end in itself. First, I would gather the group of children and present them with the concept of a labyrinth. I would show them different pictures of labyrinths, and ask them what they know about them. Then, each one would individually enter the labyrinth, get to the center, stop, take a gift or a token, close their eyes and charge it with something special, and then exit the labyrinth. Once everyone has done this, all children would sit in circle and share their experiences. The labyrinth can take you towards yourself. It's a way of walking to the self.

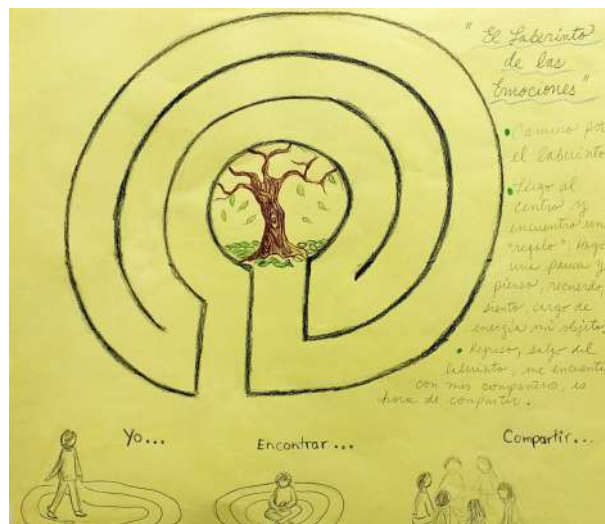


Figure 15: Super Keka's creation for enhancing emotional novelty: "The Labyrinth of my Emotions"³

Reflection journals between sessions

In her reflections between the sessions of the workshop via email, Super Keka wrote that she felt the workshop was like a journey "through time, to my past." She mentioned that some of her memories were positive, and others painful, but that the work she engaged in with the group was helping her "rescue" what is actually useful for her life

³ Figure 17 (Translation, starting from left to right): "Myself / to find / to share". (Top right corner): "The Labyrinth of my Emotions: I walk through the labyrinth / I arrive to the center and find a 'token.' I pause, I think, I feel, I remember. I charge my object with a memory. I exit the labyrinth and share my experience with my peers."

today. She said that the process was helping her recognize the emotional elements connected to her past, and how these are linked to the feeling components she incorporates to her practice that are from her present: “It is not just what you saw as a student, it’s also the backpack each one brings from home every day,” she commented. What Super Keka described was the process by which one layer of emotional experience builds upon and covers the next one, many times making it difficult for us to realize if something is actually from our past or from our present. Reflecting about our emotions is necessary to fine-tune these distinctions. Engaging in memory work in an emotionally safe place may be one of the best pathways gain this insight.

Final interview (26/09/16); hereafter referred to as: Final interview, Super Keka

During the final interview, Super Keka said that she enjoyed having a weekly space for sharing and to use art materials for the exploration of her own self. “I usually use art materials to create things for children, but not for myself,” she commented. She also mentioned that the workshop had been emotionally mobilizing, as it felt like a “trip to the past, where I’ve reconnected with things that have been locked up for many years.” Even though some moments were difficult, she felt emotionally welcomed and accepted by the group, just as Heart Swirl had mentioned: “I feel that we were able to channel the memories that were difficult. It was very important for me to connect with my student self (as a child), and relate it to my identity as a teacher,” Super Keka reflected.

Super Keka felt that the workshop helped her reconnect with her own creativity, as the process enhanced her emotional awareness. For her, the initial interview was important to her, because it helped her to gain insight on how the process was going to unfold: “I realized that this would be a constant digging. I also feel this workshop has awakened in me the necessity to do more things like this, to explore new possibilities for enhancing emotional wellbeing and creativity with my students.”

Another important aspect was related to her feelings of self-efficacy, in relation to her capacity to nurture emotional creativity: the process of exploring her own emotions, the emotions she finds in her classroom, her creative teaching process and the experiences that enhanced her own creativity, and then crystallizing all these explorations in a vehicle to enhance emotional creativity. All this made her realize that she is “on the right track,” and she felt more secure about her own abilities.

Finally, the opportunity of sharing her ideas with her colleagues was valuable, and allowed her to reflect on the different ways that similar things can be explored. The group felt emotionally supportive, and this experience helped her “bridge theory and practice, and to discover that what you bring from your own personal life is important.”

Chapter VI: Seed's narrative

Seed (pseudonym) was a 32 year old English teacher at the elementary level. She had a background in communication and theater, and had recently moved back to Lima, Peru, as she had been living with her husband in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where she taught English to college students. For Seed, this new stage in her professional life permitted her to explore new creative pathways, and that working with small children was allowing her to integrate the different things she loved.



Figure 16: Seed's symbol

Seed created a flower with a seed inside of a cocoon. She said that when she realized she wanted to be called “Seed,” first she imagined “a regular image of a seed, as a kernel.” But inspiration came from a little boy from one of her classes. He had drawn a seed at the center of a flower, and explained that the seed was born beneath the ground, but that when the seed grows, it moved to the center of the flower, where the pollen is. As the birds fed from the seed and flew into the sky, the seed moved closer to the sun, which was the center of life itself. She reflected on her symbol:

I created this drawing of a seed protected inside the flower. But I also did the beginning, at the bottom of the stem. Everything has a beginning, which is why I like the metaphor of a seed. I imagine it must be so hard for a seed to be born, for her to get out of her shell and to grow...to push her roots through the ground, push, push, and push...until she reaches the surface.

Interview 1 (30/08/16); hereafter referred to as: Interview 1, Seed

Seed drew the landscape of the beach where she used to spend summer holidays with her family. Her family owned a house at this beach, where they would spend three complete months during summer vacation. It was in this place where she felt truly free. Some of the things she remembered the most were the feelings of walking bare foot, the joy of riding her bicycle and the community she felt she belonged to. For her, “It was learning in another way...it was such a different place from Lima or school.” She elaborated:

This memory anchors me to my freedom space. Here I was able to explore with the elements, the sand, the kitchen...in this place I allowed myself to do everything. To swim, your body, to feel that I could do things I had never done before, that I could swim to that platform in the middle of the sea. It helped me a lot to loosen up, to meet children from different ages...we were like a tribe, a gang...you would learn from the bigger ones and from the little ones too.
(Interview 1, Seed)



Figure 17: Drawing as preparation for Interview 1 in response to the prompt: “A memory that influenced my emotional wellbeing and creativity”

The beach was an ideal community space for Seed. Being a closed urban space, where most families knew each other, she recalled always feeling safe and having references of other grown ups, besides her own parents, who took care of the children.

When reflecting on the emotions she found in her classrooms, she talked about a child, JP, that moved her very much. Even though Tangananana School is not considered an inclusive school for challenged children, some specific cases do get accepted, under certain conditions. JP was one of those cases. This child seemed to have some sort of autistic spectrum disorder. He used to have a special teacher that accompanied him in all classes, but his parents recently decided that this was not necessary, contrary to the school's recommendations. Seed suddenly found herself emotionally attached to this child, and said that her relationship with this child almost demanded all of her attention during class. She noticed that other children were scared because of JP's aggressive reactions, as he continually spoke about wanting to "kill" others. Through play and the arts, she tried to help him transform these feelings into some sort of narrative, like horror stories. Her relationship with JP reminded her about many relationships she had with other children when she was a child. She remembered always having a sweet spot for the misunderstood, for the bullied, and for the "different."

When reflecting about the creative student, she mentioned three elements: an open disposition for using different materials; an effort to go beyond what was expected; and a higher social awareness:

The child that is not creative puts a lot of limits. There are children that are naturally more rigid, of course, but they too can be creative. I think that one of the things that impedes creativity from growing is this vision that things that are either artistic or musical aren't really worthy. This is harder when you grow up...there is this message that you won't be able to use all of that. "Why do you draw in math class? That is wrong." There is this imposition around how materials should be instructed or educated...and children start building themselves up, they start taking all this hidden messages in...making adult fears their own. (Interview 1, Seed)

She also mentioned power issues in the relationship between teachers and students: “When you start growing, the perspective changes physically... seeing adults from down there must be scary,” she noted. Seed talked about the connection between the embodiment of feelings and creativity. For her, creativity is related to “how you receive.” She noticed that some children have “thinner skin,” and they needed to create an armor to “protect themselves.” Seed also observed “different ways of being awake,” as some children are more awake with their eyes, while others with their ears. Noticing the different ways of perceiving the world is important for nurturing creativity.

For her, teaching creatively is connected to an ability to “get out of the script.” It has to do with improvising, playing and pleasure and with an ability to transit through our own emotions:

I believe creativity is like a boat. It’s something more spiritual, like a butterfly, like the caterpillar. As a teacher, sometimes it’s hard for me to be the grown up. What I like the most is to play with them. It’s like rowing. We have a destination, there we have to go! It doesn’t matter if we get there with our butterfly or crocodile rows! (Interview 1, Seed)

It is interesting to note how Seed expressed her creativity through the use of mental imagery (“butterfly or crocodile rows”) and through metaphors (as in her own choice for pseudonym). One of the characteristics of people who are high in emotional creativity is that they are better than their less advantaged peers in thinking in terms of pictures, metaphors or literary figures (Averill, 1999a). She was also very conscious of the embodiment of creative behavior, which may be related to her preparation in theater.

Seed, Session 1 (Emotions)

Prompt: “The emotions I find in my classroom”

To respond to the prompt “The emotions I find in my classroom,” Seed created a collage mixed with a drawing, and began by delineating a seed at the center of a big white cardboard. Different kinds of emotions were born from this seed. Starting with a seed

represented the beginning for her, because “although many things are cyclical and never-ending, everything begins at some point.”

First, Seed drew the emotion of joy, which extended herself like a curly pink energy. Then she continued with darkness which represented fear, an emotion she finds many times among her students. A starry night followed: “it’s like looking at something and knowing it’s there, that it goes beyond yourself.” The starry night represented the spiritual and also the magic of observing “beings that are just arriving to this world,” like when they (the children) “sit still, which is wonderful to watch.” Afterwards followed confusion and chaos, represented by a tangle of thick green thread. When children don’t understand something, she feels as if she were pulling on that green thread, disentangling confusion. Next came growth, represented by leaves that started to stretch: “I don’t know if growing is an emotion, but it’s this feeling of growing, of expanding into the world and exploring your body.” And after growth, came freedom, represented by two magical figures, half birds and half dolphins.



Figure 18: Seed, Session 1, Collage in response to the prompt: “The emotions I find in my classroom

Seed, Session 1 (Emotions)

Prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?"

To respond to the second prompt "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?" she began by picking up a small blue cardboard. She said that she felt a need for less space, since this exercise felt more "intimate." In school, she remembered feeling castrated and controlled. She didn't have many friends, because she was always someone who "shared in small circles." During her schooling she used to befriend the ones that weren't popular and many times bullied. She talked about a judgmental gaze, particularly from other little girls: "Little girls can be so mean," she said. As it was a British school, discipline was expressed through body language, and there was a proper and an accepted way to sit down, stand up straight and walk proudly. Slowly but steadily, Seed felt she lost her freedom. Her grades suffered: "everything went down...my mood, my grades...until I started with theater. Then everything started going upwards again," she said.

