

Metaphor, Emotion, and Ethics: Arts-Based and Queer Pedagogy as Transformative Reflection

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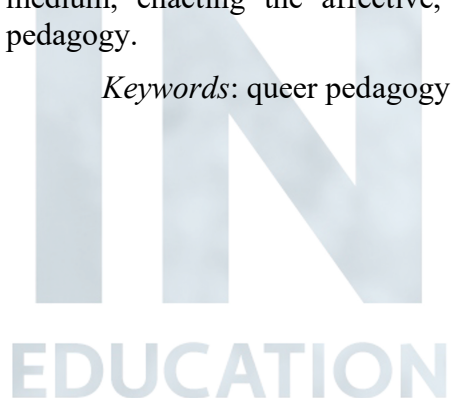
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Abstract

This study explores how arts-based and queer pedagogical frameworks can foster transformative learning in higher education through reflective writing. Situated within a required undergraduate course on cultural safety and structural competency, the research analyzed twelve students' structured reflections following engagement with queer-themed comics. Using arts-informed thematic analysis, the study examined how emotion, metaphor, and ethical awareness emerged in students' writing as indicators of transformative learning. Findings revealed four interrelated themes: affective and transformative awareness, unlearning and identity repositioning, care and professional ethics, and structural awareness and responsibility. Students used figurative language, such as metaphors of growth, constraint, and journey, to articulate emotional and ethical transformation, demonstrating that written reflection can function as an aesthetic and embodied mode of inquiry. Integrating arts-based and queer pedagogical principles enabled learners to translate discomfort into ethical insight and reimagine professional care as a practice grounded in empathy, relationality, and justice. Rather than treating reflection as a neutral record of learning, this study argues that writing itself became part of the learning event: a medium through which students named dissonance, worked through discomfort, and imagined more ethical forms of professional practice. The study concludes that language itself can serve as a transformative medium, enacting the affective, critical, and creative dimensions of arts-based and queer pedagogy.

Keywords: queer pedagogy, arts-based pedagogy, transformative reflection



Metaphor, Emotion, and Ethics: Arts-Based and Queer Pedagogy as Transformative Reflection

Higher education frequently reproduces normative assumptions about knowledge, professionalism, and identity. Conventional pedagogies privilege cognition over affect, linear reasoning over embodied knowing, and objectivity over relational engagement (Ellsworth, 2005; hooks, 1994). These traditions shape who is recognized as a legitimate participant in academic spaces and whose epistemic practices are marginalized (Kumashiro, 2002). Arts-based and queer pedagogies offer critical alternatives that position emotion, embodiment, and creative inquiry as valid modes of knowing.

Rigid disciplinary boundaries have long constrained opportunities for learners to engage uncertainty, vulnerability, and difference as productive forces (Boler, 1999). In professional programs such as health, business, or science, learning often remains instrumental rather than transformative. The emphasis on neutrality and standardization reproduces what queer theorists describe as normativity: the institutionalization of dominant assumptions about gender, sexuality, race, and ability (Bonnet et al., 2023; Britzman, 1995). As a result, the affective and creative dimensions of learning are often marginalized, limiting education's transformative potential.

This study positions arts-based and queer pedagogies as frameworks for reimagining higher education learning. Through narrative inquiry, it examines students' structured reflections following an arts-based activity. These reflections function as texts through which students articulated emotion, identity, and ethical awareness. Through language, they confronted tensions between self-perception and social expectation, visibility and erasure, and personal transformation and collective responsibility. Reflective writing thus demonstrates how language can enact the epistemic and affective possibilities theorized in arts-based and queer pedagogies.

The activity at the centre of this study asked students to engage with five comics from *Rainbow Reflections: Body Image Comics for Queer Men*, an anthology designed to bring queer men's body image research into dialogue with narrative art beyond conventional academic publication (Joy et al., 2019). The anthology frames body image not as a private psychological issue alone, but as something shaped by masculinity, social norms, stigma, and everyday experiences of visibility and exclusion (Joy et al., 2019). That framing matters here because students were not simply reacting to isolated stories, but rather, they were reading texts already structured to hold together embodiment, culture, and health. The comics also offered a distinct form of engagement: visual narrative slowed interpretation, drew attention to juxtaposition and silence, and seemed to invite more textured responses to vulnerability, bodily comparison, shame, and recognition than a more conventional classroom text might have done.

This study contributes to a growing body of research that treats creativity not as peripheral to cognition but as a primary means of engaging ethical and relational learning (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Clover & Stalker, 2007).

Arts-Based and Queer Approaches as Pedagogical Response

Arts-based pedagogy, rooted in Dewey's experiential education, situates aesthetic experience at the core of meaning-making (Dewey, 1934). Artistic creation serves as a process and method, integrating emotional, sensory, and interpretive knowing (Leavy, 2020). Even without direct art-making, interpretive engagement can promote experimentation, risk-taking, and openness to ambiguity, which are conditions for transformation (Rolling, 2013). This approach shifts attention

from mastery of content to engagement with process, emphasizing how learners construct meaning through affective and social encounters.

What arts-based pedagogy contributes here is not only the inclusion of art in teaching, but, more specifically, it offers a way of understanding how form, feeling, and interpretation work together. In that sense, the educational value of the comics does not lie merely in representing queer experience. It lies in the way visual and narrative form invite learners to dwell in tension, to notice what exceeds summary, and to respond with language that is itself often metaphorical, tentative, and emotionally charged.

Queer pedagogy complements this orientation by questioning the norms that shape educational life. Grounded in feminist and critical traditions, it interrogates what counts as knowledge and who produces it (Bonnet et al., 2023; Britzman, 1995). Discomfort becomes an opportunity for learning rather than a pedagogical failure (Kumashiro, 2002). Teaching becomes an act of unlearning, dismantling taken-for-granted truths and opening space for multiplicity and difference (hooks, 1994). Both pedagogies thus centre affect, ambiguity, and relationality.

Queer pedagogy, in turn, contributes more than a general concern with inclusion. Its sharper intervention is its insistence that educational spaces are structured by norms long before any student speaks. It asks what becomes visible, intelligible, or sayable in the classroom, and what remains disqualified as excessive, improper, or unintelligible. For this study, that matters because the reflections are not simply records of student opinion. They are traces of how students encountered, resisted, or reworked normative assumptions about bodies, masculinity, professionalism, and care.

