

**GEORGIA COLLINS: CAREER AND COMMITMENT
IN THE CONTEXT OF GENDER ISSUES IN ART EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

Georgia Collins, a notable female leader in art education, is the focus of this article. Through narrative inquiry I address the following questions: how did Georgia Collins' interest in gender issues in art education begin and what was her work and life like in writing about them? What experiences impacted her life as an art educator interested in gender issues in art education? What has being a notable figure in the field meant to her? In-depth interviews primarily involved stories told by Georgia Collins and two art educators significant to her work. Through interpretive analysis of the interviews as well as supporting documents, I present various strands of Georgia Collins' professional and personal life as a leader in the field of art education associated with feminism and gender issues. Four primary themes are discussed as significant to Collins in an analysis of the interviews: epiphanies, synergist relationships, personal and professional transformations, and life after academia.

Introduction

Carol Christ (1986) asserts that "the simple act of telling a woman's story from a woman's point of view is a revolutionary act" (p. 16). The gender revolution in which Georgia Collins was a participant, both in the larger second wave women's movement as well as in the feminist movement in art education, is comprised of stories. Collins' stories illuminate the gender revolution vividly and give it a meaningful personal context.

Stories we share indisputably serve as vehicles for meaning in our lives. We live and lead storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In art education, the missing gaps of women's contributions continue to be filled, often through the narrative tradition. In overviews of the history of art education the contributions of men are given more attention than the contributions of women (Stankiewicz & Zimmerman, 1984). It is the intent of this study to add to the literature on women's contributions to art education in order to create a richer, more complete, and balanced picture of the field. It particularly addresses the life and work of Georgia Collins, a prominent female art educator many refer to as the "mother" of feminist studies in art education.

Stories and Narrative

The Personal Narratives Group (1989) called for a balance in all disciplines in the telling of stories and experiences by and including women. Their work brought my attention to a crisis in historical and contemporary gender representations in art education whose parameters traditionally include the perspectives of men. Human experience is "gendered." Gender roles and gender expectations become normative through daily experiences that are socially constructed conceptions of social reality. The insistence that female experience is indeed important is vital for feminist research and for understanding the world. Narratives can illuminate how women negotiate gender status daily and over the course of a lifetime.

My lens for looking at gender as a viable issue in art education prior to reading the published work of Georgia Collins was dominated by a one-dimensional view, that gender was not an issue worthy of special attention in art education. Through the knowledge and insights gleaned from reading her work, I came to an overwhelming awareness, height-

ened by the glaring realization that many years had gone by in my art teacher preparation with no mention of gender issues in art education. What followed was what hooks (1994) refers to as “theoretical healing,” the moments of epiphany whereby I realized the complexities of my field in literally a new way. With this realization, I embarked on a quest to build a narrative inquiry of the life of Georgia Collins.

The life and experiences of Georgia Collins certainly have been multiple and situated. Through this study her stories and contextual information provide a richer foundation for knowledge construction in the field of art education. Her shared stories can add to the history of art education and her activism can serve as a model for students and teachers from which they can reflect on their own experiences. Through well-constructed narratives a language of possibility is developed (Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

It is Elliot Eisner’s (2002) contention that to conceive of educational ideology in practical or useful terms is to “understand how beliefs about what is valued influence what is taught, for what ends, and for what reasons” (p. 55). One overall aim of this narrative inquiry was the examination of Collins’ ideological beliefs to reveal how these values influenced what she thought, for what ends, and for what reasons. Graeme Chalmers (2004) points out that accounts and stories of the lives of art educators have been of interest in the history of art education. However, he also points out that “some of the resulting accounts have been exercises in ‘saint-making’ rather than critical histories” (p. 14). It is not my intent to glorify the life of one woman. I wish to reveal ideological stances and their contexts so as to understand one facet of the field of art education better. To establish connections between Collins’ life and the impact of gender issues in the field of art education, storytelling was used to explore what kind of experiences, hopes, desires and conditions set one woman on a path throughout a career that so closely aligned itself to one overriding issue, that of gender and feminism in art education. Secondly, how those individuals significant in Collins’ social network participated in those experiences is also of primary interest. In addition to feminist reconstructions of our understanding of the field of art education through Collins’ contributions to the field, I rationalize the fecundity of this study upon the shoulders of others’ works that construct knowledge

of gendered experiences in art education (e.g. Congdon & Zimmerman, 1993; Grauer, Irwin, & Zimmerman, 2003; Raunft, 2000; Saccá and Zimmerman, 1998; Stankiewicz, 1985; Stankiewicz & Zimmerman, 1985; Zimmerman & Stankiewicz, 1982).

