

**WILDFLOWERS IN THE CONCRETE: THE INTERPLAY OF ART, SELF, PARABLE,
AND GOOD LEADERSHIP**

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Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Education, University of Lethbridge, 2016**

A Project submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Faculty of Education
University of Lethbridge
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, CANADA

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DEDICATION

To the leaders that still hope for humanity.

To Dylan, who gave me grace, space, and patience, with love.

ABSTRACT

Good leaders embody the dispositions of care, meaning-seeking, and growth, and promote these dispositions in others. By engaging in cycles of creation, through written narratives and art, then reflecting upon them, this project explores what good leadership is and the essentialness of its practice within the contemporary education system. This project acts as an invitation for other leaders to join in a similar process by creating, and engaging in deep reflection, in service to care, meaning-seeking, growth, and promoting leadership in others. Throughout this project, both the insights *into* answering and the insights *while* answering were considered. A heavy focus on effectiveness and efficiency exists within the current education system and leaders need to continue to bring humanity to the forefront of thoughts and practices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These pages would have remained blank without the support and encouragement of multiple individuals. To them, I offer my sincerest gratitude. I want to thank my committee member, friend, and advisor Dr. Kevin Wood, for your unwavering dedication and confidence. You had faith in me as an academic, a writer, and a leader when I did not have faith in myself. I could not have gotten here without your sincere backing. Thank you to my second committee member Dr. Doug Checkley for your willingness to join in on this exploration and for your continued support.

I want to thank my father who taught me to stare into the abyss unblinkingly, to look closer, to understand deeper, to pick up bugs, and to flip pages. I want to thank my mom for being a vibrant example of an educator who is dedicated to care and growth. Your late evenings and early mornings at school never went unnoticed. Thank you for showing me that a leader doesn't need a formal title and for shaping me into the educator I am today. I will forever be grateful for my sisters and friends who supported me with innumerable texts, phone calls, coffee dates, and ears to bend. And lastly, thank you to my husband, Dylan. You have seen me through so many stages of my life, and I am so grateful that you were beside me through this as well. Thank you for your endless patience and grace as I was consumed, in the best possible way, by this project. Thank you for giving me strength and space.

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CHAPTER 1: WILDFLOWERS IN THE CONCRETE: THE INTERPLAY OF ART, SELF, PARABLE, AND GOOD LEADERSHIP

As I began my graduate studies two and a half years ago, I was shiny and eager. Burning like a coin left on hot pavement, for ways in which I could acknowledge who I was while wedging myself into the mold of a leader. Without considering my genuine leadership qualities, I attempted to fit the unique shape of me into theory after theory, and model after model. Sometimes I would fit, in the way that a hermit crab's new shell might fit, bulky and dragging. Other times, the models felt too small. Not all of me was inside. Each time I tried on a new idea of leadership, it never seemed to be consistent with who I was. After my first year of graduate school, much of what I had read and studied focused on how to become an *effective* leader. These studies described the tasks, attitudes, and actions required to effectively lead. Thoughts on what to *do* as a leader were discerned, but less frequently were thoughts presented on ways to *be* as a leader. This troubled and intrigued me. I was asking, "was the integral ether of leadership truly just the veneer of theories and models ironed onto ourselves?"

Near the beginning of my second year of studies, I felt worn and frustrated. I began to question whether I had a place within leadership. As the courses unfolded, however, what began to emerge was the idea that good leadership might include embodying certain open dispositions. This was a view of leadership that finally felt fitting. Leadership that is democratic and values the dignity of the individual; that is gracious and inviting. Considering Brown & Moffat's (1991) idea of using archetype and metaphor, alongside introspection, felt like a cool wind through the tops of the trees. Using reflective practices (York-Barr et al., 2005), participating in collective pedagogical discussions (Palmer, 1998), and caring deeply (Noddings, 1984) settled on my shoulders as the weight of sunshine does. I began to see myself reflected in ideas of how a leader

should *be*; the dispositions of good leadership. The thread connecting all of the resonant ideas was a connection to the deepest parts of our humanity. By thinking, dreaming, connecting, and reflecting, the superficial veneer of leadership began to peel away and reveal to me a deeply felt and authentic view of leadership.

As I have experienced in both my graduate studies and practical experiences as an educator, the current education system is driven by the idea that effectiveness and efficiency are the epitome of success (Samier, 2022). Industriousness makes its way into school leadership, where individuals are asked to *effectively* run schools by managing operations and directing the use of resources as one of the core standards of leadership (Alberta Education, 2020).

Contemporary educational systems embed efficient and effective processes and operational language within five-year plans and documents highlighting systematic objectives and reinforcing the idea that good education equates to effective and efficient education.

This project was born out of a curiosity about the system as I see it functions today; this project is a way for me to both inquire and to push back against the over emphasis of industriousness. Throughout this project I have engaged in deep reflection on the dispositions that seem to make up good leadership and help make *good* leader. Through multiple rounds of reflective creation utilizing narrative writing and art, reflecting on process and product, and by revisiting these artifacts, I now more firmly understand what is meant by good leadership.

CHAPTER 2: PROJECT AIM

This project aimed to engage in a deep exploration about good leadership and how I discovered and constructed its meaning. This outcome is presented as an invitation to other leaders with a desire to address the tension between the drive for effectiveness and efficiency that currently exists in our education system and for those who seek *goodness* in leadership. This

study centered around the idea that ways of being as a leader are vital to growing good leadership. Caring, meaning-seeking, encouraging growth, and then promoting these dispositions in others, in this project, translates to good leadership. Through reflexive narrative (Johns, 2022) and the creation of art (Gombert, 2017), I used parable and artistic creation to explore a metaphorical understanding of what is good leadership. Unlike other methods, so much of self was uncovered throughout this project. This vulnerable uncovering of self is presented as an invitation for the audience or reader to also participate in the same type of introspection; exploring and examining parts of themselves that fit or are extraneous to good leadership. By reflecting, writing, sketching, reviewing, and recreating, I reinforce that caring, meaning-seeking, encouraging growth, and promoting leadership in others is what defines good leadership and invites others to reflect on these dispositions. At the onset this project aimed to consider leadership as a practice that might focus on more than just effectiveness and efficiency. It also aimed to explore a model of introspective practice that might serve as an example and invitation to join a conversation about what might truly matter in educational leadership.

CHAPTER 3: A NOTE ON GOOD

This project is an inquiry into good leadership and to uncover what good leadership is, it is necessary to explore the essence of good. Good is seen as a trivial word, a word used to punctuate small talk or to toss away at the end of an interaction. It's a word to utter to fill space. However, like a vibrant prairie sunset, good is often taken for granted. The idea of good is elusive but describes something that elicits resonance. It brings out emotions and impressions. Goodness is relational, strengthening our connection between humans and enhancing our humanistic qualities. I propose here that good demands focus and attention, just as effectiveness and efficiency do.

Admittedly, in the English classes where I teach, I have always told students that good is a nothing word. It means nothing. It adds nothing. It simply exists as a placeholder for a more exciting and enticing word. However, in exploring the basis for this project, the idea of *good* has recurrently surfaced. At first, I was put off by it, frustrated even. This far into my graduate studies and the best word I could come up with was good? As the frustration dissipated and turned to curiosity, I began to wonder why this word continued to resurface. Was it the right fit for what I was trying to explore? Initiated by my wonderings and fueled by determination to uncover more about myself, I embarked on a journey of narration and reflection. Similar to the process in which I undertook for the entirety of this project, I wrote about the word good and then reflected upon my writings, in hopes of uncovering what good truly meant to me.

For this project, good has morphed into something more meaningful than what I originally thought. It is expansive and resonates in a way that makes sense to my own emerging understanding of leadership. By reflecting upon one word and its emotional and intellectual impacts, I was able to uncover some of its meaning for myself. Good is found in the small moments of our lives; in the tiny places of gratitude and emotional expression. Good allows one to react safely. It fills hearts with warmth. It allows one to feel comfortable and seen. Goodness is relational and about connection, strengthening the bonds that make us truly human.

Although this is not a definition, I hope that it provides understanding about what is meant by the word; that good is more rounded than just a nothing word. My hope is that the reader appreciates that good is an aesthetic, a set of characteristics by which to view and feel and understand something rather than a quality something inherently possesses.

CHAPTER 4: STRUGGLE WITH THE SYSTEM

I watched first with curiosity and then with mounting apprehension, over the past years, as industriousness seeped like the sheen of oil on a puddle, further and further across teaching and leading practices. I saw increased testing for younger and younger students, with the idea that data, in the form of standardized test results, could inform outside agencies of the success or failure of the education system. I saw more and more responsibility added to educators' loads with seemingly less and less time to accomplish the tasks. This forced educators to act efficiently, as opposed to thoughtfully balancing the many aims of education. A few years ago, as I was neck deep in piloting a new curriculum for English Language Arts and Literature for Grade 6, I became overwhelmed. The curriculum was saturated with fact recall, simple transactional skills, and blatant political influence. Instead of introducing these changes to curriculum in a measured and thoughtful order, implementation was on teachers and leaders at once. This left little room for deep thought about how to implement with care, to discover the purpose for these changes and what this means for the students our schools are asked to support, or to support subject specific teacher and leader learning. It was clear to me, as I continued to implement these curricular changes with limited time or support, that external agencies were forcing these changes without an understanding of what truly is essential to the education system. They were removing humanity from education. Government policy spearheaded this change, but the school division and school-based leaders were being dragged along, handcuffed to the roll out from the government. Leaders were caught up in the focus of being efficient and effective because of the lack of resources, tight timelines, and demanding expectations.

The idea that the education system needs to be industrial to be successful is a limited view of what is possible. By striving to only embody effectiveness and efficiency, it risks a pull

away from the dispositions that make us human: care, meaning-seeking, and growth. When one is solely focused on completing tasks in a timely manner, it is difficult to partake in deep-level thought, transformational ideas, or reflective practices (Samier, 2022). Although both effectiveness and efficiency have a place in the education system, the overemphasis placed upon these ideas restrict the deep understanding and exploration that is possible (Silins, 1994; Smith & Bell, 2011).

Again, and again government policy guiding education puts the emphasis on industrialism, locking teachers and leaders into a system which ignores the qualities like compassion, collaboration, and reflection that makes one human and instead embraces the institutional (Lehmann, 2016; Samier, 2022). External accountability measures such as divisional or provincial reporting and standardized testing are clear examples of this. In Alberta, standardized testing required by the government has increased dramatically in the past 5 years. Even Albertan kindergarten students do not escape the grasp of these accountability measures and testing (Government of Alberta, 2025b). Because of the pressure to perform on these assessments, leaders can fall victim to the trap of leading from a narrow viewpoint of successful outcomes and results. School based leaders are faced with the tension of responding to these outside measures while striving to embrace transformational and democratic leadership ideals (Silins, 1994). The practices that constitute good leadership are not as enticing as a system which easily dictates next steps. Being thoughtful and intentional in a system that is not built around these values requires work and time. However, it is precisely because of these systems that thoughtfulness and intentionality are required. The desire for ease is often galvanic. Leaders need to model choosing humanity over choosing the simple path of efficiency and effectiveness.

To protect oneself from falling prey to the trap of maladministration, one must intentionally practice good leadership. Good leadership embraces humanity. It entails deep thought and reflection on practice. It involves intentionally being present and tapping into the aspects that make one truly human: compassion, growth, reflection, and connection. As humanity is embraced, good leadership is practiced.

CHAPTER 5: HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To understand how the education system is currently structured and operates, it is imperative that historical factors are considered. As the old adage goes, there is nothing new under the sun and the pendulum that swings between efficiency focused educational practices and those that encourage the development of the humanity of the learner, proves this. This section aims to illuminate these oscillations in Western educational practices throughout history. This section also strives to uncover a potential explanation for the overemphasis of industrialness that exists within the system today. Western education can trace its roots back through time to practices created by the Greeks. Over millennia, vast societal, cultural, and technological shifts have taken place. These changes have molded education, leaving behind fragments of practices and systems. Remnants of classical education, religious influence, the factory system, humanism, progressivism, and business-centered ethos litter the contemporary field of education (Di Leo, et al., 2013; Joseph, 2024; Shuga et al., 2021; Titlely, 1990).

The origin of Western education can be traced to Ancient Greece when education was conceptualized by two notions of education: the liberal arts and the mechanical arts (Joseph, 2024). Both of these disciplines of education prepared individuals for life in greater society. Unlike the mechanical arts, where individuals learned practical skills on which they could survive, liberal arts went beyond the immediate needs of individuals and targeted the

development of the soul and morality. Students of the liberal arts were taught to appreciate the great beauty in art and writing and to enjoy the fine things that life had to offer (Joseph, 2024). This type of education involved the exploration of literary works, history, and philosophy, from which one's own morality developed in order for individuals to participate fully in the larger society. As Greek society developed, an education in the liberal arts was perceived to be superior but only offered to the elite. The stratification of Greek society meant that only a fraction of individuals were considered citizens and afforded an education in the liberal arts (Joseph, 2024). Modern education systems echo this unattainability of the lower class, where human and monetary resources are disproportionately allocated to private and charter schools as opposed to public schools (Di Leo et al., 2013).

As Greek society gave way to the Roman Empire, subjects like law and medicine made their way into the liberal arts (Joseph, 2024). Changes to education were not just subject specific for the Romans. The Greek model had been one-to-one education with a tutor, however the Roman model changed to include groupings of students, often sons of nobility, who were led by a single instructor. This method of education became one of control, where conquered nations learned the norms, values, and ideas of the dominant culture (Joseph, 2024). The desire for control through education is something played out in our contemporary system where schooling is used as a means to push the values of the private sector, including that of efficiency and effectiveness (Di Leo et al., 2013; Titley, 1990). As early Christianity emerged and the Roman empire fell, the role education played in shaping citizens, moved to the church. Where the liberal arts viewed the idea of morality to be developed in a secular sense, this new form of education emphasized Christian morals. Education no longer became about developing citizens of a nation, or the world, but was about developing disciples of the kingdom of God. Soon wealthy

benefactors began sponsoring the creation of schools in which their views on proper education were carried out (Joseph, 2024). Private contributors and philanthropists are reviving this practice today. The influence of outside agencies on the education system is clear in the shift of the priorities of education. Critical thought, democratic ideas, and quest for learning are being replaced with standardized testing, high competition, and the desire for score attainment (Di Leo et al., 2013).

During the Middle Ages, the role that power and privilege played in education was clear. Formal schooling was offered to those in elite positions, with few exceptions. Some of these exceptions were made for lower class citizens to attend a sort of training similar to the Greek mechanical arts, where a student would work as an apprentice for a Master tradesperson (Joseph, 2024). Power and privilege are great determining factors for finding success in today's education system, leading to large gaps in learning that can be connected to socioeconomic factors (Chitpin & Karoui, 2021; Di Leo et al., 2013). The most powerful influences in the contemporary system come from neoliberal government policies in which the desire for education systems to function more like the business sector is evident (Di Leo et al., 2013). As the Renaissance dawned, more scholars began to recognize the need for liberal arts and the espousment of humanistic qualities in education. This shift in ideals moved many away from the traditional group education model and back into the idea of individualized tutoring (Joseph, 2024). We see a similar shift in the late 19th and early 20th century with the introduction of progressivism and student-centered education. (Radu, 2011; Titley, 1990). Scholars, like Dewey, embraced the need for students to be at the center of their learning, and for education to create citizens who are able to contribute to larger society (Titley, 1990).

Populations in the West began to rise and the need for a system that could accommodate students in large numbers became a necessity. The idea of exercising control over students was more firmly established, as students vastly outnumbered educators. Funding was provided primarily by benefactors, who sought to further control the education of students in their schools. Qualifications for teachers based on their knowledge, skills, and character were established (Joseph, 2024). This idea is clear in documents like the Teacher Quality Standards and Leadership Quality Standards, that outline the standards that educators are required to meet to be qualified to teach and lead (Alberta Education, 2020; Alberta Education, 2023). Although many of these standards currently embrace the humanness of education and elicit good leadership, some of these guidelines still outline how educators are required to respond to and respect outside influence of government and other institutions. This becomes perilous if the goals of government do not match those of good leadership and education.

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, the Industrial Revolution changed life for many throughout the West. Without the labour laws we have today, all members of families, including children, were expected to work. Because of this, children were away from school during the work week, which resulted in the establishment of Sunday schools where Christian morals and ethics were instilled in children (Joseph, 2024). During the progression of the Industrial Revolution, focus shifted from simple mechanization to more complex ideas of mass production and maximum efficiency. Many of the ideas for an industrialized education system based on external accountability of efficiency arose from Frederick Taylor's theory of scientific management (Giannantonio & Hurley-Hansen, 2011; Taylor, 1911). The theory of scientific management centers around the idea that greatness of a person or system centers around their ability to be efficient in order to become prosperous, and that these two ideals should be the goal

of the workplace (Peek, 2023). Despite the many different definitions of prosperity, this theory reinforces the notion that success equates to financial gain. Although scientific management theory was originally developed in the factory setting, this management style quickly influenced the education system. Even though educational systems are not generally focused on earning a profit, these systems often are concerned about spending in the most fiscally responsible way (Government of Alberta, 2025a; Di Leo et al., 2013). Leadership wholly informed by scientific management spawns the belief that by reducing ambiguity and making jobs simpler, the efficiency and effectiveness of task completion increases. Tasks are performed simply for the purpose of project completion. Supporters of this theory embrace the idea that efficiency and effectiveness define successful institutions (Giannantonio & Hurley-Hansen, 2011; Taylor, 1911). Given this definition of success, it is difficult for educators to shift their focus to deep learning. The pressures to perform well on external accountability measures and to complete all required tasks limit educators' ability to embrace aspects of teaching and learning that embrace the intricacies of humanity (Taylor, 1911) These ideals are counter to good leadership, steering individuals away from caring deeply about the human, and instead ask that individuals be treated as part of a system (Giannantonio & Hurley-Hansen, 2011; Taylor, 1911). Scientific management embraces the managerial side of education, leaving little room for compassion, understanding, or kindness (Bush, 2020).

