HOW SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECTS TODAY’S CREATIVITY

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Master of Arts

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How Social Media Affects Today’s Creativity

Dillon J. Sedar

Figure 1. Cover image featuring artwork by Dillon Sedar
Today, new technologies and media in the 21st century are creating new opportunities for creative expression. When defining what constitutes artistic creativity today, researchers in art education are overlooking the role of social media. Social media is ingrained into the lives of Millennials and younger generations, and due to its inherent nature, does not always get credited in today’s creative practices and processes. This case study on contemporary creativity aims to highlight the impact of social media on the creativity of contemporary youth. Through conversations with four Millennials, all holding different creative practices in the 21st century, I intend to uncover how approaches to and practices of creativity now inherently include social media in some amount, whether large or small. Through this research, I aim to reveal the impact of social media on the creative practices of the Millennial generation as well as to suggest
implications for future research in art education. Creativity scholarship in art education includes
the work of Flavia Bastos and Enid Zimmerman (2015). In their edited book Connecting
Creativity Research and Practice in Art Education, Bastos and Zimmerman look at the future of
creativity through the following lenses: folk art and community connections, art-based research
in the classroom, creative thinking strategies, neuro-creativity, playful pedagogy, creativity in 3-
D virtual worlds, and refocusing creativity through a global lens. There is no specific discussion,
however, on the impact of social media or on the connection of social media to creativity in this
most comprehensive resource to date. My goal through this research is to bring light to this
missing piece—the relationship of creativity and social media.

Since the publishing of Connecting Creativity Research and Practice in Art Education in
2015, the two most prominent and visible journals of the field, Art Education and Studies in Art
Education, have minimally addressed social media usage and/or creativity specifically. Note that
I do not intend to criticize the journals for the absence of specific focus on social media and/or
creativity in the past two years, but instead assert that there is a need to address the relevancy of
social media in the creative lives of today’s learners. Social media directly fits into the milieu of
visual culture, but often fails to get recognized for its effects on contemporary creativity. Art
Education and Studies in Art Education have published more than 80 articles since 2015. Only
four of them, I have found, are relevant to social media technology uses in creative practices.
Four that are relevant to social media include the work of Knochel & Patton (2016), Grodoski

In the first article, Knochel & Patton (2016) address the strong relevancy of a digital
society versus the lack of student digital artmaking found in classrooms. Knochel & Patton stress
the need for students to learn 21\textsuperscript{st} century digital innovations for creativity in 21\textsuperscript{st} century life.
The authors focus on artmaking methodologies using 21st century technologies, but do not focus specifically on the topic of social media in creation.

Dealing specifically with using art education as an assessment of perceptions of today’s visual culture, Grodoski (2016) describes the driving force of social media in visual culture. The author provides strategies for posing meaningful questions that make individuals consider their participation in and engagement with visual culture on a daily basis.

Shin (2016) shifts the focus on visual from a local scale to a global one. Analyzing the worldwide popularity of the music video *Gangnam Style* (2012), Shin stresses the need to consider how social media has created a new global visual culture landscape and how art education should be the venue in which to address it. Shin also argues the need to engage students in social media environments for participatory learning, which they define as learning students are naturally willing to engage in without external prompting.

Castro, Lalonde and Pariser (2016) describe a study in which at-risk youth were more motivated toward creative engagement when allowed to include the use of mobile media in their approach to artmaking. Castro, Lalonde and Pariser identified students’ sense of agency through mobile media use, as well as the educational potential in the ability to engage with artistic content inside and outside of the classroom.

Clearly, the role of social media in the lives of youth is ubiquitous and undeniable. How art educators harness the potential of social media—whether through using it pedagogically, as motivation, or as a tool—will be important as we continue to conceptualize how 21st century youth learn best. This study offers a glimpse into this important conversation.
TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Throughout this study, very specific language is used in regards to the contexts of social media usage. Terms used in this case study are defined operationally, within the context of social media and contemporary creativity. They include:

**Millennial** – a person born in the 1980s or the 1990s (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2017).

**Profile** – A social media user’s profile aims to provide a snapshot to other users of who the person is, or how they want to be perceived. Profiles vary somewhat depending on the social media platform. The first image seen in a user’s profile is generally a profile picture, an image that either captures the user, something important to the user that they want to communicate, or both. Profiles on Facebook and Twitter host a banner photo, one that generally serves as a background image for the user’s profile page. Social media platforms commonly permit a brief biography that introduces viewers to the social media user. A brief biography limited to 150 words is commonly permitted and used to introduce viewers to other viewing users. If users choose to do so, personal information of location, occupation, and interests may be shared on a profile page.

**Post** – A post (noun) is visual content, written content and often times both placed onto a social media user’s profile. Posting (verb) is the term used for social media users to describe the act of placing content on their profiles for other users to see and interact with on their feeds. What an individual user posts will be seen by users that follow them.

**Follow** – Following another user on social media is a voluntary act that expresses that you are interested in viewing and engaging with the visual and/or textual information that user chooses to post onto their profile and therefore onto your feed. Social media users often intend to
gain followers in order to have a larger audience and thus larger interaction with the content they are posting.

**Feed** – Social media users often describe something they saw on their “Twitter feeds” or “Instagram feeds.” The term feed in the context of social media usage refers to the visual and textual information ‘fed’ to users by other users. The feed of those users followed shows up on personal feeds, thus allowing users to read, interpret, and interact with the content if they so choose.

**Wall** – Wall, in the context of social media, is a term associated specifically with Facebook. A Facebook user’s wall is a place on which other users can place content and that content will be displayed for followers of that particular user to see.

**Facebook** – Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues (Rouse, 2014).

**Twitter** – Twitter is a free, social-networking microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called *tweets*. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users’ tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. Tweets and replies to tweets can be sent by cell phone text message or by posting at the twitter.com website (Rouse, 2015).

**Instagram** – Instagram is a free, online, social-networking platform for photo sharing that was acquired by Facebook in 2012. Instagram allows member users to upload, edit, and share photos with other members through the Instagram website, email, and social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Foursquare, and Flickr (Rouse, 2012).

**Snapchat** – Snapchat is a mobile application and service for sharing photos, videos, and
messages with other users. Users are able to view photos or videos sent from other users for a maximum of ten seconds before the messages go away. Users are able to re-view sent photos or videos only one time. The service is ideal for sharing quick updates with other users without accumulating excess media and/or messages on one’s mobile device (Christensson, 2016).

**YouTube** – YouTube is a video-sharing service that allows users to watch videos posted by other users and upload videos of their own. The service was started as an independent website in 2005 and was acquired by Google in 2006. Videos that have been uploaded to YouTube may appear on the YouTube website and can also be posted on other websites, though the files are hosted on the YouTube server (Christensson, 2009).

**Likes** – Likes are signs of user engagement with another user’s post. Facebook began with an initial “like” button, a symbol of a hand giving a “thumbs up” gesture and now has progressed to varying modes of response titled “reactions.” A user may “react” to a Facebook post with the traditional thumbs up symbol, a heart, a laughing emoji surprised emoji, a crying emoji, or an angry emoji. Instagram “likes” come in the form of a heart or have been referred to by users as a ‘double tap’ – the action that can physically be applied to the picture on a user’s screen to indicate that they “like” the posted photo. Twitter “likes” also come in the form of a heart, or one may “retweet” a Twitter post so that one’s followers may also see it.

**Views** – “Views” is a term most closely associated with Instagram video sharing. Users are told via the social media platform how many times other users stopped and viewed videos they posted. Views of videos differ from likes of videos, as other users may choose the action of liking a video, and the social media counts that action numerically only one time. Video views can be performed by other users and are counted numerically each time the video is viewed by that user. Video “views” may then provide more user gratification than “likes” as the possibility
of a higher number of views is more likely than a higher number of likes.

**Emojis** – Emojis are visual symbols depicting facial expressions, animals, hand gestures, objects, actions and activities, types of people and their occupations, clothing, nature, food, vehicles, structures, symbols, and flags available to use for communication in social media messaging and commenting. Emojis provide a visual component and emotional context to an often-misunderstood messaging and commenting system of written text.

**Comments** – Comments allow users to write a response to another user’s post using text and emoji imagery. Users may interact with comments by pressing the “like” or “reply” buttons on Facebook and Instagram. “Liking” a comment implies agreement or gratitude for a compliment. Replying to a comment allows two or more users to break off into a separate conversation about the post or topic.

**Scrolling** – Scrolling refers to the vertical nature of social media platforms within mobile devices. Users scroll through posted visual and textual information from top to bottom and use either their thumb or finger to slide viewed information upward and out of the screen in anticipation of other and often earlier posted visual and textual information within their feeds.

**Notifications** – Notifications are commonly associated with smartphone users and indicate a request for user engagement within a particular application. Social media users often receive notifications when someone likes and/or interacts with their posts or when they are tagged. Push notifications can be turned on by users of social media applications to allow information to be “pushed” to one’s home screen, prompting them to further engage with the information and the application.

**Tagging** – Individual users may be “tagged” by other users in a post to imply involvement in the post or to communicate the post to particular persons. Tagging is generally
performed on social media platforms with the use of the “@” symbol directly followed by the other user’s profile name. Tagging an individual on Facebook automatically shares the post to the tagged user’s wall and tagging an individual on Twitter automatically shares the tweet on the tagged user’s feed. Tagging an individual on Instagram posts a notice on the individual’s profile but does not actually post the content on their profile. Tagging generally symbolizes the desire for one user to communicate with other specific users and generally implies the desire for shared experience.

**Streaming** – A method of transmitting or receiving data (especially video and audio material) over a computer network as a steady, continuous flow, allowing playback to proceed while subsequent data is being received.

**Filters** – Instagram and Snapchat offer very different kinds of filters. Instagram photo filters offer various ways of manipulating photos to achieve special color and lighting effects. Snapchat filters are unique in that they prompt users’ participation, allowing their voices to be manipulated into high and low tones, faces to be manipulated into cartoon-like characteristics, and other humorous manipulations such as rainbows in place of vomit coming out of users’ mouths.

Each of these terms, definitions, tools, and ways participants in social media engage with one another affect the ways in which individuals approach creative practices today. Note, throughout this paper, when I refer to “social media,” I am referring to all forms of social media as one singular entity, opposed to only one form of social media. This chapter has set the foundation for why creativity needs to be studied in the context of social media practices, as well as definitions of terms. The following chapter will examine how creativity has been conceptualized and defined in the past and present within the field of art education. Finally, a
description of research methods and methodologies; data analysis; and implication for the field concerning creativity and social media are provided as we keep an eye on the future.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Figure 3. Screenshot of Instagram story.
INTENTION

There are many written histories on the subject of creativity. For the purposes of this paper, I will not choose to cover all of them, nor do I wish to imply that the histories I choose to address in this review of related literature are the only worthy histories to discuss. Instead, I desire to use certain histories, in a chronological pattern, as key points to provide a brief overview of how written literature on creativity has been conceptualized historically, to the present day. My primary investigation of written literature on creativity has been within the field of art education, but when relevant, I include creativity references outside of the field. The following will contextualize my research while also considering the many uses, values, theories, and applications of creativity leading up to the many ways we define creativity today.

At no point do I intend to present one conclusive definition as to what creativity is, but I instead would like to swim amongst the many definitions already provided throughout history and consider the vast potential of how we may define and explore creative practices today. Note also that throughout Chapter II, when I refer to “artmaking,” I am referring to an act of creativity. The word “artmaking” may fit more appropriately into certain contexts. My belief is that all artmaking is an act of creativity, but not all creativity is artmaking.
LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Davis (2015) looks back nearly 80 years to trace the history and unfoldings of creativity research, from 1940 to present day. Between 1940 and 1960, research was focused upon determining the nature of creative ability, the effect of various factors upon creative ability, and the measurement of creativeness or creative ability. Much of the research in this 20-year period gave insight into student learning through creativity. Included in the examination, were ideas surrounding students’ motivation to create dependent on mental capacities and interests; the idea of creativity as a holistic process—not one defined by specific stages; and the need to accommodate to many different individual ways of working in art. Suggestions for how to teach students to be creative and how to teach creativity were also made from 1940-1960.

Prior to 1959, most research related to creativity in art education was documented in education, psychology, and sociology journals. No journal yet existed for exclusively publishing art education research. In 1947, four U.S. regional art associations combined to form the National Art Education Association with the goal of creating credible recognition for research in the field of art education. From 1949 until 1959 the organization published a yearbook, *Art Education Organizes*. In the Fall of 1959, NAEA first published *Studies in Art Education*, which is still in print today (Davis, 2015).

The 1960s witnessed *Studies in Art Education* become the primary source for publications on creativity research. Of the manuscripts published in *Studies in Art Education* during the 1960s, 30 articles had the word *creative* or a derivative of the word in the title. Two major aspects of creativity took focus of the time: the nature of creativity and the relationships between various characteristics of creativity and other phenomena. A continuation of research upon the nature of creativity in the 1960s provided more insight into student learning, but not
much was gained in the realm of teaching methodologies as related to creativity (Davis, 2015).

According to Davis (2015) beginning in the 1970s, the interest of creativity as a research topic declined. The pattern remained throughout the rest of the 20th century and into the beginning of the 21st, as less than two percent of articles found in *Studies in Art Education* during the time had the word *creative* or any derivative of it. The few articles about creativity at this time addressed model development (Novosel-Beittel, 1978), analysis of children’s drawings (Korzenik, 1976), and formation of a multiple arts department (Copus, 1975).

As analyzed by Davis (2015), the new millennium did not bring with it a new interest to creativity research, either. Only seven articles between 2000 and 2011 have been published in *Studies* that contain the word *creative* or a derivative of the word. Ideas ranged from redressing the myth of inherent creativity in early childhood (McClure, 2011); re-conceptualizing the role of creativity in art education theory and practice (Zimmerman, 2009); and making a case for curriculum integration by connecting art, learning, and creativity (Marshall, 2005). Ideas ranged from redressing the myth of inherent creativity in early childhood, re-conceptualizing the role of creativity in art education theory and practice, and making a case for curriculum integration by connecting art, learning, and creativity.