Art education literature includes stories of individuals and groups of individuals, both male and female. Narratives have been written with various purposes in mind and a prominent contribution to the genre of stories in art education is a series of five volumes dedicated to the stories of women art educators, past and present, in the form of biographies, autobiographies, and narratives concerned with feminist issues. *Women Art Educators* was published in 1982, 1985, 1993, 1998, and 2003. These volumes include (among other genres) narrative inquiry and feminist discourse made relevant through the transformative power of story. I read (and continue to read) these volumes as revival of my faith in art education is being spearheaded by once invisible women. Each chapter provides tastes of forbidden fruit that I occasionally decline to discuss with male colleagues and students, reserving my reactions and critique to the eager ears of female art educators. Many stories ooze with affirmation that I need as a female art educator. The stories verify that my role in art education has purpose beyond universal truths to more contextually bound stories; stories that operate in such a way as to remind me that what I do indeed matters. My hands linger on the covers of these works as if they embody something sacred, in the hopes that someday they will become commonplace sources in art education and pre-service teacher preparation.

Other recent narrative works in art education include *Barkan* by Mary Zahner (2003) and *The Flower Teachers* by Candace Jesse Stout (2002). Zahner spans Manuel Barkan’s career from his early developmental influences, to Barkan’s preoccupation with the notion of creativity, to his later approach which focused on Jerome Bruner’s notion of “structure of a subject” (p. ix). From Bruner’s work, Barkan constructed an approach to art education that was less rigid and allowed the possibility of emergent control. Zahner’s examination of how Barkan’s thinking and influence evolved demonstrates how a comprehensive examination of one life can benefit art education by placing accomplishments in the context in which they happened.

Stout (2002) probed the career experiences of art teachers who began teaching in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some of whom are still teaching. Open-ended interviews of 30 teachers were used to construct what Stout coined the Flower Teachers' Project. In their stories, she found patterns of experiences that shaped their teaching lives. Stout asserts that,

For those of us who seek to know and understand the experience of others, stories are the essential research tools. They draw us in—thought and feeling. They dispel indifference. They make us care. Stories suspend us in a medium of fascination, providing us glimpses of other truths, other lives. (p. 165)

Another particularly moving narrative of a life of an art teacher is told by Tom Barone (2001). Barone's study investigated the meaning of encounters with an art teacher and his former art students and the significance of those encounters. In addition, an examination (Barakett & Sacca, 2000) of how shared stories can assist both art teachers and art students in reflecting on their own experiences showed the possibilities of narrative to inform art education. Cynthia Colbert and Martha Taunton (2001) also reflected possibilities of narratives in their review of classroom research methodologies in art education, calling attention to the need for narrative portraits of art teachers and students. In particular, qualities of effective teachers can be illuminated through in-depth examination of individuals and their practice. There are others, too numerous to discuss in the scope of this paper, yet paramount to gaining a glimpse into the growing trend of stories as knowledge construction in art education.¹ See for example, Paul Bolin, Doug Blandy, and Kristin Congdon (2000); Dennis Fehr, Kris Fehr, and Karen Keifer-Boyd (2000); Rita Irwin (1995); Robert Anderson (1997); Mary Ann Stankiewicz and Enid Zimmerman (1984); and Tom Anderson (2000).

