

# The Moral Imagination Embodied

## Insights from Artists Navigating Hybrid Identities in Scholarship and Practice\*

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### Abstract

*The field of conflict engagement is riddled with tensions and challenges, such as the 'science-practice crisis' or the 'scholarship-practice divide'. Using interviews and an inductive, interdisciplinary approach and following the framework of The Moral Imagination, this article aims to deconstruct this core tension of 'scholarship or practice'. It does this from the perspective of individuals often overlooked in our field: artists. This study included interviews with three specific artists who work along the practice-scholarship spectrum. Even though these artists engage in both scholarship and practice, they do not simply define themselves as 'scholars' or 'practitioners'. Instead, they navigate their identities and work in-between these two terms. While practicing, researching and teaching they exemplify – and also move beyond – the 'both/and' approach. Using an inquiry-based, inductive approach to glean insight from these artists gives them voice and opens up a space for their views on the relationship between scholarship and practice. Paying special attention to how artists make sense of their location(s) along the aforementioned spectrum unearths fresh perspectives on the debate while furthering our understanding of the nexus between scholarship and practice*

**Keywords:** community art, peace studies, arts-based peacebuilding, practice, theory.

### 1 Introduction

In 2013, Coleman pointed out six contemporary challenges in the field of conflict resolution. He labelled these challenges throughout his article as simple 'either/or' questions: (1) Experience-based or evidence-based? (2) Mechanistic or holis-

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tic? (3) Conflict or peace? (4) Men or women? (5) Rationality or emotion? (6) Disciplinary or multidisciplinary? Although each challenge posed a different question, his response remained constant: all of these questions require a ‘both/and’ approach. Coleman points out that these challenges are representative of many tensions that permeate the core of our field. However, these tensions are not challenges in and of themselves; rather it is “our human attempts to manage them that generate unintended consequences” (Coleman, 2013: 108). Coleman’s piece offers an overview of contemporary challenges, and it is not the first to attempt to illuminate certain false dichotomies in our field.

In the preface of *The Moral Imagination*, Lederach (2005) describes a ‘historical tension’ in the field between two schools of thought. Similar to Coleman (2013), Lederach (2005: ix) illustrates this tension as a simple question: “Is building peace an art or a skill?”. Given that the professionalization of the field has focused heavily on teaching formulaic and technical techniques in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, one may argue it is a skill. Lederach (2005: ix), however, argues that “building constructive social change in settings of deep-rooted conflict requires both [art and skill]”. In addition, he notes that the overemphasis on technical and analytic-type skills has caused us to disregard the creative process (Lederach, 2005). He therefore calls for individuals in the fields of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, henceforth also called *conflict engagement*,<sup>1</sup> to “envision our work as a creative act, more akin to the artistic endeavor than the technical process” (Lederach, 2005: ix). This does not negate skill, instead it also calls for a ‘both/and’ approach, as in Coleman’s recommendations. We must learn how to engage with *both* skill *and* the creative process in tandem.

The field of conflict engagement is riddled with false dichotomies and labels such as those listed earlier; however, in order to offer a more in-depth perspective, this article focuses on the dichotomy laid out in Coleman’s first challenge: experience-based or evidence-based. This tension is part of a larger debate in the field, the ‘science-practice crisis’ (Coleman, 2013: 97) or what many call the ‘scholarship–practice divide’. As such, this article incorporates Coleman’s tension of experience-based or evidence-based under the umbrella terms for the debate: scholarship versus practice. In addition, this article also serves as a response to Lederach’s (2005) call to incorporate the art of the creative process into our work; it thereby uses an inductive, interdisciplinary approach and seeks to deconstruct the scholarship–practice divide from the perspective of individuals often overlooked in our field: artists. This study included interviews with three specific artists who work along the practice–scholarship spectrum (see Lederach and Lopez, 2016) and also engage with the feedback loop found within the interactive scholarship–practice spectrum (see Lederach and Lopez, 2016). Even though these artists engage in both scholarship and practice, they do not simply define themselves as ‘scholars’ or ‘practitioners’. Instead, they navigate their identities

1 Lederach (2005) mostly uses the terms *conflict transformation*, *conflict resolution* and *peacebuilding* in his book; however, for the purpose of this article, these terms will be at times combined and understood to be a part of the umbrella term for the field used in this journal, *conflict engagement* (Rothman, 1997; also see Albertstein & Rothman, 2013).

and work in-between these two terms. While practicing, researching and teaching, they exemplify the 'both/and' approach. Using an inquiry-based, inductive approach to glean insight from the artists gives them voice and opens up a space for their views on the relationship between scholarship and practice. Paying special attention to how artists make sense of their location(s) along the aforementioned spectrum can unearth fresh perspectives on the debate while furthering our understanding of the nexus between scholarship and practice.

