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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO
Greeley, Colorado
The Graduate School

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INTERCONNECTIVE
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ART AND SPORTS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Micala M. Anderson

August 2018

This Thesis by: Micala M. Anderson

Entitled: *The Significance of the Interconnective Relationships between Art and Sports*

Has been approved as meeting the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in College of Performing and Visual Arts in School of Art and Design, Program of Art Education.

Accepted by the Thesis Committee:

Connie Stewart, Ph.D., Co-Chair

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ABSTRACT

Anderson, Micala M. *The Significance of the Interconnective Relationships between Art and Sports*, Unpublished Masters of Arts Creative Project, University of Northern Colorado, 2018.

The connection between sports and art has been going on over the course of history, the development of society, and within our daily lives. This arts-based research project discovers that relationship within literature, methods of research, and the creation of artwork that is discussed with the findings of this research. Journal entries, personal narrative entries, my artwork, and the analysis of that artwork were used as the data portion of this research. These discoveries are further explored by my own personal journey as an athlete, artist, teacher, coach, and my experiences that have given me insight into this relationship. The crossover from elements of art and sports can be used in educational, personal, and professional settings. This crossover has had very little exploration in these settings and this research explains this as a necessary study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank God; my belief in the purpose for my life has been renewed with this process. To the professors here at The University of Northern Colorado and my teachers and coaches throughout the years, my appreciation is everlasting. Also, I am thankful to my husband and family for the support throughout this journey. Last but not least, I will thank my colleagues and students at Solomon High School, you have influenced my life in ways you will never know.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of life is not to be happy: it is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well. This is a quote that I have heard attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson. Imbedded since childhood, there has been a sense of purpose for what my life will hold. With that sense of purpose, I decided to create an arts-based research project that explores connections between art and sports within my own narrative by creating art that shows the importance of similarities between the two as well as the differences.

I wanted to explore the relationship between art and sports and how it influences our society as well as relate to the creation of art, my life, athletes, and artists. As an arts-based research project, the goal was to seek out the ways that art and sports relate. I created art from a few different avenues: first, through telling my story in my art as it pertained to the overlap of art and sports at different points in my life. Then, I described how art and sports relate over the course of history and in our society. Finally, there is an explanation of how my life relates to the connections I discovered melding with my story throughout the course of this research being chronicled.

However, during the exploration of art and sports, I do not intend to argue that sports and art are in the same category but that they should be acknowledged as being similar culturally, and with teachings and capabilities. I was raised in an American culture and taught to believe in the freedom of our choices and to imagine the American Dream as something that is attainable. These two sets of beliefs have been exemplified in

my experience with the arts and sports from age five: from repeatedly attempting the drawing of horses with no actual likeness of a horse, to shooting baskets every Saturday morning with my father. In both instances, I kept trying to either draw the horse until I got it right or shoot the basketball until I could reach a goal. The perseverance and value that was placed on art and sports ultimately led to their importance for my life. The determination I felt eventually led to my choice to teach art and coach. It would seem there is no connection between arts and sports, yet, our culture and history would lead us to a different conclusion. In my own life, there is a sense of interconnectivity between these two seemingly different creative ventures. Exploring those similarities will contribute to our students figuring out why choosing these paths can contribute to a life well lived.

Art and Sports

The majority of western society has gone to high school, been a part of a sports team, been required to take an art class, and has either loved it or hated it. Some of us were a part of the jock's clique in school or the art geek group. There were a myriad of different groups and people could definitely be part of more than one. However, from a very young age, we are separating each other into groups. Artists may think athletes are all brawn and no brain, athletes may look at artists like they are weird. The relationship between the two has not necessarily been a positive one in our historical timeline. We have all heard the stereotypes and whether we like them or not, they have become a part of our culture at an educational level and probably from our childhood. When in fact, embracing that artists and athletes are more similar than different might give us some unprecedented outcomes as a society.

Merriam Webster's Dictionary has many definitions for art. However, there are two that are relevant for this research. The first definition is a skill acquired by experience, study, or observation. The second is something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings (“Art,” n.d.). Sport also has many different definitions. For the purposes of this study it will be defined as a contest or game in which people do certain physical activities according to a specific set of rules and compete against each other and also as a physical activity (such as hunting, fishing, running, swimming, etc.) that is done for enjoyment (“Sport,” n.d.). While the literal definitions of these words may seem to have little in common at first, this paper will take a closer look and examine the similarities and relationships between them.

It is a shame that athletes and artists alike might be inclined to deny the associations between them. This arts-based research (ABR) project explores my artwork to show the link between these two endeavors within American culture and what is relative to my own personal stories in choosing to be a teacher and coach. As an artist and an athlete, I have experienced ridicule and have heard slander on the other from colleague artists and fellow athletes. I feel that there is a certain ignorance in not being open to the acknowledgement of these connections; many different cultures chronicle both within their histories. Ancient Greeks acknowledged the fact that the arts and sports were closely related as evidenced by thousands of painted vases that have use runners, jumpers, boxers, and wrestlers (Guttman, 2011). Clearly, intertwining the two disciplines could result in viewpoints for each side to explore and document. Athletes could participate in art and artists could engage in athletic activity and see what inspirations come from the

involvement. “Unity is not inherent in knowledge itself; it is created by the generous collaboration of people who seek and produce knowledge” (Noddings, 2013, p. 82).

There is unity and new knowledge that could come from mixing these two disciplines.

Benefits of Connection

Artists and athletes both would benefit from looking into the links between their disciplines, opening new areas for inspiration, collaboration, and respect for each other.

Our students and players could benefit as well. Kretschman (2012) makes a very good point,

The interdisciplinary approach offers and prescribes one to think ‘outside the box’ and to look into other areas. Because the ‘sport and art’ phenomenon has been present throughout all times and cultures of the world, it is therefore historically and scientifically very interesting and productive. (p. 5)

We live in a world where elitism and fame are what is important and that should not be the most important thing. This arts-based research project argues that our culture needs to recognize the importance of arts and sports for not just the public recognition but the substance and lessons that come from both.

Since I was a young child, the experiences and interests in art and sports, such as participating in arts and crafts with my mom, and my dad coaching me while playing recreation league sports, has led me to this point in my existence where I teach and coach. The paths I have chosen, whether they have been good or bad ones at times, have directed me to a life where I get to enjoy the benefits of art and sports on a daily basis.

Manifesting these links into an artwork would be like connecting the roads on a map in a metaphorical and personal way. “Traditional maps assert, ‘This is how the world is,’ and expect the reader to agree. Artists’ maps countermand that complicity saying, ‘This is my vision, and I encourage you to construct your own’” (Harmon, p. 11). Maps and puzzles

have a way of showing the connections between different places and spaces that would not be seen otherwise. This is why using maps as part of my arts-based research will help me discover connections on a deeper level within my life and within our culture. Also, to deepen that connection all of the art inspired by this research will be done in diptychs to physically show what I see within both areas. Digital and mixed media collage will also be used during this process.