For Seed, theater had a similar connotation for her as her holidays at the beach (see: Interview 1, Seed). In theater she found a group where she felt "vital," her "voice heard." It wasn't that anybody was "irreplaceable," but rather than everyone was "necessary," from the leading actor to the last extra, she recalled. She described this feeling like a "self-discovery...for me it was like a waterfall, like falling...and coming out with color sparks to be born again." Theater allowed her to re-connect with her body, as she started to feel free again through physical expression. It allowed her to reframe her relationship with the look of the "other." By standing on a stage, protected and contained by the theater community, she could face the look of the other and transform her relationships:

The look of the others, that I felt didn't understand me...they broke my innocence in a sense. I would play with anything, like a stick, and other little girls would snarl at me: "Why do you play with that?" I felt invisible...I went unnoticed, in the library, in the classroom. For me, theater was transformative, you could transform anything, even that look.

Seed drew a river that represented all the emotions she brought each day to school. She also painted a waterfall, as there were "many emotions." She described her emotions as fluid and continual. As in Heraclitus allegory of the river: "Ever-newer waters flow on those who step into the same rivers," for Seed, emotional wellbeing means navigating emotions without fear: "Everything changes. Me, them, everything."



Figure 19: Seed, Session 1, Drawing in respond to the prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?"

Seed, Session 2 (Creativity)

During the initial circle time, Seed started by reflecting on her pseudonym and personal symbol. For her, this represents, besides the beginning of many things, the individual's responsibility for "watering the seed" and "making it grow." She had been reflecting about the "ways in which she had been watered," and how she had nurtured herself. She shared with the group an experience she had in church. She was passing through a "dark time" in her life, and she was demanding God to help her. Suddenly, she felt a message, and a "voice" spoke to her heart saying "You have to plant the seed, and

God will water it.” Next, she reflects on the current technological paradigm, where so much information is available, at the click of a mouse:

I feel that depth is being lost. Everything is given. Everything is in Google. Then you feel that you don’t have to question yourself. You can just “ask the machine.” If you don’t question the knowledge you find outside of yourself, how will you question your own knowledge, at your personal sphere? I feel that the private has a lot to do with the educational. If that interest, that seed is not there, it’s very difficult to develop it. Even if you put water and vitamins.

Seed, Session 2 (Creativity)

Prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”

To respond to the prompt “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity,” Seed created a drawing mixed with a collage in a medium sized white cardboard. She used acrylic painting, and created a sea and a sun of many colors. For Seed, creativity is always linked to the sea. She said that she loved feeling the waves on her tummy and the emotion of freedom every time she entered the salty water. Memories of the sea were also memories of her spending time with her father, as he loved going to the beach with her. The second memory she linked to creativity was theater. She remembered the first play in which she participated, called “The Sea and It’s Mysteries,” a play by Emilio Carbadillo:

I had always wanted to act. When I started high school, I was very excited and auditioned for the first play, but I got rejected. Because I still wanted to participate, I became a backstage expert. I was very good at organizing and getting everything done. But still, I wanted to act. When I was in ninth grade, my twin sister asked me to accompany her to this audition. I knew all the lines of the play. When I heard other girls audition, I felt that they didn’t put all of their heart into the words...and the words were so beautiful. I asked the director to audition, and I read, investing all of my soul: “Dark and deep...deeply vibrant. I vibrate to the deepest of my soul. I barely murmur. A humid murmur called silence.”

Seed recalled feeling that this was the first time she said something out loud, truly feeling it: “You must have truth to be creative,” she said. She got the part and from that

moment on, continued acting. Years afterwards, she graduated from her theater course in university with the same play.



Figure 20: Seed, Session 2, Drawing in response to the prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”

Seed, Session 2 (Creativity)

Prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”

For the second movement of this session, in response to the prompt “At the heart of the creative teaching process,” Seed created a tridimensional collage, with colored sticks: “I didn’t want to do something flat,” she explained, “I had this image of constructing...I didn’t want it to be square...the triangle has a spiritual connotation for me.” She talked about the consciousness of a beginning, represented in a seed, at the center of the triangle. She had initially considered working the triangle, so that it would be wider at the bottom and narrower at the top, but then she decided it would better be narrower at the bottom and wider at the top. This way, she felt it communicated something “deeper.” Around the colorful triangle, she depicted images of waves and ripples of water colliding into each other. She reflected:

For me it’s through collision that reality is created. Creativity is in the water, in the ripples of the water that form different shapes and patterns. These patterns relate between each other, they combine and form a new reality. In the middle, lies the Self, what you are constructing.

For Seed, each child was represented by a ripple. When teachers tolerate and welcome the different expressions of the children and let them communicate “between them,” creativity is nurtured in the classroom. Because each child forms a particular type of ripple and “dances” in her own unique way, each classroom is unique. This combination makes each classroom special, impossible to repeat itself, with a particular kind of energy.



Figure 21: Seed, Session 2, Collage in response to the prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”

Seed, Session 3 (Emotional Creativity)

Seed got the dimension of “Authenticity/effectiveness.” The prompts involved were:

- “I am good at expressing my emotions”
- “The way I express and experience my emotions help me in my relationship with others”
- “My emotions help me achieve my goals in life”
- “My emotions are an important source of meaning in my life: without them, my life would be meaningless”
- “I try to be honest when expressing my emotions, even when this may cause me problems”

- “My outward emotional reactions adequately reflect my inner feelings”
(Soroa, Gorostiaga, Aritzeta, & Balluerka, 2015, p. 235).

Seed created an activity based in mindfulness that she called “The Castle of my Emotions.” Each card had a special indication on one side, and a complementary color behind. Children would approach the castle and start with the cards at the top.

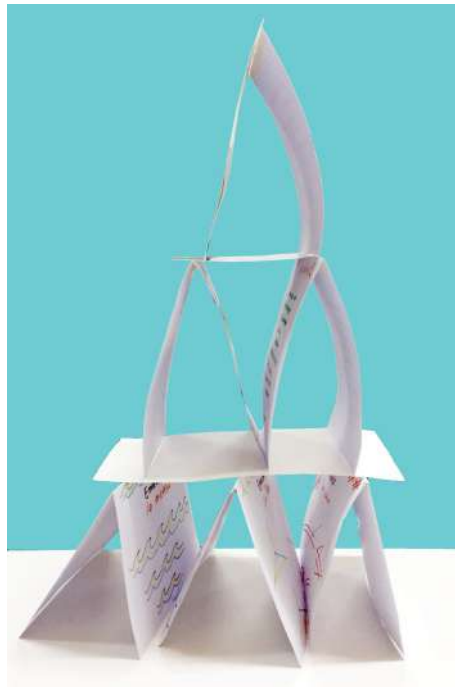


Figure 22: Seed’s creation for enhancing emotional novelty: “The Castle of my Emotions”

The castle was constructed with three types of cards. The first set of cards had instructions for relaxing: “On the floor, it is time to let go. I imagine I am born again,” and “My bare feet on the ground, with my eyes closed, I listen to the rhythm of the music, and let myself go.” The second set of cards suggested different ways of exploring an emotion: through a place, through the memory of a person, an object or music. The third set of cards show an emotion and a color that accompanies that emotion at the back of the card. The emotions Seed described are more complex, such as “freedom,” “peace,” “joy,” and “confusion.” In this way, the emotional journey is more subtle and intuitive.

The process of her dynamic was as follows: each child chose a way of relaxing. Next, an emotion was selected. Children could choose to explore this emotion by imagining a place, a person, a color or an object that resonated with it. As a closing, each child depicted their exploration through a drawing, collage or sculpture, that was later shared with the rest of the group.



Figure 23: Relaxation 1⁴



Figure 24: Relaxation 2⁵

⁴ Figure 23 (translation): "On the floor, its time to let go, to be born again, I begin to feel."

⁵ Figure 24 (translation): "Barefoot on the rug, standing up. To the rhythm of the music, with my eyes closed, I dance with my heart."

La Música

- A ritmo de la música bailar, con la emoción



Figure 25: Music⁶

Un lugar

Imaginar un lugar a donde te lleva la emoción.
Mirar el lugar.
Identificar la emoción.
Soltar

Figure 26: Place⁷

Una persona

Imaginar una persona que te identifique con la emoción.
Mirarla a los ojos en silencio decirle una palabra.
Soltar

Figure 27: Person⁸

⁶ Figure 25 (translation): "With the rhythm of the music, dance to the tune of the emotion".

⁷ Figure 26 (translation): "Imagine a place where the emotion takes you. Look at the place, feel the emotion and let go".

Un Objeto

- Imaginar un objeto que vaya de acuerdo a la emoción.
Soltar

Figure 28: Object⁹

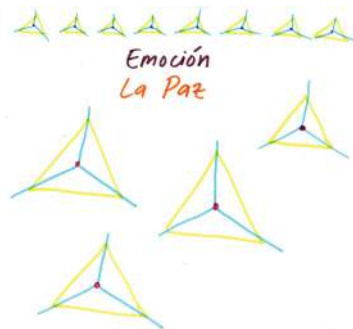


Figure 29: Peace¹⁰



Figure 30: Freedom¹¹

⁸ Figure 27 (translation): "Imagine a person that you identify with the emotion. Look at the person in the eyes. In silence, say a word to him or her. Let go."

⁹ Figure 28 (translation): "Imagine an object that connects you to the emotion. Let go."

¹⁰ Figure 29 (translation): "The emotion of peace."

¹¹ Figure 30 (translation): "The emotion of freedom."



Figure 31: Anger¹²



Figure 32: Joy¹³



Figure 33: Confusion¹⁴

¹² Figure 31 (translation): "The emotion of anger."

¹³ Figure 32 (translation): "The emotion of joy."

¹⁴ Figure 33 (translation): "The emotion of confusion."



Figure 34: Sadness¹⁵

Journal reflections between sessions

During her reflections between sessions via email, Seed mentioned that drawing and making more “concrete” her emotions, allowed her to be able to “classify” her feelings, which somehow helped her to understand them better. She also wrote that as the days passed by, she was able to observe her own feelings more clearly.

Seed also reflected on the importance of theater for her emotional and creative development. For her, theater “brings words to life, and words that are alive are powerful. They mobilize. They are cathartic.” Through theater, she connected with a sense of self-efficacy, with a “hidden power that I wasn’t conscious of having.” She also reflected about how emotions influence the creative process, functioning as a door that leads to transformation and about how individual self-work in a collaborative space like the workshop, may facilitate social transformation: “Each one of us is unique, each one of us is different. Still, through this process, we are able to involve many more people and transform,” she wrote.

Finally, Seed reflected about the importance of recognizing the different emotional “footprints” of each child: “Each child is unique and has a different creativity.

¹⁵ Figure 34 (translation): “The emotion of sadness.”

These creativities collide, mixing and transforming.” She also acknowledged the importance of reflecting about emotions and creativity for her practice as an elementary English teacher: “The power of being creative makes a language, such as English, easier to learn,” she concluded.

Final interview (30/09/16); hereafter referred to as: Final interview, Seed

During the final interview, Seed said that she felt that the process of the workshop had been “very natural,” and that the first two sessions allowed participants to “develop the tools” for the last session, which enabled them to crystallize their process in a “final product.” She enjoyed the activities and found them to be novel ideas of thinking about her work. For example, she had never thought about her own creativity (or creativity in general) in a “scientific way.” She explained that science was discovery and that it also involved systematic approaches or methodologies. She felt that the process of the workshop was thought as a method to approach the links between emotions and creativity step-by-step. Also, identifying the emotions she brought to her classroom and relating them to her own schooling and personal childhood was important for her emotional awareness.