## 2 Why Artists?

### 2.1 *Artists as Scholars*

In a field that is often dominated by social scientists, it may seem odd to examine a core challenge from the perspective of artists. This may be because we rarely see the terms 'artist' and 'scholar' as complementary. However, artists are scholars – they conduct research, accumulate knowledge and also further knowledge. For some artists, art-making itself is a form of research; Pablo Picasso once stated, "I never made a painting as a work of art, it's all research" (as cited in McNiff, 2008: 29). Like any interdisciplinary scholar, artists often research a myriad of topics to inform their work. This type of research may be likened to the theoretical or textual analyses conducted in other fields. Moreover, many artists' work does not take place within the confines of a studio. Rather, their research mirrors anthropological and sociological approaches such as ethnography, participant observation and participatory action research. Artists' research not only informs their artwork, it also impacts their scholarship. While artists are scholars, their worldview and mode of inquiry (the creative process) differ from those of more typical social science scholars whose main mode of inquiry is the analytic process.

Unlike social scientists, artists are not trained to analyse the world by taking it apart, but rather quite the opposite. For example, think about the creative process behind a painting, a symphony or a poem. Artists take multiple distinct pieces (whether shapes, music notes or words) and integrate them into a coherent whole. According to McNiff (2008), this is in contrast to the scientific method. One knows very little about "the end of an artistic experiment" (McNiff, 2008) at the beginning; instead they must learn to "trust the process" (McNiff, 1998). An "artistic inquiry ... typically starts with the realization that you cannot define the final outcome when you are planning to do the work" (McNiff, 2008: 40). McNiff continues:

In the creative process, the most meaningful insights often come by surprise, unexpectedly, and even against the will of the creator. The artists may have a sense or intuition of what might be discovered or of what is needed, and in some cases even a conviction, but the defining aspect of knowing through art ... is the emanation of meaning through the process of creative expression. (2008: 40)

Although McNiff's (2008) book is on art-based research, aspects underlying the theory of artistic inquiry are reminiscent of Lederach's (2005) recommendations for peace practitioners. For example, while *aesthetics* and *serendipity* are important parts of artistic scholarship, according to Lederach (2005), they are also crucial to the practice of building peace.

## 2.2 Artists as Peace Practitioners

McNiff's (2008) description of the process of artistic inquiry touches on numerous elements in *The Moral Imagination* (Lederach, 2005), such as *aesthetics* and *serendipity*. In his chapter "On aesthetics", like McNiff (2008), Lederach (2005: 69) also distances peacebuilding from "the analytical endeavor". He notes that the Greek etymology of *aesthetics* means "being sharp in the senses"; it is connected to "intuition, observation, and experience" (Lederach, 2005: 69). Unlike the feeling of an emotion, intuition is the sense of seeing and experiencing things "as a whole, not pieces" (Lederach, 2005: 69). According to Lederach (2005), this type of intuition is essential for peace practitioners. He explains that in conflict settings, transformative moments are often "deeply intuitive – short, sweet, and synthetic to the core", and when these moments occur, it is almost like "gazing at a piece of art" (Lederach, 2005: 69).

In terms of linkages between artistic inquiry and *serendipity*, one must simply look at Lederach's (2005: 182) definition<sup>2</sup> of the word: "the discovery, by accident and sagacity, of things for which you were not in quest which creates an emphasis on learning about process, substance, and purpose along the way, as initiatives change and develop". Artists are often surrounded by serendipity; art-making itself requires mindful attention (Grimm, 2012). According to Grimm (2012: iv), when an artist creates, she is in the "contested interstitial spaces between embodied awareness, sense perception, imagination, and reason". This astute awareness allows artists to be attentive to any changes in their environment, senses or perceptions. When changes occur, they can be reflective and respond accordingly (Grimm, 2012). Consequently, the artists' work is in constant flux throughout the creative process (McNiff, 1998; 2008). However, serendipity is not only about artwork. Rather, Lederach (2005) asserts that serendipity increases one's capacity to be responsive in the real world – an additional key skill for peace practitioners.