Progressivism, which grew in popularity in the early part of the 20th century, centered learning around the child. Dewey, the father of progressivism, viewed education's primary purpose as to prepare students to take part in a changing economic and industrial landscape and to be valuable members in a democratic society (Radu, 2011; Titley, 1990). When most consider progressivism in education, Dewey's idea of a liberal child-centered approach is the primary

focus. Lurking below the surface of focusing the child at the center of the education process was the assurance that the child entered the workforce at the appropriate level based on their station and socioeconomic status. The goal of education was not necessarily to develop the child but to safeguard society from the burdens of unproductive members. This driving factor was wrapped in the focus on development of the child in service to creating democratic citizens (Titley, 1990). Despite the potentially darker undercurrent, progressivism promoted student choice and freedom, alongside the promotion of educator creativity. This style of education prompted teachers and leaders to approach education in a way that decentered the educator, asking them instead to lead learning from the side, based on the wants and needs of the students (Radu, 2011). In Canada, progressivism reached its peak in the 1930s, when the ideals of education as an “activity and experience” rather than that of “knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored” (Titley, 1990, p. 95) and a focus on comparison to self rather than others made its way into provincial policy and guiding documents across the country. Inspired by the Ancient Greek ideas of mechanical and liberal arts, a focus on a balance of fine art and practical skills was promoted through the further development of courses like wood and metal shop, cooking, music, and art (Joseph, 2024; Titley, 1990). In Alberta, however, the adoption of progressivism failed mainly due to the government’s inability to recruit enough skilled educators. Embracing progressivism “had not failed, because it had never been tried in the true sense of the word” (Titley, 1990, p. 110). The idea of holistic development of the child, growth and freedom of choice as the main focus of education, competition against self as opposed to competition against others, and the instructors focus on care that are characteristic of progressivism did not thrive in the Albertan environment.

The rise of neoliberalism in the world of education starting in the latter part of the 20th century to the present, has negated any educational reform that has moved towards embracing

humanistic ideals. Cultivating neoliberalism has led to the emphasis being put back on competitiveness, entrepreneurial spirit, and external accountability (Di Leo et al., 2013). It has also seen decreased government spending on public education, which puts further restraints on an already shackled system (Di Leo et al., 2013). Neoliberalism promotes reduced government involvement and instead promotes free market solutions to issues that arise in education. This shift has the ability to fundamentally change public education, potentially even erasing it, in favor of a private education system. As neoliberal policies and government practices impact the daily lives of educators, they risk promoting a culture of selfishness as less emphasis is placed upon compassion, cooperation, and the collective good (Lehmann, 2016). Humanity in general is ignored. With increased emphasis upon neoliberalism the education system is moving ever further from an institution that truly embraces humanity.

Contemporarily, many industrial ideals are evident during conversations about successful educational practices that center the action of completing tasks, not just well, but as quickly as possible. Standardized testing and student compliance often hold significance over deep and authentic learning (Di Leo et al., 2013). Leaders perpetuate these ideas within their roles by putting a heavy emphasis on task completion, setting an example for other educators. It is not just school leaders that bolster these ideas, systemic issues, such as increased workload and expectations, coupled with a higher demand for external accountability, have vastly influenced the work in the education system (Elmore, 2005; McRae, 2024; Thomas, 2017). As the efforts towards schooling that elevates efficiency and effectiveness continues, members within the system have less ability to focus on what the system was originally designed for, learning, and instead turn towards completing tasks and holding themselves accountable to the demands of external regulating bodies (Elmore, 2005).

History has led to the moment in time where toxic leadership and maladministration are a common occurrence. Not only is toxic leadership tolerated, but it is also, at times, even encouraged. Toxic leadership, which is the antithesis of good leadership, embraces the industrial and inhuman parts of historic education and puts it into practice. This results in leadership that is easily influenced by the desires of outside agencies, is corrupted by the draw of efficiency and effectiveness, and that relies on systems of power and privilege. Toxic leaders whether knowingly or unknowingly cause “reasonably serious and enduring harm on their followers and their organizations” (Samier, 2022, p. 174). This harm is often mental or emotional in nature and greatly impacts the culture of a school. These destructive behaviours work to eat away at the morale and motivation of educators, leading to an environment filled with competition, bitterness, and disengagement (Samier, 2022). Behaviours like favoritism towards certain individuals, malicious and punitive communication, exploitation of relationships, manipulation, gas lighting, and morally corrupt choices, weaken the connections between individuals within the organization, eroding the tenuous amount of humanity that exists (Mathieu et al., 2014). Alarming numbers of educators are leaving education due to dissatisfaction with the status quo and the maladministration within the education system (McRae, 2024). A dramatic shift is needed to combat this mass exodus.

CHAPTER 6: DISPOSITIONS OF GOOD LEADERSHIP

To understand and practice good leadership, it is essential to embody the dispositions of care, meaning-seeking, and growth, and to promote these dispositions in others. These qualities exist to move beyond institutional limitations and towards a humanity-focused educational system. This section explores the connection between these dispositions and preexisting conceptions of leadership and leadership theory. These qualities are reflected in various

leadership models and theories including servant leadership (Eva et al., 2019; Wheatley, 2017), transformational leadership (Smith & Bell, 2011; Wood, 2023), distributed leadership (Harris, 2012; Spillane, 2005), instructional leadership (Goddard et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2008) and culturally responsive leadership (Chitpin & Karoui, 2021; Hammond, 2018).

For this project the idea of good leadership is delineated into four areas. Each of these areas brings humanity to the forefront and requires the practice of intentionality and reflection. Good leadership is caring, meaning-seeking, encouraging growth, and promoting leadership in others. These qualities are innately human. They allow a person to grow and learn from the world around them, to explore and make connections between themselves and others.

Care

Humanity is based on the belief that it is important to care for others. Society would not function without this basic belief. As leaders embrace the idea of caring, it is vital to view individuals holistically, balancing emotional, ethical, and intellectual facets. Caring emphasizes a balance of intellectual focus with the development of emotional intelligence and social responsibility (Cavanaugh et al., 2012; Davenport et al., 1997; Noddings, 1988). The moral aim of education is caring and all actions should stem from love and care, placing relationships at the heart of educational practices (Noddings, 1988). As educators intentionally cultivate relationships, exercise empathy, partake in meaningful learning opportunities, respect cultural contexts, and value each person's individuality, they are fostering an environment with care at the heart (Cavanaugh et al., 2012; Davenport et al., 1997; Nodding, 1988). Although this can be perceived as a somewhat lax approach to education, lacking rigor, true caring contains both hard and soft elements. Hard elements are those that provide rigor like expectations and accountability, whereas soft elements are those that are more traditionally connected to caring,

like kindness and empathy (Cavanaugh et al., 2012; Chitpin & Karoui, 2021; Hammond, 2018). Leaders demonstrate care by creating educational spaces shaped by the core principles of care: trust, empathy, collaboration, inclusion, reflection, and respect (Cavanaugh et al., 2012; Davenport et al., 1997; Noddings, 1988). These core principles overlap and intersect each other; therefore, caring is demonstrated by the cohesive integration of all principles and not each in working in isolation (Cavanaugh et al., 2012).

By focusing on care, leaders are partaking in servant leadership. Servant leadership is an other-focused style of leadership that aims to holistically support each member of an organization. This style of leadership allows leaders to support others as they grow into better versions of themselves (Eva et al., 2019). This external support and turn from self by leaders redirects care to the center of an organization. By exercising this care for others, leaders look to others within their organization to do the same, therefore promoting care from the center outwards (Eva et al., 2019). As chaos and demands increase within the world of education, servant leadership and care become an essential practice by educators (Wheatley, 2017). Just as care focuses on relationship building as the center of education, so does servant leadership, suggesting that in a time when individuals are pulling away from each other, good leaders and strong organizations should focus on building and maintaining relationships (Cavanaugh et al., 2012; Eva et al., 2019; Wheatley, 2017). Servant leadership and Noddings's (1988) version of care both insist that good leaders are morally bound to put individuals at the center of organizations and to lead with personal sacrifice and dedication (Wheatley, 2017). With care for humanity at the center, rather than industrious policy or practice, hope and belief in basic human goodness is emphasized within an institution (Eva et al., 2019; Noddings, 1988; Wheatley, 2017).

Meaning-Seeking

By uncovering the deeper meaning behind one's actions, leaders understand and embrace what makes one human. Meaning-seeking acknowledges an idea, seeks to explore it critically, build meaning from it, and then put what is learned into practice (Adams et. al., 2019). As leaders bring the idea of seeking-meaning to the forefront they are demonstrating that transformational leadership is vital (Wood, 2023). Although both transactional and transformational processes are important to leaders, transformational focus allows leaders to imbue actions with meaning (Silins, 1994).

Meaning-seeking exists in the action rather than in the substance or product created at the end. By going through the process of writing or creating meaning is uncovered. The product constructed at the end of a discovery of meaning is simply representative of the discovery itself (Polkinghorne, 1988). As one seeks to discover meaning with an action, both the action and the product are considered collectively. The idea that there is “no static and everlasting truth” (Moen, 2006, p. 7) allows that meaning is subjective and must be considered in relation to others.

Meaning-seeking inherently demands reflection. In reflecting on the purpose of an action, choice, or task, a deeper understanding develops. This deeper understanding allows one to unravel the parts of an action, thought, or idea and to address each part independently. This deconstruction does not have to be an individualistic undertaking but is a collaborative endeavor that bolsters collective efficacy within an organization (Adams et al., 2019; Silins, 1994). It is argued that meaning cannot be ceded to another but cocreated in dialogue (Moen, 2006). This collective search for meaning can take the shape of deconstructing ideas on education, examining practice, or reflecting through conversation (Adams et al., 2019). This deep reflection and search of purpose allow educators to consider diverse perspectives which leads to more fitting responses

(Adams et al., 2019). Seeking meaning also allows educators to find and explore nuance. The beauty in this nuance can be uncovered by reflecting on the whole rather than by reducing an experience or action into its very base parts. Instead of accepting a task at face value, the reflection required to seek meaning allows one to find subtleties and richness which is needed in the ever-increasing complexity within the education system (Adams et al., 2019; York-Barr et al., 2005).

Growth

In high school science classes, it is taught that in order to consider if something is living or nonliving it needs to be determined if the subject can grow and change. If something can grow, it is living. As living things, humans not only physically grow and change, but have an innate thirst to learn new concepts and information. Growing is an innate human quality. Good leaders lean into this inherent desire to learn and grow, modeling it for others and encouraging others to do so (Adams et al., 2019; Taylor, 2023).

Growth is at the heart of both a learning-focused leader and the enterprise of education. Professional growth is complex and nuanced, but vital to providing a productive learning environment. It is essential that leadership continually provide and promote opportunities for growth for themselves and others within their educational community (DeWitt, 2018; Taylor, 2023). These opportunities can be formal professional learning sessions or more informal and culturally imbedded practices. Growth is an intrinsically driven process in which educators' personal preferences and goals direct focus. It involves continual reflection, motivation, and awareness. Growth is not a passive practice but requires attention and dedication. By focusing on growth and learning, a leader invests in the betterment of themselves and others within their organization (Taylor, 2023).

Instructional leadership encourages the leader to develop and grow their own understanding of subject matter and good practice, to encourage individuals within their school to do the same. This emphasis on growth as both good leaders and the individuals within the organization leads to a stronger school (Goddard et al., 2015). A school community grows under instructional leadership by teacher collaboration for the purpose of learning. This collaborative approach to learning leads to an increase in collective efficacy, which is one of the most influential indicators of growth and learning within an organization (Goddard et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2008). This collaborative approach to growth requires good leaders to support learning and development. This can be done in schools by leaders by being present in classrooms, leading and participating in professional learning, and by ensuring that their schools have conditions that are conducive to growth and learning (DeWitt, 2018; Goddard et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2008; Taylor, 2023).

Promoting Leadership Dispositions in Others

Connection is universal. Leaders lean into this idea by using social connections within their organization to promote the qualities of good leadership in others. The idea of promoting leadership in others is most widely recognized in the theory of distributed leadership. Distributed leadership is a practice that focuses on using the interactions between people and the situations they are in to promote leadership, as opposed to utilizing the leader's own skills and knowledge (Harris, 2012; Spillane, 2005). Rather than expecting the leader or small leadership team to make all decisions and perform the required roles, distributed leadership encourages others to take on responsibilities, spreading across many different individuals. This practice promotes and builds leadership in others across the organization (Spillane, 2005). This interplay creates a "reciprocal

interdependency” (Spillane, 2005, p. 146) between leaders and other members of the organization, in which each member plays a vital role.

Although each member of the institution is integral, distributed leadership is unlikely to work well without the direction of a leader. It is the leader’s role to recognize the various assets that individuals within their organization possess and to leverage those assets for the benefit of their organization (Harris, 2012). Historically, the role of the leader has been that of the pinnacle of the organization, but with distributed leadership, the role of leader shifts to one of collaboration and support. This style of leadership that promotes the dispositions of care, meaning-seeking, and growth in others results in a more collaborative organization (Harris, 2012; Spillane, 2005).

CHAPTER 7: PROJECT DESIGN

This project adopted aspects of different methodologies to construct a set of practices separate from its influences. By blending parts of the process of creation and reflection used by Gombert (2017), the qualitative method of Reflexive Narrative (Johns, 2022), and the practice of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) to interpret and analyze data, allowed for multiple cycles of creation, reflection, analysis, and synthesis. Creation for this project took two forms: mixed media sketches and narrative writing to express ideas of what good leadership is. In the final step of this project paint and other mediums were used to create a final art piece. The final piece of narrative was presented orally. Both visual art and narrative writing were the basis of the reflective practice. Following the act of creation (written or art), reflection was practiced by considering both the insights *into* answering and the insights *while* answering.

Initially, one of the following prompts was used to begin and focus the creation of the sketch or writing piece. These prompts guided the creation process, focusing the text (writing or

art piece) on an idea surrounding one of the four dispositions of good leadership: caring, meaning-seeking, encouraging growth, and promoting these qualities in others. Both forms of text were used as sources of reflection and data to inform creation of a text for the audiencing. Figure 1 highlights the prompts used for each creation session.

Figure 1

Creation Prompts for Narrative Writing and Art

Creation Prompts
How is caring good leadership? How am I changed because of how I have cared for/about someone or how someone has cared for/about me?
How is meaning-seeking good leadership? How am I changed because of how myself or others have sought meaning?
How is encouraging growth good leadership? How am I changed because of how I have been encouraged to grow or how I encourage others to grow?
How is promoting leadership in others good leadership? How am I changed by the ways myself or others have promoted leadership in others?

Using one of the four prompts, a 30-minute writing or sketching creation session commenced. The first creation session was based on the first set of questions and utilized narrative. The second creation session also focused on the first set of questions but was created using art. The third creation session was a narrative and moved onto the second set of questions. The fourth session utilized art and used the second set of questions. This process of using the

same set of questions for the two modes of creation and then moving onto the next question was continued throughout the project.

Throughout the creation session, creating without editing was focused on. Following Gombert's (2017) style, a meditation or mindfulness session was, at times, required to move into the frame of mind to create without self-censorship. Directly following the creation session, a 30-minute structured reflection session began (Johns, 2022) using the following structured reflection questions. The same set of questions were used for each session in an effort to provide continuity between all sessions from all prompts. The structured reflection sessions entailed 30 minutes of uncensored written reflection upon the previous narrative or art piece and the process of its creation. Figure two provides the structured reflection questions used during each reflective session.

Figure 2

Structured Reflection Questions for Reflection on Narrative Writing and Art

Structured Reflection Questions
What does this story/art piece uncover about caring/meaning-seeking/encouraging growth/promoting leadership in others?
How am I changed because of this experience within the story/art piece?
What feelings, assumptions, and/or actions are showing up?
What feels sticky or tense about this story/piece of art?
What is this story/piece of art trying to uncover?

If I were to pull keywords out of this story/piece of art, what would they be?
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The method of inquiry followed these steps:

- 1) A prompt from the Creation Prompts was chosen for creation.
- 2) 30 minutes of creation (writing or art) was undertaken.
- 3) Directly following, 30 minutes of reflection was undertaken using the Structured Reflection Prompts.
- 4) The following day, the same prompt was used.
- 5) 30 minutes of creation in the other medium (writing or art) was undertaken.
- 6) Directly following, 30 minutes of reflection was undertaken using the Structured Reflection Prompts.

The process above was repeated five times for each prompt in each medium, resulting in 20 pieces of art and 20 short narratives. Each session of creation and reflection was completed on a different day to ensure focus and novelty of ideas. Additionally, the four prompts for creation were rotated through, to avoid stagnancy and promote diversification. This was done to collect as much data as possible in the primary steps, as to provide a robust data set for the following steps.

Following the 20 creation and structured reflection sessions in each medium, reflexive thematic analysis was employed to generate codes and explore themes that emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This process was used with each disposition: care, meaning-seeking, encouraging growth, and promoting these dispositions in others. Initially, the data was gone through to generate codes and collate the information based upon the determined codes. Subsequently, tentative themes were developed based on grouping the predetermined codes. The process of reflexive thematic analysis was repeated through the four dispositions of good

leadership. Emerging themes overlapped between the dispositions and the themes were compiled together to honor the coinciding codes pulled from the different dispositions.