The relatively small amount of creativity research in the 21st century thus far further reinforces the need to situate creativity in art education research in a new way, as I am proposing in this research study. My aim is to look back through time, during the period analyzed by Davis (2015), to further investigate the roles, research, and applications of creativity found in the last century and to question their relation to definitions of creativity we may find today while considering a very powerful contemporary cultural factor – social media.
20TH CENTURY THEORIES ON CREATIVITY

In 1948, John Dewey, an American philosopher, psychologist, and education reformer, published his seminal work *Experience and Education*. In it, Dewey expressed his belief in the need for a theory of experience in education. Here, I will connect his idea of experience to that of creativity. “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (p. 13). A common misconception I have heard about the theories of John Dewey is that he believed children learn by doing. In the aforementioned quote, he stated that the *quality* of the experience strongly affects the educational outcome of the experience. Whether one is creating an artwork or participating in a collaborative activity, the quality of the experience will directly impact what the individual learns. Not all creative experiences are equally impactful and/or beneficial to individuals and groups.

Within the context of art education in the 1950s, many placed value on the formal qualities of creativity. Rudolf Arnheim expressed that belief in his book *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*, with multiple editions published from 1954-1974. With chapter titles of “Balance,” “Shape,” “Form,” “Growth,” “Space,” “Light,” “Color,” “Movement,” “Dynamics” and “Expression,” Arnheim investigates the formalities behind creating a work of art. For Arnheim, balance in a composition was necessary to freeze the action in the work and communicate to viewers that no possible changes to the work could be made. Arnheim’s definition of shape requires viewer participation; he stated that a shape is the combination of a physical object, the medium of light which transmits information, and the viewer who perceives it from their own perspective. His chapter on growth references children and their unexplainable way of visually rendering/representing life. Arnheim placed value on the wonder originating from our difficulty in pinpointing the natural tendencies of our senses (1974).
Because the final chapter of the last edition addresses “Expression” and expressive qualities of creativity, I am lead to believe this was an idea for Arnheim leaning more toward the 1974 edition than in the 1954 edition. His concluding chapter expressed that, within creation, the essence of art cannot be captured with only size, shape, and measurement of form (1974). The final edition of the book allows room in Arnheim’s language for personal perception, experience, and expression to be a necessary part of creativity.

In 2010, Jerome Hausman published in the journal of *Art Education* an article he aptly titled “An Almost Forgotten 1953 Conference on Creativity.” Hausman shined light on a conference on creativity hosted at Ohio State University in 1953. He provided insight into what researchers on creativity were thinking about and addressing at the time. The conference set forth six dispositions: (1) creativity, although focused upon in the arts, is prominent in many other forms of human behavior, (2) creativity for organic growth, (3) creativity as a function to form identity, (4) art education as a provider of creative experiences, (5) art education as an aid toward student need, and (6) creativity for experiences that can relate to other facets of human life. Conference participants also investigated three additional fields that they labeled social, behavioral, and conceptual. The social field explored the question of whether students are more socially constructive if given opportunities for creative expression. The behavioral field addressed evaluation of creative experiences, and explored what the indications of creative behaviors are. The purpose of the conceptual field was to build a descriptive model of what a creative individual is.

Later in the 1950s, Susanne K. Langer published a book titled *Problems of Art* (1957). In it, she expressed strong views on what creativity is and what creativity is not. Langer aimed to inspire the reader to think about creativity through a specific stance, with recommendations that
still ring true today, stating that those who sit around and worry about being creative become inherently less creative as they get nothing done. Langer then provided an example of a shoe factory worker who may go home sick and take the day to rest and play piano. She argued that the day-to-day shoe making is not creation, but instead manufacturing, and justifies the music as a work of art; the idea being that a shoe is a successful construction of leather created by following a prescribed process, and an artwork is an apparition of the creator. Langer believed that the illusions artists make in virtual space never existed prior to creation, and neither did any of their parts—a spectacle. Langer supported herself from predicted outrage against her beliefs by continuing and stating that even if the artist references reality, what is created is an entirely new form because the newly created form is not reality, but a perception, reference to, and illusion of it.

Another prominent figure that contributed to how we think about creativity was Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist from the 1920s-1930s. A later work of Vygotsky, *The Psychology of Art* (1971), included his theories of what art (creating) could be defined as. Vygotsky viewed art as perception: how the external form, the inner form and the meaning/significance combine to make a unique interpretation that motivates creativity. He viewed art as technique, emphasizing that if we forget about the form in which art is created, it then may lose its aesthetic effect. Lastly, Vygotsky viewed art as a catharsis, explaining in his book that art and artmaking could be about perceptions, an investigation of emotions, an expression of imagination/fantasy, or all three simultaneously.
ATTEMPTS AT ASSESSMENT OF CREATIVITY

In the following decade, Elliot Eisner (1962), a professor of art and education and long-time writer on the arts and creativity, published a study in which he describes an attempt to create a typology of creative behavior, an effort to generalize the ways in which one may be creative. The purpose of the study was to find out if a typology of creativity could in fact be useful if employed. Eisner’s study identified four types of creativity: 

- **Boundary pushing**, addition of a new element;
- **Inventing**, addition of a new class of elements;
- **Boundary breaking**, addition of a new scheme of classes; and
- **Aesthetic organizing**, which he labeled harmonious ordering.

Eisner measured the four types of creativity using two loci—form and subject. Eisner concluded, “the random relationships among types of creativity within media suggest that the problem or context that is used for the assessment of creativity significantly affects its display” (p. 19). The studies and data collected here show but one example of the difficulty in attempting to generalize measurement of creativity.

Later, in 1964, and perhaps in less academic language, for the layperson, Eisner authored and published a book of essays, *Think with Me about Creativity*, in which he once again attempted to define creativity, this time, within the context of education. In the second essay, “Defining Creativity,” Eisner claimed that defining creativity is about proper judgment of a creative product. He believed certain creative individuals had a sort of authority to judge whether or not the product was creative. Eisner expressed that the criteria of originality and beauty should be included in the assessment of creative work (1964). To support his claim, Eisner quoted Morris I. Stein, saying a creative product is, “a novel work that is considered useful, tenable, or satisfying by some group at some point in time” (Stein, as quoted by Eisner, 1964, p. 10). An
early view of subjectivity in the world of creative products, this statement by Stein emphasizes that as long as a creative product has a supportive audience, it then can be successful.

Another prominent theorist on creativity and education in the 20th century was E. Paul Torrance. In the chapter he contributed to the edited book *Creativity: Progress and Potential* (1964), Torrance argued that a key goal of education should be to produce fully functioning individuals, and to do so, creativity must be a central focus. He even claimed by definition, that if an individual’s creative thinking is “undeveloped, unused or paralyzed,” (1964, p. 51) we cannot state that they are fully functioning intellectually. Torrance talked of the educational norms of the time, where students were traditionally asked to answer questions a certain way, and were shamed if they answered them differently. Torrance explored the controversy of those who supported democracy in education and wanted the full development of individuals’ creative talents, but at the time wanted to limit what creative talents to educate and evaluate. The problem concerning creativity addressed here in 1964 is similar to a problem we see today. We have trouble finding a place for creativity in education due to the difficulty in measuring it.

Later, Edmund Feldman provided additional perspective on creativity in *Becoming Human Through Art: Aesthetic Experience in the School* (1970), particularly sharing his beliefs on necessary conditions of creativity. In chapter two, “Creative and Psychological Dimensions,” Feldman described art in connection to creativity in three ways: (1) Art as Problem-Solving, (2) Art as Expression of the Self, and (3) Art as Perfectionist Impulse. Feldman’s intent was to prove that there is little to no separation between artistic intention found in the efforts of professional artists and amateur children. Feldman admitted the obvious, that of course there is a difference in mark making between adult and child, but explained that the difference is only a matter of technical skill. Additionally, Feldman argued that all artists are problem solving when they
create. Life itself creates frustrations, anxieties, and challenges for us, and Feldman explained that if we are to define art as expression of self, these problems in our daily lives need to be expressed through creativity. Humans tend to repress these feelings and, therefore, an internal problem is created—a problem to solve individually, maybe collaboratively. Lastly, Feldman concluded his chapter by defining art as “perfectionist impulse” (p.47). The perfectionist impulse drives artists toward *completeness*, a point at which feel they have successfully worked out their problems.

In “Creativity: Producing Solutions to a Problem,” Diana Korzenik (1976) called for an acceptance of child development regularities. With this acceptance, Korzenik aimed to propose a new definition of creativity to determine whether or not a child’s artmaking was creative, and if so, how it was creative. Additionally, Korzenik asserts that “the use of the word creative is an instance of ambiguation—the use of words without making clear which of the various meanings for it in common use is being referred to” (1976, p. 29). This quote emphasizes the difficulty in allowing creativity to hold the same definition for multiple contexts. Beittel (as quoted by Korzenik, 1976, p. 29) counters this, saying, “If there is an end to the experiences in which we speak, it is not creativity.” Thusly, Korzenik concludes that we cannot give creativity one definition, but instead we have to define creativity within particular contexts. The particular context Korzenik chose for her study was problem solving, and she chose to define creativity as a useful attribute in responding to problems.

Also important in the evolution of creativity scholarship in art education is the 6th edition of *Creative and Mental Growth* (1975) by Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain. Published in the same decade as Vygotsky’s *The Psychology of Art* (1974), Lowenfeld and Brittain addressed and emphasized the importance of creativity, creativity within schools and how to
measure it, and methods to develop creative potential. The authors identified key factors of creativity: [1] creativity offers change to what has been, and potential toward what may become or has yet to be discovered, [2] art is a continual process of creativity and can be consistently tied to an individual’s learning throughout their growth, [3] creativity holds social implications, as individuals look for approval of their creative processes from their peers and mentors, and [4] creativity builds self-identity and self-worth through engagement and contribution. In regards to creative and intellectual behavior, Lowenfeld and Brittain asserted that instead of providing specific motivation to create, children be provided environments to create that are free of physical and psychological restrictions so as not to limit or disrupt their natural curiosity.

WHAT IS CREATIVITY FOR?

Later in the decade, Michaels (1982) published The Lowenfeld Lectures. In the lectures, Lowenfeld focused more upon the audience of the age group we label today as Millennials, between 18-34. In Lecture 1 of The Lowenfeld Lectures (1982), Lowenfeld justified how every individual is creative, although he sided with the audience in stating that in this point of their lives, the creativity may be “buried” (p. 1). Lowenfeld explained that this idea of losing creativity is simply a frustration of the self and a lack of confidence in one’s own creativity. He blamed education for their loss of creative confidence, assuming that the standards required students to perform, rather than create; as a result, the implied need for perfection overwhelms individuals. When individuals only perform to please someone else, to be assessed by them, they lose any sense of individual expression. In this lecture, Lowenfeld expresses the need for creativity within one’s livelihood, explaining that creativity can inform us of our innermost desires and identity within the multiple contexts we experience.

Joseph R. LaChapelle (1983) reflected on creativity research of the 1950s and 1960s, a
time when creativity was reconceptualized within the field of art education. LaChapelle affirmed that creativity is inevitably valued in our field, but in comparison expressed that many problems still existed in understanding the creative process. While looking back at creativity research, LaChapelle believed that if we are to attempt to define creativity, we must too consider change. “Concepts of creativity and of culture have changed in a way that necessitates closer attention to the sociological aspects of creativity” (p. 131). To further contextualize this statement, I will include that the change the author expressed was that of the modernization of his time. I do not include this information as an attempt to devalue LaChapelle’s need to address change in defining creativity, but instead to highlight that although the author’s statement was made for one specific context in 1983, the statement can and very much does relate to how I will approach the many possibilities within defining creativity today.

Additionally, Ellen Dissanayake brought perspective regarding the uses of creativity in her book *What Is Art For?* (1988). Dissanayake presented art and artmaking as a venue for play, defining play as a desire for change to be rewarded with novelty and/or entertainment. She urged readers to draw connections between art and play, and stated that although play can commonly be perceived as useless, she pointed to many 19th century thinkers that believed in great benefits of play for the mind and the body. Dissanayake also emphasized how play invokes ritual and routine within a process, and how that can provide joy and security to a human being. Throughout the chapters, Dissanayake questioned and explored what art is, including what art does and whether or not it is necessary to our existence. An answer, from her perspective, may be found in her quote, “art makes special” (p. 92). The results of creativity make something special for us to connect with, and specialness can be a motivation to begin a creative act. Dissanayake defined art and artmaking as a behavior, one in which reality is elaborated,
reformed and given uniqueness and value through creation.

In the following decade, in a telling interview, Michael Shaughnessy (1998) discussed with prominent creativity scholar E. Paul Torrance how Torrance’s definitions of creativity have changed over time. Shaughnessy desired to investigate how Torrance defined creativity today in 1998, in comparison to his theories and writings. Torrance admitted that after 40 years, he still struggled to provide a definition of what creativity is. Torrance believed that there were many definitions of creativity, and each of them provides insight and helps inform the large concept. Torrance then explained that he (in 1998) had conceptualized his creativity definitions into three types: a research definition, an artistic definition, and a survival definition. Torrance gave his reasoning behind three separate definitions. He stated that his research definition was about process, and he chose to focus this way in order to ask what kind of person it takes to engage in a process successfully, what types of environments are needed, and what kinds of products will be created as a result of a particular creative process. Torrance gave credit to one of his students at the University of California at Berkeley for creating his definition of creativity. In 1964, Karl Anderson gave Torrance a list of short, simple sentences:

- Creativity is like wanting to know.
- Creativity is like digging deeper.
- Creativity is like looking twice.
- Creativity is like listening to smells.
- Creativity is like listening to a cat.
- Creativity is like crossing out mistakes.
- Creativity is like getting in deep water.
- Creativity is like having a ball.
- Creativity is like cutting holes to see through.
- Creativity is like cutting corners.
- Creativity is like plugging in the sun.
- Creativity is like building sand castles.
- Creativity is like singing in your own key.
- Creativity is like shaking hands with tomorrow (pp. 442-443).
Torrance concludes his definitions with his survival definition of creativity:

“when a person has not learned a practiced solution to a problem, some degree of creativity is required” (Shaughnessy, 1998, p. 443), implying that in order to survive we need to solve problems and creativity can be the tool that we use to do so. Shaughnessy concluded the interview by asking Torrance to look forward and make predictions for the upcoming millennium, to which Torrance responded that although new technologies and supports for education are emerging, there is still a fight against our desire for a creative society, impeded by violence, crime, and immorality. Torrance believed these negative qualities of our world stunt human creativity.

