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CULTIVATING RELATIONALITY AND AN ETHICS OF CARE THROUGH ARTS-BASED AND PLAY-BASED RESEARCH

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Abstract

In this paper we make practical and theoretical contributions to feminist adult education. Practically, we provide an overview of a three-hour arts- and play-based research workshop with research activities/tools that readers can further research to adapt to their own contexts. Theoretically, we explore how these creative practices can contribute to wider notions of relationality and ethics of care when integrated with Indigenous, decolonizing, and intersectional feminist approaches. After offering a rich description of arts- and play-based methods (photovoice, found poetry, collage, narrative métissage, river journey, and Lego visioning), we discuss how creative methods and practices hold the potential to foster deeper connections, promote collective accountability, and support the ongoing work of decolonizing education. We encourage future research to further explore the intersection of these practices with feminist adult education and to continue expanding our collective understanding of how to cultivate care, responsibility, and reciprocity in teaching and learning settings.

Résumé

Cet article apporte des contributions pratiques et théoriques à l'éducation féministe des adultes. Le côté pratique offre un survol d'un atelier de trois heures sur la recherche axée sur les arts et le jeu qui fournit aux participants des activités et des outils qui pourront faire l'objet de recherches s'ils souhaitent les adapter à leur propre contexte. Le côté théorique explore les façons dont ces pratiques créatives contribuent à des conceptions plus larges de la rationalité et de l'éthique des soins en combinaison avec

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des approches autochtones et préconisant la décolonisation et le féminisme intersectionnel. Après une description des méthodes axées sur les arts et le jeu (Photovoice, poésie retrouvée, collage, métissage narratif, River Journey, conception Lego), nous discutons du potentiel pour les pratiques et méthodes créatives d'encourager les connexions et de promouvoir la responsabilisation collective et les efforts visant à décoloniser l'éducation. Nous encourageons des recherches qui exploreront davantage l'intersection de ces pratiques et de l'éducation féministes des adultes et continueront de développer notre compréhension des façons de cultiver les soins, la responsabilité et la réciprocité dans les milieux d'apprentissage.

Keywords

arts-based methods, play-based methods, feminist adult education, Indigenous feminisms, relationality, ethics of care

Mots clés

méthodes axées sur les arts, méthodes axées sur le jeu, éducation féministe des adultes, féminisme autochtone, rationalité, éthique des soins

Arts-based (Bishop et al., 2019a; Clover et al., 2020; Knowles & Cole, 2008; McNiff, 1998; Mitchell, 2011) and play-based (Blaisdell et al., 2019; Wright, 2021; Wright et al., 2023) approaches to research can encourage a different imagination, and can trouble and disrupt traditional normative research constructs that reinforce hierarchies of power. We are three cis female authors who met one another over a decade ago. Tiffany is queer and of Filipino ancestry, Laura is a descendant of Eastern and northwestern European ancestors, and Catherine is of mixed European ancestry. Our positionalities impact our understandings and perspectives of research, feminism, and adult education and support our commitment to creating welcoming spaces for all learners, especially for students who experience multiple structural oppressions. We are all arts-based (and play-based) educators and researchers, as well as humans passionately committed to our relationships (ranging from families to communities, to nature, to art) and adult learners ourselves. We recently found ourselves in the unusual position of co-teaching a graduate-level course at a Canadian university. We say unusual because in our everyday practice we seek to push against the grain to promote arts- and play-based research, yet here we found ourselves together in an abundance of alignment support.

The purpose of this paper is to offer both practical and theoretical contributions to the field of feminist adult education. Practically, we offer an overview of a three-hour arts- and play-based research workshop we co-designed, which readers may learn from and adapt to suit their own needs. Theoretically, we discuss how arts- and play-based practices are intricately connected to and can serve to enhance both relationality and an ethic of care—concepts we discuss in greater detail below—when facilitated in conjunction with an Indigenous, decolonizing, and intersectional feminist approach. We provide details about the context in which we offered this workshop, followed by a discussion of adult education and arts- and play-based research. These two opening sections enable us to position ourselves within the discourses of feminist adult education and the imaginary. We then go on to describe the

workshop we co-created, offering brief descriptions of each of the six arts- or play-based methods we introduced, and key reflections on our design and facilitation of these methods within the course context in which we taught. Our discussion then weaves together the ideas of relationality and an ethic of care in the context of facilitating arts- and play-based methods, while simultaneously promoting decolonizing education. We conclude with invitations for scholars and practitioners hoping to move this work forward.