But more than the definitions of *aesthetics* and *serendipity*, in the context of peacebuilding, perhaps the greatest link between artists as peace practitioners can be found in the definition of the term that titles his book. To use the *moral imagination* is:

to imagine responses and initiatives that, while rooted in the challenges of the real world, are by their nature capable of rising above destructive patterns and giving birth to that which does not exist. In reference to peacebuilding, this is the capacity to imagine and generate constructive responses and initia-

2 Lederach expands on the definition of *serendipity* first given by Horace Walpole: "a gift for discovery by accident and sagacity while in pursuit of something else" (as cited in Lederach, 2005; Remer, 1964: 14).

tives that, while rooted in the day-to-day challenges of violent settings, transcend and ultimately break the grips of those destructive patterns and cycles. (Lederach, 2005: 182)

Artists by their very nature are constantly “giving birth to that which does not exist” (Lederach, 2005: 182). Naturally, not all artists participate in the creative process as a response to social problems. But conflict engagement scholars Shank and Schirch (2008) found that artists are often on the ground using artistic means and inquiry to respond to conflict. Moreover, artists work at various conflict stages and in each of what Shank and Schirch (2008) outline as the four areas in peacebuilding: (1) waging conflict non-violently, (2) reducing direct violence, (3) building capacity and (4) transforming relationships. This understanding illuminates further linkages between artists’ work on the ground and strategic peacebuilding.

According to the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies (n.d.), the three major areas of strategic peacebuilding are composed of efforts to (1) prevent, respond to and transform violent conflict; (2) promote justice and healing and (3) promote structural and institutional change. According to my review of the literature, artists’ work falls most often within the first two areas (e.g. LeBaron & Welch, 2005). In addition, there exist sub-areas of practice within each of these categories. In justice and healing, artists often work within the sub-area of trauma healing (e.g. Malchiodi, 2008). In violence prevention, conflict response and transformation, artists most often engage in the sub-area of non-violent social change (e.g. Lampert, 2013). However, the purpose of this article is not to place artists into moulds. Instead it seeks to give the artists voice, allowing their narratives to elucidate how they make sense of their location(s) and navigate their roles within conflict engagement and along the scholarship–practice spectrum.

### 2.3 Along the Practitioner–Scholar Spectrum

The first step to understand the scholar–practitioner debate is to recognize that the question of ‘scholar or practitioner’ – like many of the tensions or challenges in the field – represents a false dichotomy. As Lederach and Lopez (2016) argue, scholars and practitioners (including artists) in conflict engagement may identify with ‘hybrid’ roles that allow them to work according to the ‘both/and’ approach. These various roles can be found along the practitioner–scholar spectrum (Lederach and Lopez, 2016).

There are six roles totally along the spectrum, three of which emphasize practice: *practitioner*, *reflective practitioner* and *practitioner-scholar*. The definitions of these roles follow those offered by Lederach and Lopez (2016). Across each of these roles, the individual is an ‘engaged practitioner’ working on the ground in real-time, facing real-world challenges. *Practitioners* are so engaged on the ground that they have/make little time for reflection and scholarship. *Reflective practitioners*, however, create intentional space for reflection (Lang and Taylor, 2000). Their reflections tend to be writings or portfolios aimed at improving the work within their specific practitioner community. Farther along the spectrum, are

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*practitioner-scholars* who, in addition to practice, may develop theories and contribute to scholarship relevant to both scholars and practitioners.

While the middle of the spectrum denotes roles that blend both practice and scholarship, there are also three roles that emphasize the latter: *scholar-practitioner*, *scholar-studies-practitioner* and *scholar*. In these roles individuals are first and foremost ‘engaged scholars’. *Scholar-practitioners* engage in both scholarship and practice and their writing attends to both these areas; however, they prioritize scholarship over practice and often their orientation towards practice emerges through scholarship. *Scholar-studies-practitioners* conduct research and produce scholarship related to practice, but do not consider themselves ‘engaged practitioners’. Finally, *scholars* on this spectrum do not consider practice relevant to their research; therefore their research and scholarship are absent of any ties with practice.