FROM MODERNIST TO POST MODERNIST NOTIONS OF CREATIVITY

Karen A. Hamblen (1995) described notions of modernity and postmodernity at a time when modernism was coming to a close and postmodernist theories were dawning. The modernist era had lasted since the late 19th century, and scholars were looking for new methods, approaches, and values of creativity.

In the era of modernism, creativity was applied to solve problems via a technology rationale. Modernism was characterized by a change in style, behavior, or institution. In the mid-twentieth century, art critics credited artwork for how different it was from the past and for its innovation. Modernistic creativity was self-influencing and relied on a system of logic and purpose. With the desire for change, the modernist worried if art would exhaust itself, if there would ever be a conclusion to what art could be or do. Hamblen asserted that the mindset of change allows us to think that something progressive is happening without heavily considering if the product produced is actually progressive. “The underlying morality of a seeming endless frenzy of change is that of an implicit belief that improvement is being accomplished” (Hamblen,
Concerning postmodernity and new directions for art education, Hamblen (1995) said, “the emphasis on change and improvement is the major, overarching way in which modernity is expressed in art education and the lens through which the history of art education often has been interpreted” (p. 47). This statement implied transition into a new, postmodern era for art education along with postmodern theories, approaches, aesthetics, and artmaking. Specific postmodern qualities referenced by Hamblen were collaborative art projects, studies of community and ethnic arts, and environmental design responsibilities. Postmodernity pursues these qualities with the backing of ethical values in social pluralism, ethnic diversity, tradition, and contextualism. Life for a postmodernist is composed of many different social, historical and personal worlds, each holding strong meaning and significance. The essence of postmodernism replaced the modernist creativity process of every day everyone is getting better in every way with a belief that change must respect tradition, and that small-scale accomplishments help the greater good of local contexts and communities.

Juliet Moore (1991) provided additional context from the early 1990s, contextualizing art, society, and art education of the time. She described the 1990s as a time in which many felt something had died within the field—that something being modernism. With that, Moore expressed a feeling of contentment as society was in the new way of postmodernism. Specifically, Moore addressed the near-simultaneous beginnings of both postmodernism and discipline based art education (DBAE). She described how Viktor Lowenfeld dismissed previous art education movements and theories; theories that were now being implemented into DBAE. There seemed in the 1990s to be increased distance from Lowenfeld’s ideas, replaced by those of DBAE, quoting Dwaine W. Greer: DBAE, “seeks an evolution from a naïve (untutored) to a
sophisticated (knowledgeable) understanding of the subject of art” (1991, p. 38). Moore concluded by explaining how the postmodern movement improved the perceived quality of artistic products and brought with it improved relationships between artists and art handlers.

In 1996, Arthur Efland, Kerry Freedman and Patricia Stuhr theorized what post-modern art education curriculum may look like, and how post-modern concepts may then shift instruction. The authors invited us to look at art education curriculum as a collage, but emphasized that information should not be scattered and randomly thrown at students. They said, “it means that educators and students should work together to construct meaning out of the fragmented experience of schooling and that we can facilitate each construction with an approach to curriculum that draws on disciplines considered outside the purview of art education” (Efland, Freedman & Stuhr, 1996, p. 115). This viewpoint contrasted with DBAE’s emphasis on art and art only, and instead called for an all-encompassing learning experience in which all subjects are considered in conjunction with art. This idea debunks the idea that creativity is exclusive to the arts; the creative process invites all areas of intellect as well as more holistic approaches. Additionally, Efland, Freedman, and Stuhr addressed the introduction of computer-based instruction, citing the variety of possibilities inherent in the new technology of the time.
CREATIVITY IN THE NEW MILLENIUM

At the turn of the century into the new millennium and as previously stated, attention to creativity in research efforts within art education dropped (Davis, 2015). My research, however, has shown that additional factors come into play when defining creativity of the 2000s. After the 20th century, research focused less upon how the individual learns and creates and more on how we as a collective may create collaboratively for a better society. I will begin this section with what some call the driving force of creativity—curiosity.

Todd Kashdan and Frank Fincham (2002) explained the value of curiosity as motivation; that without curiosity, the pursuit of success and creativity is not enough to push through a 10-16 hour workday alongside many other life roles an individual may have. Kashdan and Fincham explained that curiosity does not only spring from the individual, but also comes in response to the factors of everyday life; just because one feels that one is creative does not ensure success. Creative success is dependent upon gatekeepers. Similar to Eisner’s (1964) theory regarding judgment of product, Kashdan and Fincham imply that there will always be an audience above the creative individual, an audience to impress to earn the label of creative success. The authors then explained that individuals desire this type of success, or to at least feel that they are competent members of a collective domain. When the expectations of a collective domain are constantly changing, an individual’s curiosity motivates them to achieve goals and seek rewards (Kashdan & Fincham, 2002).

Not only did the 2000s bring a desire to be creative for a collective, but the value of creativity also expanded to what could be seen within the collective. Kristin G. Congdon encouraged readers to look around their local communities and gain local appreciation in her Davis publication Community Art in Action (2004). Congdon broadened the view of what could
be considered art and promoted the art of everyday life. From family celebrations, music, quilting and folk art traditions, Congdon’s definition of art provided validation of the idea that all types of creation can be considered as and should be appreciated as art. Congdon’s theory and perspective motivate students of art education today, as they eliminate the exclusiveness of the art world, making any form of creation feel accepted and valued.

Contemporary art educator, theorist and writer Olivia Gude weighed in on thoughts of art education for the new millennium and provided new ways for contemporary art educators to think about creativity. Gude argued (2004) that it was time to start thinking beyond the elements and principles of art and design as our only factors in art education curricula. Gude laid out her “Postmodern Principles” of how creativity should look in the following list: appropriation, juxaposition, recontextualization, hybridity, layering, gazing, interaction of text and image, and representin’. Gude observed that students were very comfortable appropriating images. Gude observed that students’ appropriation of images was very comfortable to them. With visual culture a very natural part of students’ lives, the borrowing and recycling of imagery aided their expressive language. Juxtaposition helps students make sense of the vast components of visual culture, often clashing together intentionally, or within random happenings, and the interaction of text and image promotes new juxtapositions for new meanings. Recontextualization allows students to borrow images from the past for use in artmaking. Placing old images into new contexts and new relationships with other imagery provides new meaning through juxtaposition. Hybridity encourages the use of a variety of media within one piece, which layering enables, also inherently creating layers of meanings. Gazing allows makers to place value upon and categorize the mass imagery the millennium brought to visual culture. Lastly, the principle of representin’ provides makers their artistic voices that derive from their own backgrounds and cultural origins.
Gude’s Postmodern Principles provided art teachers in the new millennium new ways to think about creativity, and she continues to push the field of art education to embrace continual curriculum changes in parallel to society.

Julia Marshall (2005) was also on the postmodern train. She agreed art education in the early millennium should be approached in a postmodern manner. Marshall argued that it is important that postmodern art education be integrated with other subjects because, “it relates ideas to form, crosses disciplinary boundaries to reveal conceptual connections, and locates art in context with other disciplines” (2005, p. 227). She continued to back substantive integration because of its congruency with how the mind works, its promotion of learning and its role as a catalyst for creativity. Viewing curricula in a more abstract way allows learners to make more connections between subject areas for a more holistic experience.

With many earlier creativity researchers and philosophers pointing to the study of the individual creative self, Tom Anderson and Melody Milbrandt in their book *Art for Life* (2005) began to express the value in the social aspect of creativity. The authors reference psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) in stating that creativity is defined socially, implying that creative acts and processes have difficulty finding purpose without an audience. In defining creativity as both an individual and social practice, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) presented their idea of art for life through the following goals: (1) Individuals should understand that art and visual culture are visual communication of things that truly count, (2) art has both intrinsic and extrinsic values, (3) individuals should personally engage in creativity both individually and collaboratively, and (4) individuals should make real-world connections while developing intellectual, emotional, skills-based, knowledge-based and expressive abilities and sensibilities. The third point is particularly interesting to contemporary conceptions of creativity, here,
conceptualized individually and collaboratively.

Approaching the conclusion to the first decade of the new millennium, Enid Zimmerman (2009) wrote about the lack of creativity research within art education publications of the time. In “Reconceptualizing the Role of Creativity in Art Education Theory and Practice,” Zimmerman expressed that creativity is something researchers recognize as inherent to art education, but is now too easily overlooked. In 2009, she aimed to resuscitate creativity research by contextualizing it again within contemporary art education. After reviewing many histories, assessments and definitions of creativity, Zimmerman concluded her article by stating there is no single set of rules or laws that can be set into place that can possibly describe what creativity is for each individual, but instead we may find common threads within the thoughts, theories, and definitions of what creativity can be.

CREATIVITY: POPULAR IN A NEW WAY

Perhaps Zimmerman helped bring the subject of creativity back to the forefront of art education research. In 2010, the journal Art Education released volume 63, issue 2, and all but one title within this issue of the journal contained the word creativity. Including Zimmerman, many researchers aim to reconsider, recontextualize and redevelop the meaning of contemporary creativity today.

In the volume dedicated to topics of creativity and art education, Kerry Freedman in her article “Rethinking Creativity: A Definition to Support Contemporary Practice” brought forth a reason for the lack of creativity as curricular aim: standardization. The takeover of standardized testing combined with the difficulty in the measurement of creativity resulted in creativity being taken out of the curricular picture. While discussing the negative effects standardization has on creativity, Freedman stated “creativity is an aim of a democratic curriculum, as is, for example,
the concept of freedom” (2010, p. 10). The statement implies that standardization is a problem that is minimizing creative freedom. In the same volume, Freedman (2010) defined creativity as being a learning process based upon critical reflections, on interests, on functional and social activity, on reproduction and production, and on strong leadership. Freedman concluded by stating that implementing creative instruction to promote the above qualities involves risk taking within the era of standardization—risk taking by those who believe in creative freedom and educational democracy.

Gude continued to be involved in the changing of art education curricula, and was also a researcher who contributed to the 2010 volume of *Art Education*. In her article “Play, Creativity, Possibility,” Gude (2010) indirectly agreed with Zimmerman about how teachers will claim the importance of enhancing student creativity, but analysis of lesson plans shows that teachers are not cultivating creative abilities. Gude called for a questioning of the assumption that *any* art lesson will cultivate creative behaviors, and wanted to implement “free ideation, encouraging experimental approaches to making, and supporting students in identifying and manifesting deeply felt idiosyncratic experiences” (p. 31). Gude argued that the national art standards of 2010 were too focused upon the formal qualities of artmaking, and did not represent the deep immersion and wonder that true creativity provokes. Gude, referencing ideas of humanist psychologist Carl Rogers, believed individuals need (1) the ability to play, (2) openness to experience, and (3) an inner locus of evaluation.

Also in the same volume of *Art Education*, Marshall (2010) thanks Zimmerman for a renewed interest in creativity in art education, and begins her article “Thinking Outside and On the Box: Creativity and Inquiry in Art Practice” by stating that the art education classroom is the best place to cultivate creativity. Marshall proposed new notions of learning that happen through
creativity in art education and learning that happens through creativity in making art, and that these notions challenge contemporary teachers to combine the practices together. Marshall emphasized how creative learning processes are special as they continually cycle through experience and reflection. Marshall asserted that past theorists that conceptualized creativity have major potential to provide critical wisdom that should inform contemporary practices and theories.

Not only were researchers in 2010 thinking about bringing creativity back into the forefront of art education research, but a new factor, social media technology, entered the picture. Ryan Shin (2010) stated that today’s students are the first generation to grow up with computers, cell phones, video games, and music/video players. Those students Shin cited are now young Millennials; although, the phrase Shin preferred is one coined by Marc Prensky nearly a decade earlier: digital natives. Shin explained that digital natives use social media and other web technologies to practice creative writing, manipulating, tagging, and communicating. Digital natives maintain their created social networks to share with, support and feel connected to others. Shin referenced Prensky to explain that despite the lack of respect schools give social media technologies, digital natives are especially good at using it, find it incredibly engaging, and are creatively inspired by it. Shin’s push was to encourage art educators to embrace and negotiate the new digital world as opposed to regarding it as detrimental to practiced creative processes. Shin provided contemporary perspective in stating that social media technology is the new creative process.

Not only had creativity gained a new lens through social media, social collaborations sparked artists to hold creative practices that exist in and are performed in public spaces. Jack Richardson (2010) explained the phenomena, what he called interventionist art: “art that
establishes its purpose and form through the social exchanges and altered behaviors that arise as a result of its disruption of quotidian patterns of social experience in public spaces” (p. 18). Richardson’s goal was to pinpoint the primary function of artmaking within a broader context, and I believe the connectivity social media technology provides allows individuals to gain a broader view. He explained that contemporary artists were breaking out of traditional forms of artmaking, and out of traditional settings into public spaces that intervene and/or mesh with everyday life. Creativity then (and now) looked to have a closer relationship with daily life, to be more accessible to everyday people and even invite them to be involved. Social connectivity broadens the definition of creativity, making creative practices less about the ego of the individual, and more about the relationship of the collective.

In the two-year span between 2012 and 2014, author Austin Kleon published two books encouraging everyday creativity: *Steal Like an Artist* (2012) and *Show Your Work!* (2014). I reference his work in connection with Richardson’s idea of accessibility of art for everyday individuals and also as an example for a later discussion in which I reference my own creative practice. *Steal Like an Artist* emphasizes that one does not have to hold the label of “artist” to be a creative individual. The book also contextualizes the digital age in which we live, and connects to Gude’s idea of appropriation by stating that nothing is original—we creative people are simply borrowing from what has already been made and are remixing (Gude’s idea) it into new forms to create new meanings (which, of course, one could argue to be original). In *Show Your Work*, Kleon (2014) further emphasized the positive uses social media technology could have for creative individuals, and encouraged them to share their creative processes on a daily basis, concluding that routinely sharing small pieces of the process will result in larger, more powerful outcomes. Kleon’s tips of practicing productive procrastination, fake it until you make it, chain
smoking projects and more, help everyday people connect to and further engage in their creative practices, whatever they may be (2014).