Context: Teaching Global Leadership in a Canadian University

To understand our orientation to feminist adult education, it is important to understand our orientation to feminisms within the intercultural context in which we taught. In the spring of 2024, together with six other faculty, we three authors co-taught components of a ten-week course that prepared students to undertake a final research project. Two of those weeks were taught as a full-day in-person intensive; the other eight were taught online. This course was situated toward the end of a Master of Arts in Global Leadership (MAGL) program, where both faculty and students represent a range of intersectional identities, including perspectives and lived experience from at least nine countries beyond Canada. In this course, we centred anti-oppressive, Indigenous, decolonizing, queer, of colour, intersectional feminist adult and popular education world views, scholarship, and participatory approaches to research.

Black feminist scholar bell hooks' (2000) conceptualizations of feminism are helpful in understanding how we took up feminism as relevant to people of all sexes and genders, especially when creating a learning space. She suggested that the aim of feminism and the ongoing, dynamic, and evolving conversation about gender and gender equality is to realize a world where "fully self-actualized [humans are] able to create beloved community together, realising our dreams of freedom and justice" (p. x). This vision is inclusive of all people and targets processes of domination (i.e., sexism/misogyny/patriarchy) as the problem, rather than a group of people (i.e., men) (Clover et al., 2017, p. 25).

Our approach draws on third-wave approaches to feminism (Fernandes, 2010). As critical feminist adult educator Patricia Gouthro (2021) identified: "Over time, criticism escalated over the perception that second-wave feminism focused on the experiences of white, middle-class, heterosexual women, excluding the concerns of other women" (p. 50). For example, Black civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) identified that feminism must extend and complicate its gender-based critique of patriarchy to better account for how intersecting elements of identity shape women's experiences of violence and oppression: "Because of their intersectional identity as both women and of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalised within both" (p. 1244). Likewise, Autumn Asher Blackdeer (2023), a queer decolonial scholar from the Southern Cheyenne Nation, argued that "decolonial feminism is not merely adding more Indigenous perspectives; it goes beyond ideas of inclusion … [and] makes space for Indigenous world-views, to be defined on our own terms and in our own words," thus offering a pathway for Indigenous sovereignty (p. 620). Anti-oppressive, Indigenous, decolonizing, queer, of colour, intersectional feminist perspectives such as these informed our work as co-instructors of this course, as we endeavoured to express feminism as a liberatory movement for more people through our language and actions.

Even as we engaged such world views and approaches, we were cognizant of the paradox of teaching in the colonial context of a western academic institution, where the (English)

written word continues to hold power. As Black scholar Amilia Evans (2023) so poignantly wrote, "The relationship between predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and antiracist practices remains a paradox that may not be solvable, but it stands to be understood when reimagining diversity to subvert the effects of systemic racism" (p. 48). Therefore, with a teaching team and class composed predominantly of women and people of colour, we endeavoured to name and make explicit the critiques and contradictions inherent in Global Leadership throughout our teaching.