Teacher and Coach Relationships

In my experience, there have been many connections between what and how students are taught in art to how they are taught in sports. Showing a student how to hold a calligraphy pen at the right angle and showing an athlete how to hold their arm to pass a hard spike in volleyball are both examples of similar teachings within sports and art. Explaining to a student how much consistency you have to use when throwing a pot on the wheel is similar to the discipline involved in shooting a basketball or spiking a volleyball. Practice is just as much a part of any sport as it is a part of becoming successful with an art form. As teachers, we want the same things from our students that coaches want from their athletes and if we collaborated and related these things from classroom to court, our students would benefit in both arenas.

My personal relationships with students have grown from both teaching and coaching them. During junior high and high school years, the coaches that taught me were also the ones who had the most impact in my life. Now, whenever there is something that is troubling me with either one of my occupations, looking back on what they would have done or would not have done is something that helps me. That kind of impact, as well as my early coaching experience, was a big part of choosing my

profession. After teaching for three years, one of my students truly showed me the importance of the relationships between the teacher, student, art classroom, and coaching.

Throughout my research I break into my personal memory bank to demonstrate why this exploration is crucial to the personal lives of teachers, artists, and athletes as well as the professional side. I italicize the text and use ellipses to segue into my memories and journal entries that I have explored through my arts-based research. These stories go from the time I was young and had my first aspirations of being an athlete until my current day to day life of being a teacher and coach.

...

He walked by me in the hallway and told me the story of why he was limping. "I was trying to jab to the left and Cam was coming in on my right and my knee just buckled. I didn't want to be hurt so I just kept playing, you know me, I'll play through anything J." I told him that he better be going to the doctor & to keep me updated. I had gone through the same thing in high school and felt this sense of impending doom that I prayed to God was a mistake and it would magically turn out to be something less serious.

For three years now he has been in my class and can be quite the difficult student. Once, we got into a fight over him going to the bathroom and he threw his books in the air and stormed out of the room, mumbling some unpleasantness as he slammed my door. He made me cry that day which believe it or not, was not the first time that year. He is the student that every teacher grumbles about which is probably the reason why I have always had a soft spot for him. He does not have a father and lives with an absent mother who has a very limited view of what love is so she just gives what she can and probably

doesn't see the effect it has on her son. This, makes him a very angry kid and that kind of anger is something I can empathize with. He doesn't quite understand the consequences of his actions on other people and I'm not sure how much he cares either but I have been making the effort to show him the unconditional love that every person deserves regardless of how they treat others.

The door opened with a creak and tears swelled up in his eyes and I knew the news wasn't good. As he's trying to speak, his tears are flowing and I know he genuinely can't believe that it's happened to him. "It's my ACL J, I can't play," he stammers out. My hands shoot up to my face as I sensed my own face getting red and tears starting to swell up as I remember the feeling of my whole world crashing down on me as an aspiring college athlete with a promising future. "I'm so sorry sweetie," are all the words I can seem to muster because I know how hard the road ahead will be for him. He slams his head down on his arms on one of my desks and buries his face as the silence fills the room with the words that I want to say but know he doesn't want to hear. "Everything is gonna be alright, I know it doesn't seem like it right now but I know it will be," I choked out as he just shakes his head. He says, "I still have to tell coach, I just can't believe it." I am watching him and knowing how he feels; all I can do is hug him. He wipes his eyes and heads out to tell his football coach and nods his head at me in that teenage boy way that says "I'm good."

I'll never forget those few moments; I have always believed that I became a teacher and coach to make a difference and help kids. I never dreamed of the ways that the help I was trying to administer has manifested within my students and this instance has been the biggest one to date. No matter how horrible my relationship has been with

him at times, it's still a relationship that has been stable in his life. I found out later that day, I was the first person he told. If you would've asked me two years ago that he would come to me for anything, I would've laughed at you.

A few weeks later, our class was making a banner that had to do with our own personal culture. He created a banner that really showed his love for sports with vibrant colors, moving figures, dedication to craftsmanship that he really has never shown before. I could tell he was reveling in the memories that sports had given him and he has spoken about being very driven to recover from his surgery to get back to playing. During that assignment, the realization was so powerful and apparent to me how art and sports can be associated together.

...

Significance of Relationship

Noddings (2013) asked an important question about liberal arts education, “How might our daily lessons contribute to the search for wisdom, an understanding of a good life, the development of moral character, and aesthetic appreciation?” (p. 80). I found my own answer to that question with this experience. To this day, learning the significance of connection is the most impactful lesson of my teaching and coaching career. Our daily lessons paralleled with the relationships built with our students and players is how we contribute. You never know the impact you are making and just giving the effort to try and give out unconditional love should not ever stop, even when that effort fails. No matter how tough it gets, every person truly needs that kind of love. You never know if you are the only person in their life making them feel valued and it is making an impression, no matter how it appears. This story shows me that my experiences in this

life were not for nothing. My experiences show me that my belief that everything happens for a reason is a concrete, tangible feeling.

What is the significance of the interconnectivity between art and sports within our culture? Why should we care about this relationship? Along with our students, we will be encountering the art world and sports domains throughout our entire lives. Learning the how, why, what, where, and who of the inner workings of art and sports will make us better teachers, artists, and empathizers.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At this point in my narrative, I cannot remember a time where I did not have art and sports playing a role in the significant moments of my story. This is why I have chosen to do qualitative research, to discover the motivations and underlying reasons for such a monumental link between these two endeavors in my life and also for others to see that the connections can have an impact on us as educators and as human beings.

The aforementioned research is connected with literature that shows the relationships between art and sports. My personal art making along with autoethnographic stories, and historical research will be explored to find themes connecting art and sports. The art is also an examination of the similarities and differences within both and how both of them affect our everyday lives from youth to adulthood.

The Similarities and Differences in the Characteristics that Define Art and Sports

While comparing sports and art, I do not intend to argue that sports and arts should be judged in the same category, more so that sports and arts should be acknowledged as being on common ground having similar attributes, teachings, capabilities and history. In a physical sense, Edgar (2013) states plainly that the discipline of art is the manipulation of materials such as paint or sound. Sports as a discipline is in pursuit of the kinesthetic challenge. The definitions of Art and Sport from Merriam Webster's Dictionary show the differences between the two when dealing with the terminology. However, if art is a skill acquired by experience, then could we not say that

any masterful skill presentation of a sport such as football or lacrosse could be seen as an art? What about performance art? Could a person who is performing in dance or doing a performance art piece be considered a sport in a sense? They are performing a physical activity that they are performing for enjoyment or possibly the enjoyment of others? Identifying the similarities does not necessarily mean there are no differences.