Integrating these approaches allows educators to study how reflective writing embodies both expressive and critical functions. Arts-based pedagogy draws attention to tone, metaphor, and emotion, while queer pedagogy interprets these affective expressions as challenges to normativity (McDonald & Motala, 2022). Through this interaction, reflection becomes a creative and ethical inquiry capable of advancing transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2009). Collectively, these frameworks allow reflection to be read not as a transparent self-report, but as a site where students work through discomfort, revise assumptions, and begin to articulate ethical and professional reorientation.

Purpose and Research Questions

This study investigates how written reflection, informed by arts-based and queer pedagogical principles, can foster transformative learning in higher education. It examines how reflective language enables students to explore the affective, ethical, and relational dimensions of learning and professional formation. The research is guided by three questions:

1. How do students use written reflection to articulate identity, assumptions, and emerging professional self-understanding within arts-based, queer pedagogical spaces?
2. What affective and transformative processes emerge through the writing of structured reflections?
3. How can reflective writing function as a catalyst for ethical and justice-oriented learning in higher education?

By recontextualizing data originally collected in a professional program, the study situates its analysis within broader discussions of teaching and learning in postsecondary education. It

contributes to scholarship that views transformation as emerging not from content transmission but from engagement with complexity, emotion, and relational experience (Caniglia & Vogel, 2023).

Significance and Contribution

This study bridges three domains, arts-based pedagogy, queer pedagogy, and transformative learning, whose intersections remain underexplored in higher education research (Sameshima et al., 2019). Bringing these concepts together clarifies how learning environments can challenge normativity while cultivating reflexivity, ethical awareness, and professional self-examination.

Arts-based pedagogy contributes methods for engaging tacit, affective, and embodied dimensions of knowing (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Queer pedagogy destabilizes assumptions about identity, knowledge, and power, revealing how inclusion and representation are politically structured (Bonnet et al., 2023; Britzman, 1995). Transformative learning adds a developmental account of how reflection and disorientation may yield new ways of knowing and acting (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2009). Taken together, these frameworks suggest that transformation is not purely cognitive, but also relational, embodied, and affective (Boler, 1999; Braidotti, 2013; hooks, 1994).

Methodologically, the study advances reflective writing as an arts-informed mode of inquiry and shows how structured reflection can function as part of pedagogy rather than as a simple record of it. The students were asked to move through prior knowledge, reflection on learning, and implications for practice, while also responding in class to prompts about message, cultural reference, emotional response, and professional application. That structure mattered because it scaffolded movement from recognition to interpretation to ethical response.

Practically, the study contributes to conversations about inclusion and justice-oriented pedagogy in higher education. Arts-based and queer pedagogies engage learners intellectually, emotionally, and socially, while modelling care, critique, and reflexive responsibility. Treating reflective writing as both analytic and ethical shows one way these pedagogies can be enacted in professional education.

Literature Review

Transformative Learning and the Role of Experience

Transformative learning theory explains how learners reconstruct meaning through critical reflection and affective engagement. Mezirow (1978, 2000) described transformation as the reassessment of assumptions prompted by disorienting dilemmas. These emotionally charged experiences can lead to shifts in self-understanding and social awareness (Kreber, 2012).

Subsequent scholars expanded the theory to include emotion and embodiment (Dirkx, 2001). Clark and Dirkx (2008) treated emotion as integral to meaning-making, while Caniglia and Vogel (2023) argued that affective tension, rather than rational analysis, often initiates transformation. Within higher education, transformative learning supports engagement with complex topics such as identity and justice when discomfort is framed as productive rather than disruptive. However, institutional rationalism often discourages emotional inquiry, restricting transformative potential. More recent work also resists framing transformation as linear, outcome-driven, or purely cognitive. Instead, contemporary approaches emphasize affect, relationality, and process in shaping how learners come to re-evaluate assumptions and professional identities (Jonker, 2024). This orientation is especially important in fields such as dietetics, where pedagogical practices may reproduce narrow norms of health, behaviour, and bodily legitimacy.

Critiques of such normalization have called for ‘body-becoming’ pedagogies that emphasize process, affect, and the expansion of possibilities for embodiment through creative engagement (Rice, 2015). Arts-based and narrative methods can support this work by making emotional and embodied knowledge more available to reflection and interpretation (Denton & Cain, 2023; Joy, 2025).

Arts-based pedagogy responds to this limitation. Creative practice offers non-linear, affect-rich inquiry that invites learners to externalize and question assumptions (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Even when direct art-making is absent, written reflection can serve a parallel function by enabling affective expression through language. Aesthetic engagement with words, metaphor, and tone transforms sensory experience into a site of critical meaning-making (Leavy, 2020). This process extends Mezirow’s framework by integrating emotion, material practice, and aesthetic expression as catalysts for transformation. Recent research reinforces this view by emphasizing creative practices as central to posthuman and affective approaches to learning (Norton et al., 2024; Sinervo & Freedman, 2022). In this study, written reflection substitutes for material art-making but performs a comparable function as a container for affective processing and interpretive synthesis.

At the same time, transformative learning is often written as though disorientation is enough on its own. It is not. Discomfort may open the possibility of revision, but it does not guarantee it. Learners still need a medium through which they can test language, reflect on feelings, and connect personal reactions to broader social patterns. In this study, structured writing appears to have served that mediating function. It gave students a way to move from reaction to articulation. That movement is important because the reflections show that emotional disturbance became educationally significant when students could name it, examine it, and connect it to future professional practice.

Arts-Based Pedagogy and Experiential Learning

Rooted in Dewey’s (1934) philosophy of art as experience, arts-based pedagogy situates aesthetic creation at the heart of learning. It reframes artistic expression as embodied inquiry that unites perception, emotion, and cognition. Learners engage with ideas through creative and reflective means, deepening understanding through affective and sensory channels (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2020).

In higher education, arts-based methods support reflective practice across fields such as education, health, and social work (Clover & Stalker, 2007; Rolling, 2013). They allow students to visualize systems, explore ethics, and articulate marginalized perspectives. Similar to experiential learning’s cycle of experience, reflection, and conceptualization (Kolb, 1984), arts-based pedagogy transforms creative engagement into conceptual insight, validating emotion as epistemic.