Once tentative themes were determined, they were reviewed with the project's advisory committee. The step of reviewing and co-creating insights is critical to both reflexive thematic analysis and reflexive narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Johns, 2022). The emergent themes were discussed, examined, and compared to the codes within each disposition. The process of co-creating meaning helped to ensure deep reflection and analysis of the texts and facilitated deeper understanding, seeing information and conclusions differently, and to confirm findings. The collective reviewing of tentative themes took place following the reflexive thematic analysis of all four prompts.

After determining the themes emerging from the data with the advisory committee, the next step was to create the final reflexive narratives and pieces of art for each quality of good leadership. Each of the four qualities had one final reflexive narrative and one final piece of art based upon the themes uncovered and drew on influence from previous texts. These final texts were an amalgamation of the themes uncovered and strived to strongly illuminate the dispositions that make good leadership: caring, meaning-seeking, encouraging growth, and promoting these dispositions in others.

The culminating step in Johns' (2022) reflexive narrative and in Gombert's (2017) process is presenting the final text to an audience. Because of the need for an audience to make internal learning external, the final reflexive narrative was written in the form of a script and was delivered orally. The final art piece, along with the reflection for each quality was displayed alongside the presentation of the reflexive narrative. This was done in a single performance, where the audience explores the gallery exhibit of the author's journey in reflection on what

good leadership means. Initially they entered the space to see displays on: the background and aims of the project, an invitation to join in on the reflection and dialogue of what good leadership means, and the process of determining and exploring the ideas presented. The audience were provided with notebooks and pens, in which they wrote or sketched their own reflections on leadership and the reflection process. As they entered the space, the reflexive narratives were told simultaneously around the room. Audience members moved freely through the narratives, listened to the stories, viewed the accompanying art, and read the companion reflections. Following the audiencing, one final reflection on the totality of the process was done. This reflection did not have guiding questions but was the culmination of the entire process.

The Role of Art

When focus on efficiency and effectiveness determine the quality of a product or action, the idea of creating art becomes an act focused on talent. Artists are focused on creating art that will be appealing or desirable to others. Just as letting go of the desire for industriousness helps to find meaning in our actions, it also allows one's creation of art to be based on introspection and self-expression rather than being externally motivated (Gombert, 2017). To do so, one must acknowledge and relinquish preconceived expectations that art must be a certain way: technically accurate, visually pleasing, or focused on pleasing others (Gombert, 2017; Routledge, 2020). Art, must instead, become a vehicle for internal thoughts, emotions, surprising discoveries, and ideas. Through the practice of creating, ideas and emotions naturally arise, allowing for authentic, and sometimes surprising expression. Art as an expression, allows the artist to focus on the process of creating rather than the product one has created and as a result gain a deeper understanding of self (Allen, 1995; Routledge, 2020). Art, in the context of this project, takes the shape of reflection and expression of self. Throughout this project, art was created by reflecting on a

question about a disposition that leads to good leadership. The engagement with processes of art encouraged a deep and unbound expression of thoughts and emotions surrounding each of the dispositions.

The Role of Narrative

The vast complexity of human experience is chronicled using narrative. Throughout the history of humanity, narrative has served as the chief way of recounting learning and perception of events. Story exists across cultures and time and it is argued that a people without story does not exist (Moen, 2006; Polkinghorne, 1988). Narratives communicate a sequence of events that hold meaning for the individual telling the story or the audience. Because of the relational nature of the human mind, story is the most meaningful unit of understanding. Humans learn new ideas, connect to prior learning, experience emotional catharsis, and consider diverse perspectives through the use of narrative (Moen, 2006). Narrative can be used to connect authentic characters and their interactions in hopes of better understanding situations. They can also be used, as in the parable style, to connect fictional settings, situations, and characters to real perceptions (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Individuals add meaning to their experience, in hopes of growth and learning, through the stories that they tell. In writing down their stories, narratives are liberated. They are freed from the individual and exist to be viewed through other's perceptions and frameworks. This freedom allows individuals to draw meaning and learn from experiences that are not their own, and to construct new understandings from them (Moen, 2006). In doing so, individuals experience story and to connect this to theory. As human experience is relational and growth happens in connection with others, narrative serves as a vehicle to connect theoretical understanding and experience (Moen, 2006; Polkinghorne, 1988).

This project utilizes narrative as a means to explore the human experience and as an invitation into a dialogic experience with myself and others. Throughout the project, narratives are created and reflected upon. These stories aim to uncover the basis of good leadership and how I, and others around me, embody its dispositions. The voices of the audience engaging in the discussion around the narratives are equally as important and my own voice in creating them (Moen, 2006).

The Role of Reflection

The process of developing good leadership involves introspection and reflection which are key to the identification and development of one's humanistic qualities. The practice of reflection is not a standalone quality for leadership, but one that permeates all facets of good leadership. It seeks into all that leaders do, until each part of their practice is continually reflected upon (Bolton, 2006). Openness is a quality needed for reflection, as it allows one further investigate self. It prompts a deliberative inquiry process in which active and curious examination, in the hopes of gaining a deeper understanding. In short, reflection is an active process (York-Barr, 2005).

Reflexive narrative is one way that educators can practice reflection. It is a dynamic, non-linear, and flexible approach to study and reflection which calls one to multiple rounds of creation, through writing, and reflection (Johns, 2022). Because of its varied origins, reflexive narrative embodies characteristics of other ideas, including the concept of hermeneutics, which calls one to deeply consider all aspects of a concept or idea. Through reflection and writing, reflexive narrative challenges leaders to look beyond what currently is, in search of what has to potential to be (Bolton, 2014; Johns, 2022).

Reflexive thematic analysis is another practice that allows leaders to be aware of and situate themselves within their research or writing (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Just as reflexive narrative has varied origins, so does reflexive thematic analysis. As a method for analyzing data, the exact process varies, but in essence reflexive thematic analysis necessitates discovering and translating patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Reflexive thematic analysis entails searching through process and meaning with a desire to further understand the complexity and nuance of situations, and the ability to reflect on and tolerate uncertainty (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Both reflexive narrative (Johns, 2022) and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) necessitate continual and layered reflection. With reflection embedded in reflexive study, leaders reject the external truth, and instead, seek internal growth (Johns, 2022). Reflection can take many forms, with the most common being an unstructured prose response to a prompt. By partaking in reflection, leaders translate the unconscious emotion or motivation into unconscious thought and words. This practice bridges introspection with the outside world (Gombert, 2017). Through reflection of the process, unexpected results may occur. Embracing the uncertainty, complexity, and creativity that these moments afford us is central to reflexive practice (Johns, 2022; Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Being a reflective leader is a cornerstone quality of good leadership. In order for leaders to recognize if they are embodying the qualities of a good leader, the practice of reflection is a moral responsibility as professionals and allows one to be socially and politically aware (Bolton, 2006). As leaders, reflection allows for deep introspection, which brings awareness to what extent good leadership is embodied (Gombert, 2017). Without introspection through reflection, it is difficult to truly know if one's actions and choices embody the qualities of good leadership.

The Role of Audience

“Audiencing” (Johns, 2022, p. 131) refers to the process of inviting an audience into a dialogue based upon the researcher’s findings. Most often this process is done as a performance, where audience members actively engage with and respond to the ideas and information presented. Although the practice of reflection, writing, and art creation is set in the idea of self-discovery and uncovering internal truths, the idea of presenting the discovered ideas to an audience is a crucial piece. Johns (2022) argued that performance with an audience is the best fit to the conclusion of a reflexive narrative project because it shifts from passive idea to participative action and ideally acts as a catalyst for change. Just as great plays elicit a connection and emotional reaction, so too does the “audiencing” (Johns, 2022, p. 131) of a reflexive narrative when others are invited into a space where they can actively connect with the subject of the narrative.

Not only does an audience make dynamic, the introspection of reflexive narrative, it also takes the inner reflection to a place of outer expression (Gombert, 2017; Johns, 2022). This outward expression invites others to join in on the process of reflection and sharing. The fourth dialogical movement of reflexive narrative calls the author to share tentative understandings pulled from the themes emergent from their initial reflections with a trusted confidant, colleague, or mentor. This step is an essential preface for an audience, as it is the first step to making the internal, external (Johns, 2022). The sixth and final dialogic movement of reflexive narrative involves presenting the finished story to an audience. It involves intentional and vulnerable expression from the author. Performing must be an expression of what has been learned and an invitation for the audience to join in on the emotion and reflective practice used to write the narrative (Johns, 2022).

For this project, the audiencing took place on one evening. The audience was invited to join the process of creation and reflection alongside my own exploration. The idea of a single stand-alone performance took inspiration from Allan Kaprow's Happenings that took place throughout the mid-twentieth century. These spontaneous art performances were defined by their fleeting presence and the demand for audience interaction with the art (Rodenbeck, 2011; Routledge, 2020). Kaprow explored the purpose of viewership, expanding on the traditional role of audience and suggesting that its purpose lies in constructing meaning with the artist (Routledge, 2020). This was precisely the goal of the audiencing for this project, for the spectators to become participants. The purpose of the single performance within this project is to reflect the idea that life, story, and art exist in a fleeting moment. It was an invitation for the audience to participate in something that exists only briefly.

Place for this Project

Much research exists into the transactional ideas of what makes a good leader (Adams et al., 2019; Bush, 2020; Giannantonio & Hurley, 2011; Spillane, 2005), but little exists about the inherent human qualities embodied in good leaders. The uniqueness of this project serves as an invitation for other individuals interested in what shapes good leaders, to create and reflect on these dispositions. This project demonstrates the power of reflection and its role in shaping leadership. It opens the door to a new way of understanding leadership through the lens of self-discovery and introspection.

Through this project I expected to uncover a deeper understanding of self in connection to leadership. Stories of caring, seeking meaning, experiencing growth and finding leadership qualities in others emerged, were reflected upon, pulled apart, and then converged again. This project was more about the process than was about the product arrived upon at the end. My

deeper understanding of a personal and meaningful leadership identity emerged through the cycles of creation and reflection that exist within this project. I discovered ways in which I want to be a leader, as well as ways I decidedly do not.

The value of this process lies in the depth of self-exploration that was afforded to me through the participation in this project. Very few times in our educational careers is there such time to dive deeply into the meaning and importance of good leadership. By doing so, the conversation that is opened as discovery is essential to the field of education as it exists currently. It is necessary to think critically about how the drive for efficiency and effectiveness affects the practice of leadership within education. These conversations are needed in order for change in education to happen.

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS

This project is equally about both illuminating the process and reaching the product. The findings outlined below demonstrate that. Both the action of creating and the creation at the end are in response to a system that prioritizes industriousness over humanity. The findings listed below are raw and appear here in a near identical format as when they were created, with only changes made for clarity or excerpts chosen for succinctness, from the cycles of creation or are images of the art created during those sessions. Included in the findings are poignant excerpts from the creation and reflection process that serve to highlight the necessity of the dispositions of care, meaning-seeking, growth and promoting these qualities in others. Following the creation text or reflection are rationales explaining why each excerpt was selected and what it illuminates about each disposition. At the end of this section, the interpretations of findings explore the codes and themes that arose from this process.

CHAPTER 9: CREATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Throughout this project, I participated in 40 cycles of creation, 20 being narrative writing and 20 being art. After the sessions of creation I reflected upon the experience. Below are selections in both formats that aptly address the idea of good leadership including the dispositions of care, meaning-seeking, and growth, and then promoting these dispositions in others.

Care Writing 1

She smiles as she reads it. The words on her computer screen wobble as tears fill her eyes, begging to fall across her cheeks. She gets emails from disgruntled parents and it is such a welcome change to read these kind words. “My daughter felt so sad to be who she is in your class. She knew that you would be kind and supportive about her coming out.”

The teacher hadn’t even known. She just cared about each student. Truly, deeply, and authentically. She made a space in her room where students belonged and felt safe. She carries this message with her as a clear example that you don’t always know the impact you are having on students. She does what she can to make these lasting impressions a positive thing.

She frowns now, thinking of her current class. Because of behaviour issues, this class is the most difficult she has had to teach. She cannot act the way she wants towards them. She is always at arm’s length. The teacher is not sure if this group of kids knows she cares for them. And if she is being honest, she is not truly sure if she does care for all of them. No wonder she finds this group so tough, everything becomes task focused. She cannot fall deeper into the learning.

It becomes equal parts frustrating and disheartening. She doesn’t like the person she has become when she teaches them. Correction: When she manages them. She leans into task

completion, with worksheet after worksheet. The teacher realizes she really does care about each student, because why else would she be this worried about their learning?

A teacher in the staff room says, “just let them fail. Let them all do poorly. You did your best.” She refuses to accept that. She tells her colleague this and it is met with a smirk and a smile full of the “oh bless her heart” sentimentality. Maybe others heard the teacher. Maybe they will take it to heart. Maybe they will reflect on how much they care.

Rationale

This piece was the first piece of writing done for the project. Although it is not quite in the narrative form of a parable that would evolve later in the project, the writing introduces the idea of deep frustration with the system. It also introduces the concept of authenticity in connection to care. It tentatively explores the idea that care practiced by leaders needs to be authentic and not surface level to be accepted by those within the institution.

Care Writing Reflection 1

As I write this, I am simultaneously filled with excitement and frustration. I thought writing the narrative would flow easier. It felt stuck and stilted like I had to write something of quality right away. I found myself using cliché and common phrases. It all feels so surface. I felt like maybe that might just be it. The first pancake theory again.

I feel changed because I have gained a deeper understanding of care and what that looks like; how much I really care about students. Something about quiet leadership arose. How maybe being a role model, someone who stands up for what they believe in, the thing that is at the core of their being, is a form of leadership. How we can be these leaders in our classrooms and our schools. Maybe our students see this, maybe parents do, and maybe our colleagues do. By inviting this authentically and by demonstrating how much we care, others might follow suit.

Some questions arose as I read it back. Do we have to like our students/colleagues to care about them? Is one necessary for the other to be true? Am I assuming liking and caring are connected and then maybe discovering they are not?

Tension in this writing comes from those who do not care and those that do. Is this assuming it is one or the other? Dichotomy? (Also struggling with this idea internally. We know we don't want to be a certain way, but are that way.)

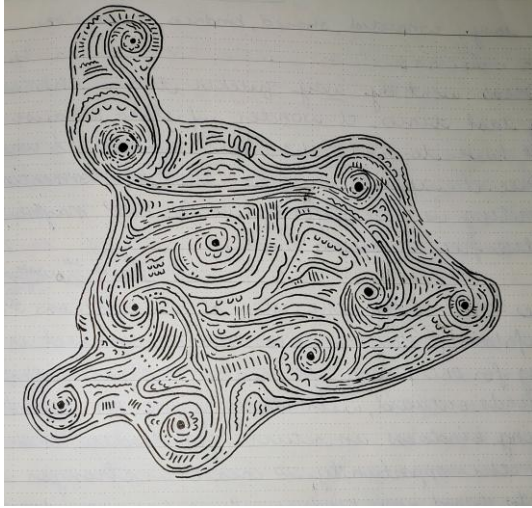
This piece is trying to uncover why caring matters, what caring looks like, and how it all connects to good leadership.

This is my first writing and reflection. Half an hour feels long, but it is good. Any shorter and I don't think I could get deep enough into the ideas I need to. I was interrupted 1x and took a five or so minute break between creation and reflection. I am listening to some folky/indie music. I feel my thoughts at times being pulled away, and just like meditation, I acknowledge then wipe away those thoughts, trying to ground myself in her and now. Next time, I am going to try to do this later in the day when I am done most of my tasks for the day.

Rationale

This reflection is the very first of all the reflections written. It addresses the initial feelings towards the project. You can see in this reflection both the frustration with the process and the eagerness and excitement towards it. The theme of struggle is brought up here in connection with the process. Preconceived notions about how fluid the process would be came into play and frustration arose when the preconceived ideas didn't match the reality of writing. This reflection also introduced the idea that there is a bit of difficulty with writing in the quest to find the most precise words.

Care Art 1



Rationale

This piece is the first introduction to art as a medium for this project. It embodies the organic and circular shaped lines that will be a common occurrence throughout the project. These lines are a comment on the natural and humanistic nature of care. The lines enveloping the dots speak to the interconnectedness of care; how in a system, care connects all members. It also mirrors the idea of a ripple effect that is explored later in the project.

Care Art Reflection 1

This process went by way quicker than the writing last time. I wonder if it is because I didn't have to find "the right" words? I was more free to express emotion/thought/connection. Maybe writing is more performative for me? Maybe I feel less free to express myself. The reflection process is slower going with this one.

This piece came from the idea of connection and enfolding. How kindness and care connect us. By caring for one person it creates a ripple effect that extends outward, with others acting for each other and offering kindness in return. For leaders, this allows us the opportunity

to create a stronger community based upon kindness. By caring you demonstrate the importance of care as a fundamental quality of being a good leader.

I find myself being changed again and again when others show their deep care for myself and for others around them. Sometimes I get caught up in the negative and when others demonstrate care it reminds me of all the positives in education. I give a lot of myself to what I do, so it feels rewarding when that care is reflected back. It moves from feeling dehumanizing to humanizing.

Feelings of warmth, joy, excitement came up as I created this piece of art. It feels good. It was a focus on the positive for me. Often I find myself caught in the inverse; what good leadership isn't, but today I just basked in the sunshine.

Rationale

This reflection provides contrast to the previous reflection done on writing. The contrast in process is very different between mediums. This reflection shows how different the process is with art vs. narrative. It is another great example of the joy that arises from doing this project.

Care Writing Reflection 2

This moment really changed who I am. Losing someone definitely sharpens the focus on what is important and the way people treat you. Who is there for you and who is not becomes clear. Although I knew that my dad passing was something that happened to me outside of school, it bled into how I was in school. I felt that my admin should care. We are in the business of humans and caring about them is how you make your institution strong. By caring about all the little pieces of their lives. Not superficially but deeply and authentically.