Art and sport are not always done strictly for enjoyment or for skill mastery. Sports has more constraints because of the rules in which the games are played and art has freedom to express feelings and emotions. In my experience as an artist and athlete, none of these definitions can genuinely describe the essence of sport or artistic activity. When you are creating or playing a sport, there is something more to these undertakings than just the combination of the defining words. Sports and art have common ground that makes them as Guttman (2011) says, “siblings in the extended family of culture” (p. 1).

Art and sports have many similarities, but they also have differences. From a younger age, athletic activities are stressed more towards kids. It is a good thing for them to be active and to have a love for a sport from early on. However, imagine a world where we put as much emphasis on creativity and artistic capacity as athletic ability. Where would students be with their creative thinking skills if they started practicing these skills as early as they did athletic skills? This is a difference between art and sports that needs to be recognized and challenged.

The Likelihood of Being an Artist versus Being an Athlete

In my community, we hear more about sports in mainstream media than we do about the arts. Sports are much more ingrained into our everyday lives because of the fandom behind college and professional sports. What we don't hear about is the everyday

lives of the people. We hear about the highly paid contracts of athletes and high payments for an artwork but nothing about the lay person who is the sports radio announcer or the museum curator who works in these same fields but without all the glory. What are most people in these fields earning? According the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), the median pay for an athlete is \$47,710 and the median pay to be a crafts or fine artist is \$48,780 per year. Both artists and athletes are listed as having long term on the job training as a part of their skill set and there is no higher education necessary. However, with artists, it is helpful to have a degree in your preferred craft. Athletic opportunities are growing at a 6% growth rate while artistic jobs are only growing at a 2% rate. Since, the number of jobs for artists are significantly higher, each endeavor is actually supposed to grow in a similar amount of people, 800-900 per year (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

These statistics are important to show how competitive both career choices are for the average person. Even though, as a society, we view athletes as having a higher economic status there actually are not many differences when looking at the statistics. This study will also look at sports and art from our (my) American societal point of view. Artworks have sold for as much money as a professional athlete makes in a contract. Alex Smith, the quarterback for the Kansas City Chiefs is making \$17,000,000 for his renewed contract in 2017 (NFL's biggest contracts for 2017, 2017). Bridge by Robert Ryman sold for \$20,600,000 in 2015 (Embucado, 2016). Both of these are examples are of what can be paid for high performing artists and athletes, with others receiving even more. However, this statistic shows how similar both fields can be for both layman and the professionals.

How Athletic Activity and Arts Participation Affect our Everyday Lives

In the United States, after high school or college, which is the majority of our lives, our time is less available for team sports or taking art classes. Time that is not spent at work is spent with our families or other commitments. But what about the time outside of that: time that we spend doing things we enjoy? Leisure time is something that as adults, we categorize as important because of all of our daily responsibilities. Leisure time is defined by Wheatley & Bickerton (2017) as not simply free time but a personal perception of what is enjoyable, pleasurable, and satisfying. Leisure experiences are both social and cultural in nature. The two main leisure activities are engagement in the arts and sporting activities. Wheatley and Bickerton (2017) assess the relationship between the measures of overall life satisfaction and general happiness based on the participation in arts, cultural, and sporting activities. They conducted a survey with thirty-nine different ways to participate in arts and sports, such as theatre, museums, games, and going to the gym.

The analysis identifies positive associations between satisfaction with life, amount of leisure time, and to a lesser extent general happiness and those that attend art events, visit historical sites and museums, and engage in moderate to mild sports. (Bickerton & Wheatley, 2017, p. 39)

Some adults do not realize how much their daily lives and satisfaction depend on these kinds of things. However, noting that both of these activities can help improve our satisfaction with life because of their cultural significance is a relationship that cannot be ignored. It should, in fact, be acknowledged. The argument could be made that not many people participate in both of these leisure fields; but, I participate in both whether it is going to the gym to relieve some stress, going to practice as a coach, playing on a rec league volleyball team or going to an art museum to see the new modern art exhibit.

Sports and art do not normally connect in a direct path, but participation in both of these activities is done for the same reason. They give the feeling of positivity and contentment within ourselves.

The Impact of Art and Sports on our Youth

Extracurricular activities for many secondary students include involvement in music, the arts or sports. These activities are an integral part of growing up and the development of students. A qualitative study done on the positive and motivational effects of these activities was done by a diverse group of professors from different universities across the United States, Fredricks, Alfeld-Liro, Hruda, Eccles, Patrick and Ryan (2002). Sixty adolescents were interviewed by multiple researchers who had been trained in motivational reasoning and development. The overall results were broken up into three groups that were individual factors, perceptions of opportunity, and a sense of self. There were many different reasons that students participated but there was a common theme of fulfillment overall. "Enjoyment was the most common reason why adolescents reported participating in an activity" (p. 77). These students were involved in multiple extracurricular activities such as wrestling, drama, and art clubs.

As a whole, students also described a sense of self that developed from being successful in these areas. "Several adolescents began to define themselves as being an athlete, a musician, or an artist" (Fredericks et. al, 2002, p. 87). The relationship with these activities can be a healthy, strong, and growing point for our youth. The realization of potential is the first key of inspiration to a young person. If we embedded in students from early on that they could work hard and achieve big dreams with the arts and sports alike, both skills could develop at a faster rate and better creative thinking skills can help

a student in a sport as well as in the classroom. The crossover and positive effects from these extracurricular activities should be equally as important to and for our students.

How Practices of Sports and Arts Relate

“Playing, Creativity, Possibility” by Olivia Gude (2010) attempts to explain what students experience in a classroom that employs them to learn through artistic practices. In this regard, it would seem that art and sports have no relation but the words and descriptions of what students have to do in an art classroom are also what athletes have on a court or field. “An artist must make a commitment to actively and seriously engaging the materials and forms at hand while simultaneously remaining loose and experimental” (p. 32). This description of what an artist is could well have been one for an athlete as well. When athletes practice, they are learning about the sport and making plays, working out their physical and mental abilities, and adjusting constantly to what their coach is trying to teach them to become better. Playing sports takes active engagement, commitment, and a sense of remaining loose and experimental to learn new things as you grow within a sport. Gude states a main reason for students not living up to their creative potential is because they “have been shamed by parents or peers for being too dreamy, not focused enough on practical aspects of surviving in a tough neighborhood or of growing up and making a living” (p.32). Young athletes face the same shaming in their dreams of becoming a professional athlete or even for going on to be a collegiate athlete.