Moreover, it is not only individuals’ roles that exist along this spectrum. Individuals on this spectrum often learn from the roles that they inhabit and apply that learning to both improving scholarship and as a means towards bettering practice. The sharing of experiences and learning is depicted on the interactive practice–scholarship spectrum (Lederach and Lopez, 2016). The arrows along this spectrum illustrate the movement of ideas and experience between those in different roles along the spectrum. In short, individuals working along this spectrum, regardless of their role, affect others along the spectrum through their own work and experiences, which informs future work and scholarship, respectively. This is also referred to as the practice–scholarship feedback loop.

For the purpose of this article, I interviewed three artists: Carole Kane, Nicolas Lampert and Claudia Bernardi. To qualify as an interviewee for this study, these individuals had to (1) have a connection to the field of conflict engagement, (2) identify as artists (i.e. engage in practice) and (3) have professional ties with an academic institution (i.e. engage in scholarship). In addition, although engaged in practice and scholarship, none of these individuals identify as ‘pure’ practitioners or ‘pure’ scholars. Rather, these artists engage in scholarship and practice while inhabiting roles along the middle of the practice–scholarship spectrum; they thereby also contribute to the ‘inner’ practice–scholarship feedback loop. These individuals are concurrently artists, scholars and peace practitioners. In short, they are living along the hyphen. It is for this reason that they served as ideal interviewees for my inquiry into artists’ perspectives on the scholarship–practice divide in our field.

### 3 Navigating the Hyphen

#### 3.1 Carole Kane

##### 3.1.1 Background, Practice and Scholarship

Carole Kane identifies herself as a coordinator, facilitator and practicing artist; she is also a graduate student in Expressive Arts Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding at the European Graduate School in Switzerland. The diversity of



her identities and work allow her to move fluidly between the roles of *reflective practitioner* and *practitioner-scholar*. In terms of where Kane falls in conflict engagement, her work aligns closely with the sub-area of trauma healing within strategic peacebuilding. She facilitates community and expressive art projects based “around the needs and potential peacebuilding aspirations of communities” (Kane, n.d.). An example of this is her project, *Petals of Hope*. Kane (1999) authored a book about the initiative, and Lederach (2005) also referenced it as a case study in *The Moral Imagination*.

*Petals of Hope* began after a bomb blast took 29 lives, plus unborn twins from 27 families, and left over 400 people injured in Omagh, Northern Ireland on 15 August 1998. The bombing took place during a ceasefire – just 4 months after the Good Friday Agreement; it was the worst atrocity of the Troubles. The world responded with an outpouring of love and sympathy. Bouquets and wreaths filled the city streets and sidewalks, but eventually the flowers began to die. Listening to the radio, Carole Kane heard a radio presenter wonder what to do with the flowers. She explained, “I wondered how the community might get back to some sort of normality, whatever that was going to be for them, because it was going to be a new normality” (personal communication, 4 November 2014). Eventually, she realized there was only one thing to do: make paper with the flowers. Omagh District Council took Kane up on her idea and asked her to oversee the making of pictures for each of the 27 families as well as the cities that lost people in the bombing.

*Petals of Hope* was a cross-community art project that involved over 150 people from Omagh. Participants included both Catholics and Protestants ranging from elementary school students to adults. The diversity of these participants could be considered symbolic and representative of the victims of the bombing. According to Kane, the Omagh bombing was symbolic on many levels; its symbolism lay in the timing of the attack and also in the vast range of victims. “It wasn’t an attack only on Protestant or Catholics – it stretched across the community. Both men and women and people of all ages were killed” (personal communication, 4 November 2014). Participants of the workshops served as a physical representation of the impact of the bombing.

During the workshops, participants created symbolic, heartfelt art while also cultivating a safe space for reconciliation and healing. Through *Petals of Hope*, individuals from both sides of the conflict talked through their shock, pain and grief. And at the end of the initiative, there were 30 pieces of artwork “symbolising, through the flowers, the thoughts, prayers, love and friendship which emerged world-wide as a result of the atrocity” (*Petals of Hope*, n.d.).