Although much research emphasizes visual or performative modalities, this study applies arts-based principles to written expression. Reflective writing functions as an aesthetic act through which students organize experience, emotion, and insight (Boncori et al., 2024). The process mirrors artistic creation by allowing learners to materialize feeling and thought through text. Arts-based pedagogies also create opportunities for students to engage complex social issues through visual, narrative, and embodied forms that extend beyond traditional modes of knowledge transmission. Such approaches can support critical inquiry and social inclusion by creating space for marginalized experiences to be encountered through counter-narrative and creative expression (Chappell & Chappell, 2016). They also challenge conventional assumptions about what counts as

valid knowledge by emphasizing reflexive, relational, and multimodal ways of knowing (McLean, 2022). In the present study, comics function as a specific arts-based medium that combines visual and textual storytelling, enabling students to engage with body image, identity, and social norms through an affective and interpretive form (Joy et al., 2020).

By prioritizing process over product, arts-based inquiry highlights the dynamic rhythm of tension and resolution, a structure paralleling transformative learning (Leavy, 2020). Through this lens, uncertainty and contradiction become generative sources of understanding rather than deficiencies (Sameshima et al., 2019). Written reflection sustains this rhythm through composing and revising, where language becomes a medium of inquiry. Recent scholarship demonstrates that reflective practices can engage digital and embodied dimensions of learning without requiring multimodal artefacts (Anttila et al., 2024; Aragón et al., 2025).

The present study also differs from much arts-based pedagogy research in a simple but important way: the students were not producing the primary artworks under analysis. They were responding to existing comics and then writing about that encounter. That distinction shifts the pedagogical emphasis from expression alone to interpretation, relation, and uptake. The learning does not happen only in making; it can also happen in reading, discussing, and then trying to render that encounter into words.

The approach, however, requires ethical attention. Uncritical use of arts-based methods may reproduce harm if emotional exposure is poorly supported (Boler, 1999; Clover & Stalker, 2007). Effective facilitation depends on trust, consent, and relational accountability. These principles apply equally to written reflection, where emotional vulnerability demands careful framing. Such ethical commitments link arts-based pedagogy to queer pedagogy's ethic of discomfort and care.

Queer Pedagogy: Disruption, Relationality, and the Ethics of Discomfort

Emerging from critical and feminist traditions, queer pedagogy interrogates how normativity structures knowledge and learning (Bonnet et al., 2023; Britzman, 1995). It moves beyond inclusion models to question heteronormative assumptions that define epistemic authority. Learning becomes a relational, political encounter that values uncertainty and ambivalence. Britzman (1995, p. 165) described queer pedagogy as “unsettling,” and Bonnet et al. (2023) emphasized tension between knowing and not knowing as a condition for ethical reflection. Kumashiro (2002) likewise framed discomfort as essential to unlearning internalized norms.

This ethic parallels transformative learning's notion of disorienting dilemmas but expands its scope from individual cognition to collective and structural awareness. Queer pedagogy centres relationality, asserting that teaching and learning are co-constituted through affective exchange rather than transmission (McDonald & Motala, 2022). Difference and tension sustain thought rather than hinder it. Scholars such as Ahmed (2020) and Fraser and Lambell (2014) highlight queer discomfort as a critical force for inclusive higher education by exposing institutional power relations. Poststructural queer approaches further challenge fixed categories of identity by emphasizing embodiment, relationality, and the discursive production of norms (Marnell, 2017). This is particularly relevant in educational settings where heteronormativity and racialized otherness may be reproduced through institutional and pedagogical practice, often without being named directly (Selvaraj, 2021). Read in this way, queer pedagogy does not simply invite inclusion; it creates conditions for students to question how bodies, identities, and professional expectations are made intelligible in the first place.

Written reflection provides a textual site for these dynamics. Through narrative, students externalize affective tension and articulate moments of ethical struggle, materializing the uncertainty that queer pedagogy deems pedagogically valuable. Reflection thus becomes both process and evidence of queer learning. It challenges binaries between teacher and learner and between theory and practice. Yet institutional pressures for efficiency often conflict with the openness queer pedagogy requires (Bonnet et al., 2023; hooks, 1994). Sustaining such affective work necessitates dialogic ethics and structured support (Woolley, 2022). Facilitators cultivate safety through shared agreements and iterative reflection rather than neutrality.

What is especially useful about queer pedagogy for this study is its suspicion of tidy resolution. The student reflections often move unevenly. They contain uncertainty, partial recognition, and moments where students can sense a prior assumption breaking down but do not yet have a clean vocabulary for what comes next. That incompleteness is not a weakness of the data. It is part of what queer pedagogy helps make legible. Learning here is not a march toward mastery. It is a more unsettled process of noticing, questioning, and trying to respond differently.

Integrating Transformative, Arts-Based, and Queer Pedagogy

When combined, transformative, arts-based, and queer pedagogy produce a model of learning grounded in emotion, embodiment, and ethics. Transformative learning provides an account of disorientation and perspective change, arts-based pedagogy foregrounds expressive and affective ways of knowing, and queer pedagogy brings a critical attention to normativity, uncertainty, and power (Brookfield, 2024; hooks, 1994; Mezirow, 2000). Together, they frame learning as a co-created process shaped by social, affective, and political conditions rather than by cognition alone.

Across these concepts, discomfort is not treated as failure but as a condition of possibility. In transformative learning, disorientation can provoke reflection; in arts-based inquiry, tension can generate insight; and in queer pedagogy, discomfort can expose the norms that structure what is knowable and sayable (Boler, 1999; Bonnet et al., 2023; McMain, 2024). Emotion and embodiment further connect these traditions by refusing a sharp division between thought and feeling (Britzman, 1995; Springgay et al., 2005).

This integration is useful for the present study because it allows students' writing to be read as more than an opinion or a summary. It supports the interpretation of reflective writing as a site where feeling, critique, and professional imagination meet. The integrated framework also aligns with broader critical and participatory traditions in education, which emphasize reflexive engagement with power, inequality, and social justice (de Carvalho, 2025; Kindon et al., 2024). Within classroom contexts, arts-based inquiry has been shown to support more inclusive learning environments by interrupting binary and heteronormative assumptions and fostering alternative ways of knowing and being (Wargo, 2019). This orientation is especially relevant here, where queer comics and structured reflection were used not simply to transmit information, but to create conditions for critical, affective, and relational engagement with marginalized experiences. Comics have been theorized not only as sites of queer representation but also as a queer medium marked by multiplicity, instability, and resistance to fixed meaning (Scott & Fawaz, 2018). That understanding supports the methodological approach taken in this study, which reads students' written reflections as sites where meaning is constructed through language, emotion, and engagement with difference.