“Playing, a necessary component of any creative process, is the first (and foundational) principle of the possibilities that can emerge from a quality art curriculum” (Gude, 2010, p. 35). Playing is the exact same word that we use to describe kids doing

athletic activity. Gude's description of success in an art classroom could be applied to a sports program. The more a student plays a game, the better that they get at it. Is this not the same for art? Do we not emphasize practicing our artistic skills and sketchbooks for the same reason? Practice in both areas is equally as important and connects these two activities on yet another level.

Similar Lessons Between the Art Classroom and The Court

“Losing is a learning experience. It teaches you humility. It teaches you to work harder. It's also a powerful motivator. I've always said somebody's got to win, somebody's got to lose. Accept the loses and learn from them” said Yogi Berra (2001, p. 47). In sports, a mark of a good coach and player is using every loss as a way to learn and get better. Is this not also a characteristic of a good artist or art classroom? In my experience, budding artists have to use their failures and experiments in their artworks as a way to learn and express themselves better. “It's important for the field of art education to develop goals, specific objections and curricula that foster core characteristics: (1) the ability to play, (2) openness to experience, and (3) an inner locus of evaluation” (Gude, 2010, p. 36). Could these qualities also be applied to a good sports program and a good athlete? If artists or athletes gave up at the first sign of adversity, neither areas would be as successful or as culturally relevant as they are in our society today. Athletes and artists may not be using the same medium but in their pursuits, they are using similar methods and mentality to become successful.

Dedication, perseverance, work ethic, effort, and love are at the heart of every person who has ever succeeded with a sport or with an art medium. Are these not the lessons that we want our students to learn from our classes or from their practices and

games? We want our students to see the value in the definitions of those words. Maybe, they won't become a famous artist or athlete but they will use these qualities in their future to be successful as a human being and isn't that the goal we all should be aiming for?

Art and Sports Correlate in American History, Culture, and Society

By definition, (Merriam Webster's Dictionary Online) art and sport require skill and activity to master. About 2500 years ago, athletes, and artists (singers, poets, and sculptors) fought for the same Olympic medals and glory. In a manner of speaking, these two areas belonged together quite naturally like body and mind" (Kretschmann & Von, 2012, p. 5). Competing in the Olympic games during any age took a mastery of skill and excellence in a specific area whether that was in sculpting or in throwing a discus. Over time, the arts were eliminated from the Olympic games. However, the fact that they were once in the same arena connects them and means that skill has definitely played a big part in each one of their histories.

This research limits the history, culture, and societal references to an American point of view because of the relevance to my experiences as the author. Allen Guttman wrote *Sports and American Art: From Benjamin West to Andy Warhol* (2011) to show that sports have played a dramatic role in the development of American Art. Guttman's (2011) opening statement is a good summary of the relationship between sports and art:

I prefer to assert, more modestly, that sports and the arts have the kind of relationships that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe described as *Wahlverwandtschaften* ('elective affinities'). Sports and the arts are similar in that both - in their ideal-type forms - can be understood as non utilitarian human expression. They serve no practical purpose. They are autotelic (from auto, 'its own,' and telos, 'goal, end, or purpose')... Sports and the arts may not be twins, but they do have a sibling relationship within the extended family of culture. (p. 1)

Guttman also writes about how artists have long been aiding in telling our history with art, just take Dorothea Lange and her powerful photographs of the Great Depression or the turn of the century with new immigration and industrialization with Alfred Stieglitz. Events like the Industrial Revolution and The Great Depression led to inventions like basketball and volleyball because people were moving closer together in cities and then they had to find ways to entertain themselves that did not cost money. The inventions of different sports in turn, led to sport art. There are many artists who participated in the role of telling sports history with art. Thomas Eakins created significant paintings about boxing, (see Fig. 1) which really showcased the human endurance, athleticism and raw energy of the sport and it drew people into the arena. This led the way for further sport art that was even created by Andy Warhol, his many portraits on famous athletes such as Dorothy Hammill and Muhammad Ali.

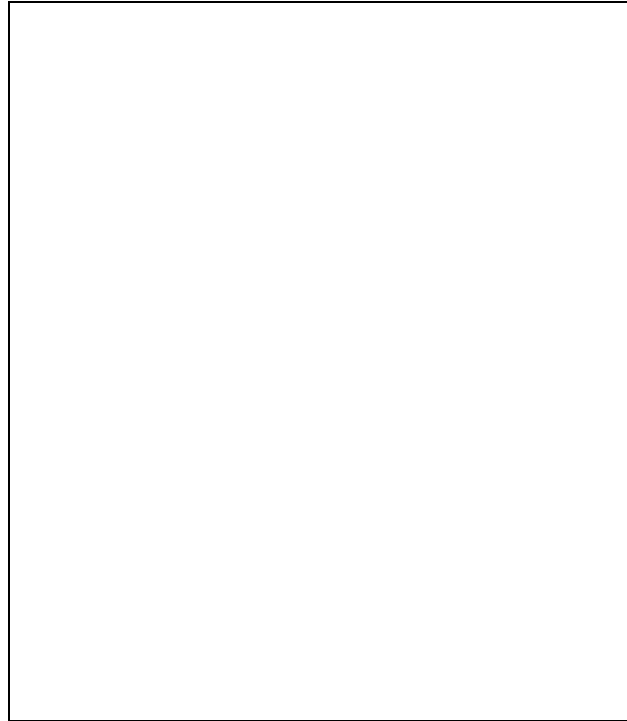


Figure 1, Taking the Count, Thomas Eakins, Oil on Canvas. Photo from <https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/5463>

There are not just artists that are creating sport art either, there have been famous athletes who have turned to creating art after their career in sports was over. Many notable athletes that are a part of our sport and athletic culture have also been noticed for their artworks. These names include Serena Williams and Usain Bolt, each of them are still in the midst of their athletic career but still find time for art. Desmond Mason was an NBA player who also found his passion in art and has made a name for himself in the art world (see Fig. 2), “I’m not a Hall of Famer and I’m not an All-Star either,” says Mason. “I won a dunk contest once. With art, I feel like I am working really hard and getting better” (Fleming, 2015, p. 18). And he has been, he has since opened his own gallery in Oklahoma City.