Luigi Longhin (2011) agreed, as he provided a psychoanalytical perspective of how a continual practice of creativity can provide happiness to one’s inner self. Longhin stated that we all share a common search for happiness and look to remove any obstacles that may prohibit us from obtaining it. Longhin explained that psychoanalysis works in two directions: one is the attempt to eliminate the negative components of the mind—the destructive and narcissistic parts of ourselves; the other direction is the attempt to develop the trusting and creative parts of the mind, and to understand that happiness is an achievement of the human mind. The goal of psychoanalysis is to promote a positive inner world, and creativity is important in achieving that goal. The contemporary mindset of creativity for everyone (as opposed to creativity only found in artmaking) therefore is a promotion of happiness and well-being for each individual.

Jack McWhorter (2013) gave a TED Talk that provided insight into the power of cultural interaction with social media technology. In the talk, titled “Txting is Killing Language. JK!” McWhorter addresses the accusation that texting technology contributes to the destruction of written language. McWhorter countered that texting is not destroying written language, but instead is creating a new one. McWhorter emphasized that texting is creating a written language that is more like spoken language, a less-formal, more personal and relatable language that communicates more emotion. The fast-paced changes of smart phone technology easily date McWhorter’s talk, as the integration of emojis into contemporary messaging would only enhance his argument, as the culture collectively found a solution to the difficulties of conveying tone, providing tools to make it less likely that text messages will be misunderstood.
CLOSER TO TODAY: CONTEMPORARY THOUGHTS ON CREATIVITY

As I have used the article “Looking Back and Looking Forward: Creativity Research and Art Education” from *Connecting Creativity Research and Practice in Art Education* (2015) earlier in this chapter to map out the history of creativity research from 1940 forward, I will now use the book as a source to provide more contemporary thoughts, theories and issues regarding creativity.

Nadine Kalin and Daniel Barney (2015) expressed their desire to develop an art education curriculum based upon the *bricoleur*, who, in terms of visual art, is someone who creates using a variety of available materials at once; they are not only speaking of artmaking media. The authors wanted art education practitioners to combine alternative pedagogies, improvisational practices and curricular tensions within visual arts contexts. “In this view, teaching and learning are not limited by the already known, and creativity is not strictly concerned with searching for the purely novel or original, but learning and teaching connected to creativity also include an innovative reworking and dialoguing with conventional and already existing socio-cultural practices and forms” (2015, p. 81). With the bricoleur approach, Kalin and Barney pushed for not only understandings of past content, pedagogies and practices, but *interstandings*, a forward approach and relation/re-creation of prior histories.

David Pariser (2015) emphasized placing value upon mundane creative acts. Pariser explained that this value is dependent upon three elements: the engagement of an individual self, the propitious nature of the environment in which the individual operates, and the individual’s level of mastery of the discipline and/or knowledge out of which their innovation emerges. Pariser also weighed in on the definition of creativity: “The capacity to identify a problem and then to use imagination, skill, knowledge, empathy and intuition to arrive at a novel and effective
solution” (p. 109). Pariser stated that the solution may be significant to the collective, or mundane but special to the individual. The solution may be significant if it is accepted as an important contribution to the knowledge or practice, or mundane in that the solution is novel only for the individual who had a wonderful idea.

In the end of Connecting Creativity Research and Practice in Art Education Rick Garner (2015) provided a “Conceptual Model for Neuro-creativity in Visual Arts.” The chapter, Garner claims that 21st century visual art education requires knowledge of the functions of the human brain that underlie content and skills acquisition. Garner stated that traditional art education focused upon art history, art in culture, and self-expression, but failed to explain to students how creativity aids brain development. He supported his argument by emphasizing that creativity is a quality sought after in the 21st century workforce, and art education is a key venue in which creative skills are developed. Therefore, it is our responsibility as art educators to help students understand the benefits that creativity can have for brain development and learning abilities.

CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH MORE FOCUSED ON CREATIVITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

Two years ago, authors Aaron D. Knochel and Ryan M. Patton (2015) expressed a problem with today’s art education. They gave credit to the recognition of the need to have digital media within art education curriculum, but also brought forth the need for art educators to apply digital media curriculum. Knochel and Patton advocated for preparing students to utilize current and future digital innovations. This curricular mindset, they asserted, applied by art educators, will allow students to further understand how digital phenomena like social media operate and will not only enhance their creativity in using the current form, but will push their design skills to manipulate, change, progress and/or create new forms. The authors argued that
the need for art educators to engage with digital technology was recognized in art education research published as early as the 1980s. This fact reinforces their argument that in 2015, the implementation and application of digital technologies should not have to be a motivational discussion, but instead one that aids and pushes our current understandings of today’s digital technologies—social media included.

With social media included in contemporary approaches to creativity, art education must then be responsible for addressing how students are perceiving today’s visual culture. Chris Grodoski’s stated in an *Art Education* article (2016) that “meaningful questions enrich our engagement and participation in life” (p. 20). Grodoski’s purpose for engaging students in visual culture is to develop opportunities to create new visual culture. Students collectively interpret and assess what today’s visual culture is communicating and they appropriate (a Gude postmodern principle) those communication methods to create new messages of their own. If social media visual culture is a part of contemporary youth’s everyday language, it then inherently becomes a part of their approach to creativity. I find Grodoski’s article incredibly important because it points out that we all should be aware of what visual culture is telling us, whether it be helpful or manipulative. This awareness is what helps today’s creative individuals transform what already exists into something (hopefully) better.

Even more recently, Ryan Shin (2016) addressed the power social media can have in creating a global visual culture and how its power can be used for positive educational opportunities. One important factor Shin pointed out is that social media is a participatory venue—contemporary youth willingly want to connect with each other by sharing visual culture. Shin also expressed the positivity that results when multiple people relate to an aspect of popular visual culture. Shin cited the song *Gangnam Style*, a music video that reached over two billion
views on YouTube in 2014. Shin noted how in 2013, a video went viral displaying Palestinians dancing to *Gangnam Style* with Israeli soldiers in Hebron, where Arabs and Jews typically harbor extreme animosity toward each other. The power of social media to create local and global connections between people can create a positive culture even in the most tense of times. Shin encouraged art educators to use participatory social media culture to promote positive learning experiences in the classroom that are relevant to contemporary life.

Juan Carlos Castro, Martin Lalonde and David Pariser (2016) gave another perspective in how mobile media technology helped at-risk youth stay motivated in their educational programs by providing them agency in their creativity and learning. Mobile media technology, in this particular study, motivated youth who were not likely to graduate secondary school to stay engaged in their education because they could access learning materials at any time with a flipped classroom. Relating to Shin’s thought on participatory social media culture, implementing a flipped classroom allows youth more creativity in their learning because they feel ownership by using mobile media to engage with educational content in a variety of manners that they choose. Students are motivated and accountable in sharing their findings in face-to-face classroom settings because a variety of procedures can be labeled as successful learning. Mobile media are also social media, and therefore students and educators can stay connected and productive outside of the classroom. Allowing students to be creative with their learning via mobile media promotes individuality and willing participation in the engagement of presented course content.

In the concluding chapter of this paper I will present further implications towards future methods of art education with social media. First, I will present a case study engaging with four Millennials addressing their creative practices in regards to social media. The case study will
inform methods needed for today’s and future art educators as we contemplate what creativity can mean when social media is inherent to our practices.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Figure 4. Screenshot of Snapchat Snap.
OVERVIEW

The purpose of this study is to address the research question: *what is the impact of social media on creativity within the lives of contemporary youth?* Considering the various ways creativity has been conceptualized alongside scholarship about the influence of social media on today’s American culture, I aim to gain insight from four participants of a research study involving 30- to 90-minute recorded conversations. Scholars in art education have referenced the use of social media within art education (Castro, 2012; Castro, Lalonde & Pariser, 2016; Choi & Piro, 2009; Grodoski, 2016; Knochel & Patton, 2015; Shin, 2010) and others (most recently Bastos & Zimmerman, 2015) have worked to define creativity for contemporary times in art education. Few, however, have discussed creativity within the landscape of digital social media.

The definition of creativity has varied, as was established in the previous chapter. For example, Dewey (1948) believed in creativity as experience, but noted not all experiences share the same value of quality. Arnheim was focused only upon the formal qualities of artmaking (1954). Langer argued that creativity is not reality, but instead an illusion of it (1957). Eisner attempted to develop a standardized typology of creativity, but noted that not all creative acts are contextual and cannot fit into one mold (1962). Torrance also expressed difficulty in measuring creativity, but labeled it essential for individual growth (1964). Feldman (1970) defined creativity as a combination of problem-solving, self-expression and a response to the perfectionist impulse. Korzenik (1976) believed we should not attempt to define creativity, as definitions place a finality to the meaning of words, and creativity continually changes and evolves. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975) promoted creativity as a continual process tied to one’s individual growth. LaChapelle (1983) believed that if we are to define creativity, we must consider change. Greer (1984) presented his solution to the measurement of creativity with
DBAE, stating that art education should be measured through aesthetics, studio practice, art history, and art criticism. Kashdam and Fincham (2002) defined creativity as a response to social qualities of life. In relation, Congdon (2004) pointed to creativity everywhere in our local communities, and placed value on its forms as quality art. Marshall (2005) believed in the power of creativity to provide connection between different things through metaphor. In relation to Kashdam and Fincham, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) also viewed creativity as a social power, and implied that art cannot exist without an audience. Freedman (2010) labeled standardization as a curricular quality that kills creativity. Gude (2010) claimed that if we are to maintain creativity, we need to play and experiment to provide new potentials. Shin (2010) defined creativity with digital technologies in mind, and Richardson (2010) provided a new form of creativity–interventionist art–that is in response to the collectiveness found through social media that is placed/performed in public social spaces. Kleon (2012; 2014) wrote two books emphasizing that creativity can be for everybody, and provided ways in which one can unlock their creativity. In comparison, Longhin (2011) provides a psychoanalytical study that states creative practice promotes positivity and individual happiness. McWhorter (2013) promoted the power of collective creativity through the use of technology, his example being that the contemporary culture of texting has created a new language. Kalin and Barney (2015) believe in the idea of the bricoleur, that a creative individual considers, appropriates, and makes collages pulling from all aspects of life to create new perspectives. Today, researchers believe in the power of creativity found within mundane, day-to-day life (Pariser, 2015) and to understand creativity, we must also understand the brain (Garner, 2015).

As can be seen in the previous chapter, definitions and ways of thinking about creativity have certainly been contextual to the times in which they were written; however, the definitions
and ways of thinking could also help define creativity today. It is important to note that this study does not aim to define creativity definitively or in a limited way, but aims to reveal nuances as related to creativity as practiced in the lives of Millennials via social media.

**METHODOLOGY**

I chose to align this study within the qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative methodology aims to take an in-depth look at a particular individual and/or situation (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2015). The particular situation I am addressing is how social media affects the creativity of today’s contemporary youth. I aimed to collect and document the quality of experiences found in the contemporary creative practices of four Millennials, drawing comparisons and differences from the data collected.

I also chose to investigate a large, more complete picture of my participants’ interactions with social media within their creative practices today by hosting recorded conversations and inviting them to share stories of their experiences. Qualitative methodologies allow for the researcher to make connections and hypotheses as the study develops. Definitions for terms are made within the context of the data collected. Qualitative methodologies hold a preference for narrative description—very prevalent in my recording of conversations, as qualitative data are collected with words rather than numbers.

I did not want to tamper with naturally occurring phenomena—data collected were in the form of conversation, allowing individual participants to share stories and experiences that came to mind naturally within the flow and energy of the conversations. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process as well as product—my recruitment of participants and my recording of conversations were completed with contemporary technology and I give credit toward my ability to do so in the final analysis of the data. Qualitative researchers analyze their data inductively.
They collect data and allow them to inform the questions that need to be asked and the connections that need to be made.

METHODS

The method I chose to use to collect research data was recorded conversation in a semi-structured interview format. Semi-structured interviews are conducted by the researcher knowing what information is desired to be found with specific questions to be asked, but also allows conversations freedom to vary and be unique with each participant involved (Fylan, 2005). I conducted purposive sampling to select four individuals between the ages of 18-34, currently defined as Millennials, to be a part of this study. My intention with each was to host a recorded conversation 30-90 minutes in length to gain insight from each participant about his or her relationship with social media in regards to his or her daily creative practice. I analyzed recorded conversations for patterns and codes, identified information that repeated, and pulled contemporary definitions of creativity made possible through the use of social media found in the stories told by each participant (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2015). When conducting interviews, I had a list of questions present to refer in case of a lull in conversation, but allowed participants to express what they felt was important to the topic of how social media affects the creativity of contemporary youth.
Case Study

The specific type of case study I have used to conduct my research is that of a collective case study (Stake, 1998). In a collective case study, the researcher may study multiple cases at the same time to be a part of one overall study. For my research purposes, I chose four Millennials who all hold creative practices today (including a barber, graphic designer, art museum curator, and an art museum educator) and asked for their thoughts on how social media affects their creative practices and their daily lives. Collective case studies are often considered more compelling, and they are likely to lend themselves toward more valid similarities between similar cases (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2015). My goal through holding conversations with individuals was to communicate the power of relationships to social media, something so inherently part of the lives of individuals in 2017, and attempt to understand both the similarities and differences found between naturally occurring stories and experiences shared by each participant.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected in the form of recorded conversation with each of the four participants separately. Conversations ranged from 30-90 minutes in length and were recorded using Audacity software. Recorded conversations were captured, saved, and stored on my password-protected laptop computer. Transcriptions were completed manually using Microsoft Word and iTunes simultaneously; that is, iTunes provided the venue for file upload and playback, while Microsoft Word was the platform used to write the transcriptions. Transcriptions were saved and kept on my password-protected computer. None of the collected data were shared publicly. Each conversation was shared with the individual participant involved in the recording if he or she requested to hear it. Participants who requested to hear the recorded conversations they were
involved in were asked to member check information stated to assure clarity of interpretation. Institutional Review Board permission was secured to conduct the study, and consent from all four participants was secured prior to conducting the conversations/interviews.