As described in an earlier publication about the development of the MAGL program (see Rowe et al., 2015), Global Leadership is a cultural activity "suffused with values, beliefs, language, rituals and artefacts" (Jackson & Parry, 2011, p. 71). All human beings are influenced by the cultural values, beliefs, and traditions of their families of origin, socio-geographical community, peer group, educational environment, and workplace, as well as by life experiences of joy or challenge. These factors shape cultural identity, which is further enhanced by intersecting elements like ethnicity, sex, gender, age, generation, socio-economic class, nationality, political or religious affiliation, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation (Gopaldas, 2013). As such, today's global leaders need to be aware of their own cultural values and orientations as well as work in ways that recognize the diversity of other people's complex cultural backgrounds. Moreover, students are invited to recognize what bell hooks (2004) called the interlocking political systems of "imperialist, white-supremacist, capitalist patriarchy" (p. 17). To address multifaceted challenges facing the world today, early in the program we suggest that global leaders must understand intersectionality—"the interactivity of social identity structures such as race, class, and gender in fostering life experiences, especially experiences of privilege and oppression" (Gopaldas, 2013, p. 90). Intersectional feminism, or intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), as a foundational concept not only informed our teaching but is also a thread woven all the way through to students' research and practice projects (see Rowe et al., 2015, for more information on the program itself).

Early in their coursework, students are invited to reflect on their own positionality in intersecting axes of power and privilege and to reflect on how identity shapes leaders' efforts at the global level through readings such as Gopaldas (2013), Hankivsky et al. (2014), and Maina-Okori et al. (2018). In the second year of the program, as they prepare to conduct their final research projects, we deepened the invitation to consider how their own intersectional identities shape the work they undertake, and how the aspects of identity we embody combine to create qualitatively different life experiences (Crenshaw, 1991).

With this focus on intersectionality, we also aimed "to decenter conceptions of feminism based narrowly on the experience of white, middle-class women and to call attention to inequalities that have historically shaped relationships between women" (Fernandes, 2010, p. 98; see also Moon & Holling, 2020). As shorthand, we will refer to these early, limited conceptualizations as white or western feminism, not to be mistaken with white feminists as people themselves/ourselves, who may support any number of feminist perspectives.

As one example drawn from the Middle East and North Africa, Wanda Krause (2022) shared with the class how women activists in Egypt struggled with narrowly defined western notions of feminism. She offered that "Egyptian women, most of whom are Muslim—some ground their activism explicitly in Islamic principles—want to create change within society for the betterment of the marginalized" (p. 6). However, some

> studies of [these women's] activities through a Western (feminist) lens envision progress and development through the expansion of liberalism. The danger of this worldview to capture the meaning of refusals will end up capturing a mere fraction of activity that empowers people in Egypt and transnationally. (p. 12)

The women with whom she conducted this study worked to uplift vulnerable women and children's health, literacy, and economic conditions, but did so more from the Muslim concept of *khayr* (doing good), through acts of refusal, or through quiet circumventions (Krause, 2022). Thus, this initial framing of feminism through a personal story and empirical research allowed us to focus instead on our shared values and the broader notions of relationality (Simpson, 2014; Wilson, 2008) and ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982, 2023), from which we approached our work.

Adult Education, Arts-, and Play-Based Research

Our course was taught at Royal Roads University (RRU). RRU was founded on the premise of offering relevant, accessible, life-changing learning opportunities for mid-career professionals. As such, adults are our primary audience in this program, and our Learning, Teaching, and Research Model (LTRM) explicitly draws from adult education, social constructionism, and UNESCO's five pillars of learning: learning to know, to do, to live together, to be, and to transform oneself and society (RRU, 2024). Though not specific to graduate education, in 1991, Euro-Canadian adult educators (the late) Gordon Selman and Paul Dampier edited a compilation discussing the nature of adult education in the settler nation of Canada. At that time they wrote: "We have a lively adult education scene in Canada, and a deeply interesting history in this field which goes back for at least 150 years" (p. viii). Approaches to adult education in Canada have continued to evolve since then, most notably in educators' increased attention to women's experiences (Clover et al., 2016; Gouthro, 2021), as well as to Indigenous (Hanson, 2021; Leon, 2016; Louis, 2021), anti-racist (Ng, 2016), and Black (Brigham, 2021; J. Kelly & Pillay, 2016) experiences. This evolution in adult education parallels the evolution of feminism itself as well as of leadership education, resulting in the approach we took in this class.