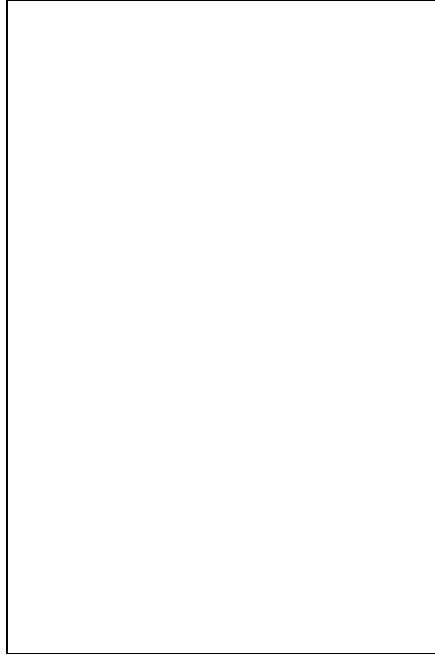


Figure 2, The Non-significant Significances, Desmond Mason. Photo from https://arts.ok.gov/Art_at_the_Capitol/East_Gallery/2012/Desmond_Mason_East_Gallery_2012.html

The sibling relationship that Guttman referred to in his opening paragraph can be described as a deep part of our culture. We partake in the arts and sports as extracurricular activities as youths and as we grow up these activities begin to become a part of our world and how we live. “We believe that adolescents experience in extracurricular activities is shaped by the larger cultural conditions in which they live” (Fredericks et. al, 2002. p. 81). In a sense, our culture is shaped by the history that we live, our own history of these extracurricular activities that have defined us from a young age. Our history has also been intertwined with artists and athletes telling similar but different parts of the story we all share that is our culture. Those connections only grow as we get older and help shape the society in which we exist.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Arts-Based Research

I have ventured into a world that is my own. The arts-based research (ABR) method uses the creation of artwork as data to analyze as a form of understanding and experience. The artwork is an attempt to dissect my own thoughts, processes, memories, narrative, and artistic abilities with my research question at the base. That question is less of a question and more of a study of discovery about the connections between the arts and athletics. I have used multiple methods to explore this journey, using elements of auto-ethnography, portraiture, and historical substantiation to see the interconnectedness. My thoughts, everyday life, personal stories, questions, and answers were documented. This documentation allowed me to explore my personal connections with art and sport in order to support and thrive during my artistic process. I was able to use my art making as a means of telling a story, relaying a feeling, expressing thoughts about my life and how art and sports have been such a large part of it.

I gathered qualitative data with documentation of my own narrative and autobiographical context, along with historical and heuristic research with the intention of exploring new and past knowledge. Data was gathered to support that art and sport have been connected throughout time. For the purpose of this study, arts-based research was used as an improvisatory research practice. A sense of self and conception of identity have an equivocal definition for each person. Improvisatory research is where the self becomes both the site and the gauge for research which reflexivity to make sense of

identity in our current culture. “Reflexivity in research methods takes a full and ongoing account of the self and the effect of identity and presence of the researcher upon what is being investigated” (Rolling, 2013, p. 133). So, in essence, as the researcher, I am taking into account my instincts, intuition, and fully cognitive modalities to create new knowledge and use as a part of my research on the connections between sports and art.

“Certainty is not the goal of... ABR, but enlarging one's understanding is” (Irwin, 2013, p.104). The beauty of being an art teacher, artist, and researcher is that the uncertainty that lies within us can be used as fuel to guide our questions. These questions will inevitably be turned into my research questions, and that is the beauty in what arts-based research can do. There is no right or wrong answer to my aforementioned research question, however, every reader can form their own opinion and even if they do not agree, the research has at least affect them will open up a consideration for a new way to look and art and sport through a new lens. Just like the art that I am creating within the same theme, I hope the effect will be the same.

Artists understand the power of the images, sounds, performance, and word, not separate or illustrative of one another but interconnected to create additional meanings. Exploring ideas, issues, and themes artistically offer ways to make meaning, personally and collectively. Thus, using art and text, practice and theory, allows for interconnections, a form of conversation as relational. (Irwin, 2013, p. 105)

Arts-based research is more than just creating artwork. There is a goal for every research form, whether that be qualitative or quantitative and for my arts-based qualitative research, my goal is discovery. “The arts, at their best, are known for being emotionally and politically evocative, captivating, aesthetically powerful, and moving. Art can grab people's attention in powerful ways” (Leavy, 2015, p. 23). If I replaced the word “art” with “sports” in this past statement, I would agree with that statement wholeheartedly.

Using sports to create art is not a new practice, sports are known for being emotionally evocative, captivating and powerful. I want to uncover the qualities that make art and sports great and put those qualities into works of art.

Autoethnographic Portraiture

Autoethnography is “research, writing, story and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to cultural, social and political” (Ellis, 2004, pg. 5). It raises self-consciousness and promotes reflexivity. I chose to use this method combined with portraiture that reflects my own past in an autobiographical way that creates a type of self-portrait. Lawrence Lightfoot as quoted by Fountain describes portraiture “genre of inquiry and representation that seeks to join science and art... in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life” (p.xv). Self-portraits are closely related and even incorporated into autoethnography. They are both an effort to tell a specific story within a timeframe and communicate to the audience with a personal touch. My search and findings for the relationship between art and sports in my own life has resulted in a self-evaluation which in turn, as resulted in self portraitures turning up in my artworks.

Portraiture is a type of research that is designed to cover a longer period of time. The process of data collection in portraiture continues until the researcher has explored all interview questions and areas that require clarity. This process could take days or years depending on the size and complexity of the subject being studied... The last step in this process is to check for any inconsistencies or holes in the data and conduct the steps needed to gain as complete a view of the topic as feasible. (Fountain, 2013, p. 165)

As Fountain states, the last steps of completing portraiture, I find myself completing a system of checks and balances within my own narrative to continue to tell my truth.

...

Sitting in my high school art class thinking, “This lady does not get me.” It felt like my art teacher had something against me because she couldn’t understand why I had to prioritize my time between playing basketball and trying to create because I couldn’t come in after school because of practice. So, when she picked one of my pieces to go to a show, I was pretty amazed. She told me it was because “It was something that really spoke to who I was as a person.” It happened to be a huge self-portrait and I did not understand what she meant at the time. Now, I truly think it was because I created it with artistic instinct and it showed my essence without literal meanings but artistic curiosity. I might never have gone down the path of being an artist without that self-portrait. It showed me that I could be more than one thing. I could be artist and athlete and neither one of those labels took away from the other one.

...

Historical Research

“Historical questions vary, but inevitably their answers come through the study of past practices, theories, and social networks, among other things. Often historical questions ask us to reposition ourselves” (Howell, p. 152). The research question at hand has many viewpoints that could be expressed but I am asking for open minded thinking and a repositioning of our rigid mindset with art and sports. History can be told differently from person to person but the many connections between art and sports over the course of our history cannot just be observed as coincidences. From an education standpoint, we can use the historic relationship to help our students in our classes to connect over a wide variety of curriculum. We can incorporate movement and history

together to create some wonderful lessons. From an artists and researchers point of view, I am using this relationship that has been discovered to create artwork and to open my own eyes to the possibilities.