I created topics of analysis after I conducted each of the recorded conversations, comparing the natural, collective concerns from each individual participant. “How people make sense out of their lives is a major concern to qualitative researchers” (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2015, p. 425). Not only was I interested in how people practice creativity in their everyday lives generally, but also how they specifically are revealing creativity through their engagement with social media. I further assert that the term “creativity” cannot be defined in 2017 without a connection to social media being made. I asked the four participants of my case study to share their positive and negative relationships with the various social media platforms as an opportunity to reflect upon their influence on not only their creative practices, but their daily lives as well. Demographic data such as age, race or ethnicity, and gender were asked of the participants, along with the following questions that guided the conducted conversations:

- Do you use social media? How often and for what do you use it? Do you ever use it for creative purposes?
- How has social media changed what creativity looks like today?
- How do you feel Millennials are expressing their creativity on social media?
- How does the fast pace of change seen and experienced on social media affect the way in which we create today?
- What are the benefits and downsides of social media for creative expression?
- Is the connectivity of social media something you value? Why or why not?
- Can you think of examples of artists/creatives today who have adjusted their work to
better function on social media? Who? And how have they changed from their previous practices?

- What is the goal and purpose for social media in your opinion?
- Describe the experience of engaging in social media creatively. How has it changed your own creative practice?
- What has social media done to the idea of ownership and originality in your own creative efforts on social media?
- What is your favorite social media and why?
- What is your least favorite social media and why?
- Do you think social media is important to creative practice today? Why or why not?

Note that not all of the above questions were used in each conversation, but instead were present for use in the flow of conversation as I searched for authentic insight and responsiveness from participants within a semi-structured conversation format (Fylan, 2005). The reasoning behind this method is to allow space for participants to organically share stories, information, insights, and reflections upon creative practices both they and others have today. This method of gathering data allows the shared information to be rich, real, and authentic. The goal is to gain insight into what my participants actually do, not just what they say they do (Sense Worldwide, 2013). Analysis of connections made between each of the four conversations are then more authentically telling of the states of creativity today within a world of social media. Data collected are done so in such a way that the researcher must trust the process to reveal phenomena that are authentic, as revealed and told by the participants.
ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

My role as the researcher was to recruit and schedule four participants for recorded conversation. With each recruited participant, I was then to schedule days, times and locations in which we could hold a recorded conversation. My role during recording was to facilitate conversation, allowing participants to feel comfortable sharing stories, information, insight, and reflection upon their engagement with social media in relation to their own and others’ creative practices. After I recorded and saved the conversations, I then transcribed them into written text. The last step was to analyze recorded data to highlight connections and differences between information discussed in each of the four recorded conversations analyzed in Chapter Four.

Additionally, my role as researcher was also that of a pseudo-participant, as I too fit into the Millennial category and hold a creative practice that heavily involves social media. As a peer to my four participants, the collection of data often involved me comparing my creative practices and uses of social media technology to those expressed by the participants in our recorded conversations. The analysis of conversations with the four participants also includes a self-analysis of my relationship to social media in the context of my own creativity. I allow my bias to power potential relations and differences participants and I may have within the realm of social media usage in our creative practices.
PARTICIPANTS

All four participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities. The first, “Pete,” is a barber who just opened his own shop with two others in early 2017. Their shop is located in central Ohio. Pete is a 25-year-old white male. He received a Bachelor’s degree in marketing from a university in northeast Ohio in 2014.

“Charlie,” the second participant, is an ex-military infantryman who is now pursuing a career in graphic design. He is working in northeast Ohio and pursuing a degree in graphic design. Charlie is a 28-year-old black male.

The third participant was “Lindsey,” a curator at a museum of contemporary art in northeast Ohio. Lindsey holds a Master’s degree and is a 29-year-old white female.

“Mia” was the fourth participant. She is a white female, and an art educator at an art museum in Northwest Ohio. Mia has achieved a Master’s degree in art education from a university in northeast Ohio.

Pete is a long time friend of mine that has always held a strong entrepreneurial mindset, always looking for creative ways to progress and redefine his life in positive ways. I came to know Charlie and Lindsey through a variety of positions I have held at a contemporary art museum in northeast Ohio, both with interesting perspectives to provide to the idea of social media usage and creativity. I first met Mia as an undergraduate student as she served as my graduate teaching assistant. She is an individual that continues to push the definition of contemporary art within her own research and educational practice. Note that none of the participants are classified as professional artists, but instead hold creative practices throughout their daily lives that I desired to investigate in my research study.
SETTING

The setting for each recorded conversation was mutually chosen by both participants and the researcher, based on convenience of location. Two conversations/interviews were conducted in public locations in two separate coffee shops, and the other two were conducted in my apartment. While the coffee shop enhanced the social nature of the flow of conversation, the conversations held at my apartment afforded more quiet conditions. The setting for each recorded conversation was chosen within mutual convenience for both the participant and researcher. This chapter has outlined an overview of past definitions of creativity, the methodology and methods used to conduct this study, the procedures in which data were collected and analyzed, my role as the researcher and pseudo-participant, a description of study participants involved, and the settings in which the collective case study took place. The following chapter will present an analysis of collected data based upon the four recorded conversations had with study participants.
Figure 5. Screenshot of Facebook post.

CHAPTER IV
CASE STUDY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND CREATIVITY
CONTEMPORARY CREATIVITY, CONTEMPORARY CONVERSATIONS

In developing this collective case study, I approached the gathering of data in a semi-structured interview format (Fylan, 2005). The semi-structured interviews focused upon the effects of social media on the creativity of contemporary youth but also allowed conversation to naturally take its course. Additionally, a deep-dive approach to conversation (Sense Worldwide, 2013) allowed me to facilitate participants’ sharing of stories without having to limit their focus. The deep-dive approach, compared to the approach of a semi-structured interview, invites participants to share full stories that may not fully relate to the presented contexts, but aids in the explaining of concepts using additional details. The goal of both approaches was to gather the most authentic data that participants were naturally willing to share.

Data gathered revealed a variety of themes, which are identified by the headings and subheadings within this chapter. Early in our conversations, and without prompting, each of the four participants made comparisons between the two most popular social media: Facebook and Instagram. Next, contemplation of what creativity is and what creativity means today—when social media is inherently considered—took place. Each participant and I shared stories of our creative practices; therefore, this chapter presents their views on contemporary creativity. The collective case study revealed similar themes of creativity within a disposable image culture, social media and creative states of flux, and creativity within a multi-modal culture. Each of the participants expressed concern about the idea of verisimilitude—the appearance of being true or real—and authenticity online. The four participants and I each discussed ways in which social media may provide insight into our studio practice, how we document our creative processes via social media, and the variety of layers involved. Lastly, I look at the power of a social media collective, and the way the individuals of the culture influence and reflect upon one another.
Viewing myself as a pseudo-participant, I insert and infuse myself and my own experiences with creativity and social media into the analysis.

SOCIAL MEDIA COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

I primarily use Facebook and Instagram to post and share my work with my followers. Apparently, I am not alone. Each of the four participants of this study was very quick to compare Facebook and Instagram when asked to discuss his or her usage of social media. I appreciate Instagram for its visual appeal and its more artistic aesthetic, but value Facebook as a source of a known online community. I say “known,” as my Instagram audience consists of many users that I do not personally know, whereas my Facebook audience consists of people I know personally. I credit both Instagram and Facebook for the success of my art practice because they provide venues for me to easily share the visuals I create with an audience. Through the two social media I have received commissions, and gained opportunities that continue to further my creative career.

Instagram > Facebook: Visual Information vs. Textual Information

The natural, unprompted comparison of Facebook and Instagram provided telling insights into current social media culture. Participants placed more positive value on Instagram and were more critical of Facebook. Pete credits Instagram for the growth and success of his new business, stating that Instagram “builds a brand” (Personal communication, March 25, 2017), and in that statement, he separates the capabilities of Instagram from those of Facebook. Lindsey began by saying how she wants to leave Facebook but values the connections with individuals she has within the platform. Lindsey’s initial statement references the early purpose of Facebook—connecting people—and also expresses her frustration with what the format has become. Lindsey dislikes that much of the information that is shared on Facebook is secondhand and lacks
authenticity. Mia also expressed her trouble finding value in Facebook. She agrees that Facebook feels too cluttered with information and therefore does not participate often. Mia would agree that she, like Lindsey, still values the connections to individuals she finds within the social media platform. Mia mostly uses the messenger feature to communicate with her social network.

Charlie finds that Instagram is home to a productive and progressive creative community, whereas his Facebook network consists of friends and family.

Instagram received only positive accolades and assessments. Each participant finds more uses for Instagram in the realm of artistic creativity, all have creative ways of using it, and find benefits through online interaction. Pete and his fellow barbers all participate in the shop’s Instagram page, posting videos and stories that create a brand from multiple perspectives that collectively say “this is what we are about.” In doing so, the shop gains new clients and sustains relationships. Charlie uses Instagram to create for himself a community of creative people. Charlie follows other graphic designers, poets, artists, illustrators, musicians and the like from all over the world to stay inspired and also to place himself and his work in that world. Charlie credits Instagram for his artistic successes and also appreciates it for providing opportunities for artistic growth. Charlie, like Pete, aims to surround himself with individuals who are successful professionals, or individuals who are, in their creative practice, at a level where he aspires to be.

Mia and Lindsey, both holding careers at art museums, tend to be more interested in how Instagram profiles are curated. Both participants use Instagram to catalog experiences. Mia considers all of her posted experiences to be a part of her creative process, while Lindsey, a museum curator, likes to provide her audience with proof that she witnessed particular artworks and/or places—a cataloging of experiences within her profession. They both spoke of their interest in the unified aesthetics found within the profiles of Instagram users. Lindsey, within her
curatorial practice of contemporary art, often enjoys when an artist’s Instagram feed can provide more insight into their aesthetic and practice. Instagram reveals an additional layer of an artist’s creative practice to online audiences. Mia reflected on her own Instagram feed, noticing that certain color schemes and aesthetics tend to come in waves of six to nine photographs/posts at a time. We contemplated how she could incorporate these aesthetic elements from Instagram into her physical artmaking practice.

Study participants all identified Instagram as the most artistic and productive social media platform. They collectively placed value upon the fact that Instagram’s visual qualities are the focus instead of text, and openly shared their joys in engaging with the social media platform. They found only two faults with Instagram: a recent wave of advertising targeted to our feeds (per Lindsey); and individuals posting too many pictures of food. Despite the many cliché images of food, Instagram’s visual focus provides greater opportunity for users to be creative.

Facebook—a venue that tends to function in a text-first, image-second format—was criticized more by the four participants for feeling too cluttered and full of opinions. Facebook users can be frustrated by the forceful nature of opinions expressed in words. An opinion expressed through visual means is more artistic, and permits viewers the opportunity to interpret as they please—a more open approach to communication.
NOTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY CREATIVITY

The fact that social media is inherent to and ingrained in the creative practices of today’s young artists dominated a significant part of our discussions, becoming an overriding theme. The degree varies, but all participants, myself included, use social media in connection to our creative practices. Speaking for myself, social media is essential to my creative process. Creating work and sharing it online keeps my creative practice in the minds of my audience. Framing my process in a variety of ways for my audience creates an image of what I do, an image that also is influenced by the audience itself.

Disposable-image Culture

I explained to each participant how the disposable-image culture of social media has affected my creative practice. Disposable-image culture is the term I use to describe how images very quickly come and go within social media platforms. Because of disposable-image culture, I have lost a sense of the preciousness of physical art objects that I had previously posted images on Facebook and Instagram. Because my audiences’ engagement with those particular art objects quickly comes and goes online, I have recently decided to repurpose the painted canvases and the like to create new images to post. While some may view this as destructive, I see it as a sustainable creative practice. Opposed to purchasing brand-new canvases, a costly act, I have instead painted over previously posted creations to develop new work and new meaning. The works inherently hold traces of previous creations, which I believe adds more interest visually. The process is freeing to me, in that the surfaces are not final and therefore have potential to change as I do. An example of this process is found within the series below. The painting on the far right is titled Untitled for Now, as a statement saying that it may be painted over again, and redefined in the future.
In relation to disposable-image culture and my explanation of how it has affected my creative practice, Lindsey provides an example of a conversation she had with an artist in her attempt to get him to provide a small, retrospective body of work spanning two or three years for a space in the museum she works at. Lindsey explained that the artist had a very difficult time with the idea of providing earlier works. Lindsey relates this experience to her understanding of an artist’s desire to consistently change and push new ideas. “As you’re talking about how you’re in it all the time, I can really understand that. Because work an artist made three years ago, if they are really active, might be totally dead work to them” (Lindsey, personal communication, 2017). I whole-heartedly agreed with this statement, as artists tend to feel that their responsibility is to look forward as opposed to backward, and current social media practices can place a lot of pressure on an artist to always be producing. I am happy to have gained this perspective from a museum curator, knowing that my past work, although irrelevant in my mind, may hold new value and meaning to someone else. So as I attempt to keep up with the fast pace of social media, I also will remember to value what I previously created. Lindsey explains that artists, curators and even viewers of art, all exist on different timelines—this is a factor I will now consider in my creative practice.
Charlie, becoming a creative individual through the field of graphic design and posting his work online for audiences to view and critique, has now gained a stronger appreciation for things that are created. Whether it be music, advertisement, poetry or other forms of storytelling, he now understands that the content comes from people who make it. Elaborating on his newly found perspective, he adds that it is much easier to consume and analyze a creative thing than it is to make it, and there is a sense of pressure involved in creating products. Charlie and I both relate to the pressure of audience analysis. We both agreed that we feel a sense of fear when we receive praise for our artmaking online—the feeling of “what’s next?” We never want our work to feel done or final, or, as artists, to be known for being good at only one thing. Disposable-image culture has created a pressure for artists and creative individuals to constantly entertain. As soon as it is viewed as “cool,” it is over—social media audiences have now moved on to the next thing that will entertain them.

Pete and I agreed that disposable-image culture has created an unrealistic expectation for barbers to provide stunning visuals on their social media portfolios that capture audiences and, potentially, new customers. We contemplated how the power of social media has created an unrealistic expectation for professionals in the field, as the “wowing” images of haircuts found on many barbers’ social media profiles, according to Pete, are manipulated to an unrealistic degree. They created the edited photo, yes, but the actual haircut, as Pete explains, does not exist. Pete says it is embarrassing trying to match these ideal, yet unrealistic photographs of haircuts and has resorted to telling clients that the cuts are impossible and guides them back to reality.