The exploration helped her “conceptualize” her thoughts about emotions and creativity, which she found helpful for her practice and to “guide” her own creativity. The most important tools she found in the workshop were consciousness about emotions and awareness about the ways in which these can be transformed, particularly the more difficult or painful ones. She felt that the process was well organized, and that “each step opened a new door.” For her, the most important moment of this journey was when she realized she wanted to be a Seed. She also said that creating her own symbol and pseudonym helped her gain more insight about her own emotional processes. The notion of the seed also allowed her to have clarity on the way she conceptualized emotions.

Finally, Seed would have also liked the workshop to be longer. She said that the size of the group felt right, and that she felt emotionally welcomed and accepted by every member: “It felt like a tribe...and the moments when we shared, were intimate and therapeutic,” she concluded.

Chapter VII: Thematic analysis

The emerging themes from the workshop were closely related to the research questions of this study. The research questions were: What sort of emotions do teachers find in their classrooms? What type of emotional memories do teachers hold from their own schooling experience, and in what ways do these influence their pedagogy? What elements lie at the heart of the creative teaching process? In what ways can teachers enhance the emotional creativity of their students?

The themes connected to these questions are: 1) the pedagogy of regard and the gaze of the (m)other; 2) imagination and new beginnings for the making of community; 3) play; and 4) the perceived barriers to emotional creativity in the classroom from the vantage point of the participants.

Even though all themes are connected, the pedagogy of regard —meaning the memories the participants had about the ways in which they were looked upon as children, and how these gazes influenced their emotional wellbeing, creativity and practice— was the central one. From my perspective, the quality of this look, (that could be punitive, judgmental or absent), deeply affected the possibilities each participant had to develop their imagination, to engage in new beginnings as well as their experience of play. The perceived barriers to emotional creativity, from the vantage point of the participants, were greatly dependent on the type of look they had received. For example, the nature of the severe and judgmental look Heart Swirl experienced as a child, made her feel afraid of doing mistakes and of taking risks. This affected her ability to remain open to experience, which is a condition for free play. Heart Swirl found her way out of this gaze when she learned about Aucouturier methodology, which is based in playing with unstructured materials, such as big foam blocks, ropes and cloths. Re-connecting with

play, made her conscious about the look that she had carried with her from her childhood to her adulthood.

As this study collects adult reflections about the experiences that developed their emotional creativity, memory work served a double purpose: it was the personal bundle while at the same time, path to transformation. Our memories are of a curious nature. Memory holds the keys to what was, that still is, while at the same time, gives us the clues to become who (we) ought to be. Re-visiting our memories helps us decipher the combinations that unlock the doors towards new beginnings and what still may become, so that we are able to step out of the past and move forward to an existence where we are may experience emotional and intellectual freedom. Hence, a more creative life.

Theme 1: The pedagogy of regard and the gaze of the (m) ‘other’

For all three participants, the effect (and affect) of the gaze of the ‘other’ was essential in the development of their emotional wellbeing and creative capacities. Even though many times it was not clear who was the beholder of this gaze, it was perceived as an adult look. The ‘latency’ of the pedagogical moments —the effect over time on a child of the way we relate to her— and how these looks, for good or for bad, influence the life of the child, have been studied by educational scholars such as Van Manen (2016): “Pedagogical experiences,” he explained, “occur in situations when and where adults stand in pedagogical relation with children” (Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 6). An adult stands in pedagogical relation with children because that adult is responsible for the child. In this sense, every caregiver constantly stands in pedagogical relation with the child he or she cares for. As adults, we cannot escape being examples for children. At the same time, it is through our gaze that children feel whether we are (or are not) attached to them. It is through that look that children feel recognized and taken care for.

As we will see, these experiences endure a long time, in spite of the sublimation strategies the conscious self may develop to overcome them (Freud, 1986).

From Heart Swirl's perspective, the look of the 'other' —particularly her child perception of what this look meant— created an emotional conflict that didn't allow her to express anger. She recognized that she still had difficulty showing her anger with people close to her. It wasn't until she was a grown-up woman and educator, engaged in play through the Aucouturier (2007) methodology of psychomotor practice, which begins with the affirmation of the self through the authorized destruction of the adult construction, that she was she was able to access her own aggressive impulses. Through Aucouturier, she could recognize the importance of aggressiveness, which is what she was referring to when she said "There is no way you can create if you don't break the adult. If you don't break the teacher, your mother...if you don't rebel" (Heart Swirl, Session 2, Prompt: "At the heart of the creative teaching process").

Until that time, she thought that there was no aggression in herself. Heart Swirl traced the origin of this experience to her childhood, when she realized that "the look from the other" caused her a lot of "expectation." She continued: "I thought this look was judgmental, permanent, and I feared to be misinterpreted...that people would think I was bad" (Heart Swirl, Session 1, Prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?") The defense mechanism she developed was to deeply bury her aggressive impulses, making her behave "always good." She became the "proper" child: always soft, always obedient, never disruptive. This also led her to feel that it was better to "go unnoticed," avoiding unruly behavior, rather than to risk the possibility that someone might think she was bad.

Creativity researchers in education, such as Ruth Richards (2010) and Mark Runco (2015), have stressed the importance of disruptive behavior and divergent thinking for the creative process. The capacity of behaving in “unorthodox” ways is also linked to the most ubiquitous personality trait across creativity theories: openness to experience (Amabile, 1996; Averill, 1999a; 1999b; Beghetto, 2010). How many times might Heart Swirl avoided participating in new experiences for the sake of remaining ‘unnoticed’ and being perceived as ‘good’?

The association between values and emotions has been investigated by Averill (1999b) as one of the main barriers for the development of emotional creativity. Emotions embody the values of a society (Averill, 2005). Under Heart Swirl’s value system, expressing aggressiveness was linked to something ‘bad.’ Risking to be considered ‘evil’ was intolerable; therefore, it was better to bury her anger.

Anna Freud (1986) has explored the ways in which children acquire their superego (the highest moral instance, which dictates what the conscious self ideally aspires to be). Children compose their superego in resemblance to the image of the adults that surround them; it almost works as a direct transfer or acquisition. It is crucial for the gaze of the caregiver to reflect a real image of what a human being is: flexible enough to include weaknesses, with an attitude of tolerance towards the hidden instincts that inhabit the unconscious. Freud stressed the importance of allowing children to express their inner aggressiveness towards the outside world, so that the repression of these instincts would not evolve to become rigid defense mechanisms accompanying the individual throughout most of her adult life, as in Heart Swirl’s experience. Heart Swirl emphasized the importance of educators understanding this principle, so as to create free individuals, liberated from internal conflicts and open to the possibility of experiencing true satisfaction.

It is crucial for educators to understand the formative role of positive emotions as well as of conflicting emotions, such as grief and anger. Suppressing these emotions will not enhance creativity, but rather impede it, since each feeling serves a purpose and plays an important role in the construction of our identity. While I am not suggesting that educators should promote conflicting emotions, the data shared by the teachers point to the fact that accepting these emotions is necessary for the development of creativity. Heart Swirl discovered the importance of accepting conflicting emotions when she learned about Aucouturier: "...I used all my strategies so that the aggressive things weren't there, because I was afraid. After I learned about Aucouturier, I realized that aggression exists...that I have to let it out, because if I don't it's worse" (Interview 1, Heart Swirl). She said that she discovered that these emotions serve a purpose and have a place and a time in our lives and learning process. As educators, we need to be able to identify in what ways each emotion may be more productive for the wellbeing of children. In this sense, conflicting emotions may signal which themes need to be addressed in our pedagogical relationship with children.

In Super Keka's narrative, four big moments occurred in which she identified the 'gaze of the other' as marking her emotional wellbeing and creativity. The first moment was the look of her father, when he decided to transfer maternal responsibility to her because of the divorce and her mother moving to a different country. She remembered that her father put his hand on her shoulder and said to her: "Now you are my right arm" (Interview 1, Super Keka). This moment endured over time, directing her actions. She became the protector of her siblings, and later on, she identified herself as a "savior" for her students, especially the most timid ones. The impact of the gaze of her father made Super Keka conscious of the responsibility educators have with children. She complained about the little awareness of many teachers when commenting on the work of children:

“They don’t realize the responsibility of their words, gestures, reactions with a little child...you can mark her for the rest of her life...just one look” (Interview 1, Super Keka). While Super Keka experienced the weight of the gaze of her father, she also suffered the absence of her mother’s look. It is important to note that even though Super Keka openly shared with the group some of her emotionally difficult personal experiences, her mother was not present in her narrative. Absent was also the story about her ex-husband, whom she divorced. The silence(s) —what we choose not to tell— may convey more meaning than our words. Just as Super Keka assumed the role of her mother with her three siblings, she carried her maternity role alone. Her teacher-self seemed to further “actualize” this role, as she felt compelled to “save” her students (Interview 1, Super Keka).

In Super Keka’s narrative, the absence of her mother’s gaze might be contained in the second experience that she linked to the ‘look of the other:’ her feeling of invisibility in school. Feeling part of an undifferentiated mass of students increased her loneliness: “Most of the time I felt alone, despite being surrounded by people. Teachers didn’t look at you. I was normal. Nobody looks at normal...I was just an entity” (Super Keka, Session 1, Prompt: “What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?”) It is important to note that she did feel seen by her classmates, as she mentioned enjoying being part of a group. It was the look of the adult, of the teachers and caregivers —*the look of her mother*— that was missing.

The third and fourth moments in which ‘the look of the other’ influenced Super-Keka relate to her self-efficacy feelings about her artistic and creative capacities. Her desire to become a visual artist was linked to the first time she produced a work of art (the sculpture of a dove), which was publicly praised and positively evaluated by her art

teacher. This was the first time that she recalled feeling “truly recognized...and the first time that I felt that I had talent. I’ve never really thought of myself as talented. I’ve always needed to be reinforced” (Super Keka, Session 2, Prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”). The recognition valuable for Super Keka was that coming from a teacher, not from her peers. Later in her life, the construction of her self-image as not being “really talented” was reinforced through the “very demanding and hard” criticism of her teachers in art school (Super Keka, Session 2, Prompt: “A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity”). This resonates with research that suggests that the so-called “evaluative” phase of the creative process, in which the product is scrutinized and categorized, has been found to be detrimental for creativity (Amabile, 1988).

Seed felt unrecognized and lonely during her schooling, in part, because of the strict British discipline in her school, where there was a “proper” way of standing straight, sitting straight, waiting quietly in line, and the like: “I felt invisible...I went unnoticed, in the library, in the classroom” (Seed, Session 1, Prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?") She also recalled feeling a judgmental look in school, particularly from “other little girls.” Through theater, Seed found a community of people where she could reconnect with her self-expression and reclaim her right to feel free. When she discovered theater, she found her place in school: [theater] was “self-discovery...for me it was like a waterfall, like falling...and coming out with color sparks to be born again” (Seed, Session 1, Prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?") Theater allowed Seed to transform her perception of the “look.” Theatrical representation has been found to be a mechanism for healing

through reconciling with painful aspects of reality. The most important aspects for Seed in her theater experience were related to authenticity and the experience of belonging to a community, where she felt that her participation was “vital” and that her “voice was heard.” It wasn’t a feeling of omnipotence—as in feeling “irreplaceable”—rather a consciousness of being necessary and of belonging. Community, or “the tribe,” as Seed expresses it, generated the in-between space for her to relate to the look of “the other,” facilitated by the stage in theater. As she recalls: “For me, theater was transformative. You could transform anything, *even that look*” (Seed, Session 1, Prompt: “What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?” Emphasis added).