Methodology

This methodological approach follows directly from the conceptual framing outlined above. Because the study is grounded in arts-based, queer, and transformative pedagogies, students' structured reflections are treated not as neutral reports of learning but as situated acts of meaning-making through which affect, ethical awareness, and professional self-positioning become legible.

Research Design

This qualitative study employed an arts-informed interpretive design to examine how arts-based and queer pedagogical practices foster transformative learning in higher education. Arts-based research values creativity, emotion, and reflexivity as legitimate means of generating knowledge (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2020). The analysis focused exclusively on students' structured written reflections documenting their engagement with an arts-based classroom activity centred on cultural safety and structural competency. No visual or multimodal artefacts were collected.

This reanalysis extends prior work on the same dataset from a professional education context by applying an integrated framework connecting arts-based, queer, and transformative pedagogies. Written reflections were selected because they captured participants' metacognitive and affective responses, revealing how learners articulated transformation through language. Treating reflection itself as a creative medium demonstrates how textual analysis can illuminate affective and ethical learning.

The study followed a constructivist epistemology, viewing knowledge as co-created through interpretation and dialogue (Crotty, 1998). This stance aligns with transformative learning theory, which defines learning as revising assumptions through reflection (Mezirow, 2000), and with queer pedagogy, which foregrounds the affective and relational dimensions of learning (Bonnet et al., 2023; Britzman, 1995). Together, these frameworks informed a methodology attentive to emotion, identity, and ethics as central to transformation.

Because the data source was reflective writing rather than interviews or visual artefacts, the analysis did not treat students' texts as transparent reports of inner change. Instead, the reflections were read as situated acts of meaning-making through which students interpreted emotion, reconsidered assumptions, and connected classroom learning to imagined professional practice. This distinction is important to the present study's methodological contribution.

Setting and Context

The study occurred in a required undergraduate nutrition course at a Canadian university focused on cultural safety and structural competency. The course emphasized reflective practice and social justice within health professions education. Students participated in an arts-based learning activity titled *Understanding Culture through Art: LGBTQ2SP+ Cultural Safety and Structural Competency*, designed to promote perspective transformation through engagement with queer narratives concerning body image, stigma, and inclusion.

Participants were undergraduate students enrolled in a required third-year dietetics course in a Canadian university dietetics program. The course is an introductory professional practice course focused on client care, communication, counselling, and professionalism. The learning activity analyzed in this study occurred in the fourth week of the course, within a unit on cultural safety, equity, and structural competency, and invited students to reflect specifically on LGBTQ2SP+ health and dietetic practice. Although students had prior exposure to broader concepts of diversity and cultural safety in earlier coursework, this assignment represented a more

explicit engagement with LGBTQ2SP+ content. No participant-specific demographic data were collected for this study. However, Canadian dietetics cohorts are widely described as predominantly women and disproportionately white, and the present cohort likely reflects that broader pattern (Brady & Ng, 2025; Gheller et al., 2018). All participants were former students who had completed the course and received final grades before recruitment.

Educational Intervention

As part of the learning activity, students read five comics from *Rainbow Reflections*: ‘Garden,’ ‘Little Fox,’ ‘Pieces I’m Keeping,’ ‘Blob,’ and ‘Through the Looking Glass.’ These texts were selected to represent a range of queer experiences, body-image concerns, and visual narrative approaches relevant to the course themes of cultural safety and structural competency. Together, the comics engaged issues of racialized belonging, trans embodiment, bodily autonomy, fatness, stigma, masculinity, and social exclusion, while differing in tone, form, and affective register. This range was intended to support both emotional engagement and critical reflection by inviting students to encounter diverse experiences of embodiment and normativity through a multimodal arts-based medium. Although the comics were engaged as multimodal texts, the present study does not analyze their visual features as primary data; instead, it examines how students interpreted and reflected on those texts through structured writing. Students were introduced to the anthology as a collection of queer body-image comics, but the present study did not systematically examine how creator biography or autoethnographic framing shaped students’ responses. Students were introduced to the assignment during the first week of class and were asked to read the selected comics in advance of the scheduled class discussion.

In small groups, students discussed the comics using structured prompts:

1. Identify the main message.
2. Describe relevant cultural or social references.
3. Note emotional responses.
4. Identify key insights about queer men’s experiences.
5. Consider how comics might be used to discuss cultural issues with clients.

Groups then shared insights with the class in a facilitated discussion. This collective meaning-making process encouraged critical reflection on professional assumptions and empathy toward marginalized experiences. An individual learning reflection from each student was due one week later.

The structured prompts were designed to guide students from interpretation to cultural noticing, affective response, and professional application. In this sense, structure was part of the pedagogy rather than a neutral container for reflection. It also shaped the data available for analysis, as the written reflections often moved from prior assumptions to emotional responses to ethical or practice-based implications, mirroring the sequence of the activity itself.

Data Source and Analytic Approach

The data source was students’ structured written reflections submitted after the activity. Each reflection included three sections: (1) prior knowledge of LGBTQ+ body image issues, (2) insights and implications for practice, and (3) key takeaways or intended professional actions. Submissions ranged from 800 to 1,500 words. Twelve students consented for their anonymized reflections to

be used in research. These texts provided rich data illustrating affective, ethical, and cognitive aspects of transformation. Data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) guided by an arts-based interpretive lens. Although textual, the analysis attended to metaphor, emotion, and rhythm, which are qualities that characterize reflective writing.

In addition to thematic content, the analysis considered how students wrote: where they qualified claims, registered uncertainty, shifted tone, or relied on figurative language to make sense of discomfort and learning. This was especially important given the study's interest in reflective writing as an aesthetic as well as analytic practice.

Analytic Stages

1. **Open Coding:** Each reflection was read multiple times, and key phrases related to affect, identity, bias, and ethics were identified.
2. **Axial Coding:** Codes were clustered into conceptual categories reflecting affective awareness, unlearning, ethical care, and structural consciousness.
3. **Thematic Synthesis:** Broader themes were developed by connecting codes to theoretical constructs from transformative learning and queer pedagogy.
4. **Reflexive Dialogue:** Researchers revisited coded data collaboratively, reflecting on how positionality and assumptions influenced interpretation.

Analytic memos were used throughout to record interpretive decisions, link codes to theoretical concepts, and maintain transparency.