Arts-Based Research

Adult educators have long been aware of the power of the arts in education, activism, community development, and social change. "The arts have been used as a method of research by women adult educators since the early 1980s" (Clover, 2010, p. 239; see also Butterwick, 2021; Clover et al., 2020; Cole & Flemming, 2021). Arts-based research, as a particular methodological approach, can be understood as "an effort to extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that otherwise would be ineffable" (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 1). Moreover, Simons and McCormack (2007) argued that arts-based researchers recognize through the creative process "the integration of intuitive and rational modes of understanding through engaging the whole of the person (emotions and intellect) in the process of understanding" (p. 297). In addition, engaging with the arts can bring to the surface preconscious or previously unarticulated concerns and desires (Davis-Manigaulte et al., 2006). As a result, instead of endorsing a singular interpretation of reality, arts-based researchers enable audiences and participants to reconsider the world

from different directions by encouraging them to look beyond the surface of the familiar (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

When teaching arts-based methods to students, we make clear that in the face of increasingly complex global challenges, we can no longer rely solely on traditional research approaches (e.g., Etmanski, 2014). There are many occasions where we need to find new possibilities to activate the heart, collectively imagine, co-create solutions, and learn into the future. Although several approaches to leadership, research, education, and community development have an innovative intent, in this course we explicitly explored how employing arts-based and play-based practices in students' final research projects offers unique ways not simply to collect data, but also to build empathy, tap into collective creative potential through co-creation, encourage a different imagination, foster meaningful relationships, and trouble or disrupt traditional normative research constructs that reinforce hierarchies of power.

Play-Based Research

Play is defined and conceptualized in an array of forms across disciplines, theories, and sectors with diverse perspectives on its value, form, and purpose. Although engaging playfully may emerge in many forms of creative, participatory, and arts-based research, the term *play-based research* is still fairly new, with only a few related studies in the literature (e.g., Campo et al., 2019; Koller & San Juan, 2015; Wright, 2021; Wright et al., 2023). Though the term is not rigidly defined, Wright (2021) described play-based research as "the inclusion of play used/arising in the research process" (p. 43). As with arts-based research, play-based approaches can be employed at any stage in the research process and are powerful windows into the unconscious or preconscious minds of participants. Research on play has often privileged western culture and failed to recognize the cultural specificity of the nature of play (Marfo & Biersteker, 2011; Wright et al., 2023). However, the act of play itself can open dialogue (Berger & Zezulkova, 2018) and foster space for deepening conversation and engaging in critical issues in the lives of children and youth, as well as in the lives of adults. However, what can be presumed to be playful or fun by the researcher may not be experienced that way by the participant (Wright, 2021); thus, contextualized, relational, engaged approaches to play-based research are critical. Like arts-based research, play-based research is deceptively powerful and ought to be engaged with care.

Teaching Arts-Based and Play-Based Methods

In the context described above, we endeavoured to teach creative methods to MAGL students and promote the methods as a means "to disrupt heteropatriarchal colonial narratives and practices and also, to encourage the emancipatory potential of hope and a sense of agency" (Clover et al., 2024, para 2). Since we three are well-experienced in this area, we had countless ideas yet had to balance our interest in arts- and play-based approaches with other aspects of the curriculum. We therefore decided to combine our efforts in a three-hour workshop where we offered:

- a presentation and overview of arts- and play-based practices;
- examples of research projects from our own experiences;
- short and long concurrent sessions, where participants could choose from three options for 20-minute and 60-minute activities; and
- a closing, large-group reflective conversation in circle.

This design enabled us to share theory and practice, draw from our own life experiences and stories, and offer a range of possible options to students while communicating that these are a small sample of many possible methods. The arts-based and play-based methods we selected to teach included photovoice, found poetry, collage, narrative métissage, river journey, and Lego visioning, each of which we describe in more detail below. Offering a choice to students enabled them to go where they were most drawn according to their own interests and research contexts, while also allowing us to maximize the sharing of our expertise. This choice meant that students experienced two of the six concurrent methods sessions (one 20-minute session and one 60-minute session), and numbers were more or less evenly distributed across the workshops.