Understanding the ways in which different places influence our behavior may show us pathways for self-discovery. The discovery of new ways of experiencing place—such as the experience of stage and representation, a place different than the regular setting of “normal” life—may help us connect with elements of oneself that are difficult to access in regular settings.

Creativity theorists such as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) have studied the impact of the quality of place for creative outcomes. Harmonious and beautiful places—keeping in mind the many different and valid perceptions of what a beautiful place may be like—have been found to enhance creativity. The organization of place has also been conceptualized as a “third teacher” in education. Some examples of this are the Reggio Emilia and Montessori approaches (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007).

Theme 2: Imagination and new beginnings for the making of community

Consciousness about the ways the look of the ‘other’ affected us as children, requires imagination. It is through imagination that we discover new ways of feeling, perceiving and expressing. Imagination helps us become more aware of our own processes and possibilities for transformation; it is also necessary for freedom, therefore, new beginnings. Maxine Greene has written about the importance of cultivating imagination so that young people will be able to envision different ways of living and of experiencing community (Greene, 1995). Hannah Spector (2017) wrote about the need to cultivate an ethical imagination. Building on Greene’s work she stated: “For Greene, the reason that it is crucial to imagine other realities is because the current one is not as moral, not as just, and not as democratic as it could be” (p. 40). Therefore, imagination is not only crucial for our development as creative and free individuals, but for the making of a more caring and conscious society.

Imagination is essential for empathy. It opens the door to awareness of the other and to our own projections within the others, which gives us clues about ourselves, enhancing consciousness. This is related to Winnicott’s (1971) notions about how the child constructs his identity and sense of self, through the gaze of her mother. Mirroring is a reciprocal process. The baby mirrors herself in the eyes of the mother, and the mother receives the gaze of her child, discovering cues about herself. To remain attentive and become more conscious, a mother needs to exercise her imagination.

The development of consciousness through imagination is not straightforward (Chambers, 1998). New beginnings in our lives are not disconnected from our past. On the contrary, the roots of our new beginnings lie in our formative experiences. Our memories are like the soil and new beginnings are seeds. A seed may have enormous potential. Despite this, every seed needs a fertile ground. New beginnings are not a

privilege for the future, even though they belong to what is not yet. The most powerful new beginnings may start with alternative ways of understanding our past, which is why memory work is necessary for consciousness and imagination (Chambers, 1998; Greene, 1995).

Dewey's (1934) notion of conscious awareness began with the imaginative phase. Imagination is what allows us to "break through the inertia of habit" (Dewey, 1934, p. 272, as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 21), and represents the beginning of something new. At the same time, consciousness—the language of the self—cannot truly express itself in isolation, because the self requires the other to develop itself, which leads us to the creation of a more ethical and creative community. Imaginative consciousness helps us become wide awake. Being wide awake, as Maxine Greene (1995) reminded us, is as concrete as what and how we experiment life. It is linked to creative action.

When we exercise our imagination and creativity, we (re)create our selves. Cultivating consciousness and an ethical imagination (Spector, 2017), in the form of wide-awakeness, allows us to "choose what *ought* to be" (Greene, 1977, p. 123, emphasis in original). Creativity is the process by which we become what we choose we ought to be, and the exercise of our freedom of thought, as Runco (2015) defined it.

Seed linked emotions to the notion of a beginning, through the image of a kernel that gave birth to all kinds of feelings. She recognized that "although many things are cyclical and never-ending, everything begins at some point" (Seed, Session 1, Prompt: "What are the emotions I find in my classroom?") New beginnings and creativity, from her vantage point, were also a reflection of emotional authenticity, which is what she meant when she said that "You must have truth," in reference to her first experience with acting (Seed, Session 2, Prompt: "A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity"). Consciousness about her creative nature was also tightly linked to different

ways in which she experienced community and place. She recalled feeling that the summers she spent at the beach nurtured her creativity. It wasn't just about being close to nature. What she enjoyed the most was "feeling part of a tribe" (Interview 1, Seed). On the other hand, her schooling represented the opposite—the lack of community and social isolation, until she found a tribe within her school: the theater group (Seed, Session 1, Prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?")

From Heart Swirl's vantage point, new beginnings and the birth of her creativity was linked to the jungle, a place where community was strong and caring. The experience of living among native children in the middle of the jungle developed in her the sense of trust, which she connects to creativity: "I feel that living like that between children [in the jungle] taught me to resolve things as they appear...I always have this confidence that everything is going to be alright...creativity is built upon trust...upon the trust to look at yourself without getting scared" (Interview 1, Heart Swirl).

How we experience relationships influence and shape our internal experience of awareness. From the perspective of neuroscience, it has been found that when caregivers "attune" themselves with children's internal worlds—through healthy mirroring experiences— children develop a positive subjective internal experience; which in turn, generates a positive perception of external reality and community. Neuroscientist Daniel Siegel refers to how Hellen Keller experienced that her "mind was born" when she suddenly understood what her teacher meant by the sign of water: "Shared experience within interpersonal relationship...is an important source of our mental lives and directly develops through processes and internal states" (Siegel, 2012, p. 41). Shared experiences are grounded in community. Through our lives, we may experience in different moments and ways how our minds are 'born,' as we connect in different ways between us.

Consciousness about this process might help us actively search for the opportunities that will enhance our awareness through interpersonal relationships. For instance, ever since Seed (re)-experienced feeling part of a caring community through theater, she continually kept searching for new opportunities to relate to others, participating in different tribes.

In Super Keka's narrative, another aspect of community which is particularly important for creativity can be observed: influence of domain and field. According to Csizkszentmihalyi's (1988) system approach to creativity, field is related to the group of social institutions responsible for selecting the novel ideas that will be considered as worthy of being preserved in the domain (Averill, 2011). Researchers, critics, philanthropists, politicians and others may serve as the "gatekeepers" of different fields. Research in social creativity has established that there is a strong tendency to replicate given structures, which is detrimental to creative outcomes (Amabile, 1996). If creativity used to be historically constrained by the tight jacket of religion in the West; nowadays, the association between innovation and market value (understood as the cash value for novel ideas) might well be the replacement of religious dogma.

Super Keka didn't feel recognized by her art teachers. She felt that "Teachers were very demanding and hard...I just concluded I wasn't really talented" (Super Keka, Session 2, Prompt: "A memory from my childhood that leads me to creativity.") She tried to ignore her need for recognition with no success: "I said to myself 'I don't mind' the criticism...but it did affect me" (Super Keka, Session 2). In her current role as an educator, she does her best to constantly recognize her students' talents and efforts. She worried about a product bias in some of her colleagues, who considered her to be too prone to praise "anything" her students do as "being beautiful." Coinciding with extensive research about the barriers in creativity, she found that rigid standards about what beauty and creativity are, constitute one of the main obstacles for its development

(Interview 1, Super Keka). In a way, by becoming an educator, she found a more gentle domain in which to develop her creativity. This can be read in between the lines, when she says: “My comfort and reward today” —contrary to the anguish she felt because of the criticism of her art teachers at school— “is that I draw and create all the materials for the children I work with. I never print” (Super Keka, Session 2).

From a psychoanalytical perspective, the barriers to our creative consciousness — as well as the awareness of our possibilities to transform and change and to exercise our imagination— have to do with the defense mechanisms we create to protect ourselves from the ascending forces of all that is unconscious (censored by us or by society), the conscious mind and the super ego (Freud 1986). Therefore, what type of strategies can we develop to overcome or “trick” our own defense mechanisms and make them relax the guard? In the next section, I will investigate the power of playing for developing creativity and integrating the different aspects of self.

Theme 3: Play

We all need to play. The ways in which we play may change depending on our life-stages. Adults play through the arts, through the way they choose their words, and their sense of humor, among other examples (Nicolo, 2015). Probably one of the biggest pleasures of working with small children is that we can reconnect with a more ‘embodied’ type of play, where there is running around and more physical contact. Reconnecting with an embodied type of play reminds us of the joy of feeling young and agile: it connects us with our vitality. Teachers may exercise their playfulness in many different forms, such as in the ways they communicate with children, with their emotional affection or in literally engaging in physical games with their students. Creating games or activities is also a way in which teachers may exercise playing.

For Seed, playing is always present in her practice. She reflected on the importance of paying attention to the different ways in which children are ‘awake:’ “Some children are more awake with their eyes, others with their ears,” she said (Interview 1, Seed). This resonates with Gardner’s (1993) multiple intelligence theories and the importance of generating spaces so that different aspects of the self may develop through schooling; such as the arts, sports, humanities, mathematics.

The activity Seed created for enhancing the effectiveness/authenticity dimension of emotional creativity was a playful mindful practice, where children could explore the different ways of feeling emotions. She created a castle of cards, where each card had different indications related to emotions: children would feel the emotions in their body first, by expressing them through movement, as when dancing to a tune trying to connect to that emotion. They were also prompted to connect emotions to different colors, objects, places and people. Finally, children would represent their experience in a drawing, taking it “out” and sharing it with the rest of her classmates (Seed, Session 3, Emotional Creativity).

The connection between creativity and spirituality was also present when she said: “I believe creativity is like a boat. It’s something more spiritual, like a butterfly and the caterpillar...it’s like rowing. We have a destination...it doesn’t matter if we get there with our butterfly or crocodile rows!” (Interview 1, Seed).

Through her practice, Seed played by “getting out of the script.” Even though she recognized always having a plan, she remained very flexible in the ways in which these plans actually developed. Another way in which playing was present in her practice was through theater and through the idea of constructing something. During Session 2, where we explored Creativity, Seed created a collage that was more of a sculpture, in response to the prompt “At the heart of the creative teaching process.” She created a triangle with

color sticks that had depth. At the center of the triangle, she drew a seed. Around the colorful triangle, she painted images of waves and ripples of waters colliding between each other. She said:

I didn't want to do something flat...I had this image of constructing...for me, it's through collision that reality is created. Creativity is in the water, in the ripples of the water that form different shapes and patterns. These patterns relate between each other, they combine and form a new reality. In the middle, lies the Self, what you are constructing. (Seed, Session 2, "At the heart of the creative teaching process")

For Seed, each child represented a ripple, and as children played between them, these ripples collided between them. When teachers tolerate and welcome different behaviors of children, giving children freedom to communicate in their own terms, creativity is nurtured in the classroom. She described this process as a way of 'dancing,' which is why each classroom is special, with a particular kind of energy and way of playing.

For Super Keka, playing was related to the ability to extend beyond the given margins, physically and mentally. It had to do with a capacity to find the pathways in life. The figure of a spiral was important for her, because "the spiral has no beginning and no end...but it has a way in and a way out." As an educator, her emotional creativity was related with her willingness to accompany her students wherever they wanted to go, the teacher relinquishing control: "You can't retain them, you can't control them. You have to go in and out with them" (Super Keka, Session 1, Prompt: "What are the emotions I find in my classroom"). She also placed playing at the heart of the creative teaching process, depicting it in an origami game. Inspired by the game called "Gallito" (literally "Little Chicken"), a very popular childhood game in Peru. For Super Keka, this dynamic represented the creative teaching process: "You have something to begin with, your plan, your color...then you have the surprise elements that take you wherever you have to go." She also mentioned the importance of having the support from her superiors

for exercising this type of pedagogy (Super Keka, Session 2, Prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”).