Revisiting a Life: Unraveling a Knot

Through this study, I wanted to assemble a narrative that explains how one woman chose to devote much of her career to exploring and sharing her knowledge and insights about issues of gender in art educa-

tion. What I found was in essence a far more complex journey. Barely had I begun interviewing Georgia Collins and those identified in her social network (for an explanation of social networks and interviewing see Fingeret, 1983) when I came to the realization that to understand the impact of Georgia Collins' work would be like unraveling a complex knot, part of an intricately formed pattern, whose composite is akin to being in the middle of the knot: to unravel it is a negotiation of selecting appropriate paths to undo, then reconfiguring to create what I envision as a beautifully, intricate knotted pattern.

I began this narrative inquiry journey in the hopes of finding out: (a) How Georgia Collins' interest in gender issues in art education began; (b) What Georgia Collins' work and life were like for her in writing about gender issues in art education; (c) What key turning points, epiphanies, or experiences had left a mark on Georgia Collins' life as an art educator interested in gender issues in art education; and (d) Now that Georgia Collins is retired, what has being a notable figure who has written about gender issues in art education meant to her? I analyzed interviews with Georgia and with members of her social network, as well as documents Georgia provided, including acceptance speeches for awards she received, personal correspondence, poetry, and photographs. Georgia's first name only will be used to address her in the remainder of this article, due to the fact that over the course of data collection I built positive rapport with Georgia, and I believe it is more appropriate to refer to her on a more personal level to maintain the tone of the research. We initially met for the purpose of this research and over the course of it we built a relationship in which first names were used to address one another.

This narrative inquiry weaves an account of an extraordinary identity in the field of art education (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The interviews followed Irving Seidman's (1998) three interview protocols very closely. Orienting the narrative through the three interview structure conveyed the significance of Georgia's past experiences, value to her present experiences, and intention of the future through Georgia's reflection, thus establishing a chronological sense of purpose. The paper is organized around the four research questions and address *character and presence; epiphanies, turning points, and nutrient experiences; synergist relationships; reciprocal and complementary ways of working; plural-*

ism: transformative personal and professional ways of working; transformative teaching; and life after academia.

Georgia Collins: Character and Presence

Georgia Collins' reputation in large part rests on the massive body of work she has written on contemporary feminist concerns in art education. Her published work spans four decades (1977-2007) of thoughtful scrutiny of the meaning of gender and feminism in art education. (For a review of Collins' published works see Hoeptner-Poling, 2005).

If I were to create an art work based on Georgia Collins, it would have to be in the form of a dance. It would be humble, yet exuberant; it would invite the audience to participate and put the spotlight on them; it would be timeless, quietly dynamic; it would be multi-layered, requiring much patience to perform; it would have no air of deception or fakery, but genuine participatory enthusiasm; it would invite women to remember why they love being women; it would surface repeatedly, just like any good work that has a life of its own, bright and thoughtful. Figure 1 is a photograph of Georgia Collins in 2005.

Georgia is as vibrant and graceful as she was as a teenage homecoming queen. Her affect is complemented by her reserved and contemplative gaze. Through six months of research, I came to understand the character and presence of an extraordinary woman. Everyone I interviewed about Georgia spoke highly of her and used words such as bright, thoughtful, caring, fair, decent, smart, aggressive, reasonable, careful, level-headed, truthful, trustworthy, conscientious, graceful, committed; a supporter, sage advisor, wise woman, and role model.

Perhaps no one sums up the qualities of Georgia Collins more eloquently and accurately than Laura Chapman (an art educator whom Georgia considers a mentor):

The best way to describe the role that Georgia has played in my life is through a comparison with the wonderful experience of being in a landscape marked by the Zen-inspired qualities known as *Wabi*, *Sabi*, and *Shibui*. *Wabi* means quiet, honest integrity. *Sabi* means reserved, mellowed with age. *Shibui* means moderate, but refreshing and energizing. Georgia has the same qualities,

and they speak to her personal and professional presence in the landscape of my life, and perhaps the lives of many others. The amount of time or quantity of my experience with Georgia is less important than the residual values of trust in her integrity. That is beyond measure. (L. Chapman, personal communication, April 15, 2005)



Figure 1. Georgia Collins. Photograph courtesy of Linda Hoeptner-Poling, © 2005.