Beyond this workshop we also integrated various other creative and participatory methods into the course, including music, dance, drawing, popular theatre, liberating structures (Lipmanowicz & McCandless, 2014), and a range of other playful icebreakers and team-building practices led by students and faculty alike. In the section below, we describe the six specific methods in the concurrent sessions offered as part of this workshop. As these are brief descriptions, readers are encouraged to read the references for more information on each method. As context for the method descriptions below, it may be helpful for readers to understand that a general inquiry into the role of global leaders in promoting planetary health ran as a theme throughout this course. Each method we introduced enabled students to deepen their inquiry into this topic, thus gaining an experiential understanding of how each method can support different ways of knowing and insights into the same topic.

Photovoice (facilitated by Tiffany)

Photovoice is an arts-based method that encourages participants to document and reflect on their personal and community concerns and desires, promotes collaborative analysis through group discussions, and provides a forum for participants to present their lived experiences through photos and contexts defined by participants themselves (Streng et. al., 2004; Wang & Burris, 1994). In this course, students were invited to go outside and take a photo(s) that represented how they and others might support planetary health during increasingly challenging and urgent times. Once completed, participants returned to the classroom, where they were given a physical copy of their photo(s) and engaged in an individual reflective activity. During this activity, they reflected on their photo(s) and wrote responses to questions such as: What do you see in this photo? Why did you take this photo? What is really happening here? How does this photo relate to planetary health? How could this photo educate others? Participants were encouraged to consolidate their reflections into a robust description and display this description alongside their photo(s). In silence, participants engaged in a gallery walk, reading and witnessing photos and descriptions created by their peers. To end the activity, participants engaged in a facilitated large-group discussion, sharing what they had noticed and learned from one another about what they and others might do to support planetary health.

Found Poetry (facilitated by Tiffany)

Found poetry is an arts-based research activity that takes existing text and refashions and reorders words and phrases from that text to represent them as poems (Hill, 2019). The activity offers an opportunity for participants to both practise reading and staying with

text, and then to intervene in the text to discover new meanings. Students were given a printed version of a peer-reviewed journal article written by a co-instructor of the course titled "Leading Individual and Collective Well-Being for Planetary Health" (Krause, 2023). They were encouraged to look for 50 to 100 words that stood out to them, highlighting or underlining details, words, and phrases they found powerful or moving. On a separate sheet of paper, students made a list of the words and phrases they underlined, making only minor changes to punctuation or words to create their poem. Students were then invited to share their poems, if they chose, and encouraged to share their own reflections on the meaning they made from their found poems.

Collage (facilitated by Catherine)

Collage, or the act of gathering and then assembling images in response to an inquiry, might be one of the better-known arts-based activities as it is often taught in Canadian public schools. However, when understood as an arts-based method (Culshaw, 2019, n.d.; Vaughan, 2005), it takes on a certain depth, as the selected images become symbolic of what a person carries inside and may not yet have words to speak. Culshaw (2019) referred to this as the revelatory power of collage (see also Davis-Manigaulte, et al., 2006). Culshaw (2019) added that methods "such as collage are gaining in popularity as they stimulate visual rather than linguistic thinking and offer the opportunity to express experiences as holistic, non-linear metaphors" (p. 268). Like many arts-based methods, collage is also used in therapeutic contexts (Chilton & Scotti, 2014), with more attention in recent years given to a method called, "Soul Collage" (Frost, 2010; Johns, 2022). In the context of this workshop, students were invited to select images relevant to their perspective on planetary health from a supply of old magazines representing a range of social interests, then glue these images onto a card. This card became a keepsake of their thinking at that moment in time.