The emotional labyrinth game Super Keka created during the third session as a vehicle for enhancing the novelty dimension of emotional creativity was also a representation of the centrality of playing to creativity. She described the labyrinth as a sort of “ritual,” that served as a connection with one’s soul. This resonates with research on emotional creativity (EC) that has found EC individuals to have more “mystical like” experiences (Averill, 1999b). Re-connecting with the notion of soul is also related to authenticity and feeling real. In Super Keka’s words: “The labyrinth can take you towards yourself. It’s a way of walking to the self” (Super Keka, Session 3, Emotional Creativity).

For Heart Swirl, playing was also central in the creative teaching process and development of the self. It was through play that she (re)discovered the aggressive aspects of herself that had been “buried deep inside.” It was also through play that she learned to transform aggressive emotions into something more productive. Through the Aucouturier (2007) methodology, she discovered the power of the unstructured materials for playing. Unstructured materials, such as foam blocks and pieces of cloths, allowed children to “charge” them with whatever is in themselves. Playing allowed children to move from physical movement to the “tranquility of representation.” It comprised the pathway from the movement from the body towards the movement of the mind (Heart Swirl, Session 2, Prompt: “At the heart of the creative teaching process”). From a psychoanalytical perspective, playing in one’s mind has also been interpreted as “the foundation of thinking” (Nicolo, 2015, p. 31). In this sense, play could also be understood as the embodiment of imagination through action.

Theme 4: The perceived barriers to emotional creativity in the classroom from the vantage point of the participants

In this study, the perceived barriers to emotional creativity in the classroom, from the vantage point of the participants, were: 1) convergent teaching practices, 2) teacher's resistance to accepting certain emotional aspects of the children, and 3) product bias and rigid standards. In the next subsections I will briefly describe each of these barriers from the vantage point of the participants.

Convergent teaching practices

Van Manen (2016) explains that an educator that considers his own education finished can never learn from children or exercise a true tactful pedagogy. When teachers believe that they hold all the "right" answers and that their methods are the "correct" ones, children are forced to follow a set of instructions that limit their learning experience, constraining their creative possibilities.

When Heart Swirl said: "I think adults kill children's creativity when they want correct answers. When you want the student to answer what you as an adult want him to say or to do," she was referring to these convergent teaching practices (Interview 1, Heart Swirl). It is also what Seed meant when she complained about "...the questioning around how a material should be instructed or educated." When methods and ways of approximating to a subject are imposed on children, they assimilate them...taking all these hidden messages in...they [the children] make adult fears their own" (Interview 1, Seed).

Convergent teaching practices have been found to be ubiquitous in the Western educational system. Researchers believe that it has to do with the replication of power structures and with the prior schooling experiences of educators (Cuban, 1993; Lortie,

1975). There are also more practical reasons involved, such as the need to maintain classroom order, which is a challenge for every teacher. Referring to these practices, Guilford, in the mid 1950's, already warned about how schooling "seriously discouraged" creative thinking (p. 448).

Through a series of longitudinal studies, Torrance (1963, 1968) documented what he called the "fourth-grade slump" in divergent thinking, which he believed had to do with convergent teaching practices. Many teachers portrayed the "ideal student" as compliant and conforming, not approving of disruptive behavior. Later on, he proved that children could recover from the "creativity-stifling" experiences. This goes in line with Winnicott's observations on the power of play to reconnect with creativity and emotional wellbeing (Nicolo, 2015). These findings are heartwarming, as they are a confirmation of the power educators have to encourage creativity and emotional health.

Challenging emotions in the classroom from the vantage point of the participants

The next big barrier identified by the teachers had to do with the challenges in integrating certain emotions of their students in the classroom. Each participant found it harder to integrate particular emotions. The emotions that were more difficult for them to handle, as well as the ones they enjoyed engaging with, were the ones that were connected to their personal stories. For example, Heart Swirl recognized that she spent half of her career trying to avoid confronting violence and anger. She used all her strategies to have a peaceful classroom climate and as she couldn't even recognize anger in herself, her teaching became very structured and rigid for a while. Through play, she discovered that anger also served a purpose and that it was healthy to accept it (in herself and in the others).

The strong association between values and emotion emerged in this theme as well. Heart Swirl mentioned several times that she didn't want to express anger because she was afraid others would think that she was "bad." At the same time, when she talked about how she handled the violent emotions of the children she works with, she referred to values: "My current role is to be with children through play...to allow that look to be a welcoming one, not one that says "how bad are these children" (Heart Swirl, Session 1, Prompt "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?"). If we put this in the context of the ages of the children Heart Swirl worked with, it may seem strange to even consider that children as small as 3-5 years could be *bad*. This perception could be related to her childhood emotional memories. During the first session, Heart Swirl explored the emotions she remembered taking to school as a child. She said that "...during my childhood...I don't know exactly when, I started to feel that the look of "the other" caused me a lot of...expectation. I thought this look was judgmental, permanent, and I feared to be misinterpreted...and that people would think I was bad. I never wanted to do anything that could give the slightest suspicion that I wanted to be bad about something. So I was always good" (Heart Swirl, Session 1, Prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?") Could it be possible that Heart Swirl was projecting on her students her own childish fears of being perceived "evil"?

Consciousness is like an onion of infinite layers. Becoming aware is only one (extremely important) step in transformation. To incorporate change in our lives, we require practice, which is what Maxine Greene (1977) referred to as "wide-awakeness." Even though Heart Swirl understood that anger was not *bad* thanks to the Aucouturier methodology, she continued to struggle with ways to fully integrate this emotion in her

practice and in her own life. To integrate anger in her life, she looked for situations where she could channel her violent emotions; such as traffic: “When I drive...I take all my anger out...people are aggressive all the time when you drive, so I become very alert and then I feel happy. I can put all that anger in a proper space” (Interview 1, Heart Swirl). Consciously finding a proper space to channel her anger, is an exercise of active awareness.

Seed had a special inclination to help emotionally distressed children. She could trace this tendency to her childhood, as she remembered befriending the “different” and “left out” at school. Through psychoanalysis we know that there are a given number of defense mechanisms or ways to cope that the self is able to exercise. The most common defense mechanisms are: repression, denial, projection, displacement, regression, and sublimation, identification with the aggressor and reaction formation (Freud, 1986). Very simply put, repression is the suppression of disturbing unconscious thoughts, to keep them outside of our conscious awareness. Denial is refusing to emotionally experience an event that is too painful or mobilizing. Projection is to attribute to others what we cannot accept to feel or think (for example, instead of recognizing that I feel envy, I decide that I am an object of envy for the other). Displacement is related to the satisfaction of an impulse with another object. We identify with the aggressor when we adopt the characteristics that make him/her terrifying to us, in order to survive (for example, when confronting an extremely violent person, we also behave violently). We exercise reaction formation when we act out in the opposite way as what we are truly feeling. Finally, we sublimate when we satisfy an impulse with an object or activity that is socially accepted (for example, sexual impulses can be satisfied through sensual dance) (Freud, 1923, 1968; Joyce, 2015).

Before Heart Swirl learned Aucouturier, she used to repress, deny and project her anger. Through play, she learned to sublimate it and do something productive with aggressiveness. Seed was able to sublimate her identification with her own feelings of loneliness. This may be interpreted from her schooling memories. As she felt lonely in school, she got involved with the girls that were socially left out, the misunderstood and the bullied (Interview 1, Seed). This sensibility allowed her to find ways to accompany students in danger of emotional damage so as to contain their emotions. A vivid example of this was her relationship with the little child JP, who had very disruptive behaviors, because of a mental health problem. Seed noticed that other children felt scared, because JP talked about wanting to “kill” others. She used sublimation strategies, such as creating with JP horror stories, where he could express his desires to “kill” (Interview 1, Seed).

Super Keka developed a similar mechanism. Her own schooling experience, where she felt “invisible,” motivated her to be extra attentive to the quieter children. At the same time, her identification with the socially unnoticed alerted her about the children that might behave abusively towards others. When reflecting about the emotions she felt during her own schooling experience, Super Keka recognized that she felt she had become some sort of a “savior” for the children who are less outgoing and timid. She recalled trying to do for her students what she feels teachers should have done with her: “I want to empower children, those children that nobody looks at, because they are timid and talk quietly. I want to wake them up, make them feel that they can talk. I make them scream what they didn’t like. And then, you make that giant, that bully, turn into a little ant...under the evidence that he is mistreating a friend” (Super Keka, Session 1, Prompt: "What were the emotions that I remember bringing to school as a child, and what is the link between my emotions as student and as teacher-self today?")

Defense mechanisms are inescapable for our psyche. As I write, I acknowledge that my own interpretation of the mechanisms of the participants is colored by my own biases and filters. The only thing we can do is to bravely look into our perceptions without fear, trying to suspend judgment. The more we free ourselves of our own prejudices, which are grounded in our formative experiences—such as Heart Swirl’s association of anger with evil—the more capable we become of seeing the other without these filters. At least we will be able to recognize them, we become better companions and better examples for the children we care for, while at the same time, we become more free in our own hearts and minds.

Product bias and rigid standards

Product bias is the belief that creativity requires a tangible product. It is centered in the evaluative phase of the creative process (assessment), and it is related to “Big-C bias.” Big-C bias links creativity to eminent and unambiguous creative outcomes. Even though theoretically, most teachers might declare that the value of creativity lies in the creative process, for many, it is difficult to escape the product bias. There are many reasons for this. In the first place, accountability mandates are constantly distorting pedagogy towards an utilitarian perspective. Creativity has a hard time to flourish in standardized testing times. McNeil (2000) found that the more standardized mandates a school had to comply with, the more teachers reduced the scope of course content and ways of educating the subjects.

Assessment and confusion about the most positive ways of recognizing students’ work is another barrier related to product bias and rigid standards. On the one hand, the standardized testing paradigm stresses extrinsic motivators, which have been found to be detrimental for creativity (Amabile, 1996). On the other hand, there is praise to ‘feeling

good' and 'self-esteem' in a superficial way that hinders authentic emotional development (Seligman, 1995).

Van Manen (2016) has written about the delicate nuances of praise and recognition in a tactful approach to pedagogy: "A compliment should be meaningful and should not be granted indiscriminately because, if given too readily and too freely it may lose its significance" (Chapter 8, Section 1, para. 1). Martin Seligman (1995), one of the founding fathers of Positive Psychology has also warned about the danger of artificial flattery: "By emphasizing how a child feels, at the expenses of what the child does...parents and educators are making this generation of children more vulnerable to depression" (p. 27), he warned. The problem in accomplishment is not failure in itself, but the interpretation the child (or adult) about its significance. If we encourage a message that failing is *bad*, rather than part of the learning process, creativity will be severely hurt.