### 3.1.2 *A Reflective Practitioner and Practitioner-Scholar*

During her interview, Kane noted that there is no formulaic route towards using arts-based approaches in peacebuilding, and there are no rules for how to move from practice to scholarship. So, what is the key for Kane as she navigates these spaces? As if taking a cue from the *The Moral Imagination* (Lederach, 2005), Kane discussed the importance of cultivating mindfulness and sensory awareness. She specifically emphasized the value of intuition, observational skills and serendip-

ity. In addition to situating herself within the *moral imagination* (Ledearch, 2005), Kane's narrative also supports McNiff's (1998, 2008) discussions on trusting the process in artistic inquiry.

While Kane highlighted aspects of the creative process as keys to her work, her narrative does not negate the importance of skill or the use of theory. In fact, Kane's work is reflective of numerous theories in the field, specifically those associated with strategic peacebuilding (e.g. Schirch, 2005) and conflict transformation (e.g. Lederach, 2003) as well as theories in art-based therapy and trauma-healing approaches (e.g. Malchiodi, 2008). However, one cannot ignore that the skills Kane found most critical to her work were not taught, but rather learned through the experience of artistic inquiry (McNiff, 2008). These skills – based more on sensory awareness than technique – align closely with those recommended in *The Moral Imagination* (Lederach, 2005).

On trusting your gut and going by instinct, Kane noted, "It's not self-taught. You don't read a book. It's not like that. I think that sensory awareness is important. It's not about academia; it's about sensitivity" (personal communication, 4 November 2014). As noted earlier, this overlaps with Lederach's (2005) call for peace practitioners to look beyond technical skills and also work towards cultivating additional, more intuitive, sensory skills. Alluding to her own reflective practice, Kane found that what really makes her work 'click' are skills such as observation and noticing, "I was never taught how to do that. And then I did Omagh. Since that experience, I've become more conscious of the sensitivity around observation" (personal communication, 4 November 2014). In addition, Kane has also learned to look for unexpected outcomes or 'surprises', asserting it is "through the unexpected outcomes that change happens; it doesn't happen through the formulaic approach of doing things" (personal communication, 4 November 2014).

Speaking about her diverse roles, Kane noted "It really has to do with serendipity." She stated, "I was never told at art college, 'When you finish your course, you will work with community groups or you are going to help people through trauma, or help them through healing'. That was never ever mentioned in my degree ...." Regarding her current academic programme, Kane seems to be following an artistic inquiry approach; she is not focused on the end result. Rather, she seems to 'trust the process' (McNiff, 1998). In the meantime, she is engaged in her own scholarship–practice feedback loop and appreciating the impact her continued education has on her work. She explained that the "learning pins back to the point of reference, which has to do with my practice, in Omagh and the other community art and peacebuilding projects in Northern Ireland. Those experiences serve as a foundational base that I adapt for other situations. I apply the practice into the theory and learn to do things differently" (personal communication, 4 November 2014). Kane is not alone in this experience, both Lampert and Bernardi also touched on the benefit of the practice–scholarship feedback loop.



### 3.2 *Nicolas Lampert*

#### 3.2.1 *Background, Practice and Scholarship*

Lampert is an interdisciplinary artist and writer who works as a full-time faculty member in the Department of Art and Design at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with a joint appointment in Printmaking and Writing and Critical Thinking. He navigates both the roles of *practitioner-scholar* and *scholar-practitioner*. He is an engaged practitioner in the areas of street art, public art, art activism and community art whose work is linked directly to non-violent social change.

As a scholar, Lampert notes that he uses art and writing to bring awareness and more engagement in the fields of social justice and ecology. His recent book, *A People's Art History of the United States*, is an example of this. It “places art history squarely in the rough-and-tumble of politics, social struggles, and the fight for justice from the colonial era through the present day” (Lampert, n.d.) In doing so, it presents how activist art has emerged, not from art institutions, but rather from the streets and social movements – and the communities of these movements (Justseeds, n.d.). It is a thorough and detailed account of how artists engaged in social movements participate in non-violent social change.