This story is trying to uncover the difference between superficial care and that of true and authentic care. Also why authentic care is so very important to the development of a strong

community/institution. It is also talking about how what can be disguised as caring may actually be selfishness. Those around you can tell if your gestures are superficial and that almost feels worse.

Rationale

This reflection echoes what is explored in the writing about authenticity but adds another layer. This added layer explores the theme of the infinitesimal vs. vastness. The smallest action or the collection of small actions can have vast impacts when it comes to care.

Care Art 2



Rationale

This piece of art introduces the ideas of surface vs. deep knowledge of individuals that is needed from leaders to practice authentic care. The rain on the surface of the water obscures the figure drowning below the surface. These ideas of authenticity and deep understanding will resurface in later pieces of writing and art.

Care Writing 3

It was the sunniest day yet this spring. The sun, the blue sky, the wisps of clouds, all seemed brighter than the days before. Yellow, blue, and white all contrasting against each other. Despite the fact that it was still morning, the sun's rays felt warm on her shoulders, a sure sign summer was just over the horizon.

Just beyond the picket fence that marked the boundary of the front yard, the cracked side walk awaited. Each morning, with a steaming cup of tea she ventures into the zinnias and marigolds to sit cross legged and watch. Quietly and without movement she watches as the moms with their babies and dogs stroll past her first. Then the midmorning joggers and the elderly pet owners traipsing around the neighbourhood. Around noon the street becomes quiet, and that is when she watches for the smaller things. The butterflies flitting between flowers. The beetles dodging cracks as they make their way down the sidewalk, and ants marching in single file lines.

It is during the quiet period of the early afternoon that she sees it. A tiny green wisp poking out from the crack in the sidewalk.

Rationale

This piece of writing introduces the idea of the parable format that is used throughout most of the project. This piece begins to move the project away from a more concrete form of narrative writing and into a more metaphorical and representational narrative. The motif of nature emerges in this piece of writing. This motif will be carried across dispositions and seen in many pieces of writing and art.

Care Art 3



Rationale

This art piece introduces the idea of the heavy privilege of leading. The figure in the sketch is bent under the weight they are carrying. For leaders this weight is made up of all of the things they know and hold for those in their organizations. From preferences to goals, from losses to successes, from the things they like to ways they need to be pushed. Leaders who care know and hold all of these things.

Care Writing 4

The clatter of bells startles her, pulling her out of her thoughts. Quickly she darts her eyes towards the door. A tall man shakes the water droplets off his shoulders. It's not him. She simultaneously feels relief and frustration.

They had planned to meet weeks ago after she sent the dreaded text, “we need to discuss something.” As she had typed it out, she felt a twinge of something close to embarrassment, because they weren’t anything near a couple and that had very much felt like something you

message to a partner. He had messaged back with surprise coated in agreement. They settled on a day and time and then she had waited. She knew what she had to tell him would be difficult and that he may feel blindsided or hurt.

But she also knew that she had to tell him. Despite the uncomfortableness of the inevitable conversation, it had to be had. It would be better for everyone.

So here she sits, rolling a coffee cup between her palms. She wonders if it is a weird sadistic side to her that feels excitement about the prospect of this looming conversation. But as her cup hits her palm again she realizes that the reason for her guilty excitement is because she cares deeply about him and their relationship and about making the situation better for everyone.

Rationale

This piece of writing introduces the idea that to care about a person, a leader must not only support them in positive ways but also by having difficult conversations. Care is not only about the individual, but about the organization as a whole. Having difficult conversations when it is crucial to do so demonstrates the leader's ability to care about the larger group. This is not always a concept that comes to the front of mind when we consider care, but nonetheless is a crucial part.

Care Writing Reflection 4

Today I chose a different coffee shop than the one I usually do. I was craving novelty; a change. I am hitting a wall with this writing but in the best possible way. Instead of just writing the thoughts that are readily available in my head, I have to bend and squeeze my thoughts to fit. Often it takes 10 min of consideration before I am able to write. I have been keeping this outside of my allotted writing time. Bumping back the time by each minute it takes before I have an idea.

It is a beautiful struggle. I am finding myself more excited for these sessions than I was before. I feel like I might be uncovering some things.

Clear is kind →phrase my mentor used once when I was asking about a situation where a difficult convo was warranted.

Rationale

This reflection illuminates the writing process over content. It explores the beautiful struggle, as I call it, that exists in digging deeper into a topic. As I wrote, coming up with new ideas became more challenging, but it was in the struggle that I discovered profound thoughts about care. This reflection also is a great example of excitement with the process, not just the subject matter that I was covering. Throughout this project, there is a dichotomy between frustration with and enjoyment of the process of creation and reflection.

Meaning-Seeking Writing 1

My dad had a huge collection of books, spanning subject areas and genres. Months after his passing, my sisters and I undertook the arduous task of sorting through and clearing out his library. Some of the volumes were covered in dust. Some had dog eared pages. So many of the texts were about seeking meaning in the things that seemed un-understandable. Volume after volume we placed in boxes. Books about war, famine, genocide, heartache, adventure, the metaphysical. Concepts and ideas so closely connected to our humanity; about finding meaning within our existence. A whole lifetime of seeking the purpose of humanity. If we can find meaning in our humanity that meaning can be translated into leadership. The qualities that make us good humans also make us good leaders.

Rationale

This piece of writing introduces the concept of meaning-seeking, how it connects to myself, and then how it connects to leadership. The idea that meaning-seeking is a perpetual and lifelong quest that requires constant intrigue and questioning is introduced in this piece as well. It establishes these ideas that are explored throughout other pieces of writing and art.

Meaning-Seeking Writing Reflection 1

I am writing today, following our last session as a cohort. Today many people spoke about care, the humanity in leading, and moral outrage. I left feeling a little blue. Scattered and maybe a bit untethered. I used this word in my narrative but realize that it explains who I am as well. Maybe not who I am but where I am currently. I am finding so much joy, fulfillment, and excitement in what I am doing but yet I feel a little sad and a little stuck today.

I feel myself sitting with the term moral outrage bouncing around in my brain. I am finding myself outraged and saddened by the system and those that perpetuate the system. Forcing it to call for more and more effectiveness and efficiency. Piling on tasks in the form of standardized assessment and accountability measures. I feel this system and those that perpetuate its ideals harden/close of these in search of meaning. We talked about, today, the idea of depersonalization. That pulling backward as a way to protect oneself only serves to further the personal and systemic issues that are causing you to pull away in the first place. This could be said about seeking meaning as well. When we find ourselves no longer seeking the meaning behind our task, that pulling away can be made worse by pulling away to begin with. Lean in.

Rationale

This reflection further explores the duality of enjoying the process and being frustrated by it. It also adds the idea of frustration with the system itself. This sense of frustration is echoed

across the dispositions of good leadership and seen in many entries. At points this frustration serves the project, and at other times it does not. It clouds the purpose.

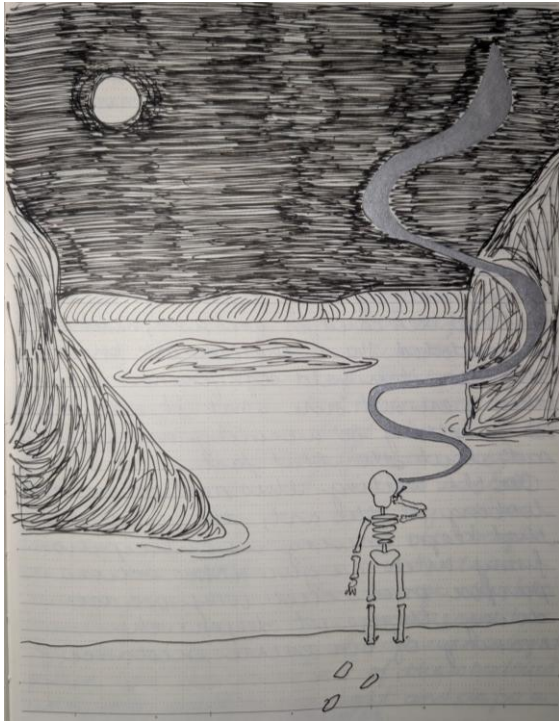
Meaning-Seeking Writing 3

She lays on her back. The heat from the late day sun on the dark earth, seeping into her skin. The sky is covered in what she calls cotton candy clouds. Pink and blue kissing the underside of the fluffy clouds. It is at times like these where it becomes unbelievable that the sky is not simply a painted dome towering above her. That something so beautiful can exist for such a fleeting amount of time. Tonight is the turning point of the season. It shifts summer into the coolness of autumn. Despite the date, the grip of summer has been strong, reluctant to release the hot long days. But she can feel it now, as the cotton candy clouds melt in the beginning darkness of twilight, the cooling in the air as the heat of the day seeps into the earth. She waits, as the sky continues to darken, for the show she is here to witness. It is almost all at once, the stars begin to twinkle, blinking themselves on. The milky blush of the galaxy spreads across the darkened sky. The moon is just peeking above the horizon. This is why she is here, to feel small and insignificant when faced with the vastness of the universe before her.

Rationale

This piece of writing continues with the use of the parable format and explores the nature motif. The idea of infinitesimal vs. vastness is brought up again here, this time in connection with meaning-seeking. An image that is connected with this idea is that of the night sky. The idea of sky, or more specifically the night sky, is brought up many times in both art and writing throughout the project.

Meaning-Seeking Art 3



Rationale

This piece of art is another example of the night sky motif. This motif arises repeatedly around this discipline. The skeleton is representative of the continual pursuit of purpose. That seeking meaning is not something that is done once and finished with. It is something that requires constant and continual reflection upon.

Meaning-Seeking Writing 4

Each day she neatly packed up her bag, cleared the top of her desk, and walked out the door without a backward glance. She walked down the street lined with the elms and turned down the avenue with the pink house in the middle, until she ended up at the banks of the river. She placed her bag and shoes, with her lace trimmed socks tucked safely inside, on the big flat rock just by the trees. As she made her way down the bank, barefoot, she carefully selected the flattest thinnest rocks. Gingerly, she placed each one in the makeshift basket she made out of the

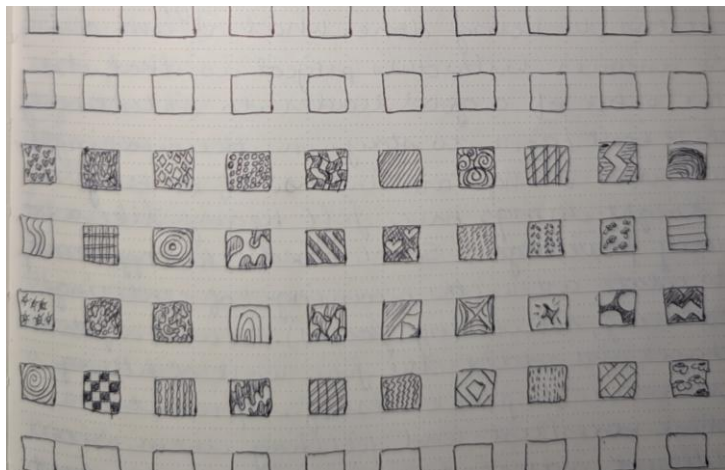
bottom of her shirt. Once she reached the spot, a small jut out of the bank. She lets all the stones drop around her feet. One by one, she picked up a rock, smallest to largest, cocked her arm back and hurled it across the surface of the water. She watched it skip until it sank below the surface of the river. She watched as the ripple expanded outwards, then picked up another stone.

To the woman that watched discretely out of her kitchen window, an eye to the crack in the curtains, her actions seem odd. There is something about the actions that seem ritualistic. Always the same rock for her back and shoes, always stopping at the same spot. To the woman watching it seemed like a waste of time. To the woman skipping stones it was much more.

Rationale

This piece of writing covers the idea that meaning is personal and that though others may complete the same action or task, the meaning behind it may be specific to the individual. It also introduces the idea that meaning may not always be apparent to all. It may be something that is hidden or somewhat indiscernible.

Meaning-Seeking Art 4



Meaning-Seeking Art Reflection 4

This process can at times feel very meta. The art that I got to do today was about finding meaning in the tasks that we do. Lately I have been catching myself feeling a bit like I “have to” do this work. Treating it in a way that I am absolutely trying to avoid; the opposite of what I am trying to do with this project. When things are busy and piling up, it is easy to fall into the checklist mentality. Our priorities shift from meaningful interactions to being down. What I am aiming to uncover with this project is that it is the work of a good leader to intentionally shift back/aim to stay in the meaningfulness when things are intense or busy.

Tonight things have felt heavy. Like a lot. Heavy privilege? So I used this opportunity to create art with meaning (of centering, calming, returning focus). I used repetitive shapes and added the fine work of filling the boxes. The piece itself represents check boxes/list, and filling them with different patterns/meaning. A piece about seeking meaning while seeking meaning is doing it!

Rationale

This piece of art and the corresponding reflection are a great example of product and process convergence. The purpose of this art was to find meaning in the task that I was doing. I used the opportunity of this project to help center myself and return to focus after a heavy day. This process was to find meaning and avoid falling into the checklist mentality; of completing tasks solely for the purpose of getting them done.

Meaning-Seeking Writing 5

Each morning she walks past the elderly man’s house. Each morning the elderly man was walking counter-clockwise around his garden with a watering can. Every morning, the same pattern. Rain, snow, sun, sleet. His path was so prescribed, I was literally worn into his grass.

One day, in the depth of winter, as she passed, she called out to the man, asking what he was doing. “Finding peace,” he called back and moved on to the next plant. She scoffed to herself and continued on her way to work. The next morning as she passed the man’s house, she called out again, asking what the man was doing. The man responded with “falling in love.” This time she really and truly laughed. A deep laugh from her belly. She laughed all the way to work. On the third day she was giddy to see the man. She nearly skipped to his house. “What are you doing today?” she asked. “Contemplating existence.” This time she nearly doubled over with laughter thinking how crazy this man was.

Rationale

This piece of writing explores the idea of imbuing actions with meaning. When the significance of an action is uncovered, purpose follows. This purpose allows individuals to gain a deeper connection and understanding. It is also another example where nature and water is a repeated motif.

Meaning-Seeking Art 5



Rationale

This piece of art is another example of the night sky motif, but this piece goes further to compare the mind of the subject that is seen through the eyes and a pool of sky. It compares the mind to the night sky and finding meaning within that sky. It shows the deep connection between humanity and finding meaning within and outside of self.

Growth Art 1



Growth Art Reflection 1

Today is my first day back into the project after my vacation. It feels a little stiff to get back into it. I feel like before I left I was so engrossed in the work and by vacationing I was pulled out of it, dangling so my toes are just above the water. Now being back in it, I fear my responses are just surface level. Scratching the surface, like a stick in the sand. I fell back on

cliche, a plat for growth. So original. But anytime we talk about growth, all I think about is a plant and how the viney tendril wraps up and around, reaching out for something to hold onto. I think of combing, scrambling upwards.

I think of the vine I have in my backyard, that wraps around the fence. But to start with, and sometimes to this day, it needs a little help. Tenderly, I need to wrap the shoots with wire and twist it around the fence. This is the thought . I had when I made this piece of art. That good leadership is those bits of wire that hold us onto the fence. They help us grow upwards, instead of along the ground. I also like the phrase “holds us to it” in the sense that good leadership is a small amount about accountability. Hopefully there is an intrinsic motivating factor when it comes to wanting to grow and learn, but if that is absent, it is important that leadership provides that motivation to grow. Maybe kickstart it and show the importance of it, then hopefully the vine can continue to grow on its own with minimal help. The swirls in the background represent the spiral nature of growth. How it is cyclical but also moves upwards. It is also a shape that I used to draw as a kid, a fun contemplative shape. It also shows how much I have grown. From that Jr. High student to this grad student. I have grown and changed so much.

Rationale

This piece of art and the corresponding reflection uncover a few crucial ideas about the disposition of growth. Firstly it explores the feeling of inadequacy that is brought up a few times throughout the project; the fear that what I am doing is not *deep* enough or academic enough. Although this piece of art is the first in the disposition, the fear is still present. The second idea that this piece of art and reflection uncover is the idea of holding someone to something. The idea that good leadership also has to do with accountability; that as a good leader our role is to help support and guide growth in the right direction.

Growth Writing 2

With the sunrise, the farmer wakes each morning. As he swings his legs over the edge of the bed and stretches his arms over his head, he mumbles cock-a-doodle-do. It started out as a joke, a nod to the farmer cliché. But like things do, a joke became habit and now ritual. He starts his day in the greenhouse, as the sun peeks over the tops of the trees and begins to glint through the glass roof. At the back, hidden behind forests of tomatoes and pepper plants he has planted a row of peas. Although usually a tender spring plan, the farmer has tried to plan in the twilight of summer as the nights grow cooler and the days grow shorter. An experiment really. He reminds himself of the 19th century monk experimenting with peas. Not necessarily the science part of it but the delicate care that it takes to keep them alive. They are little more than babies now. Toddlers, he is calling them. Curling tendrils, their meaty fists clutching out at the world. Gingerly using lengths of cut twine and the lightest touch, he attaches the shoots to the trellis behind them. Each morning there is a new shoot or tendril that needs wrapping. Eventually, the farmer knows the peas will no longer need his tender affection. They will grow stronger and wrap themselves. He will still check, every day. One day, they might slip or grow heavy on one side, and he will be there to strengthen. To redirect. To rotate. He will be there each morning as the sun rises above the trees and as he mimics the rooster crow for only the greenhouse to hear.

Growth Writing Reflection 2

I am not sure if I am changed but as I wrote a warm feeling began and stayed in my gut. I was writing from a positive place. A place of hope.

I am in Banff today and just heard a presentation about hope. Collective hope. Something we build together. At first I was skeptical. Another toxically positive spiel. But it wasn't. It was

choosing an act of rebellion. I feel like that fits with this work. It is a practice. Leaders need to practice all of the attributes I am outlining. Hope falls in there.