Super Keka's experience in relation to her perceived artistic talent is a lucid example. What was hurtful for her identity was the permanent character she imprinted to her own abilities: "I just *concluded* I wasn't really talented", she said to herself (Super Keka, Session 2, Prompt: "A memory of my childhood that leads me to creativity. Emphasis added). To interpret talent in categories of *having* or *not having* it, is categorical and permanent. Super Keka felt that she couldn't really do anything about it, because she decided she just wasn't gifted. Had her teachers encouraged her creative *process*, instead of limiting feedback to criticizing the products she created, Super Keka might have developed a different perception of her own abilities.

Summary of the chapter:

The emerging themes analyzed in this chapter were closely related to the initial research questions, which were: What sort of emotions do teachers find in their classrooms? What type of emotional memories do teachers hold from their own schooling experience, and in what ways do these influence their pedagogy? What elements lie at the heart of the creative teaching process? In what ways can they enhance the emotional creativity of their students?

From these question, the themes that emerged were the following: 1) the pedagogy of regard and the gaze of the other in the construction of self, 2) imagination, linked to new beginnings, for the making of community 3) play; and 4) the perceived barriers to emotional creativity in the classroom from the vantage point of the participants.

As said before in the introduction, the central theme was the quality of the look the participants received as children. How they interpreted this gaze and the *latency* (how long it influenced aspects of their life), related closely to the development of their creativity and emotional wellbeing. In the case of Heart Swirl, a severe and punishing look made her afraid of being perceived as ‘evil.’ In the case of Super Keka, the absence of the look made her feel invisible and lonely. Seed felt that the ways other girls looked upon her at school was hurtful, which made her connect with the more timid and less social peers.

All three participants found their way out of the effects of these gazes through play. In the case of Heart Swirl, learning Acoutourier methodology (which is based on play with unstructured materials, such as cloths and big blocks of foam), helped her connect with the emotions that were difficult to handle for her; particularly aggressiveness. She had denied herself the possibility of expressing anger because as a

child she had linked it to that castrating, punitive look. Through play she learned to accept that these emotions exist, she was able to recognize them in herself and integrate them into her life and practice, finding appropriate places and ways to express anger. Seed was able to transform “that look” (quote from Seed), through theater, where she found a community, a “tribe,” as she said, where her voice was important. Super Keka found her way out of invisibility through her practice as a teacher. During her whole career, she has been attentive to the quite children, the ones that don’t speak out loud, encouraging them to participate.

The barriers to creativity in the pedagogy that Heart Swirl, Seed and Super Keka identified resonated with previous research in educational settings. These were: convergent teaching practices (a monotonous way of teaching, where children learn to respond what the teacher *wants* to hear, without causing disruptions to the class order); product bias (considering that creativity is a product, instead of a process), rigid evaluation standards; and challenging emotions for the teachers in the classroom.

The emotions that were challenging for each teacher were different, and they connected to their own personal stories, which is another strong case for memory work in teacher’s development and training. For example, for Heart Swirl, aggressive emotions were difficult to handle, because she had trouble accepting her own anger. Seed felt a special inclination for children that were “left-out,” as she could relate to their stories. I’d like to stress the importance of accepting and tolerating *difficult* or *challenging* emotions. For this purpose, teachers who don’t engage in self-work, reconnecting with their past, will mostly have a difficult time doing so.

An arts-based workshop approach was appropriate for this study, as it encouraged introspection and reflection. Collage inquiry, combined with the verbal explication of what each creation meant for each participant, was a useful open-ended method. For the

participants, it was important to be able to exercise their own pedagogical creativity, particularly during the last session, where each created a vehicle for enhancing an aspect of the emotional creativity of their students. This session served as an self-assessment, even if it wasn't intended to be so. The participants said that they felt enthusiastic about their own creativity for enhancing emotional wellbeing.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, this study points to the possibility that our defense mechanisms —such as denial, repression or sublimation, among others— might be at the heart of our personal barriers to creativity. As defense mechanisms try to avoid the unconscious becoming conscious, to impede the suffering of the ego (that mediates between the unconscious and the Superego, which is our ideal self), they play an important role in disconnecting us from the feelings and thoughts that may be disturbing for our psyche (Freud, 1986).

As teachers, it is important to embody a flexible example of what being human means for children, for we cannot escape being models to them (Van Manen, 2016). To do so, we need to develop consciousness about the ways in which we were looked upon ourselves as children, how these gazes affected us and in what ways they may still be present in our pedagogy. As we become more thoughtful, our pedagogical imagination will flourish, hopefully leading us to our own inner freedom. To reiterate, in Maxine Greene (1988) words: “A teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own” (p. 14).

Chapter VIII: Conclusion

The research questions from where I started this exploration were: What sort of emotions do teachers find in their classrooms? What type of emotional memories do teachers hold from their own schooling experience, and in what ways do these influence their pedagogy? What elements lie at the heart of the creative teaching process? In what ways can teachers enhance the emotional creativity of their students? These questions lead us to the following emerging themes during the fieldwork: 1) the pedagogy of regard and the gaze of the (m) other; 2) imagination and new beginnings for the making of community; 3) play; and 4) the perceived barriers to emotional creativity in the classroom from the vantage point of the participants.

One of the reasons why creativity is so fascinating is because it cannot be reduced to a given formula. I feel that pedagogy, understood in van Manen's (2016) terms as "distinguishing what is good or right from what is bad or wrong in our ways of acting and interacting with children," might be best described as a creative process in itself. Creativity is the process by which we become ourselves. Our creative products are reflections of our inner transformations.

As educators, paying attention to the creative process prompts us to be more flexible and agile in our practice as we move back and forth from 'reflection in action' to a calmer introspection. It is like a gymnastic of the mind and soul where we constantly question assumptions and consider the opposite (Runco, 2010). It also re-connects us with the fundamental role of emotions in the teaching and learning process. As we become more attentive about the ways in which we relate with children, doubt is at the heart of the pedagogical process. At the same time, pedagogy is the art of "knowing what to do when we don't know what to do" (Van Manen, 2016, Chapter 11, Section 4, para. 1). A creative teacher has embodied the art of moving between these tensions. As she

dances through the known and unknown, she accepts uncertainty because she is *certain* about her *ethical responsibility* with the children she works with. A creative teacher has embodied his or her “response-ability” (Levinas, 1969, as cited in van Manen, 2016, chapter 3, Section 4, para. 4).

Reflecting about our emotional creativity in our practice is a powerful way of becoming more conscious as educators. I believe that this has to do with the emotional characteristics that are ubiquitous in the creative process, particularly the elements of openness to experience, courage and authenticity. Generating a safe space, such as the workshops in this study, allowed participants to travel through memory lane and access the origins of their creativity. Participants felt that the process of the workshop had helped them become more aware of their own creativity and the ways in which they enhance their students’ emotional wellbeing.

This study is also a practical example of how a participatory workshop approach to creativity may be productive for enhancing teachers’ preparation in favor of a pedagogy where creativity theory is in the service of practice. As most of the research has been conducted by social psychologists, it has generally been psychometrically oriented, looking for the general aspects across different processes and sub-processes of creativity (Guilford, 1950, Amabile, 1996). Pedagogy, on the contrary, is a qualitative inquiry. Educators are most concerned about the *particular* subjective experiences of each child, which is why creativity from the vantage point of teachers focuses on the process. I believe this is why, as Feldman and Benjamin (2006) argue, “...creativity researchers (with rare exceptions) have neglected educational aims and means” (p. 302). From my perspective, the disconnect between educators and investigators has to do with a professional bias and conflicting paradigms. Whereas social psychologists tend to look for general traits across large populations, [a certain type of] educators focus on the

unique characteristics and individual experiences of each of their students. Therefore, as good as many theories of creativity may be, they will not be of much use unless we generate *collaborative* spaces for investigators and educators to reflect about them. If researchers truly want to contribute to the development of a pedagogy for creativity, they need to recognize the central role of educators and learn from their experiences.

From the vantage point of the participants, the importance of a safe place to reflect on their emotions, creativity and practice was noticeable. In Heart Swirls' words: "...teachers are not been cared for emotionally, they are expected to answer many tests...but when we support them emotionally, that person transforms herself and everything around her changes" (Interview 1, Heart Swirl). She also found the process to be therapeutic: "The workshop felt like when I used to go to therapy. It's like getting to a place where things that are deep inside of you can be explored. It's an opportunity to look at what's there, but that you are not really watching" (Final Interview, Heart Swirl).

From Super Keka's vantage point, even though the process was emotionally mobilizing for her, describing it as: "a trip to the past, where I've reconnected with things that have been locked up," the method of the workshop and the energy of the group helped her channel her difficult memories. Linking her past schooling experiences to her present teacher's self was a healing process that brought to her consciousness clues about her work as an educator (Super Keka, Final interview).

Participants stated that the workshop helped them reconnect with their creativity and enhance their emotional awareness. Seed mentioned that the step-by-step activities made her "conceptualize" about creativity and "think in a scientific way about it." She found this to be valuable for her everyday practice. The sessions were also described as an "awakening" by all three participants. Super Keka said: "this workshop has awakened in me the necessity to do more things like this and to explore new possibilities for

enhancing emotional wellbeing and creativity with my students.” Heart Swirl said that the process was helpful to “awaken the eyes and heart, allowing us to break with what’s taken for granted, amplifying our capacity to see and to listen.” Seed stated that the proposed activities are elements that “guide” her own creativity and that “each step opened a new door” ((Final interviews, Heart Swirl, Super Keka and Seed).

All three participants observed that the opportunity to recognize their own sense to develop emotional creativity in their students was very important for their self-efficacy as teachers. Seed phrased it as a “crystallization” into a “final product” where she could see what she had learned. For Heart Swirl, creating her method for enhancing emotional preparedness helped her bridge her own memories and feelings, merging her more rigid part with her playfulness. Super Keka said that creating her emotional labyrinth made her realize that she is “on the right track” and that she now feels empowered to work the emotional aspects of her students. For her, the workshop was an opportunity to “bridge theory and practice, and to discover that what you bring from your own personal life is important” (Final interviews, Heart Swirl, Super Keka and Seed).

This study shows how a memory work approach through an arts-informed methodology to creativity is productive for enhancing consciousness in teachers’ practice. The workshop was designed as a process of self-discovery connecting participants’ childhood experiences with their adult identities as educators. All three members agreed on the benefits of artistic inquiry for this purpose. During the sessions, it was interesting to observe how the open-ended methods facilitated participants’ connection with their unconscious. Getting started was difficult many times, as it required them to exit their comfort zones, but once the process began, intuitive knowledge emerged and revealed itself. In Heart Swirls’ words, “In this situation, you couldn’t succeed if you started by thinking. You had to feel first” (Final Interview, Heart Swirl).

The workshops showed how the tactful knowledge of participants reflected different psychological theories that nurture wellbeing, such as some aspects of psychoanalysis (Freud, 1929, 1986), Positive Psychology (Seligman, 1995) and mindfulness (Lantieri, 2007). As participants realized this, their self-efficacy sense was boosted. The movement from memory-work and self-study towards the creation of a vehicle for enhancing emotional creativity for their students, allowed teachers to appreciate their practical psychological wisdom. During the last session, after each participant had created a vehicle for enhancing an aspect of emotional creativity, I commented on the links between their creations and some psychological theories. In this sense, it was important that I had reviewed many creativity and emotional wellbeing theories and methodologies, as I could call attention to these elements. Creative self-efficacy—the judgment of one’s own imaginative ability and competencies—is considered to be the most important predictor of creative behavior in students (Beghetto, 2006b). This study suggests that this can be also applied to teachers’ training. Participants agreed that the positive feedback I provided made them feel more secure in their own pedagogical abilities and ignited their curiosity to continue investigating.