Narrative Métissage (facilitated by Catherine)

In simple terms, métissage is a creative method that interweaves diverse texts, including personal stories, poetry, gestures, and images (Chambers et al., 2008). In so doing, it supports the co-construction of knowledge about self, others, and the world (Etmanski et al., 2019). Like other artistic media or creative qualitative inquiry methods, métissage can move from expressing one person's story to becoming "a means of conveying truths about the human condition" (Furman, 2006, p. 138). In this sense, it acknowledges both the individual and the collective, and supports the complex and often messy unfolding of our shared humanity (Beltran et al., 2024).

Though not solely an Indigenous method, some authors have described this approach as a decolonizing research sensibility (Donald, 2012), an interpretive Indigenous approach (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012), or a Métis manifesto (V. Kelly, 2012). Métissage—particularly *narrative* métissage that draws primarily from personal narratives, as was taught in this course—offers a means to engage with one's own identity construction and deepen one's understanding in relation to others (Beltran et al., 2024). In the context of this class, students were invited to write a personal narrative on planetary health, then work in a small group to weave their narratives together with those of other students. Each group then performed the narrative back to all the workshop participants. (See Bishop & Etmanski, 2020, for more information on how to facilitate narrative métissage, and Bishop et al., 2019b, for a concrete example.)

River Journey (facilitated by Laura)

Through play- and arts-based research and education, participants can have opportunities for "emancipatory and empowering counter-narratives" (Clover & Stalker, 2007). River journey is one such art- and play-based method, facilitated to engage participants to reflect on an experience over time (from start to middle to end or future), while documenting the most significant changes (Lee et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2024). For this method, students were invited to reflect on their journey as students in the MAGL program. They were asked to use coloured markers, paints, or other tools to draw a river across a page and to use "keywords and images that [reflect] their significant experiences, strengths, and challenges" (Finn et al., 2023, p. 4). Once complete, participants were invited to share their rivers in a circle with the larger group, if they chose to, focusing on key highlights and moments of change. A focus group was then facilitated, probing further on ideas shared from the rivers. A river journey acts as a play- and arts-based storytelling approach and can be particularly helpful in challenging singular narratives of oppression.

Lego Visioning (facilitated by Laura)

Lego visioning is a play-based research activity that invites research participants to have a tactile experience by building their visions with Lego. The activity allows for abstract reflection, inviting participants to go beyond linear ways of knowing and understanding themselves and their desired futures. In the context of exploring planetary health, students were invited to bring nature objects (e.g., pine cones, shells, sticks, leaves) into their Lego visions, using both Lego and nature to co-create a vision for the future with their peers in small groups. Once the activity was completed, participants were invited to share their structures while the facilitator asked further open and probing questions about their visions.

Workshop Reflections

As previously mentioned, this workshop, together with the overarching in-person residency design, offered students the opportunity to experientially understand a range of arts- and play-based activities and methods. In students' research proposals, we noticed that many of them endeavoured to integrate some of these methods, in whole or in part, into their studies. Nevertheless, they—like us—were constrained by a short time frame in which to conduct their research projects. Although they expressed a desire to learn and understand more about how these methods could be integrated into research contexts, the very nature of western/neo-liberal education in a time-bound graduate program poses challenges for how deeply one can appreciate the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of arts- and play-based research as means of disrupting traditional normative research constructs that reinforce hierarchies of power and privilege numbers and linear-rational ways of knowing and expression. As such, we acknowledge that in the beginning, students often see these methods as just another tool in their toolbox. With time, practice, and patience, we can begin to more holistically grasp the full potential of such methods in fostering the imagination and envisioning better worlds, an undertaking that can last a lifetime. In applying any lessons gleaned from this article, readers might weigh the benefits of spending more time with one method, thus deepening comprehension, rather than providing a range of examples.

Having described the practical contribution of this article, we turn now to how arts- and play-based methods contribute to wider notions of relationality and ethics of care.