As fleeting and disposable as her images may be in the world of social media, Mia recycles the pictures captured and posted onto her Instagram page and references and/or uses
them in future artworks. Mia analyzes her creative aesthetic, knowing that her posts to Instagram serve a purpose; this allows her posting practice to help her understand and interpret her own creative interests. The images and experiences she collects and documents on social media are not as disposable to her as they can be to other users, as they continue to be used in a variety of ways in Mia’s all-encompassing creative practice.

Additionally, Lindsey and I discussed how the nature and culture of social media have changed how I and other artists approach creativity. I admitted to Lindsey that the pace of social media had affected my work in 2016. I told every participant that in 2016 my goal was to post every day, and shared with them how that approach changed the way I created artwork. The fast pace of social media did not encourage me to spend a lot of time on one larger work, but instead I would make many small works with less effort in each. The disposable-image culture found in social media engagement transformed my original drawings into disposable images, leaving an impact on viewers the duration of the time it took to look at or “like” the photo and continue scrolling. Because of that, as I explained to Lindsey, my creative energy was very focused on the present, leaving little time to dedicate to more enduring creations.

Charlie also expressed frustration with the disposable-image culture created by social media. Charlie feels proud of his creations, and proud of the hard work he puts into them. Charlie too feels the pressure of the pace and explained that he often experiences artist’s block after working hard on a design, posting it and having time to come up with another idea right away to impress his audience. The power of social media is evident here, as both Charlie and I are not being told we have to post, but yet we pressure ourselves to do so. The power of social media is real because we believe in it; simultaneously, the image culture created by social media is disposable.
Social Media and Creative States of Flux: Transformations and Growth

The inherent state of flux within social media culture is a subject that arose organically in all of my conversations with study participants. Each of us discussed how the culture of constant change affects what we create and how we approach our creativity. As stated previously, I very easily allow social media, and interactions with my audience, to influence the art I create. I can say that conversations with these four individuals have counteracted the problem that my art practice had become a chore. Regardless, as the title of this section implies, past documentation of my creative practice shows growth, change and transformation as I continue to create and engage with the culture surrounding me.

Pete’s biggest concern is keeping his audience engaged with his brand. Therefore, he has been expanding the business beyond barbering, now that he and his co-barbers own a building. I asked him what he felt his brand should look like, and what opportunities he would like to provide beyond the barbershop, considering that he and his co-barbers now own a space. Pete then said that he and his co-owners view the space as a garage, with much more potential than just a barbershop. One can play videogames in a garage, host watch parties for shows and sporting events, work out in a garage and/or simply hang out. The ability to change a space is what provides potential for new and exciting happenings, and Pete and I discussed that this quality keeps the brand and locational identity of their brand fresh and in a state of flux. Labeling their space as only a barbershop limits the owners to just that, and Pete and I agree that in limiting themselves, businesses can become too comfortable, stagnant and, therefore, stale.

One way in which Pete and his coworkers are maintaining a space that is in flux is by utilizing it as a music venue in which they can host shows. Their first show is connected to a fundraising event to help a girl travel to Mexico to provide aid for orphans. They are providing a
space that hosts a great time for a good cause. In addition, Pete has connected with a professional mixed martial arts fighter who will be providing sparring lessons. By cultivating a variety of activities in the space, Pete and his colleagues push beyond the simple label of “barbershop,” thus maintaining a creative space that is constantly transforming and growing.

The participants explained why they are engaging with social media and how their practices sustain their creativity. Charlie has a desire to grow artistically, to remain in constant progression. Social media, Instagram specifically, is the means by which he documents his growth. Charlie is not only motivated by his personal evolution, but also enjoys seeing others on social media posting about what they are creating or trying to create. The participants and I agree that we aim to keep our audiences interested by embracing a state of creative flux, so that our practices do not become limited or stereotyped in their eyes. Charlie does so by posting every day, good or bad, and trying a variety of artmaking tools and techniques as opposed to repetitively creating within his comfort zone.

Mia and Lindsey document the flux of their creative lives by cataloging their experiences. Mia keeps viewers interested as they witness relationships between posts, as they tend to hold threads of unified aesthetic. Lindsey keeps viewers interested in her travels and variety of experiences, all relating to her creative practice of curating art. Variety is essential to the creative practices of both Mia and Lindsey, and their creativity is heavily influenced by many other creative practices. The creative practices of others are an inherent part of Mia and Lindsey’s occupations. Social media platforms make it easier to access other artists’ creative practices. Interaction with, interpretation of, and response to other creative practices are what shape and define the creative practices of Mia and Lindsey.

As the culture of social media continues to change, I and the four participants of this
study continue to change with it. Our creativity remains flexible and far from singular as we strive to engage with creative communities to maintain inspiration for ourselves and our audiences. We grow and transform ourselves constantly through our creative practices, which are intimately related to social media.

**Social Media, Creativity, and Multimodal Culture**

Social media platforms allow users to create a representation of themselves using communication tools combining audio and visual text, image, and video. This multimodal culture not only changes how others perceive us, but can change the way we see ourselves.

Mia shared with me how her online personas are broken into the three primary social media of Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (listed by her in that order) and how each serves a different purpose in her creative career. “I would say 99 percent of the time, none of the content crosses those outlets” (Mia, personal communication, April 19, 2017). Mia explained that she uses her Twitter account exclusively for work and museum-related activity. She sees Twitter as a professional networking opportunity. Mia thinks of her Twitter account as an online professional portfolio cataloging museum engagement and professional interests that may be useful in the future if she were to apply for another job. Twitter is the only publicly viewed social media that Mia maintains; Facebook and Instagram remain private. Mia provided an example of how Twitter has benefitted her museum practice: she has used the medium to build a relationship with museum personnel working in New York City who later traveled to northwest Ohio to collaborate on a project.

Charlie explained that the online social network he holds within Facebook is simply a collection of friends and family that knew him far before the beginning of his graphic design career. However, his Instagram profile hosts a network of artists and designers from all over the
world—a community he feels provides more motivation and progress for his career. We discussed the opportunities social media provides for having different audiences, and how one can curate his or her followers and network for the most beneficial outcome. Different online profiles can serve different purposes for parts of our creative practices, and can transform how we are perceived on a daily basis. How one uses text, image or video affects how audiences perceive the user. For example, Charlie finds it easier via Instagram to connect with design companies that could potentially hire him for work, rather than connecting with them in person.

Pete provided an example of how multimodal culture can overpower the reality of what is possible in the practice of barbering. Pete said that editing tools and social media postings became a crutch for a barber he used to work with. This individual was known for not providing the cleanest haircuts, yet his social media account showed that he did. In such a case, one does not have to be good if one can simply use social media to create an ideal résumé. Pete’s example shows that through image manipulation and social media, it is possible to make people expect haircuts that are impossible to execute in reality. What is frightening is that people truly believe and trust an illusion. Thus, for Pete, using video is a more authentic approach to the documentation of the haircuts he produces.

Lindsey, too, pondered how the newer phenomenon of sharing videos instead of photos on social media helps promote artists’ feeds. She explained that social media users want to feel that they are simultaneously sharing experiences with other people online. Lindsey stated that curating one’s videos is as common as curating photos, but videos can have more impact. Because videos have a set duration, users tend to experience them longer than they do still images. A social media user is more likely to stop and experience a video than to stop and experience a photograph. Social media users must utilize different senses and modalities when
engaging with images, text, and video. For example, Lindsey finds very strange the physical practice of scrolling through Instagram feeds; a factor that makes the imagery seem very disposable.

Mia said that multi-modal culture directly influences her museum education practice. Traditionally, museum education has been information-driven, she said, presented in the form of lectures, whose form and content were only adjusted slightly, depending on the audience. “Bring in a group of kindergarteners, bring in a group of adults, they all get the same lecture” (Mia, personal communication, April 19, 2017). But she is part of a giant shift in the art education field within art museums. Now, she does not have to orally provide information in the form of a lecture to tour groups—that information is all readily available digitally on their smart phones. Mia explained that if someone asks her a question and she does not know the answer, it is an excellent prompt for individual investigation, allowing participants to feel ownership and partnership in their museum experience. Mia’s role as museum educator today is to be a facilitator who “incites people to be inquisitive or to cause people to want to look for more information” (Mia, personal communication, April 19, 2017). Mia encourages others who are involved in museum education to ask questions that will get people excited about topics of investigation, as opposed to dispensing facts that are final and do not have further potential. She says,

What year was this artist born? I don’t know. I don’t need to share that information in the moment that I have with a visitor because that is something they can do on their own quickly and efficiently. But they won’t have me six hours later to facilitate a conversation or to push their thinking. So to me, factual information is readily available. Opinion-based information is also readily available. And I think to me it’s more important to get someone to want to do that learning on their own than it is to spoon-feed them that information (Mia, personal communication, April 19, 2017).

In our conversation I mentioned that, as Millennials and educators, we are very aware of
how social media works, how it is being used, and how our relationships with it evolve; and how the next generation, the students we are educating, know even more than we do, and it is partially due to their comfort in the multimodal milieu of social media. Mia responded by describing the behavior of a group of high school students she works with at the museum. Two to three times a month, the high school youth come to the museum and collaboratively plan events. Mia said their initial acts of creativity or communication always involve social media. When promoting their events, they instantly resort to Snapchat filters and Instagram stories. “They create their own Snapchat filters!” (Mia, personal communication, April 19, 2017). Art educators need to consider that the students we are educating today are multi-modal minded. They consume text, images, and video almost constantly, which has changed the way they think. Social media, amongst other contemporary technology, should be an important consideration when prompting and facilitating student creative practices, as it promotes multi-modal ways of knowing, learning and being, and certainly impacts creative practice.
AUTHENTICITY AND CREATIVITY

As I previously mentioned, in 2016, my goal was to share something creative on social media every day. I told study participants that the result was that the quality of my work was not always the best, and was sometimes forced. I admitted that half of the time (or more) I would simply make something just to have an image to post. I have noticed that the collection of these small, at times effortless drawings did not always document my growth, but were, instead, just products. I explained to participants how my practice is changing today, and how I am trying to become more translucent in my posting, focusing more on the quality of the work I am actually making, and not only creating something to present to a daily online audience.

Verisimilitude and Virtual Authenticity

ver·i·si·mil·i·tude
/ˌvərəˈsɛmələt(y)əd/  

noun

the appearance of being true or real.  
"the detail gives the novel some verisimilitude"  
synonyms: realism, believability, plausibility, authenticity, credibility, lifelikeness  
"the verisimilitude of her performance is gripping"

Figure 10. Screenshot of Google definition of “verisimilitude”

Mia, in our talk, often used the term authenticity in relation to creative practice and social media. Mia feels that art that has an audience is more authentic, more real. She said, “I made this
and now it hangs on my wall, vs. I made this and now someone is going to use it” (Mia, personal communication, April 19, 2017). Knowing that a creative work will perform a function can give the work more significance for the creator. This speaks to creativity today, and how artists and creative people through social media technology can easily obtain an audience for their practice. The connectivity we have online makes our creative practices feel that they hold more of a function because they are able to reach many people much more easily than ever before. Social media allows each individual’s creative practice to feel purposeful and meaningful, knowing there is an audience waiting, making it that much more “real.”

Charlie and I dove into the concept of authenticity of creative process and how a positive online identity can change an audience’s perception of who you are. Charlie said that the influence of social media upon our creativity and daily lives is inevitable. Whether we want it to or not, social media influences who we are, and our engagement with it influences how we are perceived. This thought prompted us to discuss “real” audiences, and how the various social media can contain various communities. Similar to Mia’s uses of different social media for different purposes, Charlie and I discussed how we post particular parts of our creative practices for different reasons and for different audiences. Charlie claimed this online practice is no different than how we behave in real life. He said we all act differently around different people and within different contexts.

The lack of authenticity in Photoshopped haircuts prompted Pete to change how he documents his portfolio. Pete now chooses to take videos of the haircuts he creates to post on social media. He does so for accountability purposes, to show an authentic—“real”—cut. “You can’t cheat on a video. You can’t get the best side on a video. It takes the entire thing” (Pete, personal communication, March 25, 2017). Pete claimed that how you document your creativity
makes a huge difference in how you are perceived, and he and his fellow barbers prefer using videos to remain both accountable and authentic.

In our conversation, Mia brought up the past social media mantra of “photo or it didn’t happen” and contemplated if the notion is now “video or it didn’t happen.” I questioned whether we, as social media users, tend to trust the authenticity of video more than we do photos. I suggested that a possible reason is that a user cannot cheat, or alter reality, as much on video (considering Pete’s idea of usage). Mia labeled image and video manipulation as the “ubiquity of the tool” (Mia, personal communication, April 19, 2017). We concluded the topic by discussing how the easy accessibility of photo and video manipulation tools make them inherent to the social media experience and the sharing of creative practices.

Lindsey said that many contemporary artists are affected by social media and the idea of verisimilitude. She gave examples of how some artists use social media to create a brand for their work, and all their efforts are focused on getting their work online. The notion of social media and verisimilitude has filtered into the museum space, too, Lindsey said. Art environments are created online; one needs not to be in a physical space with the artwork to appreciate it anymore, when social media makes appreciation possible virtually. The reality takes a form dictated by social media; it is real in the sense that viewers can engage with it, or at least the illusion of the reality created. Social media has transformed how we perceive reality and creative practices connected to that reality.
Translucency of Social Media Creative Practice

In a similar vein, the impact social media have on creative practices can also be understood through the notion of translucency, manipulating how clearly we perceive and engage with others’ creative practices. As previously noted, Pete noticed that other barbers were using editing tools such as Photoshop to manipulate, correct, and blend images of haircuts to idealize them for posting on social media. Pete supports the approach of his videographer, saying that if you are documenting what you are creating, you do not have to create something to present. What I take away from this is that Pete is placing more emphasis on his real life than on his online persona. This means that he is not allowing his online profile to control what he creates, but instead is using his profile to share what he has created. The translucency of real-life acts documented on social media as opposed to creative acts that have been manipulated in order to influence the viewer’s perspective was a common theme throughout my talk with Pete, a theme I find inspiring. We should be in control of our daily creativity, and not allow social media to control us. Translucency should be considered carefully when engaging in creative practices through social media sites.