For example, Heart Swirl’s method for developing emotional preparedness was very much in line with the techniques developed by Martin Seligman and colleagues in the Penn Resiliency Program. The Penn Resiliency program is based on cognitive psychology theory and it follows a step-by-step approach to prevent depression in youth. The four main steps, put in very simple terms are: identifying automatic thoughts (the first thought that comes to our minds in a particular situation), confronting our automatic thoughts with reality and trying to get a grasp on how “precise” they are (for example, if my automatic thought is “nobody will love me because I failed the course” To what extent is that really so?), the third step involves re-elaborating on the third, and the fourth

step is called “de-catastrophizing,” which involves considering the “worst possible outcome,” in order to be able to have a more realistic appreciation of how events and thoughts affect us. This program has been validated with more than forty thousand students and teachers worldwide, and has been found to be effective for reducing depression in children (Seligman, 1995). Super Keka’s and Seed’s ideas, on the other hand, resonated with mindfulness practices, such as learning to breath and incorporating yoga or stretching to school activities, which are currently considered to be most productive for enhancing emotional wellbeing in the elementary level (Lantieri, 2007).

A participatory workshop approach to emotional creativity may also be valuable for reducing teachers’ burnout syndrome. Participants said that the sessions were “therapeutic” and that they helped them continue to heal their inner child. All three mentioned the importance of feeling emotionally protected by the group. The size of the group was optimal for this purpose, as it allowed us to have enough time to engage in emotional sharing. Investing in the emotional wellbeing of teachers is fundamental for the educational system. As educational researchers interested in creativity, we need to understand this dimension of teachers’ practice and commit to the development of safe spaces that will enhance their emotional wellbeing.

This study stresses the importance of being attentive to the theme of creativity in education. However we have to be careful of the dangers of institutionalizing a “creativity mandate,” (Alexander, 2004; Craft, 2005). Putting creativity as a curricular goal may be more detrimental than conducive for its development. Politicians and policy makers continually express their distress with the uncertainty about what the future holds in the current technologically driven era. Among the so called 21st Century Skills, creativity and innovation are always present (NACCCE, 1999). At the same time, standardized testing is on the rise worldwide, favoring scripted lessons at the expense of

creativity. As educators, we need to ask ourselves what the purpose of creativity is in our practice and stay true to our intuition. From the perspective of businesses and governments, the role of creativity in society is innovation and improvement., which falls into an utilitarian and societal viewpoint. The kind of teacher portrayed in this study, on the other hand, focus on the subjective and individual experiences of each child. Creativity is about the process and its value lies in its power of facilitating the expression of our true selves (Moran, 2010). If we want creativity to be in service of freedom and self-knowledge in education, we need to have conceptual clarity on these issues. We cannot confuse it with a marketing tool for making things more *attractive*.

Collaborative creativity studies are necessary for the development of methodologies tailored to the necessities of each school and social group, and in this sense, they may help in the empowerment of teachers. As mentioned before, there is consensus among researchers that little has been advanced in the practical application of creativity theory. This lack of cooperative investigation may be related to the differences between research paradigms among practicing educators and social psychologists. While psychologists tend to follow a psychometrical perspective, looking for the general aspects among wide groups, educators focus on the particular situation of each child they work with. Therefore, it is not enough for ‘experts’ to observe educators and make conclusions about their ways of approaching creativity. Investigators need to work hand in hand with teachers to develop methodologies that are truly useful. The researcher should help systematize teachers’ practical knowledge, recognizing that they are the ones who actually create and embody this wisdom.

From the perspective of educators, engaging in creativity studies may help them actively pursue their own inner freedom, which will allow them to ignite the search for freedom in their students. Professors that become more conscious about their emotional

creativity will be more prepared to be honest in an intra-personal and interpersonal level, which will allow them to practice a more thoughtful pedagogy (Averill, 1999; Greene, 1995).

This study invites us to reflect on how we may be reproducing our own emotional limitations through our pedagogical approach with our students, inhibiting creativity. It is also a request to question our ‘look’ upon the children we work with, and to elaborate how children are receiving and experiencing our regard.

Being attentive to the ways we relate to children and to the way we ‘look’ is essential to nurture our pedagogical relationship. Parents and teachers alike hold pedagogical relationships with children. Of course, the nature of this relation is not the same, as educators and parents have different responsibilities. In both cases they are concerned with the growth of the child, maturation and wellbeing. The main difference is that “teachers serve the children by observing from a very close proximity while still maintaining distance” (Van Manen, 2016, Chapter 5, Section 2, para. 5).

Winnicott’s (1971) ample concept of “good enough mother,” when applied to teacher’s practice, might be useful for working-through the gaze educators place on children. “Good enough” is not perfect, and ‘perfection’ is not good enough. To be human is to be fallible, and this is an ingredient of the care provided by the ordinary devoted mother: “*Good enough but not perfect*” (Joyce, 2015, p. 161. Emphasis in original). What does it mean to be a good enough teacher? Based on the present study, it has to do with being open to experience, to a capacity of adapting to the changing demands of the child. By accepting our limitations, connecting with our fears and with the frightening looks we might have received as children. It has to do with cultivating our emotional creativity, and requires from us to engage in memory work and self-study. Joyce (2015) reminded us that, “The imperfection is paradoxical, as the baby needs

predictability that is, at the same time, fallible” (p. 161). Perhaps, the necessity of fallible predictability has to do with our internal capacity for transformation and resilience. *We need to be reassured that, even when things go wrong, we will be able to conquer adversity, to do more than just survive, to live as complete human beings through the experience of constant evolution.* To be reassured in their human capacities for overcoming adversity, children need to relate to adults that understand this dimension of existence, who openly accept their own limitations and show how they work through them.

Another important reflection for becoming a good enough teacher is contained in Indigenous learning experience, which focuses attention back upon the necessity of “nourishing the learning spirit” (Marie Battiste, as cited in Tanaka, 2011, p. 67). The learning spirit is nourished when we are able to “connect consistently to the inner forces of the self...it is about the ability to understand the capacities and lessons needed to learn on a life path” (Tanaka, 2011, p. 67). Nourishing the learning spirit is similar to Pinar’s notion of autobiographic self-study. Pinar has written about the importance of returning the focus from teaching and learning to the notion of *study*. Citing Block’s notion about “engaging in studying as engagement in prayer” (Block, 2004, p. 2, as cited in Pinar, 2005, p. 71), he reminded us of the never-ending search of self-discovery, and of Dewey’s concept of the role of teachers in “enabling children to discover, articulate, and expand their interests and thereby direct their attention...teacher’s purpose is ‘hortatory’ rather than didactic, to ‘incite’ the student’s ‘passion’ for study” (Pinar, 2005, p. 74). As teachers, we need to nourish our own learning spirit, because to the extent we do so, we will be able to ignite the desire for study and self-discovery in children.

The experiences portrayed in this study may shed some light on these central questions. Starting from developing consciousness about the gaze we place upon

children, which is a reflection of the ways we experienced the look of the other as children, the gentle understanding of good enough teaching may open the pathway for the reconciliation between the child within the adult educator; reuniting the adult world with the realm of children. In Heart Swirl's words:

You have to recognize your inner child. You have to recognize that you have a story to heal from that inner child. If you are selfish about it, you will never see the ways in which the other child mirrors your own experience...you will become angry, and say that you can't stand that child, because you haven't recognized him in yourself. You don't know that you are living a personal situation. To the extent you know where your devil is, you will know why those children mobilize you in such a different way...and just by knowing, the story changes. (Interview 1, Heart Swirl)

The structure of the workshop also provides an opportunity to identify which creative and emotional processes teachers *were* actually nurturing in their students, which may be conducive to higher levels of self-efficacy in teachers' practice.

As a researcher, the possibility to work with Heart Swirl, Super Keka and Seed has been a privilege. The themes that emerged during the fieldwork resonated with my own personal experience concerning creativity. As I explained in the introduction, for me, creativity has always been related to emotions and self-work. Throughout my life, every time I've felt a creative blockage there was something that I was trying to avoid feeling, accepting or letting go. Many times it was a toxic emotion, particularly fear. As the sessions unfolded and I learned about the experiences of my participants, I could see many of my own experiences reflected in theirs. I could relate to Heart Swirl's fear to being perceived as 'bad,' as I myself was very afraid to be perceived this way as a child. Having two older sibling with a cognitive handicap, I wanted everybody to think that I was extremely good—particularly with the less fortunate—because I feared that my feelings of shame and anger could betray me. I could relate to Super Keka's experience with the arts, and with the stress she felt because of the extremely competitive context of

the arts, as I felt this too when I practiced to become a pianist. I could also relate to Seed's experience in school and her identification with the weaker children, as I myself found ways to sublimate the experience of having siblings with a handicap.

But what was most enriching for me, was to learn about how each of my participants had transformed these experiences, for instance, to learn how Seed transformed the "look of the other" through theater. Seed inspired me to enroll in a theater course which I've found to be a wonderful space for self-growth and community. And how Super Keka empowered herself and found in her practice ways of nurturing emotional security in the children she worked with. And how Heart Swirl's honesty and insight, and her compromise to engage in self-work was a life lesson. This experience became a confirmation of the enormous power there is in sharing our personal stories with trust. As in Leonard Cohen's song, "Anthem," recognizing the similarities and differences among our lived experiences, allows us to recognize that "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." I feel that this process has shed much light upon myself and, hopefully also in the lives of Heart Swirl, Super Keka and Seed.

This personal journey has also been important for me to work on my own creativity. As I advanced my thesis work, many times I felt blocked, which caused me to feel afraid and insecure. For example, as I studied all the theories about creativity, I felt very anxious to find *the* right theoretical framework. As I wanted *a* correct answer, I submerged myself in all the psychometrical theories, this, despite the fact that I was aware that I was investigating creativity, and I was reading about the links between creativity-flexibility-openness to experience, and my own personal experience had showed me that creativity is a qualitative process. It was very interesting, because as I read more and more about creativity, I realized that I was being quite contradictory, trying to find *a right and exact* framework for it. On the one hand, I aimed for inspiration

and intuition, and on the other I wanted to know exactly how to get there! When I finally came to terms with this, I realized that I was anxious about the evaluative phase of this thesis. I wanted to do something creative, something that would speak from heart to heart, but I was so concerned about the external assessment that would eventually come, that I was losing my ability to emotionally connect with my own journey: I was repeating the emotional blockage I felt when giving a piano concert as a child. Once this issue became clear to me, I started to feel that I flowed, ideas suddenly coming to my head and heart. I realized that I needed to be more flexible and more open, and that I needed to work on my own barriers to creativity through this work, in order to be able to produce something of value.

After reflecting upon this and working through it with my advisor, I decided that everyday creativity was an ample enough framework to incorporate the different elements of creativity. Everyday creativity has to do with *how* we do our everyday tasks (Richards, 2007). There are many different theories inside the large theme of everyday creativity, and one of them is Averill's (1999a) emotional creativity theory, which I incorporated into this study. The beauty of everyday creativity is that it focuses on the process, and leaves room for uncertainty and ambiguity, which is necessary for intuition to develop itself. Everyday creativity is like a large Russian Babushka doll. Inside her we can find smaller dolls, with more precise characteristics. As in the Russian dolls, everyday creativity theories have common elements among them, which Runco (2010) identified in his parsimonious creativity framework as: autonomy, courage, wide interests, openness, tolerance to ambiguity and relative risk, originality and authenticity (p. 241-246).