“Historical research provides a robust means to address these limitations. Historical research can serve as a tool to extend the reach of your limits of understanding” (Howell, p. 151). During the preliminary stages of making the decision of which research question to choose, I took into consideration that I knew I wanted to do an arts-based research project that I could relate to on a personal level. Art and sports were the two things in my life that have never really wavered as far as my interest in them. Now, as I was taking a look into these considerations, I could already see the constraints that would happen if I were to just base it on my own experiences. The decision was made to look into the history of this relationship and found limitless connections that were either being ignored or had not been seen before. My understanding of the subject was expanding, and historical research became a huge part of the argument. History not only engaged my thoughts but also made me realize how much narrative and story were apart of everything that we do and the biggest part of all of our histories and that is the biggest connection of all. My story was just going to add to history as it is happening.

Procedure & Participants

Over the course of the last nine months I have completed historical, cultural, and personal research with the help of articles, books, and the keeping of mind maps, and reflections with sketches in a journal. All of these have contributed to the research behind the creation of each of the artworks that are exploring the relationship between art and sports.

My experiences within both worlds have been a lot of where my discoveries have come from. In a sense, the recording and observations for this data have been ongoing since I was a young child so there is a plethora of information and time that has been incorporated within these connections. With my colleagues at work and a couple of friends in the art community, I have had conversations about my findings and they have been recorded in my journal for references for memory.

Data Collection & Plan for Analysis

My data is deeply rooted in the creations of the arts-based elements. I want to show tangible relationship between these two avenues and shed light on this as two things that need to not be so separate and can be equalized and expanded upon together as both very important cultural capstones. My artwork is the result of the data collection. I will reflect on and critique the art, the decisions made during the art making process and use this as a framework for the connections. I have researched and produced as an artist, teacher, athlete, and coach. My goal is to find ways to incorporate artistic elements and kinesthetic elements into both of my arenas of leadership as a coach and teacher. As a part of that same goal, use this as a way to connect the two not only in my life but to bridge the gaps of perceptions people have about these two areas of engagement.

Limitations

Since my district is a small one and I am the only art teacher, this has turned out to be somewhat hard because my colleagues, who are very educated and culturally wise, just do not have the same knowledge of artistic concepts or artistic education. However, they are still in the field and are very open to conversation about the connections of athletics and education because our small school is very sports driven. This also turned

out to be somewhat of an obstacle because the people who are coaches or physical education teachers have almost no connections with the arts. So, my attempts to find something where I could have my classroom engaged in a collaboration have been very limited, so I turned my attentions to arts-based research to discover those connections within myself as an educator and coach.

Every research or art project has its setbacks at times and to acknowledge those setbacks, embrace them and use them to push yourself outside your comfort zone is essential to good art making and probably to good research as well. There could be some argument that the research done in my artwork would be less valid than a historian's. "The term history has roots that are related to inquiry, story, witnessing and recording" (Howell, p. 151). Any part of history itself was written by people who were telling their truth about the events that they witnessed. I view my narrative and findings as a valid source of historical context within my lifetime and also a valid form of research to use because I am stating my truth. This truth is not just based on opinion; it is based on what I have witnessed, knowledge I have pursued, texts that were read and happenings that I have been played a leading role in. "Research is no longer perceived from a traditional scientific perspective, but rather from an alternative point of view where research is conceived of as 're-search' and is a living practice intimately connected to the arts and education" (Irwin, p. 104). I am living my practice and research. History has also been witness to others research for centuries and that is why my narrative is just as valid.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Initial Process

This chapter includes an overview of the data in the form of personal artwork. In order to understand the findings of this study, there first needs to be an explanation of my process as an art maker and researcher. Mind maps, listing the similarities and differences between art and sports, writing down my memories, creating sketches of ideas and exploring literature, formed the ideas for the art portion of this arts-based research project. The art that was created is the data that will be analyzed. I will discuss each artwork that was carefully cultivated throughout this progression. Each project had its own way of finding its way to creation and I will explore my own personal critiques of these artworks as well to share a view of semi-objectivity. The biggest part of this process was a self-examination even when I was not a fan of facing my past stories that brought up many complicated emotions. What can my life be a testament to? What can the metaphorical state showcase that the literal state cannot? How can my art and history give life to this connection I believe in exploring?

Artwork and Inquiry

The first thing I do when attempting to self-reflect and see the connections with art in my own life was to mind map my experiences and explore all of the similarities and differences within my unaltered thoughts and memories. This led to me keeping of journal and sketchbook to keep record of these findings (see Fig.3).

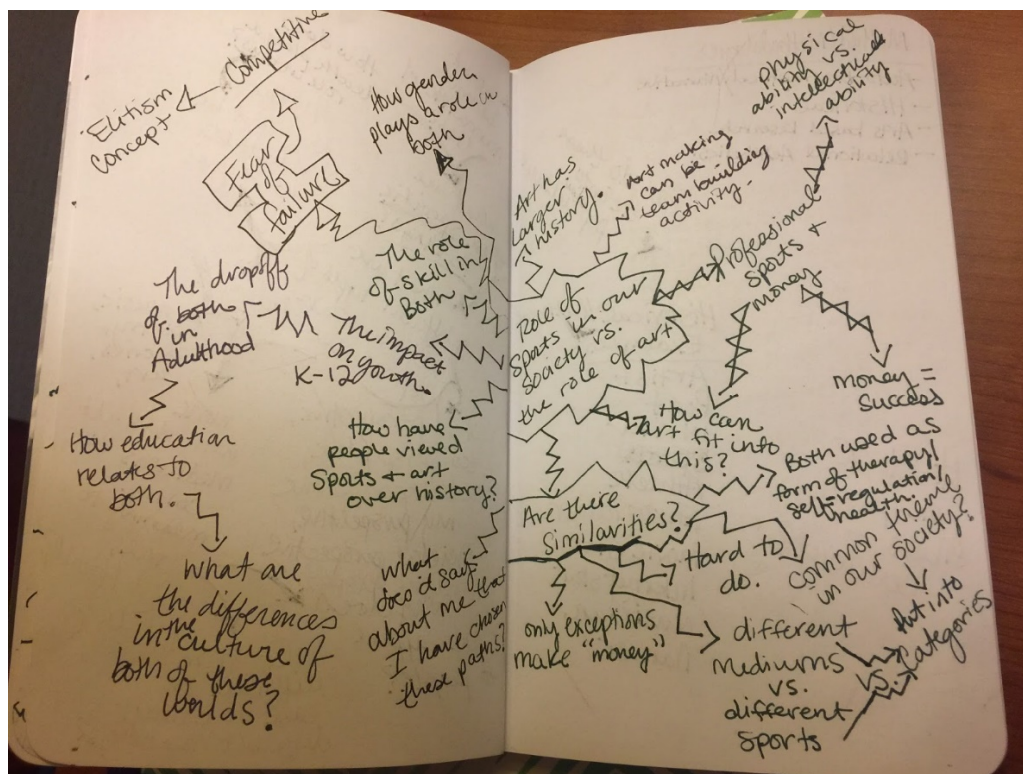


Figure 3, Micala Anderson, Initial Journal Entry, Drawing, 2017.