Lampert's practice also coincides with non-violent social change. He collaborates with groups, such as Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, the Rain Forest Action Network (Chicago chapter), Tamms Year Ten and Iraq Veteran's Against the War (Chicago chapter) (Lampert, n.d.). His art actions touch on issues including (1) anti-war campaigns such as his work with 'Operation Recovery', which works to stop the redeployment of traumatized soldiers; (2) environmental struggles, such as motivating resistance against the Penokee Mine in Wisconsin; and (3) human rights, such as supporting workers' rights in Wisconsin and migrant rights across the United States (Justseeds, n.d.). Through his various works, Lampert exemplifies another way to navigate the hyphen between being a scholar and engaged practitioner.

#### 3.2.2 *As a Practitioner-Scholar and Scholar-Practitioner*

Like the other interviewees, during his interview Lampert also highlighted topics found in *The Moral Imagination* (Lederach, 2005), including the importance of flexibility, adaptability and patience. Lampert also described the benefits of the scholarship–practice feedback loop. He asserts, “the best way to learn is to engage” (personal communication, 6 November 2014). He learns by stepping into a movement and engaging directly with a community. Although Lampert feels that his scholarship and practice are very much divided, he linked learning through his experience to being a better professor. Professors in his department teach about art, social justice and ecology and, according to Lampert, “the best way to do that is by practice and making art” (personal communication, 6 November 2014).

In addition, Lampert spoke extensively on how the standards for evaluating faculty and educating students in academia need to be re-assessed in order to better support people interested in pursuing practice-based scholarship. He offered the Peck School of the Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as an exam-

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ple, explaining how evaluation within his department differed from more traditional models. He noted that he works at a research university, and is therefore expected to ‘produce’ while also teaching. However, in his department, “research is a very open-ended word” (personal communication, 6 November 2014); Lampert and his colleagues are evaluated on their “full-body of work: expositions, various projects, publications ...”. Moreover, his department highly values interdisciplinary work.

However, Lampert noted that there are potential reasons why his department can be more flexible in its evaluation standards than other institutions. First, Lampert is not a tenure-track professor, rather he is full-time academic staff. In addition, Lampert works in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which is not an ‘art world epicenter’, meaning that there is “a healthy respect for community art” (personal communication, 19 February 2016). Moreover, many of Lampert’s colleagues also focus on art and social justice, and so over the past decade they worked together to make the case that “working as artists in the community and in activist movements is a valid and critical path for an artist/educator to take” (personal communication, 19 February 2016). Lampert recognized that this differs from departments that evaluate faculty according to traditional standards such as the quantity and quality of academic publications. However, he found this more traditional approach to be both limiting and unhealthy for professors and their disciplines.

Unlike colleagues within other departments or discipline, there are no constraints when it comes to what Lampert and his colleagues can produce in their department, “we can self-publish, we can do artists books ... there is a respect for everything that we are producing” (personal communication, 6 November 2014). The flexibility in Lampert’s department is a large reason why he is able to navigate across his roles along the practice–scholarship spectrum. Scholar-practitioners across various disciplines engaged in peace work may benefit from a similar, more flexible model. If departments adopted a more holistic approach of evaluation for faculty, this could allow scholars in academia to more easily transition across multiple roles, including those focused on practice.

### 3.3 *Claudia Bernardi*

#### 3.3.1 *Background, Practice and Scholarship*

An artist and part-time full professor of Community Arts at the California College of the Arts (CCA in San Francisco/Oakland), Claudia Bernardi works as a *reflective practitioner*, a *practitioner-scholar* and a *scholar-practitioner*. She teaches one semester per year and spends the rest of year as an engaged practitioner. In academia, Bernardi leads courses that bridge the nexus of practice and scholarship with arts-based approaches, such as Art in Activism. She also shares lessons from her work at invited lectures and conference talks across the country and internationally (e.g. Bernardi, 2013). Her work both on the ground and in the classroom uses the arts to promote human rights, social justice and community building. Bernardi does not identify herself as a peacebuilder because the communities she works in are still divided. However, even so, I would argue that her work contrib-

utes to efforts in two sub-areas of strategic peacebuilding, both trauma healing and non-violent social change.