Epiphanies, Turning Points, and Nutrient Experiences

Georgia Collins was born in 1934 in Twinsburg, Ohio, the middle child of three daughters. Despite knowing that her parents loved her, Georgia suspected her father was secretly disappointed in not having had a son. Early on, she committed to not being a disappointment by doing things that at the time were relegated to boys. She states,

I did not intend to be a disappointment and thought I could make up for my father's not having a son by going fishing with him,

learning how to bait my own hook, start an outboard motor on the first pull, and, if necessary, change a broken cotter pin. (Collins, 2004)

She “knew” that mothers did not work outside the home (unless absolutely necessary), that “fathers fixed things and mothers cleaned them” (Collins, 2004). In play, Georgia internalized the gendered role of toys and she knew that it was acceptable for girls to play with dolls *and* trains, but it was suspect when boys played with both trains and dolls. She said, “We begin to gauge ourselves and others by a mysterious set of double standards for males and females when it comes to being (quiet, pretty, in need of rescue) and doing (running, making, rescuing and of course, winning)” (Collins, 2004). By the age of six, however, Georgia considered the making of art neither a “boy thing” nor a “girl thing.” A telling account of gender role awareness was put poignantly by Georgia in the following passage reflecting on her elementary years:

My notions of art and womanhood had become more complex and personal. I knew, for example, that Natalie Nichols was an old maid even though she did not have a large wart on her nose like the one in my deck of cards; that Maud Ford was a widow because her husband had died; that Mrs. Roxbury, my fourth grade teacher, was a divorcee because she had, for some unknown reason, left her husband who had been a good provider; and that, even though she was happily married, you had to feel sorry for Katherine Dodson because she had no children. (Collins, 2004)

Georgia also describes a coup in questioning social acceptability in the fifth grade when she and a group of other girls decided they would challenge the de facto dress code for girls. They began wearing slacks and jeans to school every Thursday as a united front so as to avoid the embarrassment of “I see Germany. I see France. I see somebody’s underpants” while on the playground equipment (Collins, 1991). This early show of solidarity in the Class of 1952 is a telling metaphor of future challenges Georgia would face later in life.

By the time Georgia graduated from high school (see Figure 2),

she remembers “I was well versed in the etiquette, privileges and perils of becoming a woman. I knew that you had to avoid competing with boys, being a ‘wall-flower,’ or having a ‘bad’ reputation” (Collins, 2004).

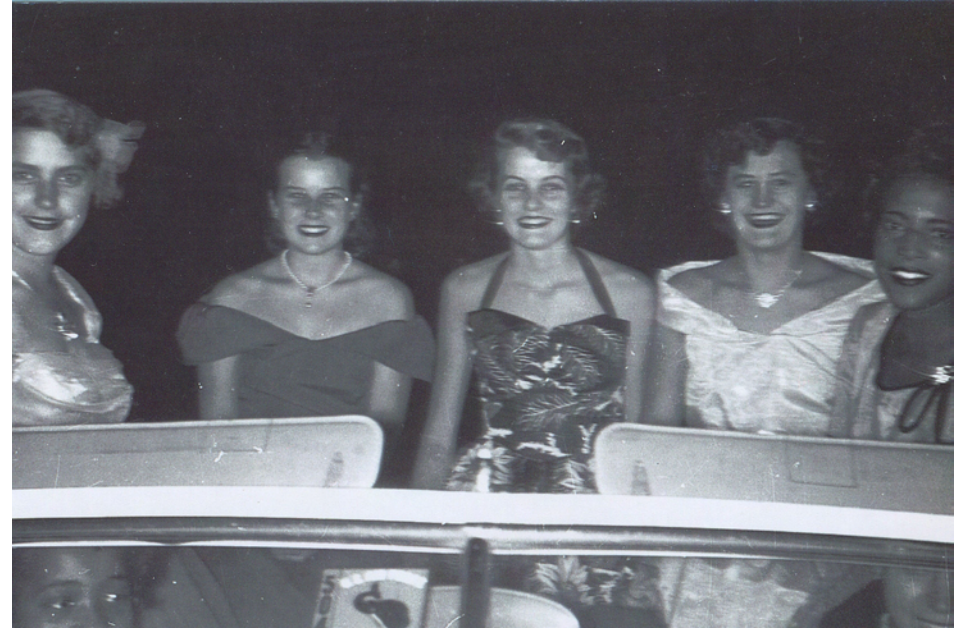


Figure 2. Georgia Collins (third from left) as the 1951 football homecoming queen. Copyright 1951 by Georgia Collins. Reprinted with permission.