Discussion

In the third edition of *Making Space for Indigenous Feminisms,* Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson reminded us from Anishinaabe teachings that "we never do anything in isolation" (Simpson & Maynard, 2024, p. 273). Drawing from this teaching and other Indigenous feminist theorizing, we understand relationality not only as a critical concept to teach alongside how to conduct arts- and play-based methods, but also as a concept to embody in the classroom (and beyond). Relationality from an Indigenous feminist perspective emphasizes interconnectedness, relationships, and reciprocity as fundamental to understanding identity (TallBear, 2011), community (Simpson, 2014), and the non-human world (Yazzie & Baldy, 2018). From this perspective, relationality involves the ways in which people and communities understand themselves in relation to others and the more-than-human world, with an emphasis on mutual responsibility, respect, and care. Similar but still explicitly different, an ethics of care, also sometimes known as care ethics (Toombs et al., 2017), seeks to prioritize "interpersonal relationships" and benevolence (Gilligan, 1982), and focuses on fostering trust and care in relationships. A feminist ethics of care "opens to a commitment to re-making relations, to flourishing and re-making the world" (Moore et al., 2021, p. 198). In arts- and play-based research, deconstructing binaries and their inherent hierarchies, and creating space for co-creation, likewise troubles paternalistic ethics of care approaches, which Moore and colleagues (2021) suggested assume a hierarchy between researcher and researched. A nuanced and decolonial feminist ethics of care respects participants as active contributors instead of as people who are "vulnerable and in need of protection" (Moore et al., 2021, p. 182).

Anishinaabekwe scholar Eva Jewell (2024) added that "unless [an ethic of care is] actively and attentively anti-colonial, it is at the expense of the worlds that pre-exist and exceed this one" (p. 170). As such, we learn from Indigenous feminists to challenge dominant patriarchal and colonial narratives that prioritize individualism, ownership, and exploitation (Simpson, 2014). Their thinking offers an alternative to these structures by promoting the idea that survival, well-being, and justice are collective responsibilities, and that all beings are part of a broader, interconnected web. Jewell (2024) described this approach as moving toward an anti-colonial feminist care ethic. For instance, several decades after the 1982 publication of *In a Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan (2023) recently revisited her work to suggest that caring is in fact a natural and *human* way of being that has been repressed and diminished for all people under patriarchy, thus expanding her original contributions to feminist thought and reflecting the broader evolution in thinking, being, and doing we offer here. Although this acknowledgment helps us move these bodies of work into conversation, it remains important not to simply subsume Indigenous feminist discourses under *white* feminism. Further, arts-based scholar Tiina Seppälä (2016) urged us to consider what she terms a decolonial feminist solidarity, which "stresses the importance of recognising different sociocultural categories and their interactions on multiple and often simultaneous levels" (p. 84). This discussion reflects the nuanced, messy, imperfect, and sometimes painful way we aspire to work with and learn from one another as colleagues and co-instructors. These ideas are important in educational settings in terms of acknowledging power differences beyond sex and gender that exist in any setting and welcoming all learners into a circle of care. How we come to understand one another is not always elegant or polished, and our relationships are still very much in flux and motion, yet we continue to spend time nurturing and tending to them.

In teaching this course on research preparation, one of the co-authors of this paper led a seminar on decolonizing research practices and methodologies, drawing from Indigenous feminist frameworks. In this seminar, she emphasized that knowledge is not a product of individual effort but is deeply intertwined with the relationships between people, the Land, Water, and more-than-human beings (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2000). She explained that because these relationships are sacred, researchers have a responsibility to approach their work in ways that honour and nurture, rather than exploit or harm, these connections. This concept, known as relational responsibility, was articulated by Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008). In both this seminar and our arts- and play-based workshop, students were invited to challenge colonial conceptions of knowledge, its creation, and who has the right to possess it, as well as to understand knowledge as truths beyond just words (Hill et al., 2024). In addition, faculty supported students in understanding *good* research practices, or what Moore et al. (2021) described as a feminist ethic of "care-full risk [that] allows us to work towards 'responsible action' while taking seriously matters of accountability" (p. 198). Drawing from the theories of relationality and ethics of care discussed here, arts-based scholars stress the importance of reciprocal relationships (Goessling et al., 2021). In their exploration of a broad range of arts-based and participatory youth work, Goessling and colleagues (2021) highlighted that one of the themes across this body of work is attention to relationships. They argued that while research is often not seen as a space conducive to focusing on the people and efforts involved in building community, arts-based approaches provide a unique opportunity to foreground these values of reciprocity and care.