Bernardi's experience spans 20 years of both domestic and international work with main initiatives including art-in-community projects for political refugees and survivors of torture from Latin America, including in her native country, Argentina. One of these projects includes The School of Art and Open Studio of Perquín, El Salvador – also known as *Walls of Hope* – where she serves as both a founder and director. This unprecedented project of art, education and human rights initiative has its roots in the nexus between art, artists, politics as well as both national and international government organizations.

Founded in 2005, 13 years after the end of the brutal civil war in El Salvador, 1980-1992, *Walls of Hope* brings together children and adults from both sides of the conflict in the still fractured and divided community of Perquín and neighbouring villages. The school is considered inclusive and follows a non-sectarian agenda. While the work of *Walls of Hope* is considered “political, but not partisan”, Bernardi explained, “that sounds like a great line, but I cannot tell you how difficult it is to maintain that” (personal communication, 30 October 2014). Moreover, according to Bernardi, one of the main (positive) ‘unexpected outcomes’ of the founding of the school is that what it “has been able to convey is a middle ground of diplomacy ... people who never spoke before or who would fight or would cross the street in order not to run into someone else, would come together in order to work together in a project, because we offer that permissibility” (personal communication, 30 October 2014).

Furthermore, this is not an isolated incident. Bernardi says that in her work with art in communities, she has seen evidence that “Art produces a step towards diplomacy and that is a huge contribution. And we see that happening all the time, all the time, in parts of the world that are hugely conflicted” (personal communication, 30 October 2014). *Walls of Hope* has inspired projects and similar models across the world from places such as Colombia to Northern Ireland, Mexico, Guatemala, Switzerland, Canada, Germany, Argentina, Serbia and the United States.

### 3.3.2 *As a Reflective Practitioner, a Practitioner-Scholar and a Scholar-Practitioner*

Similar to Kane and Lampert, a key element to Bernardi's work is also discussed in *The Moral Imagination* (Lederach, 2005). For Bernardi, her work is highly dependent on the understanding, use, management and sensitivity of one main element: time. When discussing her various projects and expanding on the differences between her practice work and academic work, she explained, “It's a lot about time. Whenever you work with communities it is time-sensitive ... Academia pre-establishes everything. ... You cannot do that in the real world.” She also noted “when you look at practitioners who are also academics, have in mind that in their work, like in mine, the reason of academia may or may not coincide with the work they do in the world” (personal communication, 30 October 2014).

In addition, when asked how she defines ‘practice’ versus ‘scholarship’, unlike Lampert, Bernardi replied that “there is no division at all” between the two (personal communication, 30 October 2014). She often emphasized how her teaching

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influences her practitioner life and how her practice on the ground ‘profoundly’ impacts her teaching. Regarding returning after her time abroad every year, she stated, “I am a better professor when I come back” (personal communication, 30 October, 2014). This is largely due to the accumulation of new knowledge from her on-the-ground experiences. Her courses are always planned fresh, based on projects.

Moreover, Bernardi’s students speak for themselves on her influence as a professor. She granted me access to reflection papers by one of her classes on the prompt: “What will you remember from this class five years from now?” Words repeated throughout the essays included: ‘impact’, ‘moved’, ‘refreshing’, ‘shocked by my ignorance’, ‘enlightened’, ‘eye-opening’ and ‘inspiring’. In their essays, students expressed gratitude and awe at what they learned during the semester. They were astonished to learn about real-life tragedies and events happening in the world. For many, it evoked a passion to take action and join various movements. Moreover, not only did Bernardi’s teaching from experience help students become more engaged, but according to their essays, Bernardi also succeeded in teaching her students a core and essential skill in academia: critical thinking. It is difficult to truly assess the impact of the practice–scholarship feedback loop. But if her students’ essays are any indication, it seems Bernardi was right – her practice does ‘profoundly’ impact her teaching. And, according to her, her scholarship continually impacts her practice. They are inherently intertwined. She inhabits the hyphen gracefully, moving fluidly across identities within the spectrum and constantly engaging within the feedback loop of the interactive scholarship–practice spectrum.