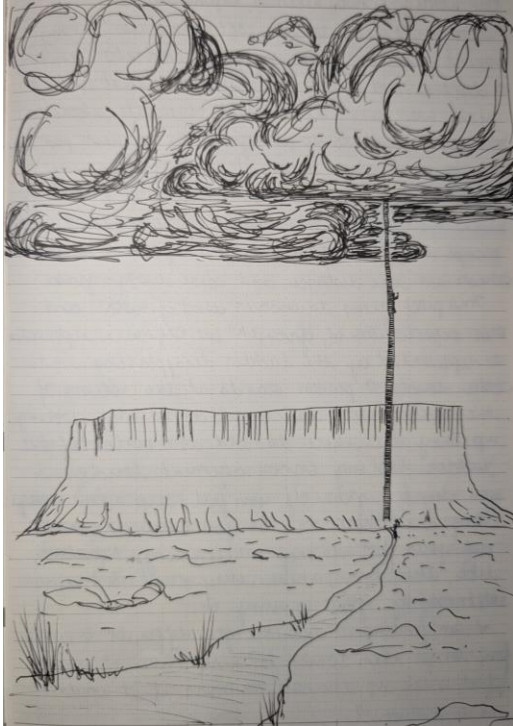
An assumption I am making is that people will be able to pull the story out of what I am writing about. They will be able to hear the moral resounding in their skulls. That they will see beyond these silly stories to find the deeper meaning.

The message that this story is trying to uncover is the attitude/outlook of the farmer that leaders should adopt. Of supporting others and encouraging growth. Pruning and setting back on track when needed. But checking in everyday. It overlaps a bit with promoting leadership, in the sense that the goal is to support until you are no longer needed. Essentially to work yourself out of a job. Carefully and tenderly encouraging the growth of others. Step by step, day by day. Never leaving, never giving up.

Rationale

This piece of writing and the corresponding reflection further develop the idea that good leaders support growth in others. It goes further to explain that the ultimate goal is to support growth until that encouragement is no longer needed and the individual can support and direct their own growth. These pieces also introduce the idea that growth is a continual pursuit and something that is never finished.

Growth Art 2



Rationale

This piece of art explores the idea that a good leader's role is not to encourage growth from above, from a place that is better than, but to witness other's growth from below to see the wider scope of the journey. The figure at the bottom of the ladder is representative of the leader, with the head thrown back witnessing the climb. The figure on the ladder is on a journey of learning and growth. The ladder disappearing into the clouds is representative of the idea of perpetual growth.

Growth Writing 3

He stares at the yawning circular opening a few steps from his feet. Prickles of sweat start at his temples. Through the opening he can see blue skies with fluffy white clouds dotting the horizon. Far below he can see the turquoise sparkle of water. How high up are we? He wonders, biting the inside of his lip.

The woman stands silently, still as an ancient oak, just inside the cool shadows to the man's left. The stone of the room they are in reflects the heat of the day, keeping in the clammy coolness of the morning. She has had many pass through the opening before this man and knows that he will be forever changed. For the better, but deeply changed. She has walked with him along the path by the sea, up the mountain, and through the building to this point, steps away from taking the plunge. She has assuaged his worries, answered his questions, encouraged and even slightly pushed. Now she steps out of the shadows into a shaft of sunlight and claps a hand on his shoulder.

Growth Writing Reflection 3

This piece was inspired by the idea that sometimes learning and growth takes a bit of a leap. Sometimes someone on their own is hesitant to do something uncomfortable. To move into an area where they are stretched and pulled in a different shape than they are currently in. It often takes someone to walk alongside someone, with the metaphorical hand on the back. The characters embody this relation. I feel like the idea of guiding someone through growth sometimes can feel paternalistic; the "I know better than you" attitude. But when growth/change/learning is approached with genuine excitement for the learning. In a way that one might share details of a vacation destination to a person who has never been to that location before. A "you're going to love it" attitude.

So much of this work requires nuance and could be so much different with a slight shift in outlook, authenticity, or attitude.

Rationale

This piece of writing and corresponding reflection further explores the leader's role as being beside or with another person. They explore how learning is experiential and collaborative.

These pieces also add the idea that sometimes learning and growth take a bit of a push.

Sometimes the person learning can be hesitant and it is the job of the good leader to direct learning in a specific direction. This should be done in a non-elitist way, but in the form of an invitation.

Growth Writing 4

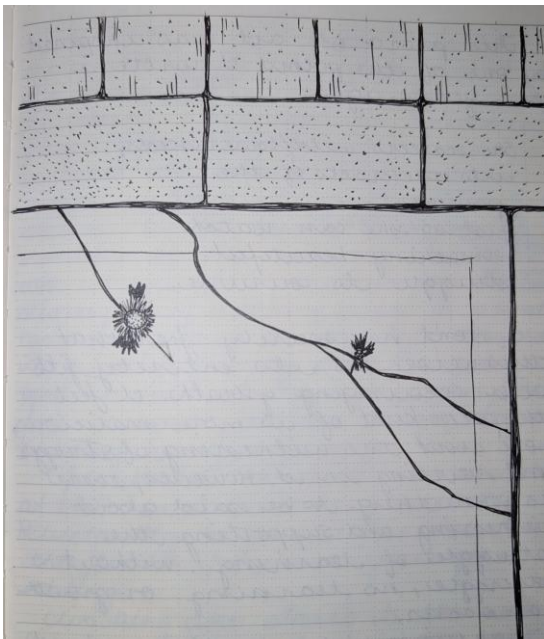
They stood shoulder to shoulder staring across the vast expanse between their rock and the next. Two ropes were strung between them and a pile of rough hewn boards sat by the edge. This high up, the blazing blue sky seemed extra brilliant and was dotted with a few perfectly fluffy clouds. She starts with the first board, instructing the other woman slowly how to attach each end securely. Board by board they build the bridge, meticulously securing and testing each piece. As the sky blushed with pink and deepened into the inky expanse of night. Back and forth across the already created part of the bridge they walked, bring piece by piece back across. Finally it was finished. The two women collapsed on the far rock. The other woman fell deeply into a sound sleep. As she slept, the first woman undid the bridge board by board , until nothing was left except the two ropes and a pile of boards. As the sun rose and the other woman awoke, she was enraged and demanded the first woman explain why she had destroyed their hard work. It had taken all day and intense concentration to finish, she lamented. Calmly, the first woman replied as she glanced over the edge, you will never truly learn to build it, until you build it yourself. And with that, she laid down and fell asleep.

Rationale

This piece of writing introduces the idea that promotion of learning requires knowledge of when to let go and when to allow the other person the opportunity to grow on their own. This idea has been touched upon in the previous pieces of writing but is further explored here.

Another idea that is presented with this piece of writing is the idea that good leadership requires effort and mental strength. It is not always an easy thing and that struggle is important to recognize. This piece of writing is also a strong example of the style of parable writing that is used throughout this project. This style of writing is used to illustrate a lesson in a short and simple way.

Growth Art 5



Growth Art Reflection 5

This piece of art was inspired by one of the poems I wrote a few years ago:

*She scatters wildflower seeds
into the cracks of the
pavement
just so she can watch
something beautiful*

struggle to survive.

I don't necessarily feel that this verse in its entirety fits with encouraging growth. I feel the poem is more malicious, more about the witnessing struggle and revelling in it. However, there is something to be said about witnessing and supporting the struggle of learning. Without struggle, no learning can occur.

Learning and growth are hard and so is leading someone through a period of growth. It is difficult and painful.

Rationale

This piece of art and the corresponding reflection further explore the idea of both leadership and growth as being something that is challenging and even at times painful. It explores the idea that good leaders witness and support the struggle of the people in the midst of growth, and that witnessing in itself is a difficult thing to experience. The wildflower growing out of the concrete is representative of the tenacity required to both grow in and witness growth in a situation that may not always be the most conducive to this learning and growth.

Promoting Leadership Writing 1

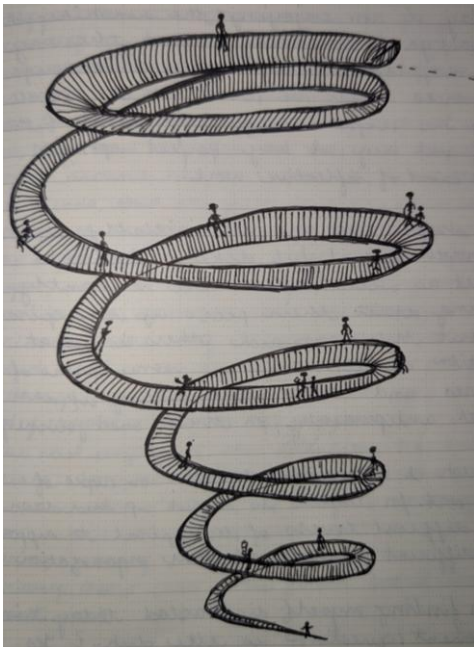
As I started my first year of grad studies, I was eager to get going and started to read my textbooks early. Sitting in my favorite coffee shop (as I do for most of my work), flipping through page after page of the Fullan text, eagerly highlighting and writing notes in the margins, an idea stuck out to me. A good leader aims to lead themselves out of a job. They should create the conditions where their institution should be able to survive without them. They should foster conditions in which others step up and fill their roles.

Rationale

This piece of writing introduces the idea that good leaders should aim to foster conditions within their school in which others can thrive in their absence. The idea of promoting leadership centers around this. Promoting the dispositions of care, meaning-seeking, and growth in others in the effort to create more good leaders within an institution and therefore be able to self sustain.

This idea will arise throughout the entirety of this disposition.

Promoting Leadership Art 1



Promoting Leadership Art Reflection 1

Today I am enjoying the sunshine in my backyard. Something about the way the dappled sight filters through the trees makes me want to do art all day. The light breeze keeps most of the head and bugs at bay. Perfect post for this kind of reflective work.

This shape was one I initially sketched for growth but I feel like it fits this context as well. Leaders are constantly pushing their peers up the spiral. So that they push others in that

direction as well. I drew some pairs of figures and some people moving up the spiral independently, on their own journeys.

I wish I had added ladders or ropes of some sort, for leaders to climb up and down the different levels of the spiral to support the different members of their organization.

Rationale

This piece of art and the corresponding reflection connect the dispositions of growth and promoting leadership in others by suggesting that it is through growth that leaders create the conditions for their organizations to sustain without them. It draws upon the idea that growth and promoting leadership in others may require a push.

Promoting Leadership Writing 2

It was about the system. The intricate set of pipes and valves, bends and bells, that she affectionately calls Bessie. Each morning she descends the ladder deep into the belly of the system. Bessie wraps around her, enveloping her in warm steam and metallic twists. In the quietness of the morning she swears she can hear Bessie breathe. The shuddering inhale and exhale of steam moving through pipes. She whispers to Bessie then, greeting her, asking for a peaceful day, absent of the hiss and spatter of a leak.

Day after day she takes care of Bessie. With tender care, she wraps the joints and tightens fittings. Making sure to leave things better than she found them, but the tattered system, that is Bessie, is strange and ancient. They had built the system over a hundred years ago, adding twists and turns to the pipes as her years went on. Despite the daunting mess she knows the importance of leaving the job easier for the person that comes after her. And maybe, just maybe Bessie will, one day, be able to function on her own.

She has heard about the advancements to systems like Bessie's. She has heard the whispers that have made their way, like a giant game of telephone, to her ears. Automation, it is called. They are using computers to help repair systems. These computers are aware. Not like us, she is told, but she doesn't believe. She knows Bessie's consciousness would just be giving a voice with a computer. Allowing her to speak the thoughts that pass with the steam through pipes.

Promoting Leadership Writing Reflection 2

This was a weird one. The half formed idea that was in my head before I started writing was somehow working towards leaving a system better than you found it and in a state that it can continue to sustain itself in the leader's absence. As I began to write, I realized that what I was writing about was mechanic, robotic, industrial, and inhuman. All of the things that this project is rebelling against.

What I do think was important and something I am feeling a bit more as I continue to write consistently is the feeling of hope that comes out of my view of good leadership. That being hopeful/positive/seeing the best in people will help them do better. There is something so hopeful about fixing a system for the benefit of the next person.

Rationale

This piece of writing and the corresponding reflection address the idea of surprises arising while writing. During this creative and reflective process, sometimes ideas arise that do not seem to initially fit and it is through the reflection that the meaning or connection is uncovered. Initially, this piece of writing seems to contradict the entirety of the rest of the project, but as I reflected upon the why and the deeper rationale for writing, the idea of leaving a system better than you found it, or creating the conditions for a system to function independently

emerges. Another idea that is touched upon in this piece is the idea of hope. How leading for the future of an organization is an act of hope. Hope is an idea that is echoed across other dispositions in both writing and art.

Promoting Leadership Art 2



Promoting Leadership Art Reflection 2

When I was looking/thinking about promoting leadership in others. I was thinking about the idea of seven generations. It is the principle that any choice/decision that we make should positively impact those seven generations in the future. Most often it is intended to be used/referenced when talking about environmental impacts. But I like the idea of making choices that affect the longevity of something. Leaders need to have that birds-eye view, the big overarching, long term view that might not come from being in the classroom. It is keeping the wellbeing of the whole school, in the present and in the future, in your mind.

This piece of art helped me to shift my view to that of something even further in the future. It gives a point ahead to reach towards with finality, not just a very open and misty idea of “the future.” It makes things tangible and attainable.

Rationale

This piece of art and the corresponding reflection introduce the idea of longevity. That, in order to achieve longevity in an organization, a good leader must think forward and make choices that they feel will benefit those in the future. Looking forward should not just be to the indeterminate future but towards a point that seems attainable. These choices must include promoting leadership in others to achieve that longevity. This reflection also exemplifies how the process of creation and reflection changes the point of view in which I approach the prompts.

Promoting Leadership Writing 3

Today is a big day. Today she receives the gifts. She has awaited the day for months and months. Each moment she has spent with Senior has imbued her with the knowledge and understanding. Her eyes are widened by each visit with Senior. And today is the day that the gifts will finally be hers .

She has daydreamed about the time in which she would become Senior and would get to promote the gifts in another one of her.

She turns the knob and steps into the small room. The coolness of the space always takes her a minute to get used to. Senior, as always, is seated in one of the straight backed wooden chairs, back facing the door. She enters quietly, walking soft footed and folds herself into the complementary chair. A quiet moment of settling follows. The familiar silence that belongs between two people who know each other well. When the moment passes, Senior reaches out to clasp her hand.

“Today the gifts are yours. But what you may not know is that they have been yours from the moment we started this work. Each time your thinking or action changed because of your new understanding you were using the gifts. When you expressed excitement, love or encouragement you used the gifts. You had them this whole time but only now have the confidence and whole breadth of understanding to know about each of the gifts. Now you move from using the gifts with heart to using them with head.”

With a tight squeeze of the hand, Senior stood, turned and left the cool room, as she started to wonder and apprehension at the now vacant chair.

Promoting Leadership Writing Reflection 3

This piece of writing was borne out of the comment someone made to me in passing when I was lamenting slightly about not “really being a leader.” They said to me that each day I change, support, and push others was me practicing leadership. I didn't need a formal role, or a title to do that. The title doesn't define who is a leader and who is not.

It explores the idea that a leader can foster leadership in others by turning their own eyes onto the skills and qualities that they already possess, but that make them good leaders. What they are already doing. This story was a fun one to write. I liked thinking of a way to represent these concepts abstractly.

Rationale

This piece of writing explores the idea that promoting leadership in others may be about increasing confidence and awareness in others by encouraging reflection. Reflection is used as a tool throughout this project to dig deeper into understanding and exploration of ideas. This tool can be directly applied to the process of promoting leadership. Often others need to reflect to be aware of the qualities that they do possess.

Promoting Leadership Writing 4

The water parts around her as she pushes off the dock. This is her favorite time of day for a swim. The pumpkin of a sun just skimming the tops of the grassy hills that surround the lake. Sometimes the lake itself seemed to exhale, leaving its misty breath on the surface.

Tonight she is not alone. Standing on the dock, backlit from the lights of the house in the distance and along the path, is her swimming partner for the evening. They wanted to come swimming with her and had planned to get in as soon as they got to the dock but now that they are here they are feeling unsure and somewhat nervous.

The tepid water always seems to help calm her thoughts. At this time of night the water and air are almost the same temperature. She knows her swimming partner will love it and calls encouragingly to them. She coaches them to slowly lower themselves in. To enjoy the sensation of the water rising to meet the body. Without superiority or judgement, she calls out again, expressing joy at the simple act of swimming. She is no better than them because she is swimming; she just wanted to share in the joy and excitement of a good swim.

Rationale

This piece of writing further explores the idea of promoting leadership as an invitation rather than a demand based on superiority. This idea was introduced in a previous piece of writing but is expanded upon here. This piece of writing is also another great example of parable, in which a simple story illustrates a message. The simple structure of this narrative allows for a clear exploration of the idea of promoting leadership as an invitation.

Promoting Leadership Writing Reflection 4

Today was hard to write. I am running up against a wall , and this is the hardest topic to talk about. I had to think for a long time, pushing back my start time again and again. Pausing throughout writing to consider where the story was going.

I settled on the idea of promoting learning as a “come on in, the water is great” mentality, rather than a gift to bestow. The main character of the story loves swimming and knows that the person with her will enjoy the water. She coaches and encourages them to try it out, not because she sees herself to be higher than the other person, but because she knows they will be better for it. The reflection was tough too. I feel like I hardly wrote anything.

Rationale

This reflection is another great example of the struggle with the process. Throughout the project, struggle is evident, both with the process of creation and reflection, and with the system itself. This struggle leads to frustration and feelings of inadequacy. The idea that creation exists within the struggle is exemplified in this reflection.