Beyond facilitating learning about relationality and ethics of care, as faculty and instructors in an adult education space it was vital for us to embody these teachings in our everyday interactions with students. Simpson's collaborative work alongside Black scholar Robyn Maynard (2024) reminded us of the importance of relationships—specifically, how it "always starts with visiting, sharing food, sharing songs and ceremonies sometimes, doing something together, getting to know people" (p. 273). Throughout the two weeks of the in-person residency aspect of this course, we endeavoured to do much of the same. Every morning we enacted notions of care by preparing and sharing food, often engaging in conversations across our tables abundant with easy-to-peel mandarin oranges and what was left of a dozen hard-boiled eggs. Our breaks between discussions were filled with snacks: fruit gummies that stuck to the roofs of our mouths and a variety of mixed wrappers clinging to and protecting chocolate delicacies. We sought for students to feel physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually nourished and supported to thrive in their learning. We aimed to break down barriers to their thriving, through collective and student-specific forms. For example, we welcomed one student's child into the classroom on days when childcare was not available, and provided him with opportunities to contribute and take leadership himself. We integrated art and play as part of an embodied ethics of care, integrating much space for play, fun, and laughter through song, games, jokes, and unstructured playtime in our learning and research. Wright et al. (2021) noted the value of fun in research and building relationships, and how it is often dismissed as not important enough to be written about or explored more deeply.

Invitations and Conclusions

We close this article with an invitation to readers to move more deeply into what Indigenous rights activist and adult educator Cindy Hanson (2021) called *solidarity activism*, where

"decolonizing education takes the form of individual and collective processes that aim to transform political and socio-economic structures, support multiple epistemic positions, and heal ruptured relations of domination and subordination" (p. 27). Building on our collaborative work, in this article we have explored how one might do so through arts- and play-based methods, and how these can serve to deepen and broaden understandings of relationality and ethics of care. We specifically encourage faculty and instructors teaching creative research methods in both formal and informal adult education settings to draw inspiration from Indigenous, decolonizing, and intersectional feminist pedagogy.

Reflecting the abundance of creativity offered throughout the course, many students endeavoured to weave creative practices into their final projects, though they also maintained their desire to pursue surveys, interviews, and focus groups—the standard research methods many students had already heard about upon starting a methods course. We see this trend reflected in other methods classes, where arts-based research is one of several approaches offered in an overview of potential methods. Looking ahead to future iterations of the workshop, we recognize that, much like building relationships, engaging with arts- and play-based methods requires prolonged engagement over time. We also see the benefit of providing early exposure and multiple opportunities to practise these methods in the course and perhaps in the program more broadly. This would allow students more opportunities to embody and meaningfully engage with the work, rather than collecting one-off experiences as tools in their researcher toolbox.

This paper contributes to the expanding body of feminist adult education by demonstrating the value of arts- and play-based methods within an Indigenous, decolonizing, and intersectional feminist framework. Through theoretical exploration and practical guidance, we have outlined how these methods not only facilitate creative and engaging learning experiences but also promote relationality and an ethic of care. By offering an overview of the workshop design and the specific arts- and play-based techniques we used, we hope to inspire adult educators to adapt and implement similar approaches in their own work. Ultimately, we argue that when facilitated with an awareness of power dynamics, cultural context, and social justice, these methods can challenge traditional hierarchies of knowledge and create spaces for more inclusive, responsible, and transformative educational experiences. As we have shown, when skillfully facilitated, arts- and play-based methods hold the potential to foster deeper connections, promote collective accountability, and support the ongoing work of decolonizing education. We encourage future research to further explore the intersection of these practices with feminist pedagogy, and to continue expanding our collective understanding of how to cultivate care, responsibility, and reciprocity in adult education settings.

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