#### 4 Conclusion

This article attempted to deconstruct a current debate challenging our field: ‘scholarship or practice?’ By using an inductive inquiry-based approach, it aimed to offer new insights to the current debate. It did this by giving voice to individuals who, though engaged in scholarship and practice within our field, were often overlooked. These individuals were artists. In addition to seeking fresh perspectives into the scholarship–practice divide, this article was engaged with artists owing to Lederach’s (2005) call to “envision our work as a creative act”. Approaching the scholarship–practice divide from this angle allowed for fresh perspectives on the topic.

First and foremost, responses from interviewees supported current views in the field that the question of “scholarship or practice?” represents a false dichotomy (i.e. Coleman, 2013). Coleman called for a ‘both/and’ approach regarding the tension of ‘experience-based or evidence-based’, and in terms of scholarship and practice, interviewees for this article not only agreed with a ‘both/and’ approach but also embodied it. Moreover, their view of the lines between scholarship and practice seemed much more blurred. For them, their response went beyond the ‘both/and’ approach. Lampert, Kane and Bernardi identified themselves as artists, writers, professors, facilitators, coordinators and directors. They inhabited loca-

tions along the scholarship–practice spectrum that ranged from *reflective practitioner* to *scholar-practitioner*. They worked in these roles while also hanging onto their earlier identities; their embodiment of one identity did not negate the others.

In addition, as is evidenced by their work, not only are these individuals masters of moving fluidly across roles on the scholarship–practice spectrum, they are also proficient at integrating both the art of the creative process along with more technical skills and theories of conflict engagement into their work. When interviewees described the detail of their practice and scholarship, undergirding their work one can see influences from theories in a myriad of topics, such as strategic peacebuilding (e.g. Schirch, 2005), conflict transformation (e.g. Lederach, 2003), art therapy (e.g. Malchiodi, 2008), trauma healing (e.g. Yoder, 2005), conflict ripeness (e.g. Zartman, 2000), non-violent social change (e.g. Sharp, 1973) and even Elise Boulding’s idea on the 200-year present (e.g. Boulding, 1990). In this way, their scholarship clearly seeps into their practice. In addition, as was evidenced by their interviewees, the feedback loop also works in the opposite direction.

Interviewees’ scholarship was affected directly in that each of these artists shared their experiences and lessons learned from their practice via books, articles or academic lectures. However, a perhaps ‘surprise’ outcome of this inquiry was that their practice did not only affect their written work. Lampert and Bernardi both expressed that their experience in practice explicitly affected their teaching. This can be seen in the fact they both teach courses that incorporate community engagement. Thus, they are able to not only serve as physical role models for their students on how to engage in practice and scholarship but also provide spaces for their students to learn from their own experiences. In this way, their students can find their own place on the interactive scholarship–practice loop.

When I first began this inquiry, I believed that the ‘scholarship or practice?’ question illustrated a false dichotomy, although I also felt it was rare to find individuals who found balance among this core tension in our field. I never imagined I would find individuals who moved so fluidly between the two. But these artists do just that. From these artists’ insights, I have learned that to be engaged in both scholarship and practice is a skill in and of itself. However, it is not a technical skill; it does not come from a textbook. It requires flexibility, attentiveness, mindfulness and perhaps most importantly – patience, along with an inherently deep understanding of time. These skills are learned through experience. Thus, not only are they exemplary examples of navigating across the scholarship–practice spectrum and engaging with the practice–scholarship feedback loop, but they each seem to embody the lessons of *The Moral Imagination* (Lederach, 2005).

In closing, I would return to Coleman (2013), who noted that the tensions in our field alone are not challenges, rather they are our “human attempts to manage them” (Coleman, 2013: 108) that result in negative consequences. These artists support this claim; they do not attempt to ‘manage’ the space between scholarship and practice, rather they inhabit it naturally. And for them, it does not seem to pose a real challenge. In the field, we often call for scholars and prac-

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tioners to work together – feeding into the assumption that they are separate individuals. However, what these artists' perspectives on the debate illuminated is that we do not need to approach this tension as 'either/or' or 'us vs. them'. When asked about scholarship and/or practice, these artists did not respond with an 'either/or' view of the tension, or even from a 'both/and' approach. Instead, they broke down the false dichotomy – they are not just 'scholars' or 'practitioners', rather they engage in scholarship and practice as 'all of the above'.

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