Among the recorded conversations, I identified additional ideas in relation to translucency, the first being the idea of quantity over quality. If creative individuals attempt to match the fast past of the disposable-image culture found in social media, the quality of the work they create may suffer. Creative people online may then become good at creating one particular type of image, or brand of their work. Branding one’s creative practice allows for individuals to post the same practice repetitively, perhaps with slight variations, thus affecting the translucency. Being translucent in the creative process places equal value on all parts of the process, and not only on the final product. Social media culture affects how creative individuals approach their
creative practices. They consider how online audiences will interact with the work, and what the implications are. The four participants expressed that they value creative individuals who are able to both keep pace with the fast-moving social media culture and also maintain a sense of authenticity through a translucent sharing process.
A studio is generally known as the location in which an artist creates their work, and is a home for the creative process. A studio can be full of tools, surfaces, and opportunities to create throughout. Oftentimes, a studio contains collections of what an artist may find interesting and/or inspirational. In the past, entering an artist’s studio is an uncommon experience. Social media
culture is changing that notion, as creative individuals have begun to be more translucent in their creative practices, showing their audiences the steps of their creative practices, things that inspire them, tools being used, spaces being worked in, and final products, all within their social media profiles. This type of “studio” process sharing online makes contemporary creativity inspiring, educational, and easily accessible.

“Your aesthetic is your aesthetic no matter what you are doing” (Mia, personal communication, April 19, 2017). Mia reminds us that your creativity is naturally connected to who you are, no matter how long you approach it. Aware of this, Mia uses her previously posted photographs on Instagram and inserts them into artworks. She showed me an example of how she has taken skylines from older photos and transformed them into abstracted shapes in new artworks. Mia admitted, “now that we are talking about it, I guess I am bringing social media into my artwork,” implying that the use of social media within our creativity is not something we always think about, but is inherent in our studio practice (Mia, personal communication, April 19, 2017).

The act of creating and sharing on social media has reconceptualized the studio as a space that is not fixed, a place that unique to Millennials and their creative practice. Charlie likes the idea of creating and sharing on social media every day, whether it be of good or poor quality. His justification is that he is putting work out into the world, and it will be there forever—the work can physically outlive both of us. The idea of the studio leaves a constant place and enters into a timeless and constantly changing space. For Charlie and me, the idea of death motivates us to not take creative opportunities for granted. For Charlie, his motto is that tomorrow is not a given, and that pushes him to create and share every day. As he does so, Charlie values the transformation and growth of his work that is documented over time. Studio spaces online are
places where our creative practices may be held without burdening a physical space. With that notion, creative individuals feel more motivated to post and share all aspects of their creative practice.

I asked Lindsey if she has seen in her curatorial examples how social media has either positively or negatively affected the way artists create their works, or their studio practices. Her answer: “of course” (Lindsey, personal communication, April 12, 2017). Artists are constantly responding to the world around them in their work, she said. Artwork that does not take social media into account may be irrelevant in regards to content, which can affect an artist’s studio practice. Lindsey explained that artwork that is current allows viewers to see their own experiences reflected in the works. “The surface structure is definitely going to evolve as society evolves” (Lindsey, personal communication, April 12, 2017). Lindsey made it clear that artists are responsible for choosing how they respond to the relationship between their practices and social media.

Pete’s “studio” practice is reflected in his branding practice. He and his coworkers provide a variety of social media perspectives, all encompassing the brand of their collective shop. Doing so provides their clients and followers a chance to see behind the scenes and identify with the shop further than just sitting in a chair for a haircut. Pete and his coworkers want their shop to be versatile; promoting this versatility via social media makes their brand relevant to more people. Pete and his coworkers are able to make people feel that they, too, can be a part of the shop (or “studio”), an equal partnership that values connection with everyone involved.
Social Media as Documentation

Social media is also used to document creative practices. Lindsey claimed that, more times than not, artists’ Instagram feeds are very focused on their work and on cultivating an aesthetic or a brand. Lindsey was quick to point out that she does not use Instagram that way. Instead, her profile is a compilation of cat photos, artwork seen in certain places, or simply visuals of things she finds interesting. Artists use Instagram to communicate a total aesthetic for their creative practices, she said. As a curator, Lindsey finds value in being able to see more of the process of an artist’s work shared on Instagram, as opposed to only the final product. She clarified that artists have different mindsets about what is important to share and each uses social media differently. Some artists, Lindsey explained, post final products, while other artists post, or document, so much process that one may find it difficult to tell what is happening. The ideal situation for her as a curator is when artists provide additional insight into their creative practices through social media that document the creation of their polished, finished portfolio.

The creative practices shared by each of the four participants are only possible due to the documentation of them via social media. The rapid growth of Pete’s shop is due to the ease in accessing of its brand online. Clients are able to find and feel a part of the brand by following its page, and therefore the shop is maintaining a positive relationship with its clients via social media. The ability to expand one’s creative community online is much easier now, making Charlie’s world much larger, and giving his graphic design career more potential than it would have if it relied on in-person contacts. Lindsey’s curatorial practice of contemporary art is enhanced by the additional perspectives provided on Instagram profiles, as artists are easily able to share and document more of their process and provide more meaning to a final product. Lastly, Mia, in her effort of continual documentation of experience via social media, creates a
sustainable process that is all-encompassing, allowing documentation and final products to be equally important.

**Layered Practice: An Addition to “Real Life”**

In continuing our discussion on how social media affects today’s creativity, I explained to Lindsey that because of the fast pace of social media image sharing, I have lost a sense of preciousness of the “finished” object and am now using artworks created previously on canvas and repurposing them to create new work to post online and display in gallery settings. We discussed whether this concept would drive sales when people see a work in person, knowing the object itself is subject to change and may be painted over in the future. Lindsey asked if I was leaving any elements of the previous work visible, and I explained that I do not think I could completely paint over previous works, and that I value the additional layering that comes with repurposing. Lindsey ties my process to social media by explaining that we can now easily keep images, “things don’t totally go away, but there is some preciousness of the art object” (Lindsey, personal communication, April 12, 2017). She also asserted that social media interaction with images cannot replace in-person experiences with art objects. She understands the practicality of repurposing materials, as they can be expensive, and she also understands artists’ desire to continually change and attempt to figure out their work, allowing processes and creations to be less final. This repurposing adds layers to my creative process both physically and metaphorically, as traces of the past will be inherent in the work as I paint over the old with the desire for a new conclusion.

Too often when speaking of involvement with any form of social media, I find that many people hold the notion that engagement with these technologies is not separate from what they call “real-life.” Lindsey specifically dismisses the use of this term, saying she hates when people
use it. We both agreed that these technologies and the experiences we have with them are indeed very real. That being said, the subject of reality was woven throughout our conversations, with participants sharing different contextual perspectives. The “real life” that people speak of tends to be but one layer of experience for Millennial artists in 2017. Social media and multi-modal technology have completely redefined what reality can be, and have allowed our perceptions of it to be layered with various meanings.

Charlie, during our interview, showed me the latest technology he had been working with in his graphic design career. We both observed that using the digital drawing pad certainly has strong similarities to the process of creating physical art, because it allows the user to create various line thicknesses and varying degrees of opacity, while also taking into account the tilt of the artist’s hand. We discussed how digital artmaking tools are often considered to be a type of cheating and/or over-manipulation of “reality,” but Charlie claimed that is what they are made for, and that technology usage is inherent to creativity, whether in small or large doses. The digital drawing pad is just one of the technologies available in 2017 that allows an artist like Charlie to incorporate many layers into his creative process.

The ability to save each step of the process allows a graphic designer to backlog individual components for potential use in other works later—layers that can be saved, and then retrieved again for use in various visual contexts. Not only that, but Charlie loves that nothing is final, and that when he saves each step, he does not have to be afraid to add a filter, new shapes, new colors, new text, or new *anything* to the work—because if one move makes it go sour, the “undo” button is his best friend. This way of creating makes it possible to create countless layers upon layers, all easily retrieved and shared because of technology and social media. Charlie is creating a visual language and saving it to his computer. Experimental techniques and
combinations of imagery fill his folders and can be referenced or used at any time. His practice of creating every day and saving each step and/or experiment plays a major role in his growth and efficiency as a graphic designer. Through social media, Charlie is able to share and document each layer of his creative process to show authentic translucency, but also is able to document the flexibility of his creative practice—skills often sought by graphic design firms.

Charlie and I also talked about the strange phenomenon of meeting fans of our work in person. We both contemplated why we think it is strange, as if social media has made us forget that there are people on the other side of the phone, controlling profiles and liking pictures. I think an answer may be our mutual desire for progression, and how we share the documentation of our progression with our audiences. This adds yet another layer to our creative process as we contemplate the ease of obtaining audience members today, and the differences of an online audience versus an in-person audience. Later in our conversation, Charlie and I admitted that we do not feel like “artists” yet, although we both can be proud of accomplished résumés, and, therefore, it feels strange to engage with individuals who are strictly fans of our work. The emphasis we put on not wanting to be finished with or limited in our creative practices makes us feel strange when we witness individuals connect with works we have made in our past. This reinforces the idea that our practices are multilayered, and have layers that can be defined by each decision we make as we move forward with our creative pursuits.

In the context of barbering, however, the tools that Charlie admires are behind the digitally-manipulated photos that are causing Pete’s customers to have unrealistic expectations for a well-done haircut. To Pete, there is a line where Photoshop manipulation breaks reality, and he finds it unfortunate that people are being sold the ideal haircut on social media when most of the best barbers cannot execute the cuts in real life. The power of social media in this context has
altered—or added layers to—the reality of what a quality haircut is and as I have stated before, Pete is fighting to show accountability by using video, instead of photographs. Social media has created new, layered creative practices that were unknown to previous generations. These practices will forever change creativity.

In addition to Lindsey’s perspective on “real-life,” she also very clearly stated that social media representations of self could never be a true representation of one’s self. So, to Lindsey, social media experiences are real, but are not all-encompassing. My talks with study participants reveal that social media experiences are curated and layered. We share with other social media users what we want them to see and we help fabricate how we want to be perceived. I would argue that each participant uses social media to transform his or her own reality, creating multiple layers that define and help them understand their own creative practices. Pete and his co-barbers use social media to create the brand image of their barbershop that they want their customers and friends to experience on a daily basis. Charlie uses social media to build a creative community and continue to learn and grow as a graphic designer. Lindsey uses social media to document experiences in hopes of developing future conversations and curatorial opportunities. Mia uses social media to reflect upon her own creativity and catalog her thoughts and experiences in order to gain professional connections and opportunities. I use social media to document my artistic process and make me feel like my art has a purpose in the world. These layers of social media practices are filtered through our creative practices, layers that are just as unique as we are. We use similar modes to create, but those outcomes are layered differently.

The potential of social media being an extra layer to one’s creativity helps us expand and grow our practices in a variety of ways. The excitement and engagement that the four participants had for the topic of how social media affects creativity made this research possible.
The questions I asked spawned a variety of contextual conversations. Even a small study of four participants reveals that there is vast potential for further study of the topic, as art, social media, and creative practices continue to change. A most exciting take-away from our conversations is that there is not just one form, but many this potential may take. The implications of these conversations will be explored in the next chapter, as I will further investigate what creativity looks like now and what it could look like in the future with social media technology inherent to its production.
Figure 12. Created meme featuring artwork by Dillon Sedar.
LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT: THE PROMINENCE AND UBIQUITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Each of us has some type of relationship with social media. Its influence on contemporary culture is here to stay, and that influence will continue to undergo transformation and growth. Some people, fearing its omnipresent nature, have taken drastic steps to remove themselves from any form of social media. Note, however, that even this act is in response to the ever-present power and hold social media has over us. When discussing notions of creativity in 2017 with the four participants, I found that no matter if we were discussing social media positively or negatively, it was certainly one thing—pervasive, ubiquitous, and inherently a part of all of our lives in way one or another. As an art educator, I must consider that social media is an important part of my students’ lives, and that my students interact with it in many different ways. I have stated a few of my biases in the previous chapter, and here I would like to also note that I, too, have been analytical of my own uses and influences from social media culture within my own creative practice. I will now consider my educational practice, and what my engaging with a variety creative practices can mean today and in the future considering the constant flux of social media culture.

CONTEMPORARY DEFINITIONS OF CREATIVITY AND ART EDUCATION

My collective case study supports that there is strong power in the collective of people online. Users of social media determine what is popular and what is not—at least we are led to believe so. One underlying theme I identified in my collective case study—a factor Lindsey and I dipped our toes into—is the idea that we are in control; that our creative practices through social media, what we make and decide to share, are all based on the choices we make as individuals. When I analyzed the data from the collective case study, which includes me as a participant, I found that social media has more influence on my creative practice than I initially thought when
I began this research.

As art educators, we may never fully understand what our students’ level of engagement is with social media technology; simply knowing what social media platforms they are using and trying them ourselves do not suffice. We must attempt to understand what social media is doing to the culture and mindset of those we are educating. When we develop any lesson activity, we must consider whatever social media is current, because social media is ingrained into the way our students think and find information. The connections identified within my collective case study reveal the various effects of social media on participants’ creative practices. For example, participants stressed that they searched for and valued authenticity and translucency in social media postings. Online communities are more likely to trust profiles that show verisimilitude. Social media culture collectively decides which profiles and creative practices are accepted as authentic, and grant them power accordingly. Art education is a perfect place to ask “why?” in the context of social media popular culture. It has become clear that part of curriculum practiced by art educators should address how their students are engaging with online content. Additionally, art teachers must help students become aware of their relationships to social media.

If I were to continue this study, I would ask my participants, “why Facebook?” “Why Instagram?” I did not expect that all four participants would organically make comparisons between Facebook and Instagram. Note that I only interviewed four participants, and I am sure results would differ among different age groups, but the four Millennials made strikingly similar comparisons and contrasts of Instagram and Facebook. This fact leads me to conclude that our creative approaches may have a similar beginning if we have a consensus on what Facebook and Instagram are doing for us. The power of this collective may drive us, as we feel our individual creativity is contributing to the larger whole.
I do not believe contemporary art educators need to or should mimic the way their students use social media in order to gain understanding of their online cultures. Frankly, this type of investigation is not possible simply because we are not our students and never will be a part of their culture. Instead, and again, contemporary art educators need to understand their role in maintaining awareness of what social media technology and culture is doing to their particular student body and culture. Getting involved in social media can help art educators understand the various platforms, but we must realize that our students will always be using social media in ways that are powered by and changing with their own cultures—a factor that cannot be understood just by logging in. The same can be said of our students, that they too will not use social media in the same manner that their teachers will. Different generations have different relationships to social media, and I feel art education is the ideal venue through which to address our relationships to contemporary visual culture.