A further analytic concern involved distinguishing between stated aspiration and demonstrated transformation. Students frequently expressed intentions to act differently in future practice. These statements were treated as meaningful, but they were not automatically taken as evidence of durable change. Instead, they were interpreted as signs of ethical orientation and professional re-positioning within the context of reflective learning.

Researcher Reflexivity

Researchers responsible for coding and analysis were external to the course and had no prior interaction with participants, reducing potential bias from evaluative relationships. Interpretive analysis of affective and ethical content required reflexivity. Each researcher maintained a journal documenting assumptions, reactions, and evolving insights.

Team discussions served as peer debriefing to examine interpretive differences and maintain analytic integrity. The researchers adopted an ethic of care informed by Springgay et al.'s (2005) emphasis on relational and aesthetic inquiry, interpreting expressive language contextually rather than as neutral data. This commitment ensured participants' words were treated as meaning-making acts rather than as evidence to be objectified.

Analytic Transparency

To ensure coherence and rigour, a coding framework was developed to structure interpretation. Table 1 summarizes analytic categories, definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and representative examples. The table provided both an interpretive guide and a record of analytic reasoning, linking participants' language to theoretical constructs while maintaining fidelity to student expression.

Table 1*Analytic Framework for Structured Reflections.*

Code Category	Definition	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Illustrative Example (Student Reflection)
Affective Awareness	Recognition of emotional response and its role in learning	Mentions of vulnerability, pride, empathy, or discomfort	Purely descriptive statements	“This was a very transformative learning activity that sculpted my views.”
Unlearning Bias	Acknowledgment of internalized assumptions or stereotypes	Explicit reflection on previous misconceptions or bias	Statements about others without self-reflection	“It was uncomfortable to realize I have absorbed some of these stereotypes.”
Ethical Reflection	Connection between learning and responsibility in practice	Mentions of care, advocacy, or inclusive practice	Personal growth without ethical application	“I feel empowered to advocate for ending gender stereotypes.”
Structural Awareness	Understanding of social or institutional power relations	Mentions of privilege, normativity, or inequity	Emotional reactions without reference to systems	“Body image is not only about confidence but about social norms that privilege certain kinds of bodies.”
Transformative Intention	Evidence of intended future change in action or perspective	Statements linking reflection to future behavior	General expressions of approval or satisfaction	“I want to ensure my future practice creates space for everyone.”

This coding framework also helped contain overinterpretation. It required analytic distinctions between emotional response, critical self-recognition, ethical commitment, and structural analysis, which were related but not interchangeable across the dataset.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

Credibility was supported through peer debriefing and iterative code review. Dependability was ensured by maintaining an audit trail of coding and memo writing. Reflexive journaling established confirmability, and thick description of context enhanced transferability. Ethical care guided all stages of analysis. Reflections were anonymized before researcher access. Participants retained intellectual ownership, and written consent was obtained. Because reflections engaged personal and professional beliefs, interpretation prioritized contextual sensitivity and fidelity to meaning.

The analysis aimed to honour participants' agency while acknowledging that interpretation remains partial and situated.

Findings

The analysis of the twelve anonymized student reflections revealed four interconnected thematic patterns describing how arts-based and queer pedagogical approaches facilitated transformative learning in higher education. The themes were Affective and Transformative Awareness, Unlearning and Identity Repositioning, Care and Professional Ethics, and Structural Awareness and Responsibility. Together, they show how students used reflective and creative processes to confront assumptions, acknowledge bias, and articulate ethical commitments. The quotations below are drawn directly from verified student work, although minor grammatical adjustments were made for clarity.

Affective and Transformative Awareness

Many participants described the learning activity as emotional and self-reflective. The creative and reflective elements helped them process feelings that are often excluded from professional education. Students reported that the work was not only informative but also personally moving and perspective-changing. One participant wrote, "This was really a very transformative learning activity that sculpted my views on LGBTQ+ issues, mainly regarding body image and health care access." Another explained, "I feel empowered and motivated to advocate for and work towards ending gender stereotypes and practicing in a culturally safe manner, especially towards those among LGBTQ2SP+ communities." These reflections illustrate how the process fostered affective engagement that led to awareness of social responsibility.

Several participants explicitly described shifts in attitude and empathy. One reflection stated, "Reflecting on and acknowledging areas of personal bias, including those that are subconscious and hidden, allows one not only to become a better clinician, but a better person." This awareness aligns with transformative learning theory, which emphasizes reflection on assumptions and emotional dissonance as catalysts for change (Mezirow, 2000). The emotional tone of many reflections suggested that discomfort was necessary for learning. One student commented, "This training activity encouraged me to remember to approach new people and situations with an open mind, and to try not to stereotype or make assumptions about people." The language of humility and openness illustrates affective transformation through the recognition of prior bias.

At the same time, the affective work in the reflections was rarely limited to broad statements of empathy. Students often linked emotion to cognition and to practice. For example, one participant wrote that the comics and discussion "broadened my perspective" and made clear "the importance of empathy and to create a comfortable, non-judgmental space for LGBTQ+ clients." Another described the activity as "eye-opening," noting that it prompted reflection on "other gaps in my perspective with regards to prevalent issues communities may be facing." In these instances, feeling did not remain private; it became the basis for rethinking professional relations.

Unlearning and Identity Repositioning

The second theme reflected students' efforts to unlearn stereotypes and reposition themselves in relation to queer experience, professional responsibility, and their own assumptions. Many realized that they had absorbed cultural narratives about gender and body image that influenced how they

interacted with clients or peers. One student observed, “Going into a client meeting with the assumption you already know how a client may relate to their body does not leave room for an individual to express what their actual lived experience is.” This statement demonstrates a shift from assumptions toward relational listening, a central element of queer pedagogy that emphasizes openness to difference (Britzman, 1995).

Several participants linked the activity to a broader understanding of how representation shapes practice. One reflection stated, “The comics exercise made me think about how we visualize bodies and what we consider normal. It made me realize that images also teach us what to value.” This awareness shows how arts-based learning enabled students to connect aesthetic decisions with social implications. Through visual reflection, they examined how norms about bodies, gender, and health are reproduced through everyday professional practices.

The process of unlearning often involved emotional struggle. A participant explained, “It was uncomfortable to realize I have absorbed some of these stereotypes, but the project gave me a way to confront them without shame.” The reflection shows that arts-based work allowed emotional exploration without judgment. As Kumashiro (2002) argued, discomfort can be a productive pedagogical space when learners feel supported to reflect critically. In this context, creativity offered safety and distance while sustaining ethical introspection.