Promoting Leadership Writing 5

“97, 98, 99. 100! Here I come!”

Giddily she opens her eyes and pushes herself off of the banister on which she was leaning. The house was silent. She trailed her fingertips along the banister as she climbed the stairs listening for a creak or the muffled giggle of her siblings. As she reached the first landing of the dark old house, the door and the end of the hallway swayed slightly as if a strong breeze or a small hand had moved it. She crept towards it, finally flinging back the door to reveal her younger brother, his face clouded with the disappointment of being found so quickly.

“You cheated!” he hurled the accusation at her, somewhat half heartedly. Reluctantly he joined his sister on the search for their younger sibling.

Climbing the stairs to the next floor the siblings had their ears peeled for even the slightest sound as they stood on the landing they heard a rustling sound to their left, behind the half closed door of the spare bedroom. Their youngest sister being so tiny and flexible as young people are, was always so good at hide and seek. It wasn’t like her to hide in such an obvious place. The brother pushed open the door with such force that it bounced off the wall, revealing the source of the sound: an open window.

After searching each bedroom to no avail, the siblings climbed the last set of stairs to the attic. The still, dusty space, always felt charged and stuffed with secrets. The boxes and trunks were stacked creating haphazard piles. Old coats hung from the fraters and the dormer windows let in streams of the morning sunlight. They looked and looked. Finally as they stood still at the center of the room, they heard the telltale muffled giggle, pulled back an old painting to reveal their sister, tucked against the wall.

“Your turn to find us,” the older sister said as she leaned down and offered her hand.

Promoting Leadership Writing Reflection 5

This story aimed to uncover the idea that sometimes prompting leadership is about the hunt for finding these qualities in others. Sometimes these qualities are easy to spot and sometimes it takes more of a search to find them. After looking in all of the usual locations, it can be beneficial to look in places, or into people that may not be as obvious.

It also aims to uncover the idea that people are not always excited /eager to take on the idea of participating in leadership. Some are reluctant, the brother, and some want to keep their

talents and ideas hidden. Some are good at hiding parts of themselves and it takes a lot of work to find out about what they can offer as leaders.

I am working in a cafe in a different city. Since I am so close to the end, I feel a small sadness about the loss of time part of the project. This practice of creation and reflection. I have the desire to write more. I am not sure I have said what I need to say, but I need to draw a line in the sand somewhere. This, just as with everything, has to come to an end.

I feel like I have found a way to write and to create art that is so different than the first round of creation. It will be interesting to find the similarities between the rounds; the string that binds them together, rather than the differences that I see.

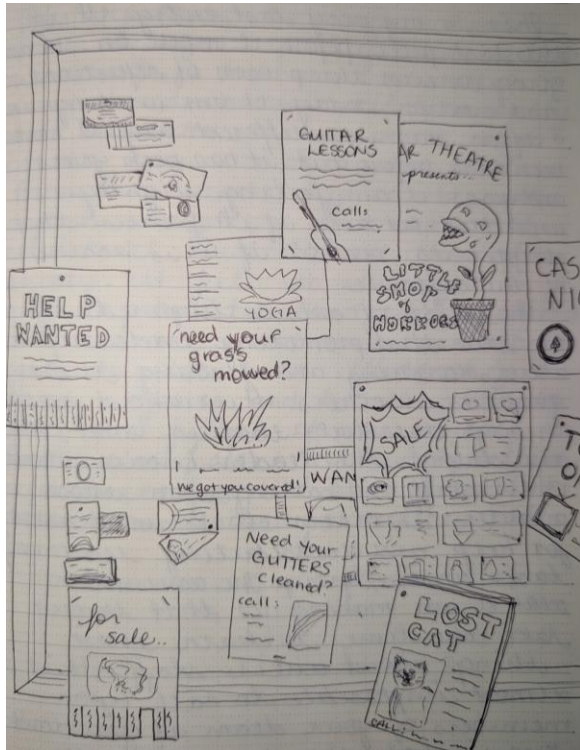
I am feeling determined and slightly melancholic about this piece. The action that seems to arise from this piece is the action of searching; the hunting; the seek and find. Another action that arises is the idea of coaxing. Coaxing someone out of or into action. Another verb that is stuck in my head is the word placate. I am not sure if that is the right word, but the idea that in promoting leadership, a good leader needs to demonstrate the idea to all involved that they are understood and that the way they are feeling is heard and understood. Especially about others feeling towards demonstrating their own leadership skills.

Rationale

This piece of writing and the corresponding reflection further explore the idea of promoting leadership in others, may require a push on the part of the leader. This idea is somewhat shifted into the idea of coaxing rather than pushing as a means to promote leadership. The piece of writing explores the idea that promoting leadership dispositions in others is about uncovering the qualities that others already possess and then encouraging others to demonstrate these dispositions. This reflection also touches on the idea that there is enjoyment in this process

of creation and reflection. This enjoyment is based upon the opportunity to engage in cycles of creation and reflection that are not always utilized in one's day to day work.

Promoting Leadership Art 5



Promoting Leadership Art Reflection 5

This is my very last entry. It is the last piece before I move on. I am going to miss this process of reflection and creation. Today I am writing in a coffee shop in a different city. I have been here before but it has been years and years. I am feeling slightly unsettled. Not sure if it is because this chapter is over or if it is because of the caffeine.

This piece of art is inspired by the idea that promoting leadership is about searching and finding those qualities in others. It is about sorting through the chaos that is all the things the leader knows about their staff, and calling upon those qualities in others. It is about asking for help and distributing leadership tasks across the group. The assumption that I am making is that

leaders take the time to learn these things about their staff. It is almost impossible to call upon a member of your team if you don't know what they have to offer.

This experience has reaffirmed things for me. After exploring these concepts over forty entries and over a whole summer (3 months?). It has really been cemented in me that this is the way to be a good leader.

Promoting leadership has been the hardest concept to talk about. I feel like I have said all that I can say. It feels so straightforward: promote leadership in others to embrace what they have to offer, to distribute leadership across a group, and to do this to better the future of the school/institution/site. Not out of selfish need to control, but out of an altruistic desire for betterment.

Rationale

This piece of art and the corresponding reflection solidify the idea that promoting leadership is about seeking out the dispositions of care, meaning-seeking and growth in others. It takes determination and patience to wade through all of the information that one has discovered about the others in their institution to find the information to be used to promote leadership qualities in others. This reflection also introduces the idea of confirmation. Through this process the idea that good leadership is exemplified by demonstrating care, meaning-seeking, and growth and then promoting these dispositions in others, is solidified. It is also another strong example of both frustration with and enjoyment of the project, simultaneously.

CHAPTER 10: INTERPRETATIONS

Interpretation of this project's creations and reflections was done by finding codes and common themes throughout the different dispositions of leadership. The following are the final codes developed after rounds of coding and sharing as outlined in the method. The themes

present below were developed by analyzing the previous generated codes for repetition of ideas. This process is outlined in the project design and utilizes the idea of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Coding

The coding process for this project took shape through analysis of the created texts. After reading through and looking at each text, noticings and surprises were recorded. From this document, codes were created and refined in two cycles. Below are examples of the coding process from each of the four dispositions. Figures 3,4,5, and 6 present examples of codes arising from care, meaning-seeking, growth, and promoting leadership creations.

Figure 3

Care Coding Example

Caring Writing 1:

- Discovering self within the project
- Being cared for is an emotional connection
- Caring is a way of being
- Caring is not about actions but about being
- Caring about someone can be restrictive
- Frustration about the lack of care (system?)
- Hopefulness as an act of rebellion
- Excitement and passion for the topic of good leadership
- Feminine protagonist

Caring Reflection 1.1:

- Frustration with the process of writing
- Caring is connected to being/one's self
- Caring is quiet leadership
- Leading from a place of quiet strength
- Delineating caring about and liking someone
- Tension (frustration with?) those that care and those that do not
- Injustice in the system
- Some "getting away with" not caring

Caring Art 1:

- Introspection needed to care
- Caring creates a deeper connection between individuals
- Individual value placed upon caring
- Organic nature of caring (organic lines?)

Figure 4

Growth Coding Example

Growth Writing 1:

- Female protagonist
- Continual growth; ongoing nature of growth
- Growth/learning vs. Stagnation
- Uncertainty
- Stepping/moving into the unknown
- Admiration
- Bravery in facing what we do not know
- Propelled forward in/into growth
- Age plays a factor in the desire to grow

Growth Reflection 1.1:

- Frustration with finding the right words
- Distraction
- Continual growth
- Personal influence
- Frustration/uncomfortableness with being unfinished
- Excitement about growth/learning

Growth Art 1:

- Organic shapes
- Spiral
- Plants
- Upwards momentum

Figure 5

Meaning-Seeking Coding Example

Meaning-Seeking Art 1:

- Emulation of style vs. finding personal style
- Night sky metaphor
- Expansion vs. minuscule/infinitesimal vs. vast
- Illumination of meaning

Meaning-Seeking Reflection 1.2:

- Frustration with unfinished work
- Guilt associated with incomplete work
- Desire for authenticity in the system
- Desire for authenticity with the project
- Terror of being infinitesimal
- Terror of being nothing
- Humanity is found amongst the multitudes
- Humanity lies in what makes one alive
- Meaning is lost in condensing the multitudes
- Closeness to humanity = better leaders

Meaning-Seeking Writing 2:

- Emulation of genre vs. finding personal genre
- Connection/reflection of self in writing
- Commitment to meaning-seeking
- Meaning-seeking protects from making disastrous decisions
- Influence of industrialism/neoliberalism on education
- Systemic loss of interest in meaning-seeking
- Time for/need for change (systemic?)
- Female protagonist

Figure 6

Promoting Leadership in Others Coding Example

Promoting Writing 1:

- Reflection of experience
- Good leaders work themselves out of a job
- Good leaders support their staff, who in turn support students
- Self as the protagonist
- Reflection vs. Narrative
- Frustration with the system

Promoting Reflection 1.1:

- Discovery with process
- Purity in process
- Leading to be replaced
- Leaving something better than you found it
- Leading for betterment
- Selflessness
- In service to...something?
- Feeling inauthentic in project/process

Promoting Art 1:

- Spiral shape
- People at different stages of a journey
- Walking together/walking apart
- Collective/independent journey
- Moving forward/upward
- Continuation/ongoing

Themes

Themes for this project arose from both the process of creation and reflection and the product that resulted from both of these processes. The following are the themes that arose from the reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) of the discovered codes. Figure 7 presents the themes that arose from the codes developed from the cycles of creation and reflection.

Figure 7

Themes Arising from Coding

Themes	
Insights while answering (process)	Insights into answering (product)
Self-discovery	Being vs. Action
Excitement with process	Frustration with system
Parable format	Hope
Frustration with process	Reflection
Emulation of style	Self-discovery
Reflection	Introspection
	Authenticity
	Repetition
	Nature/Organic
	Commitment
	Upwards
	Collaboration
	Infinitesimal vs. Vastness

	Deep understanding
	Perpetual
	Humanity vs. Industrialization
	Existential terror
	Duality
	Transactional vs. Transformational
	Struggle
	Support
	Propelled

CHAPTER 11: AUDIENCING

The following is a reflection I wrote the evening of the audiencing, just before it began.

Here I am. It is today. Everything is all set up and I am finding a quiet moment before it all begins and I am swept away with it all. I am so proud of myself. All of myself is poured out and on display. I feel like the length of my guts are stretched all across the room. It is so wild that in an hour and a half it will be all over. I feel like I am there already. In that future. This feeling of vulnerability is so intense. I want to bawl and burst. It is here. I am here.

Overview

The audiencing for this project took place over one evening in a theatre space at the University of Lethbridge. The space was a blank square room with most of the walls covered in thick black curtains. Two of the three walls along the outside of the space held large signs that explained context, purpose and place, and the meaning of good. One of the other walls displayed the narratives and pieces of art from each of the dispositions of good leadership. On the far wall, in between the signage explaining good and purpose, an illustrated video where each of the

narratives were read by me was projected and cyclically played. The video consisted of shadow puppets, filmed using an overhead projector, illustrated the narratives that were being told.

Ethereal electronic instrumental music played at a mid to low volume. Outside of the door in the communal space, I presented a video of myself welcoming others to the project and guiding the start of the experience. Audience members were invited to take a pencil and a notebook to record their experiences through art or words, in a similar fashion to the process I went through to create the project. They were invited to proceed through the room clockwise, taking in the context before the art and narrative, but that ultimately how they chose to experience the audiencing was up to them. The experience took place over the course of an hour and the audience members were invited to experience the audiencing at whatever speed they chose. Chairs were set up in a V-shape facing the projected stories and the art and narratives. Audience members chose to wander around the outside, to sit, watch, and listen, or to stand, clustered in small groups. The light created a warm but not overly bright glow in the room, perfect to illuminate the creations and keep the audience emersed in the presentation.

Artifacts

Below are the artifacts that were used in the audiencing, including and video presented. Presented here are the artifacts which represent the visual pieces of the project that were displayed during the audiencing. They are included here to gain a more rounded envisioning of how the audiencing took place. Each disposition had a written narrative and a painting that corresponded to it.

Invitation.



Introduction Video.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1anXDgTb-N8a1cjNfb5rRLmUDEClcGHeQ/view?usp=sharing>

Wildflowers in the Concrete Narrative Video.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CKPefPfQfJ5042NBmAOkd6qUjknnyjLq/view?usp=sharing>

Project Signage.

CONTEXTUALIZING WILDFLOWERS IN THE CONCRETE

As I began my graduate studies two and a half years ago, I was shiny and eager. Burning like a coin left on hot pavement for ways in which I could acknowledge who I was while wedging myself into the mold of a leader. Without considering my genuine leadership qualities, I attempted to fit the unique shape of me into theory after theory, and model after model. Sometimes I would fit, in the way that a hermit crab's new shell might fit, bulky and dragging. Other times, the models felt too small. Not all of me was inside. Each time I tried on a new idea of leadership, it never seemed to be consistent with who I was. After my first year of graduate school, much of what I had read and studied focused on how to become an effective leader. These studies described the tasks, attitudes, and actions required to effectively lead. Thoughts on what to do as a leader were discerned, but less frequently were thoughts presented on ways to be as a leader. This troubled and intrigued me. I was asking, "was the integral ether of leadership truly just the veneer of theories and models ironed onto ourselves?"

Near the beginning of my second year of studies, I felt worn and frustrated. I began to question whether I had a place within leadership. As the courses unfolded, however, what began to emerge was the idea that good leadership might include embodying certain open dispositions. This was a view of leadership that finally felt fitting. Leadership that is democratic and values the dignity of the individual; that is gracious and inviting. The different theories settled on my shoulders as the weight of sunshine does. I began to see myself reflected in ideas of how a leader should be; the dispositions of good leadership. The thread connecting all of the resonant ideas was a connection to the deepest parts of our humanity. By thinking, dreaming, connecting, and reflecting, the superficial veneer of leadership began to peel away and reveal to me a deeply felt and authentic view of leadership.

CONTEXTUALIZING WILDFLOWERS IN THE CONCRETE

As I have experienced in both my graduate studies and practical experiences as an educator, the current education system is driven by the idea that effectiveness and efficiency are the epitome of success. Industriousness makes its way into school leadership, where individuals are asked to effectively run schools by managing operations and directing the use of resources as one of the core standards of leadership. Contemporary educational systems embed efficient and effective processes and operational language within five-year plans and documents highlighting systematic objectives and reinforcing the idea that good education equates to effective and efficient education.

This project was borne out of a curiosity about the system as I see it functions today; this project is a way for me to both inquire and to push back against the over emphasis of industriousness. Throughout this project I have engaged in deep reflection on the dispositions that seem to make up good leadership and help make good leader. Through multiple rounds of reflective creation utilizing narrative writing and art, reflecting on process and product, and by revisiting these artifacts, I now more firmly understand what is meant by good leadership.

METHOD

For this project, I engaged in cycles of creation and reflection based around the dispositions of good leadership. I created narratives and art, and then reflected by considering both the insights *into* answering and the insights *while* answering. Each session of creation or reflection was half an hour long. The structure of this audiencing is modelled after this process. My ask is that you, the audience, seek to read, to listen, to observe, and then, in turn, reflect on your experience through art or narrative in the books provided. Both art and narrative are meant as a mode of expression and not as a polished piece for others. It is an intrinsic and reflective practice. This is an invitation into a discussion about what good leadership means to you and how the dispositions of good leadership impact your understanding. Feel free to engage in this discussion indpendently or co-create meaning with others. I hope you pause to reflect on both the process of how you have come to your understanding, as well as the product this practice has brought to you.