In order to be current and contemporary in our practice, art educators should be questioning our students on what they feel is authentic and true online. We must ask how they are perceiving information fed to them on their social media feeds and question their beliefs on what can be considered true and authentic online. Asking these questions and listening closely can help contemporary art educators gain further understanding of how student culture is influenced and developed by social media. Educators can identify student needs by addressing these topics, and will be able to form and practice lessons for powerful contemporary educational contexts.

For instance, the four participants and I discussed disposable-image culture promoted by the fast pace of social media culture. Users look for instant gratification when they are scrolling; a strong, quality creative practice may take more time than the social media world has patience
for. Is this a bad thing? Through my personal reflection of my artmaking practice between 2016-2017, along with my shared reflection with the four participants, I have noticed that a balance is needed between quality and quantity. In 2016, as previously explained, I was creating work just so I had something to post every day. This sounded like a great goal, but it quickly became a chore, and the work lacked authenticity because it was made for posting online. Having abandoned the one-a-day posting goal, I am finding that creative momentum can be easily lost when only posting larger works that take more time to complete. My solution, for now, has been to post steps of the process to engage viewers on a (somewhat) daily basis. Social media has clearly affected how I view my creative practice, and with its constant flux, I too, am in constant flux, attempting to produce work that engages viewers online and in person.

I aim to use this state of flux to inform my educational practice, encouraging students to accept change and experimentation into their creative practices. With even the youngest elementary students using smart phones, the technology could allow them to document their work and provide another layer to their creative learning, as well as a sense of ownership of the practice. Smart phone technology has the potential to promote student engagement inside and outside of the classroom. It is, therefore, clear that art educators seriously consider utilizing both smart phone technology and online learning to engage their students. Online sharing and peer critiques, for examples, will promote the growth of students’ creative abilities, perhaps more efficiently than an average 45-minute class could. Using social media as a curricular vehicle promotes students’ engagement of their creative practices on a 24-hour basis.

We must also understand social media for what it is. The image of the painting posted onto social media is not the actual painting; the 360-degree video posted of the haircut is not the actual haircut; the images captured and shared on Instagram and Facebook profiles are not the
actual experience had by the person posting them. However, the experiences of viewing those images and videos are still real experiences! They are among the many layers of our lives that the multi-modal social media culture makes available to us, and the layers help define and redefine the meanings of happenings in our lives. This is a contemporary definition of creativity. Social media technology allows a final product to be only a starting point for prompting curiosity in the process. The ease of access online to multiple layers through multiple modes encourages individuals to further engage in creative processes more than ever before. Instead of only wondering how something was made, YouTube videos have the potential to show you. Instead of only seeing the painting hung on the wall, individuals may easily Google the artist, their origin, and other works. Additionally, not only can people use their smart phones to investigate further, they can share the information via social media and educate their connected communities! The power of, “look what I found” makes education of any kind using social media a participatory culture, one in which participants are willingly involved.

Many critics of social media are concerned that individuals will lose touch with reality. Wake up people, welcome to 2017—social media technologies are reality. They exist, we interact with them, they are a large part of our real lives. Again, life is inevitably in flux and new technologies will continue to enter our lives. The idea that technology will take over implies that we are not in control. We have to remember that we are the ones in control. We have now become multimodal cyborgs, and, frankly, I am okay with that. Without the use of social media technology, I would not have been able to successfully conduct this study. Social media was used to connect to each of the participants to set up a day and time to meet and record conversations. Social media technology and the multiple modes of information we take in promote connection to one another. Interacting with each other through text, imagery, and video
communication enhances and multiplies the number of ways we may understand not only our creative practices, but ourselves in general in relation to the world around us. Social media is a new way of knowing, a new way of living our lives and creating experiences. We now are able to live a creative life that moves in and out—way out—of the traditional studio, classroom, and day-to-day experience.

RESOURCES FOR CONTEMPORARY ART EDUCATORS

In addition to the four individuals I had participate in my case study of How Social Media Affects Today’s Creativity, I identified four contemporary artists working in relation to social media. Social media is either the driving force, subject matter, or a manipulative factor in the creative practices of the following artists, and the ways in which they are using social media can provide insight into how we may define our creative practices of today and the future. The following artists may be used by art educators to address issues of contemporary social media.

Two Visual Artists that Address Social Media

Pawel Kuczynski is a Polish artist whose work addresses social media culture. Each of the artworks discussed below can be found at the following links:

- [http://pawelkuczynski.com/](http://pawelkuczynski.com/)

His art deals with contemporary issues, has high impact through the use of sophisticated concepts and technology, humor, and easily relatable content. For example, one of Kuczynski’s works portrays a boy in a dark space, lit by an out-of-the-frame light source which we can assume is a television because he is holding a video game controller. As the boy is clearly engaged in whatever game he is playing, a figure, whom we can assume to be his mother, is depicted much smaller than the boy and using the video game controller cord as a clothesline.
Kuczynski is addressing the power within the social media of video games, the addictive behavior we often see within its culture and the mother’s lack of authority. Kuczynski is making a statement about a lack of values, personal responsibility, and hard work.

In another painting, Kuczynski creates a visual parody of an Italian gondola ride, an experience popular for its beauty and romantic nature. However, Kuczynski’s painting shows the Facebook logo “F” lying flat on its back, floating in the canal in place of the gondola, and the man taking the ride is glued to his laptop computer. Kuczynski is making a strong statement about how people tend to seek out artificial experiences online, even when surrounded by beauty. The artist’s visual commentary makes viewers consider their presence in the moment, and whether or not they need to be online in certain moments of actual beauty. Kuczynski also uses Facebook as the subject in a work that portrays a church confessional booth. Extending from the top of the booth and built into the structure is the very familiar Facebook “F” logo. At the tip of the F is the mouth of a megaphone accompanied by action lines that indicate loud volume. Kuczynski is commenting on how Facebook participants use their profiles as a confessional space—often to receive sympathy, shock value, or praise, all fueled by the desire to connect in some way.

As stated before, each of Kuczynski’s works addresses social, political, and/or societal issues. Kuczynski is a great source for art educators in regards to visual culture, because he deeply addresses how society may view, perceive and/or use information in their daily lives. Using Kuczynski as a reference for conversation, brainstorming and lesson motivation will allow students to develop their own understandings of visual culture and find their place on contemporary issues as they enter a variety of creative approaches.

Another powerful example of how social media is engrained in contemporary art practice
is found within the work of Nicole Eisenman. A work that is especially likely to create an emotional connection with the viewer is one Eisenman entitles *Long Night*. The work depicts a character lying in bed at night, big eyes staring directly at the night table clock and a plugged-in smart phone. Anyone who has ever waited on a call or text from a loved one can relate to this painting. The painting pays tribute to the addiction to connectedness we may have with individuals or groups due to smart phone technology, and the negative effects they may have on our personal health.

Eisenman is known for her painting *Breakup*, which depicts a face, rendered in gloomy colors, staring directly into a smart phone. The figure’s frowning face in combination with the title implies that a relationship breakup has just happened over the phone. This painting is an accurate reflection of the times, since relationships can easily end with a text message today, because some do not even have the courtesy to call, or do it in person, for that matter. Not only does the painting address breakup etiquette, but it also comments on the notion of relationships in contemporary society. The painting is reminiscent of Aziz Ansari’s *Modern Romance* (2016) and his explanation of how relationships are very disposable today because there are far too many options for someone better online. Eisenman’s work is relatable, to say the least.

Eisenman also addresses contemporary relationships in her painting titled *Long Distance*. *Long Distance* presents a phenomenon only possible through social media technology. The painting displays two individuals Skyping or Facetiming, two types of online communication in which two people not only talk to each other, but see each other while doing it. Ansari also discusses this phenomenon (2016) and how prior to today’s social media technology, individuals would only date people within their geographical location, but now we can stay connected across the world if we please. My point in discussing the work of Nicole Eisenman is to address how
she and other artists are bringing the essence of contemporary society into their creative practices. Art educators can find relevant content for discussion and creative motivation within the nuances of today’s social media culture.

**Two Visual Artists that Create through Social Media**

Artists are also creating art through social media. Different than using social media as subject matter, Richard Price and Christoph Neimann use social media as the tools for their creation.

Price in 2014 created and displayed in the Gagosian Gallery in London what he called appropriation art, which sparked a great deal of controversy. Price’s *New Portraits* consisted of appropriated Instagram photos with accompanying profile names, number of likes, and the first page of comments that came with each post at the time Price collected it. Each of the images was reproduced and printed on large canvases to hang on the gallery’s wall. The artist chose to mark the works at a price of $100,000 each, an act that made many consider whether or not these images were his to reproduce and sell. This relates to the conversation I had with Lindsey about social media ownership. We discussed the comfort we felt with posting on social media, how Instagram had made us feel ownership of the platform by allowing us to build identity through what we post. The truth is that the information we post, if our accounts are public and not private, is there on the internet for anyone to use. This lack of ownership is what I feel Price is trying to communicate—the ease with which he was able to gather these photographs from others can be scary to some. Art educators can address the concept of ownership of online social media postings and connect it to Price’s *New Portraits* in a meaningful way. The work could prompt powerful and intriguing aesthetic discussions, for example. Contemporary art educators must be savvy in raising the issue of ownership of creative identity online, and we should
empower youth to determine their own levels of creative practice within an online world of posting and sharing that can easily be appropriated or stolen, depending on your point of view.

Neimann uses social media in a more positive light. In 2016, Neimann created covers for *The New Yorker* that are marvelous on their own, but come to life through smart phone or computer activation. A variety of covers he created offer augmented and virtual reality experiences that bring motion and animation to the images and further enhance viewer engagement. The covers then are a two-way street, one that provides a traditional still image for the cover of the magazine and one that requires viewer activation for additional experiences. To view and activate the covers yourself, visit [http://www.christophniemann.com/portfolio/nyercover/](http://www.christophniemann.com/portfolio/nyercover/). This example shows how the approach to creativity in 2017 has changed due to social media and smart phone technology. Without social media, Niemann’s covers would not be able to come to life in the new and innovative way he has created. Social media has transformed what he has created, knowing the potential possibilities the technologies can provide before even beginning the project.

Social media technologies, if a commonality in your classroom community and allowed by one’s school district, can easily become a tool for creativity in the art education classroom, allowing students to invent new and innovative ways to create art for a variety of purposes and functions.
CONCLUSION

The truth is, by the time you have finished reading this paper it is already outdated. The constant flux of social media culture will have made the statements and notions of contemporary creativity expressed by the four participants and me a thing of the past. Since I conducted the study, new questions about how social media affects the creativity of contemporary youth have inevitably arisen, and need to be meaningfully considered.

What I urge contemporary art educators and all educators to do is stay aware and embrace the flux. Define and redefine your creative practices with the change happening all around you. Stay relevant and engaged with the communities you interact with both online and in-person. Allow the findings of this study to relate to your contemporary practice in a way that is most productive to you. Lastly, do not fear the change that social media culture, visual and popular culture, and a connected society bring. Instead, flow with the ever-moving flux and open yourself to change for an ever-sustainable creative practice.

This research affirms that there has to be contemporary definitions creativity. The definitions found within the research of Chapter II can still hold relevance, but we have to consider the contemporary context we live in—engulfed in social media. The ways in which we share and post visual and textual information online have changed how we communicate with one another, and have changed the ways in which we approach our creativity. Our experiences (Dewey, 1948) engaging in our daily lives have dramatically changed with the introduction to social media, and my data collected show the variety of values places on different qualities of experiences found within the online culture. Images online have become very quick and disposable, perhaps holding more meaning in the social interaction they prompt as an aftermath of a posting. This notion has made individuals heavily consider what it is they are creating, and
how they are going to communicate their practices on social media. The flux has to become a part of one’s creative practice—creating a practice open and willing to change as the culture interacting with it changes. Korzenik (1976) and LaChapelle (1983) both stated that to define creativity, change must be considered within the definition. Social media culture changes on a daily basis, and therefore ways in which to engage in social media creativity have potential to change on a daily basis. The culture interacting with online creative practices is multimodal, and therefore today’s creative practices need to be careful to not become too one-dimensional and stale. Shin (2010) defined creativity considering contemporary technologies and therefore multiplies the modes of engagement possible when engaging in creative acts today. Additionally, Richardson (2010) expressed the vast potential of what can be created when we combine social media culture, contemporary public art and a collective/collaborative mindset. The ability for human beings to stay connected online fuels collaborative cultural engagement with creative acts that place emphasis on shared experience. When engaging with online audiences, creative practices need to also show a sense of verisimilitude, as expressed by my participants as a valued aspect of contemporary creative practices. Employing translucency into one’s social media posting practice develops a trusting relationship with online audiences and promotes collaboration. Torrance (1964) believed that creativity is essential for individual growth. Using social media creates a visual library of this growth, as creative individuals may see their online social media profiles as their digital studio—a place to post and hold their creative practices not only for audiences to engage in, but also provide themselves with documentation of growth, flux, and positive transformation. These contemporary creative practices are but one layer of a vast number of considerations that now inherently influence contemporary artmaking. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1975) believed creativity is directly tied to one’s individual growth. Social media
creative practices encourage the sharing of one another’s growth, acceptance and reaction to constant flux, and inspiration in a collective power of progression—all of these very easily accomplished online. The power of social media should not be taken for granted. If the field of art education truly claims to be a field that values individuality, that shows care for voice and agency, that claims to keep a pulse on contemporary issues, then staying abreast of our students’ usage of social media becomes a moral obligation. Embracing students’ creativity via social media provides an educational environment with a participatory culture that is willing to learn and change with the constant flux of contemporary culture, and flowing with the constant flux maintains a sustainable creative practice for all involved.
REFERENCES