The reflections were somewhat uneven, however, in the extent to which they documented identity negotiation strongly. What appeared more consistently was a re-positioning of the self as learner and future practitioner. Students wrote about becoming more open, more cautious about assumptions, and more attentive to how their own prior understandings had been shaped. One participant, for instance, reflected that they had previously stereotyped queer men as generally more body positive and later recognized that this assumption “does not leave room for individual experiences.” Another acknowledged surprise at realizing they had connected insecurity and vulnerability to femininity, then described feeling “ashamed” of that tendency and newly committed to challenging it. These examples point less to a fully developed identity transformation than to a more provisional but still meaningful shift in self-understanding.

Care and Professional Ethics

A third theme concerned how students redefined professional care and ethical practice. Many connected the activity to an expanded understanding of empathy, cultural humility, and advocacy. Their reflections demonstrated that care involves both compassion and structural awareness. One participant wrote, “This activity helped to provide a framework for structural competency, in that it provided an example for how body image issues in queer men stem from societal pressures.” This understanding aligns with the concept of critical empathy, which links personal awareness with systemic critique (hooks, 1994).

Others described the exercise as a way to reconnect them to their professional purpose. One reflection read, “I feel like this activity helped me remember why I wanted to go into this profession in the first place, to help people without judgment.” This statement highlights how transformative learning can reaffirm ethical commitments through reflection on practice. For many participants, empathy became intertwined with accountability. In several reflections, students explicitly moved beyond general kindness toward a more demanding conception of care. As one student stated, “It made me realize that being kind is not enough. You have to understand the structures that make people feel unseen.”

Several reflections connected emotional insight to practical change. One participant explained that, as a future dietitian, it is important to ensure that clients from the LGBTQ+ community “would feel open arms and a non-judgmental ear for whatever struggles they may be facing.” Another wrote about the need to ask clients their preferred names and pronouns, avoid assumptions, and create a welcoming environment that allows clients to speak openly about body image and food-related concerns. Through creative reflection, students articulated ethical awareness as an ongoing, relational process rather than a fixed principle. This demonstrates how arts-based pedagogy encouraged learners to translate feeling into professional responsibility.

Structural Awareness and Responsibility

The fourth theme involved the recognition of social structures that shape experiences of body, identity, and health. Participants identified how cultural and institutional forces influence both clients and professionals. Several reflections revealed new awareness of intersectionality and systemic inequality. One student wrote, “This activity helped me realize that body image is not only about personal confidence but about social norms that privilege certain kinds of bodies.” Another explained, “It made me think about how health care often assumes a straight, able, thin body, and that assumption leaves people out.” This shift toward structural understanding aligns with transformative learning’s later stages, in which insight broadens beyond the personal and begins to orient future action.

Participants recognized their roles within larger systems and described intentions to act more inclusively. One reflection concluded, “I want to use what I learned to make sure my future practice creates space for everyone, not just for people who look like me.” The notion of responsibility appeared repeatedly in the dataset. Learners framed responsibility as ongoing rather than as a one-time ethical realization. One participant summarized, “It is not about feeling guilty; it is about staying aware and making changes every day.” This emphasis on sustained reflection and practice supports Caniglia and Vogel’s (2023) interpretation of transformation as continuous ethical engagement.

What is notable in these reflections is that students did not remain at the level of individual prejudice alone. They repeatedly named wider forces such as minority stress, stigma, discrimination, media ideals, and health care exclusion. Several connected queer men’s body image concerns to social pressure, heteronormative standards, and institutional barriers to care. In this way, the reflections often moved from personal recognition to structural critique, suggesting that the activity opened a space for linking self-examination with broader social analysis.

Metaphor as Embodied Reflection

Across the reflections, students frequently used metaphors and figurative imagery to express emotional movement, ethical awareness, and transformation. These metaphors served as linguistic equivalents of the aesthetic processes characteristic of arts-based learning, translating affective experience into symbolic form. Through metaphor, learners articulated shifts in self-perception, awareness of others, and relational responsibility. Figurative language became a medium through which emotion and insight were materialized, demonstrating how reflective writing can function as an embodied art practice.

Several participants drew on metaphors of growth and emergence to describe transformation. One student interpreted the comic *Garden* as “the metaphor of growth and transformation... magnificently used to represent the self-discovery and acceptance of the

protagonist's queerness. The blooming of the garden represents gradual self-acceptance, considering societal pressures toward normalization." This description externalized emotional learning through natural imagery, framing self-understanding as a living and evolving process. The same participant extended the metaphor to professional ethics, observing that "self-acceptance itself is an empowering yet crucial step toward emotional and psychological well-being." Growth here became both personal and professional, signifying ethical maturation.

Metaphors of constraint and release appeared in students' depictions of bias and unlearning. A student reflecting on *Garden* explained that the character wished to "shrink himself to normalcy," linking the act of shrinking to internalized oppression. This image recurred across multiple reflections as learners described their own prior assumptions as limiting frames that had to be dismantled. Another participant wrote that the activity allowed them to "confront [stereotypes] without shame," suggesting a movement from constriction to expansion. The oscillation between shrinking and blooming functioned as a metaphorical vocabulary for transformation, mirroring the tension central to queer and transformative pedagogies: the movement from containment within normativity toward openness and relational agency.

Other students employed journey and spatial metaphors to express awareness and connection. One participant reflected that the exercise "encouraged me to remember to approach new people and situations with an open mind" and to "try not to stereotype or make assumptions about people." The language of openness and movement framed learning as an ongoing relational path rather than a static realization. Similarly, another student wrote that they aimed to "surround [themselves] with like-minded people" and to "find their place," expressing transformation through spatial imagery that evokes belonging and ethical orientation.

Several reflections also contained aesthetic and existential metaphors linking life, art, and empathy. One participant stated that "life is art and art imitates life," explaining that the comics were "an impactful way to educate... because the art helped to really bring the emotions to life." Another wrote that "the added visual effects and storytelling aspect of the comic make it more relatable and bring an emotional aspect... that is otherwise missed in other methods of knowledge transfer." These comments suggest that students experienced their own writing as a continuation of the artistic process, using language to render emotion visible. Reflection thus became both a record of interpretation and a creative act through which learners reimagined ethical and professional identity.