From these journal entries, I would choose the ideas that related most to my own connections within my past and what I felt was the most relevant and relatable to other people as well. Almost all of the data compiled was something that impressed me as a reverberation from my past to my present to something that I could see leading the path to my future. Art and sports were the biggest connection and influence on the choices I made deciding my career. They were also repeating patterns within my mind maps and memory writings that showed me a path to follow.

Media & Details

Since this started with self-reflection, the beginnings of my work were digital self-portraits. From these self-portraits, I determined a distinct diptych theme that would arise within all of my work. Each artwork I created seemed to have a counterpart or

another version that showed the different sides of myself that emulated different paths with both my personal stories with sports and art.

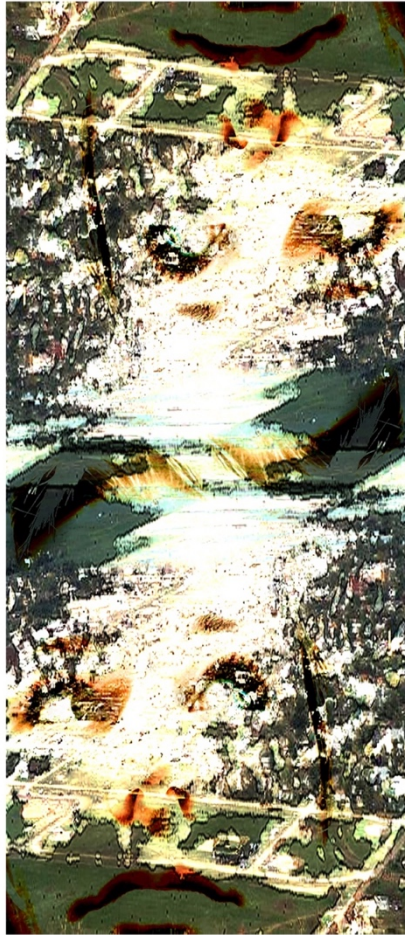


Figure 4, Micala Anderson, Reflection, Digital Collage, 2017.

Reflection (see Fig. 4) starts this theme with an asymmetrical version of myself overlaid with a path of the tornado that struck my home town when I was ten. These events were chosen because this was a time in my life that I can point to as a basis of change that led me on a somewhat path of chaos for the next fifteen years. My father left our home for good and it was my first experience with betrayal. He was my role model and one of my initial influences on the love that I feel for athletics. It was also a time that I remember writing and drawing to express my emotions. The impact that had on my life

resonates until adulthood and still has impacts on my decision making. Since this was the first major event in my life where I could connect the two in a way that seemed like destiny. I couldn't ignore the metaphor of the destruction of the path of the tornado because in the wake of that tornado, there was also growth. New things were built in my hometown and I became a more understanding person from this experience. Such as art, such is life, there can always be beauty in the ashes as long as you look for it.

I felt that *Reflection* told the beginning of the story but there had to be an ending of sorts to this piece. A self-portrait seemed fitting because it was the telling of my expedition. As an art teacher and coach, I truly feel that this is what I was meant to do. These first pieces seemed to tell the overview of how one goes from tragedy to triumph, which is what I emulated with *Voyage* (see Fig. 5).



Figure 5, Micala Anderson, *Voyage*, Digital Collage, 2017.

Creating these self-portraits in a digital format led to a cultivation of using mixed media to combine the more personal aspects of my journey together to produce another diptych series. For this next series of work, I was inspired by the map artwork of Stephen

Walter, *The Island*, 2008 (see Fig. 6). He mapped out his home town, London, with all of his personal memories as parts of the city instead of the actual streets and landmarks of the city. For *Memory Maze* (see Fig. 7) I combined elements of my history and essentially made the blueprints of my memories. In addition, I made a maze of my brain on a self-portrait to symbolize the paths we take in life are not all winners. We do not always take the correct road first, but I do believe that we find our way eventually to our destined route. The incorporation of my memories with the maze is an effort to mirror all of the diverse turns, errors, and successes my life has taken in order to get me to the point where I have become a teacher and coach.



Figure 6, Stephen Walter, The Island, 2008. Photo from "The Map as Art" pg. 202.



Figure 7, Micala Anderson, *Memory Maze*, Mixed Media, 2018.



Figure 8, Micala Anderson, *Frequent Flashes*, Photography & Fibers, 2018.

In another sense, it is not just the big choices that get us to a place of contentment and peace with our life path. In many ways, it is the day to day small choices that influence who and what we become. In sports and art, practice daily and the choices to learn the small motions, the intricate workings and dedication to the art of being successful push us into moving towards perfecting our ability. In *Frequent Flashes* (see Fig. 8) the photographs were intentionally taken with a Polaroid camera to show the instantaneous moments that pass us by as we are living our day to day lives. Also, they show that our lives are made up more of these moments than the ones that seem larger to us. They are meant to show the moments that we do not see as a big impact in the moment, but we realize it later on.

...

Learning about poverty culture was one of the most eye-opening experiences because it related to my life, my husband's life and my student's lives. It gave me a sense of understanding from where I could relate to the people around me in a deeper way. I will never forget listening to the lecture I was in that day and feeling a sense of immense empathy for most of the people in my life because I could now see the pain that their actions came from. It gave me different eyes to see my students through so that I could form relationships and reach them in a way I had not been able to before. Out of all of the pointless in-services teachers have to sit through, this is the first one that I know has changed my teaching and coach for the better.

...

The pictures show my day to day life and how it all connects together. All of those small moments created the life that I have now as a teacher and a coach. My journey from artist to teacher and player to coach was a tumultuous one. I was young, impetuous, rebellious, and unfocused when I started out. As my paths started to align I learned a lot about myself, got older and more responsible. *Chroma Conversion* (see Fig. 9) & *Monochrome Metamorphosis* (see Fig. 10) align with these parts of the journey. It shows a dramatic change in color but also highlights different parts of the story and you see something different within each transformation even though they are the same digital collage.



Figure 9, Micala Anderson, *Chroma Conversion*, Digital Collage, 2018.