Finally, I would like to reiterate that this study shows how the barriers to creativity in pedagogy can be a reflection of our own defense mechanisms and unresolved emotional experiences; such as the gaze of the 'other' upon us, our own insecurities about

our capacities, and our prior schooling experiences. From my personal experience, courage is the quality we need to exercise the most, to overcome our defense mechanisms. It takes courage to acknowledge our fears and to recognize when we are not able to receive with love and acceptance the children we care for. It takes courage to look inside our own stories, and peel back the layers of our memories, re-visiting the painful seasons of our lives, in order to exit them. It takes courage to embrace uncertainty and to tolerate ambiguity, while at the same time, remaining attentive to the effects of our actions, with tact. It takes courage to follow our intuition, despite knowing we may be falling into old unconscious traps or defense mechanisms. It takes courage to recognize ourselves as many times not ‘good enough,’ and to accept our flaws with compassion, understanding that it is the only way to become what we ought to be (Greene, 1977).

Let us embrace creativity studies in education as an opportunity for personal growth and transformation and not as an imposed, external mandate. Let us exercise with courage our ethical *response-ability* with the children we interact with. Let us remain authentic, open to experience, and tolerant of uncertainty, while we continue to develop wide interests to generate an ever growing embroidery of tactful, pedagogical ways of connecting (Runco, 2015; Van Manen, 2016).

Limitations of this study

Even though the group size was optimal for the in-depth exploration of the teachers’ experiences, it would be interesting to continue doing more workshops with different types of groups. The workshop could have had more sessions. One of the participants considered it should last at least a couple of months. Finally, the school, as a higher middle-class private institution, where teachers enjoy greater advantages compared to socioeconomically lower schools, constitutes another limitation. The findings of this study don’t reflect the reality of the profound social and economical inequalities

pervasive in Peruvian society. However, this was beyond the scope of the present investigation. In the future, I would like to continue with this exploration, particularly with disadvantaged schools.

Implications of this study

I believe that one of the fundamental ethical and pedagogical responsibilities of educators is to be able to exercise an emotionally-enhancing pedagogy, one that will make children grow up into loving, secure, autonomous and ethical adults. A teacher who is not conscious of his or her own emotional obstacles will not be able to accompany children with a tactful pedagogy. Education is not only the work of educators; it involves the whole community. One of the intentions of this investigation has been to raise attention about the necessity to engage in collaborative and horizontal dialogue between scholars and educators. It is also a way of recognizing teachers' practical knowledge on emotions and creativeness. The proposed methodology could also be adapted to work on emotional creativity with the parents of children. From my perspective and lived experience, what is most important is to assume our adult responsibility in the nurturing of children's emotional wellbeing in favor of their creativity. A child who is conscious, flexible and emotionally agile, has many more resources to work with through the challenges of life. A child who develops his or her emotional creativity will also be more capable of exercising empathy and will have more chances of making a positive difference through his or her life. I believe that by consciously engaging in this self-work, as educators and parents, we will nurture children in this self-discovery path, while at the same time, heal as individuals and as a society.

Chapter IX: Creative Synthesis in the Form of Poetic and Musical Inquiry

Poetic inquiry is the reframing of participants' words and phrases in the form of a poem, with changes in spaces, lines and words. Poetic inquiry is a powerful way to represent findings in a condensed way, without losing emotional content. It is also thought to be a way of representing the voices of participants in a more transparent manner (Prendergast, Leggo, & Samashima, 2009).

“A/r/t/ography” is an inquiry that provides “complex, multidimensional artful pathways for understanding the arts-based researcher as artist/researcher/teacher” (Lee & Gouzouasis, 2016, p. 346). I feel that this way of framing arts-based research is a very creative and holistic way of engaging in research. “A/r/t/ography” pays close attention to epiphanies and “epiphonies.” An epiphany, Lee and Gouzouasis explain, “is often spurred by an object or event that enables the individual to make an inference or develop a new deeper understanding of a phenomenon” (p. 345). An “epiphony” is a term coined by Gouzouasis (2008a, 2008b). To clarify further, an epiphony can be understood as:

...a realization that is evoked through sound, specifically, music. That is because the suffix, “phony” means “sound...and for musicians in particular, important discoveries about the self and others...are often based upon acoustic experiences. And acoustic experiences require both sound production and listening, to the self and to others, to comprehend a situation or tale and relate it to personal and other experiences. (as cited in Lee & Gouzouasis, 2016, p. 345)

As a pianist, composer, educator and researcher, the concept of “A/r/t/ography,” “epiphonies” and epiphanies resonate deeply within me and allows me to expand my imagination for new research possibilities that feel more alive, that honor different languages and ways of expressing ourselves. This way of understanding arts-based research may integrate and recognize elements in a more democratic, emotional way, generating an amalgamation between the voices of participants and researchers. This, I feel, will certainly bring new beginnings and seeds.

The process I followed for my creative synthesis was similar to the experience of a photographer who chooses the angles, the light and the framing. I selected the phrases and words that moved me the most, which is without a doubt, a reflection of my own concerns and issues. Because of this, I feel that artistic inquiry goes beyond communicating findings; it communicates insights and is, in itself a generative source of interpretations for oneself and the others.

Engaging in poetic inquiry was a second level of abstraction of my thematic analysis. First, I read many times the narrative chapters of each participant and marked with colors the phrases that moved me the most. The main criteria I used for this was intensity, musical and emotional resonance. As I read the narrative chapters, looking for poetry between the lines, I noticed that something important was happening. This process was helping me to connect more deeply with my participants, in a more emotionally way. As I read through the data of each of my participants to identify the phrases for the poem, I noticed something changed. Somehow, the transcripts had come back to life, and I could remember much more vividly when each of my participants said each phrase, how I perceived their voice, tone, the emotions I sensed in themselves and the emotions that they woke up in me. From my perspective, one of the most important advantages of engaging in poetic inquiry is that it allows the researcher to keep emotionally connected to the research data. It is a form of representing and communicating insights and findings that allows the essence of the phenomena to shine. In the case of this study, I wanted the reader to be able to *feel* the emotions conveyed by Seed, Heart Swirl and Super Keka. I wanted to express in a short and strong way the overlapping themes, as well as the differences among their experiences. Through the poem, it was possible to hint how these individualities

complemented each other during the workshop, and the type of energy the group possessed as a whole.

Once I felt I had marked all the phrases that resonated within me, I summarized these loose phrases in a short narrative for each participant. It was like a bullet list containing the most salient ideas of each participant. Then, I repeated the process, condensing the content more and more. From each list, I selected the most important phrases. I started playing around with the selected phrases, trying to figure out the story that was between the lines. This, by identifying the common ideas between them. Curiously, the poem *revealed* itself, when I realized where the beginning was; which was, of course, in the notion of the seed, that Seed had mentioned as being at the heart of her creative teaching process. Now that I reflect upon my process, it is interesting to note that, while I was waiting for the poem to *step out*, I was doing different things related to my thesis, although, not necessarily working *on* the thesis. In a way, I was preparing myself emotionally to receive the poem, as in an incubation phase. It is a well known folk theory that inspiration has to find you working.

I have experienced this process many times, specially when composing musical pieces. It is always the same: I have an idea, a concept—in this case, the emotional creativity of the participants. Then, I try out different musical phrases. Suddenly, one of them *feels right*. This is usually the main theme, or what could be identified as the *leit motiv* of a musical piece. Once the main theme is clear, everything flows. For me, poetry is music with words.

Once I felt that the poem had revealed itself I shared it with my participants and asked for their feedback. They commented that they enjoyed seeing their words and ideas organized in this form. They didn't suggest any changes and felt the poem represented

the experience, combining all of our voices, including, of course, my own (Butler-Kisber, 2011).

Besides sharing the poem with my participants, I have also showed it to several people accompanied with an abstract of the study, with the intention of receiving useful feedback. In every case, people unfamiliar with the subject of inquiry, particularly with the theories behind it, felt emotionally touched by the words of the participants arranged as a poem. Educators with whom I shared the poem, felt recognized as a community and could see themselves in the words of their colleagues. Thus, for people unfamiliar with the subject of inquiry, the poem was a tempting invitation to investigate. For educators, it was a way of celebrating and of sharing the heart of the pedagogical relationship.

The musical nature of poetry encouraged me to write a musical piece to accompany the phrases of the participants. The process was similar to the one of writing the poem. Only this time, I had to *attune my listening* and wait. I read out loud the poem several times and improvised in the piano. One day, the first musical phrase appeared. It was a dark melody, in a E minor. She was dramatic, filled with *pathos*. *It was so hard for a seed to be born*. I continued doing this process, improvising on the piano as I read the poem until the piece felt complete. As I wanted to share the poem and music with a wider audience, I decided to create an animated video, with the phrases of the poem along with the musical sections I had imagined them with. The beautiful pictures of Heart Swirl, Super Keka and Seed made this piece a whole.

Just as I had shared the poem with an abstract, I shared the video in my social media account, this time, without an abstract, only with a very general context that explained that the phrases and pictures were from the participants of this study, and

that I had only organized them in the form of a poem and created music to accompany them. The resonance of this piece was much wider. Many friends who don't speak English, told me that they *did* understand the emotions and the story that was behind. They could relate to it and experience the emotional and creative journey we had embarked in.

“A/r/t/ography” inquiry is both a process and a synthesis. I would say it starts even before the research idea is mature, even if we don't know it, because its seeds are in the choice of the subject of our investigation. In this case, it was a natural move, as this study aims to discover the elements that nurture emotional creativity in practicing teachers. “A/r/t/ography” inquiry is a piece to share and a piece to dwell on. For me, it's a way of celebrating the beauty of being a work in progress. It helps us stop and wonder, and it also moves us to keep on digging and going.

Link to the video: “To New Beginnings:”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHX8dl2pVAY>

Poem:

To New Beginnings

It must be hard for a seed to be born
To push her roots across the ground
Push, push, and push,
Until she reaches the surface

I know it is dark
I know it is black
*But I also know
there is a pathway
And a way out*

You have to look at yourself first:
You must have truth inside
To recognize your inner child
And that *you too*, have a story to heal

The work with children
comes through oneself
in the end
It's freedom what prevails

Once you know where your devil is
You will understand *why* those children
Mobilize you in such a *different* way

And just by knowing
The whole story changes

Remember that look
It was so

Judgmental

Permanent

Absent

Remember how fear said:

"It is better to go unnoticed"

Most of the time you felt alone

Nobody looks at normal

It broke our innocence

But then you discovered

That you could transform everything

Even that look

It felt like a tribe

We were like patterns

relating between each other

colliding

And this feeling of expanding into the world

...the emotion of growing.

Awaken the eyes

Awaken the heart

Allow yourself to break with what's taken for granted

Not so that the child changes...

but so that you change

in relation to how you receive this child

I know it is hard for a seed to be born

And to push her roots through the ground,

Push, push, and push,

Until she reaches the surface

But then, it's like rowing...you know

And it can be different next time

We have a destination

It doesn't matter if we get there

with our butterfly of crocodile rows

It's falling in love with yourself

To look at what you have done, and say:

Yes

That's it

I accept it.

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