Later, while attending the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Georgia met her husband and by 1969 she had three children. The family eventually settled in Kentucky where her husband held a faculty position at the University of Kentucky. In tune with the political climate of the time, Georgia, with the encouragement of her husband (an educational philosopher), attended a free course on women’s liberation. This experience would be an epiphany, turning point, and nutrient experience that channeled Georgia’s life work. She describes the first meeting:

The class was held in a small room in the Student Union. It was packed with young women. Three men lounged in the back row. One was smoking a cigar. I felt out of place because of my age (35) but I took a seat. Before our teacher identified herself and

her two friends as members of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), she asked the men to leave the room. I held my breath, but the men merely smirked and exited in a cloud of smoke. Our teacher suggested we arrange our chairs in a circle. She told us that she and her friends were hoping to organize a women's liberation consciousness raising group; then she passed out a mimeograph sheet of questions for discussion. I ran my eyes down the list. One question jumped out at me. It was this: Why do so many people say they would rather have boy babies than girl babies? (Collins, 2004)

This question was a catalyst to Georgia's own consciousness raising, as memories (albeit never spoken) of her father's disappointment in not having had a son came back to her. Georgia explained,

When I first asked myself the apparently innocent question about people's preference for boy babies, the puzzle pieces of my life suddenly fell into place, forming a coherent pattern. I experienced this new way of looking at things as liberating. I no longer felt it necessary to deny my own personal experience, to dissemble, or to repress my anger over sexual double standards and the double-binds, damned-if-you-do or if-you-don't set of gender rules I had tried to play by for the first 35 years of my life. Everything about sex and gender was suddenly open to critique, not rational argument, not competitive debate, but open to a radical critique from a woman's personal point of view. (Collins, 2004)

In the years that followed, the second-wave women's movement and the second-wave women's movement in art were forces closely connected to Georgia's work which pragmatically and philosophically addressed issues of feminism and gender issues in art education. Georgia's work (both solo and in collaboration) can be characterized as philosophical inquiry to discover meaning and clarity of feminism and gender issues in art education, not to uncover facts and "truth" about them. She addressed the sex appropriateness of art activity for the female, citing Simone de Beauvoir's (1952) concepts of transcendent (male) and imma-

nent (female) values, notions she would revisit again and again. Georgia frequently raised questions about feminine sensibility as an issue in art education, drawing attention to the negative values she believes underlie art teaching. She explored and advocated for a pluralistic approach to art teaching characterized by an androgynous model for art activity. Sex equity and issues of status of women in art education, a feminine identified field, were commonly discussed. It has been Georgia's contention that art educators will not be fully empowered until the feminine-identified values of art teaching are considered equal to masculine-identified values of art teaching.

The early years of the women's art movement were dominated by artists, art historians, and art critics, largely bypassing issues of the possible roles art might play in minimizing sexist influences in art education (Sandell, 1979). Georgia, with others in the field, worked diligently in the next decades to remedy this condition.

Synergistic Relationships

While Georgia's contributions to the field of art education easily stand on their own, it is impossible to describe them in isolation. Renee Sandell and Georgia Collins have worked together for thirty years; a relationship based on trust, mutual admiration, and friendship. The bond they share was evident the first minute I started speaking with Renee—the impact of their synergist collaboration was heartfelt, profound and inspiring. *Women, Art and Education* (1984) is perhaps their best known collaboration in which they trusted their inner vision and their extensive scholarship to write a comprehensive work on women's issues and art education. Later in 1996, they co-edited *Gender Issues in Art Education*, an issues-based anthology representing a useful and insightful blend of praxis-oriented feminist voices in the field. Both Georgia and Renee are proud of this combined effort, which expanded collaboration on issues of feminism and gender issues in art education to include eighteen voices of others in the field interested in the similar issues.