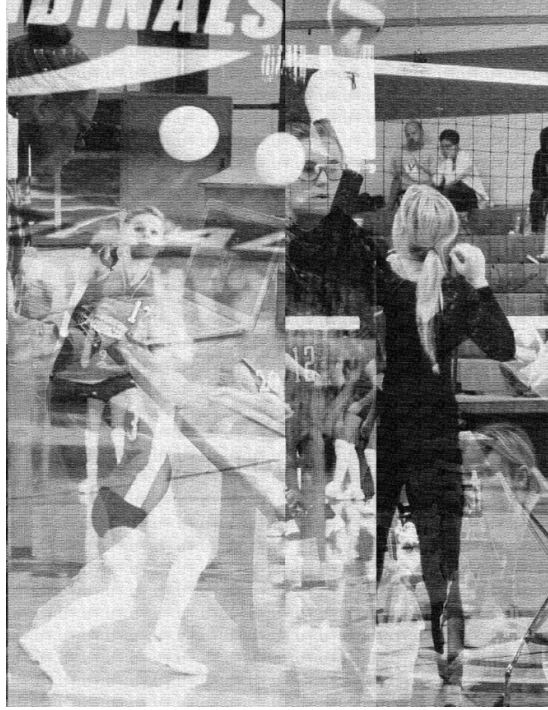


Figure 10, Micala Anderson, *Monochrome Metamorphosis*, Digital Collage, 2018.

Many people have gone on a similar journey on the way to finding what they believe to be their calling. Which is why I felt I needed to create a piece that shows this transformation. It is often a tough journey and it is one that I find to be a constant in life. This diptych was really meant to showcase the similarities between the roads that lead to teacher and coach within the art and sports world. From the creation of this artwork I got the inspiration to create the pieces, *Artist's Mission* (see Fig. 11) and *Athlete's Undertaking* (see Fig. 12). These pieces were directed as a take on the individual paths and ways that artists and athletes form. To help the audience understand that even though they are similar, they are also different but the creation of something amazing is still happening. The beauty of an executed play in volleyball that ends with a point is just as valid and beautiful as a final artwork for an artist. The product may be different but the goals are the same, achievement.



Figure 11, Micala Anderson, *Artist's Mission*, Mixed Media, 2018.

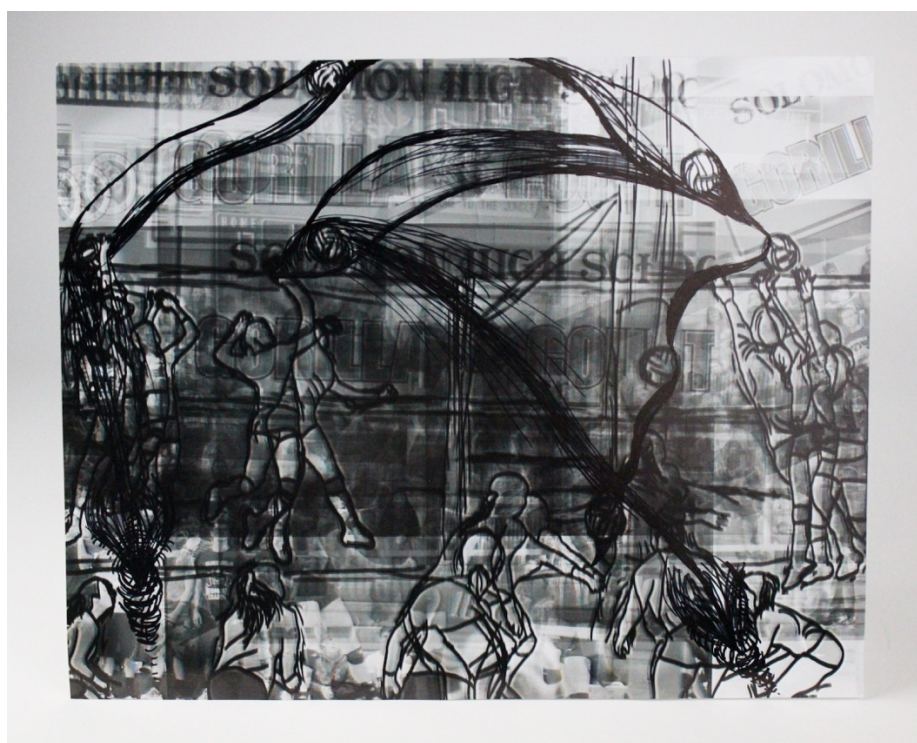


Figure 12, Micala Anderson, *Athlete's Undertaking*, Mixed Media, 2018.



Figure 13, Micala Anderson, *Uniquely United*, Mixed Media, 2018.

The final project that resulted from my data gathering process was *Uniquely United* (see Fig. 13). Athletics and art have undeniable overlap and connections that have been explored within these works of art and especially within *Uniquely United*. There are two sides to the collage, one is sports theme and the other arts. I took pictures and words that described and depicted the participation in each one. The words are important because if you switched them between art and sports, they would describe and identify each one almost seamlessly. This was done as a final act to show the research and validity within the two's relationship. Analyzing this artwork has shown multiple connections between art and sports. It has also shown a need for further research and exploration to truly understand and figure out the benefits that could be possible with the crossover of the two within education, artwork, athletics and our society.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Effects on Practice

Looking at my research and all that I have learned about myself throughout this process has also made me see my students in a clearer light. I see the connections they can make in both sports and art and I can use that to help teach my students in a more understanding way. Also, this research has made me pay more attention to who my students are, how I teach them, and the differences in them as learners and as players. It has also made me see that there are more connections within the way they learn in both atmospheres, not just the way I teach or coach them.

Personal Reflection

In the past, I would have said that teaching and coaching was something I discovered when I was around twenty-two years old. However, now that I have explored my person, it would seem that this was almost what I was destined to do. Finding all of these connections in history, in our culture, and within the practices of both art and sports has really helped me find the connections between the two. Finding this within myself, leaves me wanting others to follow in that wake. It has been profound to find myself such apart of these two worlds and relating them in ways that I never would have thought about before. I keep trying to get people to experience more art or athletics, even if they are not inclined for either of them, because of what they mean to me. Also, I see how they can truly benefit quality of life whether that is as an adult or a child. Within my own art making process, I have found these connections to be tangible and relatable to anyone

who has been an athlete or an artist. I would go as far as to say that these findings have opened my eyes to a new way of seeing the possibilities within others and myself.

Future Actions & Research

There could be more research done within these two realms. There are many ways that these could combine into the classroom such as, cross curricular instruction from both the art and physical education departments. Simple projects with both aspects as the main focus such as, using movement as artwork or a teacher could incorporate creative thinking skills into their physical education lesson. The uniqueness of arts-based research is that there does not have to be a definite answer at the end of the research process. So, in the mindset of an open viewpoint, the focus of this research was to find the connections, explore them, and expand on them. In the future, within my own classroom, exploring that connection within my students will be a definite possibility. This could also open minds and doors for artists and athletes alike to see each other with a more rounded view. In conclusion, the possibilities of further research could go beyond what we are trained to perceive about sports and art. The demand for this significant connection is in our youth, in our everyday adult lives, our education system, and in ourselves. We need to be open to what could happen in these areas as a culture, let the connections take hold and explore them together.

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