A NOTE ON GOOD

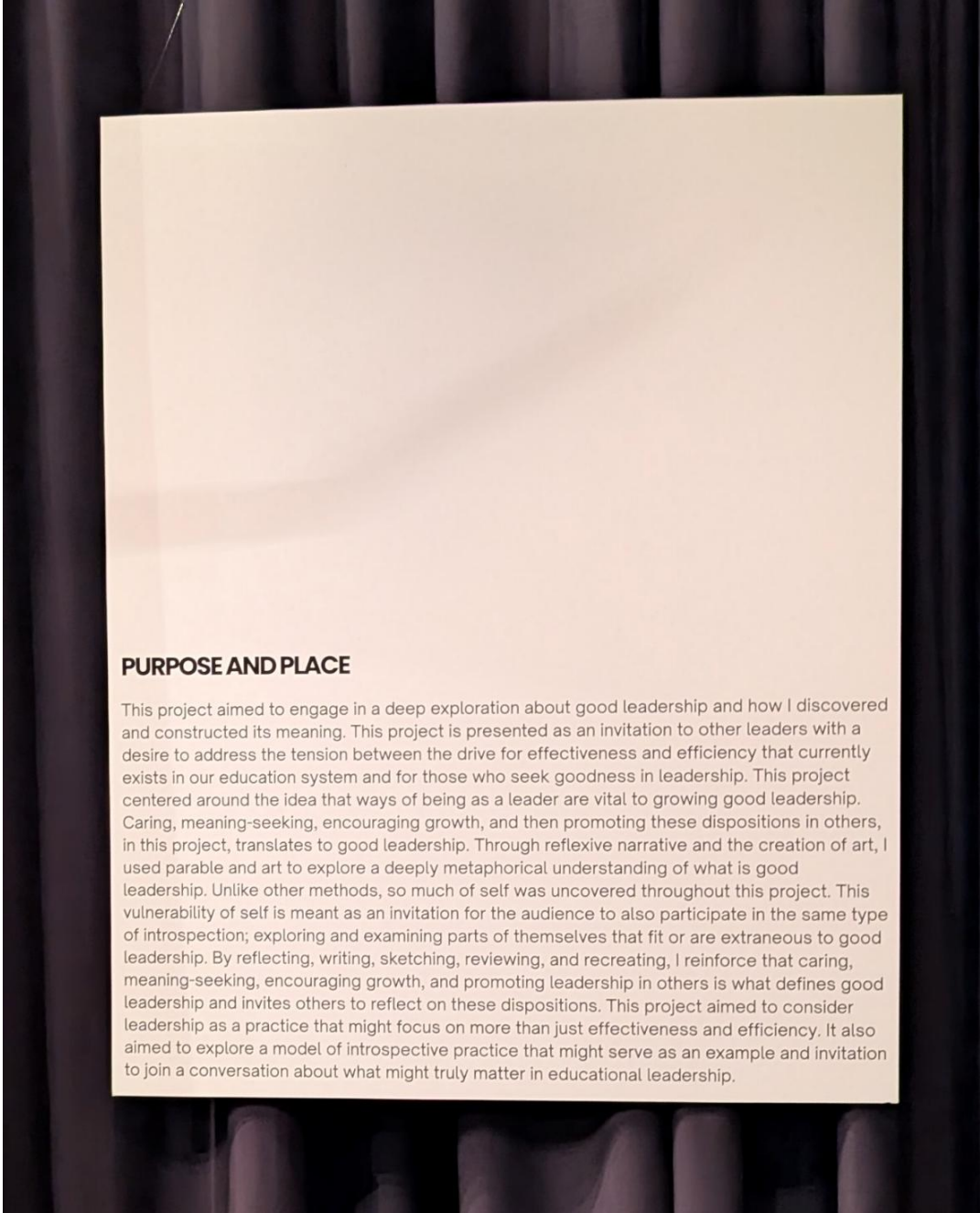
For this project, good has morphed into something more meaningful than what I originally thought it was. It is expansive and resonates in a way that makes sense to my own emerging understanding of leadership. By reflecting upon one word and its emotional and intellectual impacts, I was able to uncover some of its meaning for myself. Good is found in the small moments of our lives; in the tiny places of gratitude and emotional expression. Good allows one to react safely. It fills hearts with warmth. It allows one to feel comfortable and seen. Goodness is relational and about connection, strengthening the bonds that make us truly human.

Although this is not a definition, I hope that it provides understanding about what is meant by the word; that good is more rounded than just a nothing word. My hope is that the reader appreciates that good is an aesthetic, a set of characteristics by which to view and feel and understand something rather than a quality something inherently possesses.

A NOTE ON GOOD

This project is an inquiry into good leadership and to uncover what good leadership is, it is necessary to explore the essence of good. Good is seen as a trivial word, a word used to punctuate small talk or to toss away at the end of an interaction. It's a word to utter to fill space. However, like a vibrant prairie sunset, good is often taken for granted. The idea of good is elusive but describes something that elicits resonance. It brings out emotions and impressions. Goodness is relational, strengthening our connection between humans and enhancing our humanistic qualities. I propose here that good demands focus and attention, just as effectiveness and efficiency do.

Admittedly, in the English classes where I teach, I have always told students that good is a nothing word. It means nothing. It adds nothing. It simply exists as a placeholder for a more exciting and enticing word. However, in exploring the basis for this project, the idea of good has recurrently surfaced. At first, I was put off by it, frustrated even. This far into my graduate studies and the best word I could come up with was good? As the frustration dissipated and turned to curiosity, I began to wonder why this word continued to resurface. Was it the right fit for what I was trying to explore? Initiated by my wonderings and fueled by determination to uncover more about myself, I embarked on a journey of narration and reflection. Similar to the process in which I undertook for the entirety of this project, I wrote about the word good and then reflected upon my writings, in hopes of uncovering what good truly meant to me.



PURPOSE AND PLACE

This project aimed to engage in a deep exploration about good leadership and how I discovered and constructed its meaning. This project is presented as an invitation to other leaders with a desire to address the tension between the drive for effectiveness and efficiency that currently exists in our education system and for those who seek goodness in leadership. This project centered around the idea that ways of being as a leader are vital to growing good leadership. Caring, meaning-seeking, encouraging growth, and then promoting these dispositions in others, in this project, translates to good leadership. Through reflexive narrative and the creation of art, I used parable and art to explore a deeply metaphorical understanding of what is good leadership. Unlike other methods, so much of self was uncovered throughout this project. This vulnerability of self is meant as an invitation for the audience to also participate in the same type of introspection; exploring and examining parts of themselves that fit or are extraneous to good leadership. By reflecting, writing, sketching, reviewing, and recreating, I reinforce that caring, meaning-seeking, encouraging growth, and promoting leadership in others is what defines good leadership and invites others to reflect on these dispositions. This project aimed to consider leadership as a practice that might focus on more than just effectiveness and efficiency. It also aimed to explore a model of introspective practice that might serve as an example and invitation to join a conversation about what might truly matter in educational leadership.

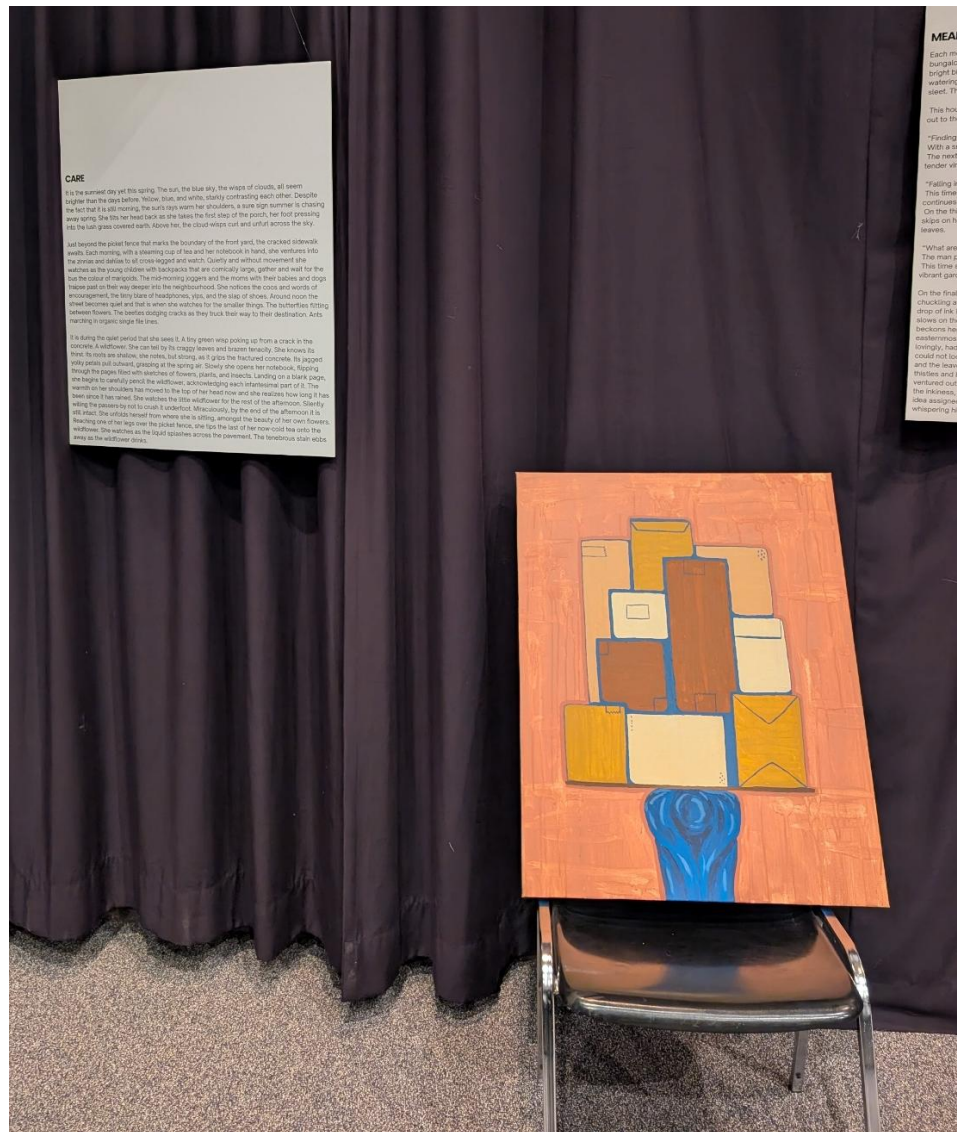
PURPOSE AND PLACE

The idea that the education system needs to be industrial to be successful is a limited view of what is possible. By striving to embody effectiveness and efficiency, it pulls away from the dispositions that make us human: care, meaning-seeking, and growth. When one is solely focused on completing tasks in a timely manner, it is difficult to partake in deep-level thought, transformational ideas, or reflective practices. Although both effectiveness and efficiency have a place in the education system, the overemphasis placed upon these ideas restrict the deep understanding and exploration that is possible.

To protect oneself from falling prey to the trap of maladministration, one must intentionally practice good leadership. Good leadership embraces humanity. It entails deep thought and reflection on practice. It involves intentionally being present and tapping into the aspects that make one truly human: compassion, growth, reflection, and connection. As humanity is embraced, good leadership is practiced.

For this project the idea of good leadership is delineated into four areas. Each of these areas brings humanity to the forefront and requires the practice of intentionality and reflection. Good leadership is caring, meaning-seeking, encouraging growth, and promoting leadership in others. These qualities are innately human. They allow a person to grow and learn from the world around them, to explore and make connections between themselves and others.

Care.

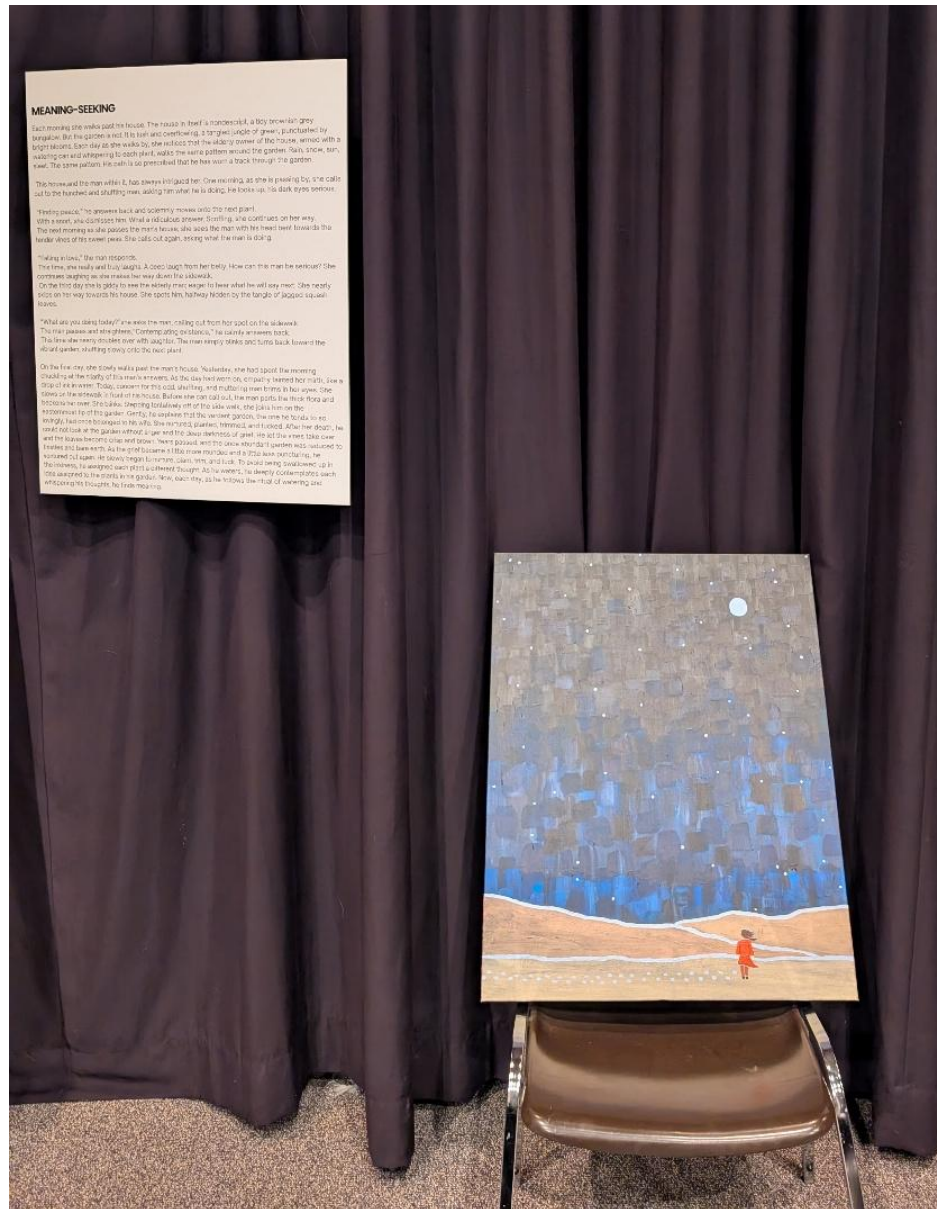


It is the sunniest day yet this spring. The sun, the blue sky, the wisps of clouds, all seem brighter than the days before. Yellow, blue, and white, starkly contrasting each other. Despite the fact that it is still morning, the sun's rays warm her shoulders, a sure sign summer is chasing away spring. She tilts her head back as she takes the first step of the porch, her foot pressing into the lush grass covered earth. Above her, the cloud-wisps curl and unfurl across the sky.

Just beyond the picket fence that marks the boundary of the front yard, the cracked sidewalk awaits. Each morning, with a steaming cup of tea and her notebook in hand, she ventures into the zinnias and dahlias to sit cross-legged and watch. Quietly and without movement she watches as the young children with backpacks that are comically large, gather and wait for the bus the colour of marigolds. The mid-morning joggers and the moms with their babies and dogs traipse past on their way deeper into the neighbourhood. She notices the coos and words of encouragement, the tinny blare of headphones, yips, and the slap of shoes. Around noon the street becomes quiet and that is when she watches for the smaller things. The butterflies flitting between flowers. The beetles dodging cracks as they truck their way to their destination. Ants marching in organic single file lines.

It is during the quiet period that she sees it. A tiny green wisp poking up from a crack in the concrete. A wildflower. She can tell by its craggy leaves and brazen tenacity. She knows its thirst. Its roots are shallow, she notes, but strong, as it grips the fractured concrete. Its jagged yolky petals pull outward, grasping at the spring air. Slowly she opens her notebook, flipping through the pages filled with sketches of flowers, plants, and insects. Landing on a blank page, she begins to carefully pencil the wildflower, acknowledging each infinitesimal part of it. The warmth on her shoulders has moved to the top of her head now and she realizes how long it has been since it has rained. She watches the little wildflower for the rest of the afternoon. Silently willing the passers-by not to crush it underfoot. Miraculously, by the end of the afternoon it is still intact. She unfolds herself from where she is sitting, amongst the beauty of her own flowers. Reaching one of her legs over the picket fence, she tips the last of her now-cold tea onto the wildflower. She watches as the liquid splashes across the pavement. The tenebrous stain ebbs away as the wildflower drinks.

Meaning-Seeking.



Each morning she walks past his house. The house in itself is nondescript, a tidy brownish grey bungalow. But the garden is not. It is lush and overflowing, a tangled jungle of green, punctuated by bright blooms. Each day as she walks by, she notices that the elderly owner of the house, armed with a watering can and whispering to each plant, walks the same pattern

around the garden. Rain, snow, sun, sleet. The same pattern. His path is so prescribed that he has worn a track through the garden.

This house, and the man within it, has always intrigued her. One morning, as she is passing by, she calls out to the hunched and shuffling man, asking him what he is doing. He looks up, his dark eyes serious.

“Finding peace,” he answers back and solemnly moves onto the next plant.

With a snort, she dismisses him. What a ridiculous answer. Scoffing, she continues on her way.

The next morning as she passes the man's house, she sees the man with his head bent towards the tender vines of his sweet peas. She calls out again, asking what the man is doing.

“Falling in love,” the man responds.

This time, she really and truly laughs. A deep laugh from her belly. How can this man be serious? She continues laughing as she makes her way down the sidewalk.

On the third day she is giddy to see the elderly man; eager to hear what he will say next. She nearly skips on her way towards his house. She spots him, halfway hidden by the tangle of jagged squash leaves.

“What are you doing today?” she asks the man, calling out from her spot on the sidewalk.