What makes Georgia's and Renee's writing partnership so powerful is a synergistic mix of factors. Georgia clearly is a theorist, the philosophical thinker. Renee is a pragmatist, situating ideas in practice. Renee shared, "The whole is so much more from its parts. So many ideas, and

it's really the excitement, the motivation; all that comes from that kind of processing" (R. Sandell, personal communication, February 5, 2005). While Georgia is the calm, think-it-through-thoroughly-before-you-jump half of the team, Renee is the energetic go-getter other half. Georgia and Renee's partnership is organic and non-hierarchical with mutually shared empowerment.

Bernard Young was a colleague of Georgia's from 1979 to 1988 at the University of Kentucky. Both starting their careers at UK, they immediately connected on a professional as well as personal level and continue their friendship to this day. Their professional relationship was what many in academia would deem ideal. Bernard called Georgia a welcome partner in the oftentimes drudgery of committee work, departmental work, and other community service. He compared their work together as a two-person caucus united in similar vision for what was needed and right at the university. In a reasoned and assertive way, Georgia and Bernard were a united front. When asked about Georgia's politics that involved departmental action, Bernard indicated that Georgia was indeed political and highly ethical in her dealings with university matters. Georgia had a second-sense about how to "play the game" in order to get things done, but also did so in a very admirable fashion. Bernard shared many conversations he had with Georgia concerning the balancing act of the personal and professional that reminds us of the importance of balance:

I've seen all kinds of shipwrecks all over campus; of people that just could not maintain personal, family relationships at all when they were trying to sort of get to the top of their careers. And she did that with ease and grace. (B. Young, personal communication, March 12, 2005)

Reciprocal and Complementary Ways of Working

Georgia's way of working with Renee, in particular, and with other women in the field are characterized as a synergistic process of reciprocal support, trusting intuition, and honoring many voices over one. As Renee put it, "We were sort of following our own values, that of having more voices, and that whole voice piece is so important to us as

art educators in general, but really, to feminists" (R. Sandell, personal communication, February 4, 2005). Co-authors in essence become a family and community of voices, a feminist ideal that places more value on organic and holistic ways of working over the solo and isolated voice. Other synergistic relationships include Georgia's work in the NAEA Women's Caucus. Working to eradicate gender discrimination at all levels of art education, the Women's Caucus of the National Art Education Association was a circle of members Georgia described a reciprocal connection with that allowed both the sharing of her ideas as well as a cathartic outlet. Georgia called the support and encouragement a "remedy" from intellectual isolation. She became part of task forces (the militaristic tone of which she did not like) and took action by writing to editors of journals asking for a balance of male and female voices as well as for the use of non-sexist language. It was a community, an extended family that worked towards an overriding goal and at the same time honored individual voices and accomplishments in achieving it. Interestingly, the NAEA Women's Caucus is valued by Georgia for its role in her life, but whose need for existence she would like to see eliminated. Put simply, removing sexist practices in art education would rid the need for it. Members of the NAEA Women's Caucus supplied an extension of support and affirmation Georgia appreciated outside of personal and working relationships. She formed lasting relationships with many members, and now hopes that the new generation of feminists in the field both continue and revise the Caucus' function within the larger association.

Pluralism: Transformative Personal and Professional Ways of Working

Issues of diversity were important to Georgia in both her work and in her day-to-day life. Renee reflects on the diversity inherent in her relationship with Georgia: "Ultimately we have very different backgrounds; and it's such an interesting relationship. I think that some of the diversity between us...it's very interesting; but I think it fits with really appreciating diversity, thinking differently, constantly being open to new ways of looking at things. Georgia and I, our connection was cemented in certain ways by our diversity; our differences in age, our differences in background, our differences in stages of life" (R. Sandell, personal com-

munication, February 4, 2005).