Importantly, the metaphor in these reflections was not ornamental. It often did the conceptual work that a direct statement could not easily accomplish. When students reached for blooming, shrinking, openness, and movement, they were not simply describing the comics; they were also describing their own learning as process, tension, and reorientation. In that sense, figurative language provided a means of registering transformation without reducing it to a single declarative claim.

Collectively, these metaphors reveal how learners enacted arts-based and queer pedagogical principles through written expression. Figurative language provided a symbolic grammar for articulating affective complexity and ethical aspiration. The imagery of blooming, shrinking, opening, and journeying demonstrates that transformation was experienced as movement, embodied, emotional, and relational, rather than as cognitive resolution. Through metaphor, students transformed reflection into aesthetic inquiry, enacting the very processes of embodiment, care, and critique that the pedagogy sought to cultivate.

Summary

Together, the four themes show how arts-based and queer pedagogical practices supported transformative learning through emotion, self-examination, ethical reflection, and structural awareness. The strongest evidence in the dataset lies in students' affective engagement, their reconsideration of assumptions, their ethical repositioning as future practitioners, and their growing awareness of structural inequity. Evidence of identity negotiation was present, but less consistently and less fully than these other dimensions. Overall, the reflections suggest that arts-based inquiry helped students translate discomfort into critique and reimagine professional care as a practice of empathy, responsibility, and justice.

Discussion

The findings suggest that structured reflective writing can serve as a meaningful site of transformative learning in higher education. Rather than emerging through rational reflection alone, the learning documented here took shape through the interplay of emotion, critique, uncertainty, and ethical self-positioning. The discussion considers four related dimensions of that process: emotionality and embodiment, queering pedagogy through reflection, the ethics of care and discomfort, and structural awareness in relation to educational practice.

Emotionality and Embodiment as Catalysts for Transformation

A central insight from this study is the role of emotion and embodied awareness in transformative learning. Across the dataset, participants described the reflective process as one that required vulnerability and empathy. As one student noted, "This was really a very transformative learning activity that sculpted my views on LGBTQ+ issues, mainly regarding body image and health care access." Another wrote, "Reflecting on and acknowledging areas of personal bias, including those that are subconscious and hidden, allows one not only to become a better clinician, but a better person." These reflections suggest that transformative learning here was affective as well as cognitive. Students described discomfort, empowerment, and self-recognition as turning points in their understanding, which aligns with Clark and Dirks's (2008) claim that emotion is integral to meaning-making.

Dewey (1934) described art as a form of experience in which perception and reflection are unified. While this study did not analyse the comics themselves as visual data, the written reflections exhibited a related aesthetic quality. Through descriptive and metaphorical language, students translated emotional experience into reflective understanding. Their writing did not simply report learning; it became one way of processing it.

Embodiment entered the reflections less as explicit bodily theory than as professional and relational awareness. Students repeatedly connected empathy for marginalized groups to changes in how they imagined speaking, listening, and positioning themselves in practice. In that sense, written reflection became a space where cognitive, affective, and ethical dimensions of learning came together.

Queering Pedagogy Through Reflection

A second major insight arises from the ways students used reflective writing to challenge normative assumptions about identity, authority, and knowledge. The reflections demonstrate how learners enacted the principles of queer pedagogy by questioning the supposed neutrality of professional discourse and acknowledging the partiality of their own perspectives. One participant's reflection captured this shift: "Going into a client meeting with the assumption you

already know how a client may relate to their body does not leave room for an individual to express what their actual lived experience is.” This statement reflects a movement away from professional certainty toward relational openness, consistent with queer pedagogy’s aim to trouble hierarchies of knowledge and authority (Bonnet et al., 2023; Britzman, 1995).

Queer pedagogy calls for education that resists closure and embraces ambiguity. Students’ reflections showed this openness as they grappled with contradictions in their learning. They questioned what it means to be “professional,” how empathy and objectivity coexist, and how language itself can reinforce or challenge power. Reflection served as a site of queering because students used it to unsettle fixed understandings of their roles and assumptions.

One participant reflected on this process by writing, “It was uncomfortable to realize I have absorbed some of these stereotypes, but the project gave me a way to confront them without shame.” The statement reveals that unlearning was not only intellectual but also affective and ethical. By articulating discomfort in writing, the learner performed the kind of productive uncertainty that queer pedagogy values (Kumashiro, 2002). Written reflection thus became a site for enacting queer pedagogy, transforming exposure to art into introspective and ethical learning.

At the same time, the data are stronger on assumption-checking and professional re-positioning than on identity negotiation in a full sense. Students often revised how they understood themselves as future practitioners, and sometimes as learners implicated in normative frameworks, but the reflections more rarely documented sustained identity reconstruction. Framed this way, the findings remain substantial while staying closer to what the dataset can support.

Metaphor as Embodied Reflection

The analysis of figurative language revealed that metaphor operated as a central mechanism of affective and ethical expression. Through metaphor, students materialized transformation, giving emotional and intellectual processes tangible form. These linguistic constructions paralleled the aesthetic modes of knowing central to arts-based pedagogy.

Participants frequently used natural and spatial imagery to convey transformation. One student described “the blooming of the garden” as representing “gradual self-acceptance considering societal pressures toward normalization,” while another discussed the wish to “shrink [oneself] to normalcy.” Such metaphors of growth and contraction rendered visible the movement from constraint toward openness that characterizes transformative learning. The recurrence of images such as blooming, shrinking, opening, and journeying suggests that students conceptualized their learning as embodied motion rather than abstract cognition. These metaphors also carried ethical force, allowing students to frame transformation as relational movement rather than as a purely private insight.

This finding extends transformative learning theory in a useful way. It suggests that metaphor can serve as a bridge between feeling and interpretation, especially when learners are trying to articulate change that is still emerging. It also supports queer pedagogy’s resistance to closure, since metaphor allows movement, multiplicity, and partiality rather than forcing reflection into a single stable declaration.

The Ethics of Care and Discomfort

Findings in this study deepen understanding of how reflective writing mediates care, discomfort, and ethical responsibility. Participants consistently described emotional and moral tension as vital to their learning process. For many, empathy evolved into awareness of structural power and

privilege. One reflection stated, “This activity helped to provide a framework for structural competency, showing how body image issues in queer men stem from societal pressures.” Another participant wrote, “It made me realize that being kind is not enough; you have to understand the structures that make people feel unseen.” Such reflections illustrate hooks’ (1994) vision of teaching with love as a practice of justice rather than sentimentality. Students articulated care as an active stance grounded in critical awareness rather than as an expression of comfort.