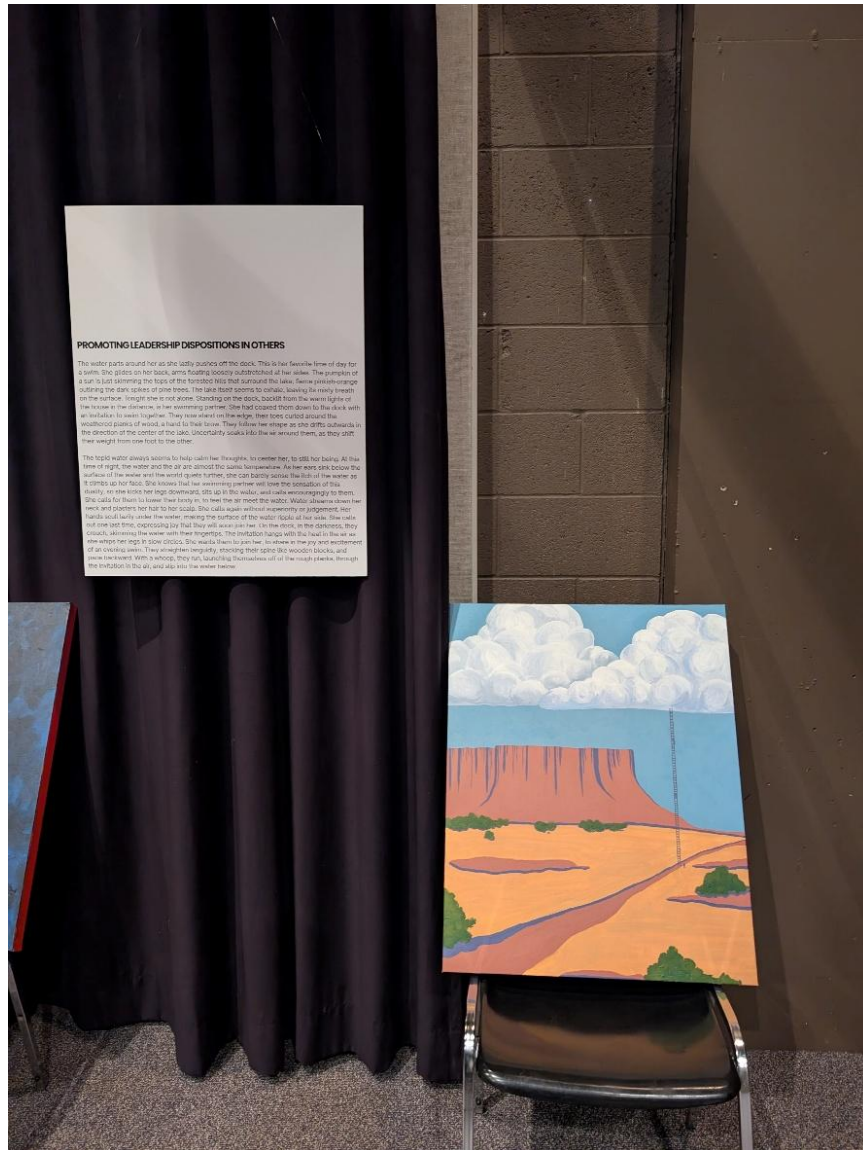
The man pauses and straightens, “Contemplating existence,” he calmly answers back.

This time she nearly doubles over with laughter. The man simply blinks and turns back toward the vibrant garden, shuffling slowly onto the next plant.

On the final day, she slowly walks past the man's house. Yesterday, she had spent the morning chuckling at the hilarity of this man's answers. As the day had worn on, empathy tainted her mirth, like a drop of ink in water. Today, concern for this odd, shuffling, and

muttering man brims in her eyes. She slows on the sidewalk in front of his house. Before she can call out, the man parts the thick flora and beckons her over. She blinks. Stepping tentatively off of the sidewalk, she joins him on the easternmost tip of the garden. Gently, he explains that the verdant garden, the one he tends to so lovingly, had once belonged to his wife. She nurtured, planted, trimmed, and tucked. After her death, he could not look at the garden without anger and the deep darkness of grief. He let the vines take over and the leaves become crisp and brown. Years passed, and the once abundant garden was reduced to thistles and bare earth. As the grief became a little more rounded and a little less puncturing, he ventured out again. He slowly began to nurture, plant, trim, and tuck. To avoid being swallowed up in the inkiness, he assigned each plant a different thought. As he waters, he deeply contemplates each idea assigned to the plants in his garden. Now, each day, as he follows the ritual of watering and whispering his thoughts, he finds meaning.

Growth.



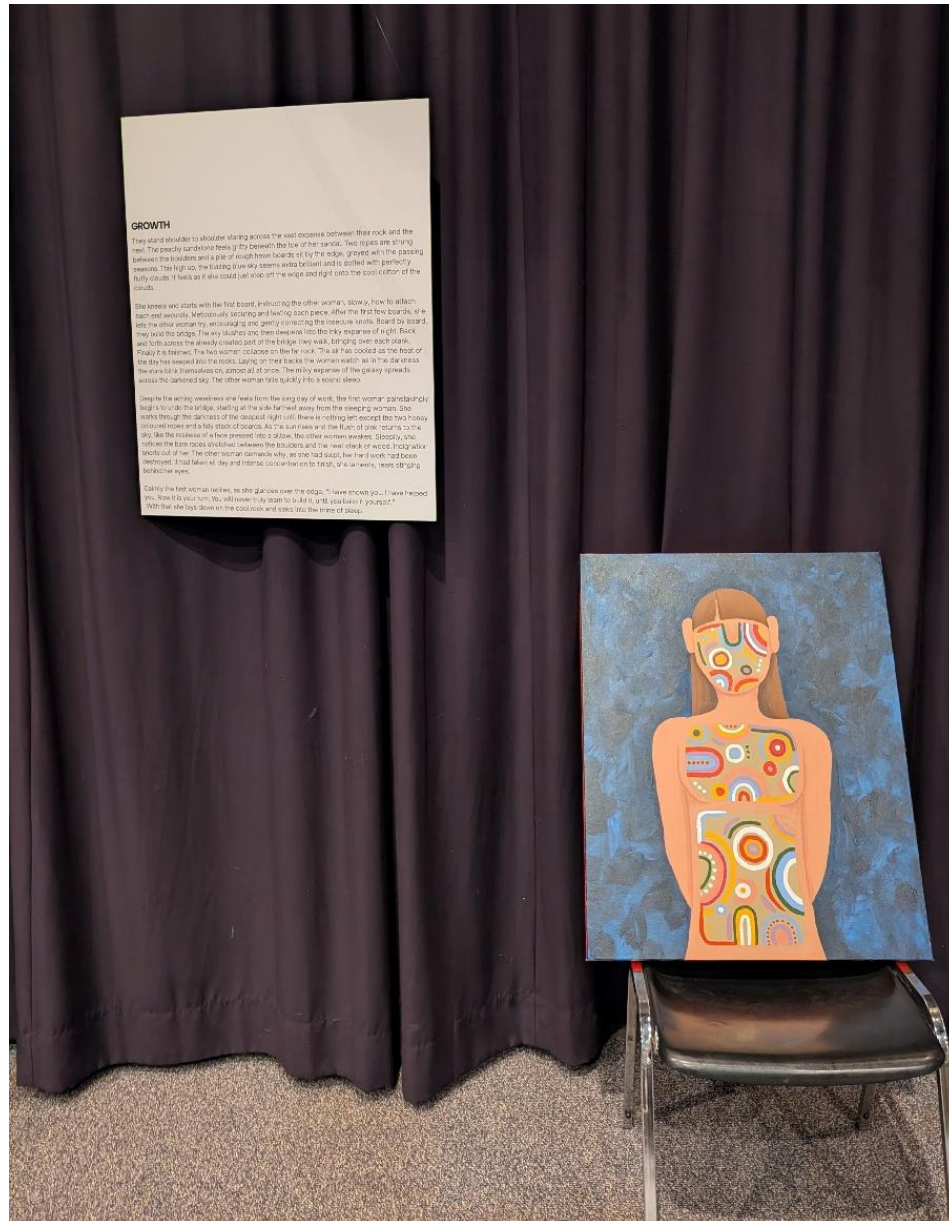
They stand shoulder to shoulder, staring across the vast expanse between their rock and the next. The peachy sandstone feels gritty beneath the toe of her sandal. Two ropes are strung between the boulders and a pile of roughhewn boards sat by the edge, greyed with the passing seasons. This high up, the blazing blue sky seemed extra brilliant and is dotted with perfectly fluffy clouds. It feels as if she could just step off the edge and right onto the cool cotton of the clouds.

She kneels and starts with the first board, instructing the other woman, slowly, how to attach each end securely. Meticulously securing and testing each piece. After the first few boards, she lets the other woman try, encouraging and gently correcting the insecure knots. Board by board, they build the bridge. The sky blushes and then deepens into the inky expanse of night. Back and forth across the already created part of the bridge they walk, bringing over each plank. Finally, it is finished. The two women collapse on the far rock. The air has cooled as the heat of the day has seeped into the rocks. Laying on their backs the women watch as in the darkness the stars blink themselves on, almost all at once. The milky expanse of the galaxy spreads across the darkened sky. The other woman falls quickly into a sound sleep.

Despite the aching weariness she feels from the long day of work, the first woman painstakingly begins to undo the bridge, starting at the side farthest away from the sleeping woman. She works through the darkness of the deepest night until there is nothing left except the two honey-coloured ropes and a tidy stack of boards. As the sun rises and the flush of pink returns to the sky, like the rosiness of a face pressed into a pillow, the other woman awakes. Sleepily, she notices the bare ropes stretched between the boulders and the neat stack of wood. Indignation snorts out of her. The other woman demands why, as she had slept, her hard work had been destroyed. It had taken all day and intense concentration to finish, she laments, tears stinging behind her eyes.

Calmly the first woman replies, as she glances over the edge, "I have shown you. I have helped you. Now it is your turn. You will never truly learn to build it, until you build it yourself." With that she lays down on the cool rock and sinks into the brine of sleep.

Promoting Leadership.



The water parts around her as she lazily pushes off the dock. This is her favorite time of day for a swim. She glides on her back, arms floating loosely outstretched at her sides. The pumpkin of a sun is just skimming the tops of the forested hills that surround the lake; fierce pinkish-orange outlining the dark spikes of pine trees. The lake itself seems to exhale, leaving its misty breath on the surface. Tonight she is not alone. Standing on the dock, backlit from the

warm lights of the house in the distance, is her swimming partner. She had coaxed them down to the dock with an invitation to swim together. They now stand on the edge, their toes curled around the weathered planks of wood, a hand to their brow. They follow her shape as she drifts outwards in the direction of the center of the lake. Uncertainty soaks into the air around them, as they shift their weight from one foot to the other.

The tepid water always seems to help calm her thoughts, to center her, to still her being. At this time of night, the water and the air are almost the same temperature. As her ears sink below the surface of the water and the world quiets further, she can barely sense the itch of the water as it climbs up her face. She knows that her swimming partner will love the sensation of this duality, so she kicks her legs downward, sits up in the water, and calls encouragingly to them. She calls for them to lower their body in, to feel the air meet the water. Water streams down her neck and plasters her hair to her scalp. She calls again without superiority or judgement. Her hands scull lazily under the water, making the surface of the water ripple at her side. She calls out one last time, expressing joy that they will soon join her. On the dock, in the darkness, they crouch, skimming the water with their fingertips. The invitation hangs with the heat in the air as she whips her legs in slow circles. She wants them to join her, to share in the joy and excitement of an evening swim. They straighten languidly, stacking their spine like wooden blocks, and pace backward. With a whoop, they run, launching themselves off of the rough planks, through the invitation in the air, and slip into the water below.

Images and Video





https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zaZrYbq3hzOTXcx2a9MHoN_5WWbtp3Hp/view?usp=sharing

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YlqOrfRgzTf88K43vxYeZVnK4sHWJjFN/view?usp=sharing>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13AobKkpo7MaRM8BOLSc92q8qjz3cEw-h/view?usp=sharing>

Reflection on Audiencing

Throughout the presentation and even as I was setting up, I kept reminding myself to be present in the moment. I remember thinking, this is already a memory. What an odd thought to have. Near the end of this process, I fear I may have been caught up in the system; in the grind to finish, to show, to display. It is a tricky balance, to equally weigh the importance of the audiencing to the whole process and the need to center the experience on self and creating for the

purpose of expression. I want the audience to value my work and appreciate the effort that has gone into the creation. I also want to safeguard the process as something intrinsic that develops meaning and enables expression. Near the end, I feel that I may have tipped into the former a bit more than I would have liked.

As grating as it felt to hear my own voice for over an hour on repeat, it felt good to sit in my ideas and creations for an extended period of time; for it to be cemented as it was read again and again. It felt like such a fitting end to the project, to be so deeply emersed in all of my creations. Even the conversations I had with others were centered around either the process in which myself and other engaged with material or with the content being presented. Throughout the night, the value of the audiencing was solidified as it moved my thoughts and ideas outside of self and into the conversations of others.

At first, as the night began, I was a bit worried because everyone was so silent. They were orderly and reverently waiting their turn. They were following the “rules” I had established. The audience initially seemed to be trying to find my meaning, not developing or discussing their own meaning. However, as audience members began to finish reading, they fell into groups and the room became less church-like and more a place of quiet whispered contemplation. Some audience members approached me to discuss the project. It was interesting that many of these conversations centered around the process; how novel it was, questions about how it fits into the academic rigor required of a master’s program. They asked about the paper. Some even want to read it. I love that those that wanted to read it connected it to their own contexts, letting me know that they wanted it for the areas of social work or coaching. After having these conversations, I was able to see that the audience was in fact creating their own meaning from the experience and not just seeking what they thought I wanted them to get out of the audiencing.

As people continued to enter throughout the night, there was a sense of eagerness and experimentation that filled the air. At times, it felt almost like a worry about getting it wrong; a worry about not understanding how they *should* engage with the material. It seemed like the audience wanted to participate but were unsure how to start. As more people arrived and the room filled, audience members became more comfortable and started to act in less prescribed ways. They sat, listened, sketched, or wrote. There was a bit of an intensity in people's concentration, with hands clasped, heads cocked, or hands to the chin. I feel that everyone who entered did so with curiosity. They were willing to engage with the material a non-antagonistic way. They looked, listened, engaged, taking in the ideas, stories, and art that were presented without the intention of poking holes in it. It seemed that the multimodal expression of my project proved to be accessible to the audience. Individuals could interact in various different ways with the media presented in the ways that it was.

An element that was surprising to me was how emotional of an experience it was. I did expect some emotions to arise within myself for a few reasons. Firstly, because I know that live experiences, like concerts and theatre, where I experience an expression of humanity brings me to tears. The thought of a crowd of people gathering to experience the most human expression elicits such a strong emotional experience on my part. A reaction that is equal parts joy and sadness at its fleetingness. Secondly, because of how vulnerable of an experience the audiencing was. It felt like I cracked open my chest and asked everyone to look at my beating heart. It felt so raw. I knew this would make me emotional. To share this space with others. To hear my stories, my creations, brought to life, and to sit in them for an hour or more felt a bit like exposure therapy. I think some of the emotion also came from the wave of realization that this intensely focused and special exploration was essentially over. This period of my life is done. All of the

academic and personal experiences from the past three years, including feelings of inadequacy, grief, frustration, excitement, passion, and guilt, converged in this presentation. What I didn't expect was how emotional others got in connection to this project. Some of my conversations about the ideas presented or the process that we went through to arrive where we did ended in tears. I observed other audience members shedding tears reading, listening, or talking with others. Some of the stories seemed to resonate with others in a profound way. Audience members were eager to tell me their connections that they had made to themselves or their personal contexts or how what they were experiencing compared or contrasted against my experience.

I was also surprised by the dynamics of the crowd. Firstly, the sheer number of people who came to support me. Over sixteen audience members came to participate. This was extremely surprising for the time when it was presented, a Tuesday evening in late June. As much of the crowd was educators, that time of year is arguably the busiest time of the whole year. That so many people carved time out of their busy schedules to come and so deeply participate, was so moving. Secondly, the audience was so varied. People from all aspects of my life came. It felt amazing to have family friends, colleagues, superiors, and even some strangers all in one place, supporting the exploration I have undertaken for the past few years.

I am so pleased with the experience of the audiencing. It was an experience that I could have only hoped for as I planned and prepared. I believe that it was a perfect end to such a deeply personal exploration and that it extended the conversation that I hoped the paper would start in a very tangible sense. It left me feeling raw and exposed in the best possible way. I am equally excited, relieved, and sad that it is over. The idea that *good* leadership involves embodying the dispositions of care, meaning-seeking, and the promotion of growth, and then

promoting these qualities in others was cemented for me during this audiencing and the conversations I had following it. I have been steeped in these ideas for many months, so to me, leading from a place of humanity seems like an obvious course. It was interesting to me to watch and have conversations with others, to whom this learning was not so obvious, who were approaching the audiencing with a sense of novelty. Some of the audience members seemed to feel similar things to what I did when further exploring leadership theory and experience in my second year of graduate studies: the sudden feeling of something fitting and right. It seemed to me that the ideas presented felt like a slow exhale after holding one's breath. The importance of good leadership became solidified to me through observations of and conversations with others in which "the real world" was discussed. How, the ideas presented may be somewhat idealized; that in "the real world" leaders are unable to focus on these aspects of humanity and good leadership. My response to these comments is that we, as leaders, make time and space for things that are important. As a leader, care, meaning-seeking, and promoting growth are the most important things to me, and therefore something that I prioritize and will endeavor to continually prioritize. Others that feel the equal importance of these dispositions will also do so. The audiencing itself was an example of this practice. As audience members entered music and the audio from the video were playing. This soundscape seemed to make it difficult for some audience members to concentrate on the reflective process that I asked them to partake in. The sound is reminiscent of the important but transactional "noise" that leaders are continually presented with and asked to navigate. It is vital that leaders learn to live with and traverse the "noise" while still caring, finding meaning, promoting growth, and then, in turn, uncovering these dispositions in others.

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