Bernard was the first African American male hired at the University of Kentucky in the College of Fine Arts and Georgia was the first female hired in the art education department. Georgia consciously and with concerted effort advocated and pushed for more diversity at the University of Kentucky and she and Bernard shared many conversations on related topics, anchoring their strong relationship. Different phases of life, (Georgia the older, with grown children; Bernard younger, with small children), enhanced their relationship as well. The personal conversations Bernard, Renee, and Georgia shared often revolved around issues Georgia had already lived through. Her ability to thrive in multi-generational relationships is one testament to her belief in the importance of pluralism, a transformative response and way of thinking that envisions a new common culture free of inequality that welcomes diversity in all its forms (Collins & Sandell, 1992). This way of thinking, while primarily situated within feminist concerns, was at the heart of Georgia's work and vision. "Things," she said, "didn't look black and white to me; they were more complex" (G. Collins, personal communication, May 26, 2005). On the heels of the Civil Rights Movement in American history, Georgia embraced integration. She welcomed relationships with individuals of various backgrounds and experiences, and continues to do so. She gives partial credit for her awareness to the younger generation of postmodern feminists in education and art education:

Over the last thirty years, my teaching and research have helped me refine my concepts of woman and art, and postmodern theories have encouraged me to temper my more emphatic views on art and womanhood by warning against the over-generalization of my experience as a White, middle-class American female. The subtle mutations in my notions about women and art, however, pale before the dramatic changes that occurred to them during my first women's liberation meeting in 1969. (Collins, 2004)

Experience and backgrounds (including racial and gender identities) need to be situated in how we view our world and work. Georgia acknowledges thinking about these issues more in the last decade (1990s to

the present); but she does not dismiss or accept any positional blame for being White, having been in a White female middle-class movement, but acknowledges it for what it is. She welcomes the differences, including race, class, and socio-economic statuses, inherent in the current movement.

Transformative Teaching

I found descriptions of Georgia's teaching to be transformative in nature. She identified strengths in attention to advanced organization and skill in questioning. Her quiet (yet willful) manner of commanding attention created respect from her students. Bernard describes two types of professors: the researcher professors who become the top researchers but are not good at teaching; and the researcher teachers that excel in both areas. He says,

Georgia was a *researcher* and she was a *teacher*. So she was a teacher that believed that teaching was extremely important, and that students were ultimately the important people in the classroom. So she would sometimes be *exhausted*; and she would come into—after she would leave a classroom say, "Oh, gosh! That took so *much* energy out of me!" And absolutely so tired; and I would understand what she was talking about because she had prepared in extreme detail for her class. And then she would go and work on her research. (B. Young, personal communication, March 12, 2005)

Georgia described her teaching as a form of research:

I think I probably approached my own teaching that way [as research] to a certain extent, but I was not totally aware that that was what I was doing. It was only when I had students and student teachers who were so afraid that they would fail that their lesson plans wouldn't work, that they, and I began to see, that set against the alternative; so what if you perfect these lesson plans and they're always successful, and you do them over and over and over again—what a boring life that was going to

be. So, it seemed to me the answer to both the fear of failure, for early teachers, and the burn-out—doing the same old thing over and over, for teachers who have been working longer—is if you viewed the teaching as research and kept pushing to find out more and more of what, of what the student can do, or what worked best. (G. Collins, personal communication, May 26, 2005)

Georgia stressed to her students that no one model of a good art teacher exists,

that you had to find the roots of yourself as a good teacher in your own personality. And also you had to think of...that your lesson plan was really a hypothesis that you're hypothesizing; that if you do this and this and this they're going to come up with great art work, or they're going to learn all these things. But if it *fails* you've learned something just like you do in research. In other words, teaching is research. (G. Collins, personal communication, May 26, 2005)

To think of teaching in this manner brings fresh perspective, simplicity, and eloquence. Examining the practice of teaching as research as something holistic and dynamic and collaborative breathes life into the relationship.

Conclusion: Retirement and Continuing a Life after Academia

Georgia's life after academia (having retired in 1999), while different from her life as a professor, shows no signs of slowing down. When I asked her during our last conversation in 2005 how she was able to survive academia while juggling other roles, she shared that the real secret is to base your career on something you care about deeply. She chose a focused line of inquiry and it served in sustaining her interest, commitment, and vigor in researching it. On first reading this seems so simple; yet it is profound sage advice.