Through writing, learners were able to process discomfort safely and analytically. The act of composing allowed students to pause, reframe, and make sense of their feelings without withdrawing from them. This written mode of reflection aligns with Clover and Stalker’s (2007) view that critical reflection can merge emotional engagement and social analysis. Students used language to narrate their ethical development, identifying moments when compassion evolved into a call for advocacy or professional change.

Rather than avoiding discomfort, students interpreted it as evidence of growth. One participant captured this in the statement, “It is not about feeling guilty; it is about staying aware and making changes every day.” This reframes discomfort as generative rather than negative, positioning emotion as a foundation for sustained ethical practice.

Structural Awareness and Institutional Implications

Students’ reflections also revealed growing recognition of how structural forces shape individual and professional experience. They moved from describing personal reactions to analysing institutional systems that perpetuate inequality. One participant wrote, “Body image is not only about personal confidence but about social norms that privilege certain kinds of bodies.” Another observed, “Health care often assumes a straight, able, thin body, and that assumption leaves people out.”

These insights represent a later phase of transformative learning, where awareness becomes socially and professionally oriented (Kasworm & Bowles, 2024). Students’ reflections demonstrate that they came to view professional identity within larger structures of power and representation. Reflection thus became a medium for linking the personal and the political.

This has direct implications for educators and institutions. For instructors, the findings suggest that structured reflective writing can foster not only empathy but also systemic awareness when prompts move students beyond reaction and toward interpretation, critique, and application. For institutions, the study suggests that pedagogical designs of this kind deserve to be valued as intellectually serious work rather than as merely supplemental or affective add-ons. If higher education is committed to equity, then assessment frameworks must make room for learning that joins ethical reasoning, self-examination, and structural analysis.

The study also underscores that transformation occurs when learners connect introspection to action. Several participants articulated intentions to adapt their professional practices to better serve marginalized populations. Reflection, therefore, did not end with awareness but extended toward responsibility.

Synthesis

Overall, these findings suggest that written reflection can function as a powerful mode of transformative learning. Emotion acted as a catalyst, reflection served as the medium, and structural awareness emerged as a key outcome. More precisely, the study suggests that writing

about art, rather than producing it, can still create a meaningful space for rethinking self, power, and professional responsibility.

Limitations

This study was conducted within a single institutional and disciplinary context, which constrains the generalisability of the findings. The participants were all students in a professional dietetics program, and their engagement with queer and arts-based pedagogy occurred within a specific curricular moment. Consequently, the results should be understood as contextually situated rather than broadly representative.

As with all qualitative and arts-informed research, interpretation is shaped by the researcher's positionality and analytic lens. While reflexive strategies were employed to strengthen trustworthiness, the interpretive process remains partial. The data were derived from written reflections rather than observed interaction, interviews, or dialogic follow-up; as a result, some dimensions of embodied, interpersonal, or performative response may not have been fully captured. The study is therefore strongest in what it can say about reflective articulation, ethical orientation, and emerging professional self-positioning, and more limited in what it can claim about durable transformation beyond the writing itself.

Additionally, the study did not include longitudinal follow-up, which limits insight into whether the shifts described in the reflections persisted over time or translated into sustained changes in practice. Several students articulated intentions to act differently in future professional contexts, but those intentions remain aspirational within the bounds of this dataset.

Finally, while the metaphorical analysis illuminated the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of reflection, its inclusion emerged post hoc. This became analytically generative, but it also means that metaphor was not built into the original study design as an explicit analytic focus. That constraint may have limited the depth of theoretical triangulation across data sources.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should explore how arts-based and queer pedagogical concepts operate across disciplinary and institutional contexts. Comparative studies involving other professional programs, such as education, social work, or nursing, could clarify how disciplinary discourse shapes the affective and ethical outcomes of reflective practice.

Longitudinal designs would be especially useful in tracing how students' insights evolve as they move into professional practice. Such work could help determine whether the affective, ethical, and metaphorical shifts identified here lead to sustained behavioural change or remain primarily reflective achievements within the classroom.

Further methodological development is also warranted. Combining written reflections with creative artefacts, visual journals, interviews, or group dialogue could deepen understanding of how aesthetic and linguistic modes of expression interact. Because the present study suggests that students often worked through uncertainty in partial, figurative, and self-corrective ways, future research might also examine more closely how metaphor functions during discussion, revision, and collaborative meaning-making, rather than only in final written texts.

Finally, research that more explicitly attends to intersectionality, including race, gender, class, migration, and linguistic location, could further illuminate how arts-based reflection mediates complex forms of ethical and professional positioning. That question is especially

important here because some of the student reflections suggest that prior cultural context shaped how participants encountered queer content, but the present dataset does not support a fuller analysis of those differences.

Conclusion

This study examined how arts-based and queer pedagogical practices can support transformative learning in professional education through structured reflective writing. The analysis showed that students' learning was mediated not only through emotional and ethical reflection, but also through the metaphorical and aesthetic language that gave those experiences form. Reflection functioned as both a cognitive and creative process, enabling learners to translate affective response into insight and ethical awareness.

The findings suggest that transformative learning in this context involved an interplay of emotion, relational awareness, and critical examination of bias. Students' reflections showed that self-awareness and professional responsibility often emerged through discomfort, empathy, and growing attention to structural inequity. Metaphorical expression played a central role in this process, functioning as an aesthetic bridge between feeling and interpretation. Through figurative language, learners gave tangible form to processes of unlearning and ethical reorientation that align closely with arts-based and queer pedagogies.

The study contributes to scholarship on transformative learning by showing that written reflection can serve as an arts-informed mode of inquiry. Transformation here was not confined to visual or performative expression. It also occurred through language that enacted movement, growth, and relational connection. More precisely, the study suggests that writing about art can itself become part of the transformative event, not merely a record of it.

Pedagogically, the study affirms the value of integrating aesthetic and affective dimensions into professional education. Structured reflection anchored in creative material can support not only awareness of diversity and equity, but also the interior work required for more ethically responsive practice. If professional education is serious about preparing students for relational and justice-oriented work, then pedagogies that make room for uncertainty, feeling, and critical self-examination should not be treated as peripheral. They are part of the work.

Overall, the study extends the understanding of arts-based pedagogy as a practice of relational ethics and critical imagination. It suggests that language itself can be a site of transformation, where learners begin to rework professional identity through the intertwining of emotion, art, and reflection.

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