In her work *Retirement Lessons* (2003), Georgia discussed what she had learned in her first year of retirement, arranged in three "lessons." The first lesson is "On Teaching," describing her return to the

role of being a student once again. From classes she has taken, Georgia reflected on what she learned:

I learned the value (and how-to) of developing a class into a supportive learning community; the importance of clarity and humor; the significance of teaching students as well as the subject; and the pedagogic generosity of being a little absent-minded...I learned that defensive over-planning can be counter-productive; that you should not intimidate students in an attempt to inspire them with the seriousness of your subject; and that it would be better not to be too self-absorbed—at least not during class time. In short, I learned what a ready, available, and inspiring primer on teaching is at hand for those of us in teacher education who continue to take courses. (p. 98)

In this published work, Georgia has come full circle addressing a topic ripe with possibilities in the context of art education. I know of no other works in mainstream art education journals that tackle the issue of retirement (a subject of study whose time has come). Such a graceful continuation of scholarly writing is not surprising. Georgia also continues thinking about gender issues in art education and comments on their future direction within the field. She reflects,

Feminism in academia has, over time, merged its concerns with other liberation/equality movements, and as a result has become de-politicized. The earlier emphases on the similarities among women for the sake of consolidating political power and making changes has inevitably morphed into emphases on differences among women in the spirit of postmodern multiculturalism. I see this shift as beneficial and necessary for the institution of progressive feminist achievements, but I feel neither compelled or eager or particularly qualified to contribute to the development of postmodern feminist perspectives. I see the problems that we second wave feminists energetically tackled and in amazing degree were about to solve but I also see the problems that we created and differences we ignored for the sake of political expediency. I

know that many of our assumptions were arrogant. But I strongly believe based on what I have seen that the younger generations of women in art education will work effectively toward an inclusive and just approach to the teaching of art in our society. (G. Collins, personal communication, March 4, 2005)

Georgia's writings on feminism and art education brought me to her at a time when I was feeling like a bad hot sauce: I was filled with heat (anger and frustration) in my awareness of being female in a feminine-identified field, but I had no flavor (raised consciousness). Her contributions started me and countless others on the path to a raised consciousness and desire to continue the quest for comprehending the complexity of gender issues in the field and the continuous reconstruction and revision of that comprehension. Georgia's work, life, and stories, taken together, illuminate consciousness and understanding in ways that only narrative inquiry can frame. It is one vehicle through which we can enlarge the thematic circle of how we conceptualize gender issues in art education.

There are other notable female (and male) leaders in art education whose stories need to be told and thematically constructed for understanding. The current generation of feminists in art education stands on the shoulders of many, their extraordinary stories embedded in ordinary lives. Learning from their stories can give the field of art education more complex and dynamic dimensions that value personal voice and experience.

End Note

1. See for example, Ament, 1996; Calvert, 1996; Congdon, 1991; Congdon & Zimmerman, 1993; Daniel, 1996; Eyestone-Finnegan, 2000; Garber, 1996 & 2003; Garber & Stankiewicz, 2000; Grauer, Irwin, & Zimmerman, 2003; Irwin, 1995; Irwin, Mastri & Roberston, 2000; Kellman, 1996; Klein, 1993; Lovano-Kerr, Semler, & Zimmerman, 1977; Majewski, 1979; Michael, 1977; Myers, 1998; Packard, 1977; Packard & Zimmerman, 1977; Present Lewis, 1987; Saccá & Zimmerman, 1998; Sandell, 1979; Sandell, 1991; Sandell, Collins & Sherman, 1985; Smith-Shank, 2000a & 2000b; Speirs, 2000; Springer, 1994; Stankiewicz & Zimmerman, 1984 & 1985; Thurber, 1998; Thurber & Zimmerman, 2002; Turner, 1996; Wyrick, 2000; Zimmerman & Stankiewicz, 1982.

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