

Contemplative Lens

Sabina Lunja

Wurundjeri Country (Victoria, Australia), Victoria University

This mixed medium art piece (Figure 1) is part of a series and involves self-portrait photography, Prisma©, and collage. My intention was to depict what reflective practice has been like for me, at first as a provisional psychologist and student in the Applied Psychology (Community) Masters at Victoria University, and now a psychologist and university educator. This journey has helped me to understand the significance of lived experience and intersectionality.

Growing up in the '80s, and of the inner suburbs of Naarm (Melbourne) on Wurundjeri and Bunurong/Boonwurrung Country, it took decades for me to understand we live in a system of systems. I acknowledge my privilege, and that I continue to benefit from the structures built through colonisation that still oppress First Nations Peoples. This is a dark mark I cannot erase, and I cannot unsee. I am hopeful, since I believe change is possible, and I am grateful to have been able to evolve my values to align with the principles of social justice.

I photographed a series of self-portraits at a time when I needed some headshots, which was incredibly uncomfortable. Taking “selfies” is not something I do often, my smartphone photo reel is mostly filled with pictures of family and nature. It reminded me of reflective practice, a key principle of community psychology. It is a skill that can take time to develop, having the ability to sit with discomfort and recognise where it comes from, understanding the impact our reflective lenses and lived experiences on our practice.

But introspection also has its limitations. When I think of systemic issues, I often wonder, can one person make a difference in all these systems and across time and space? Can *I* make a difference? Indeed, every action is a type of intervention approximating pragmatism. Doing nothing is still an act, and like many, I have learned first-hand that good intentions can have adverse consequences.

And yet, small changes do make a difference, just like trying various photo angles, lighting and poses. I chose this Prisma© filter because it provided the textured finish I was looking for, of depth and consistency. There was an initial discomfort in using AI to help create this piece, however, the implicit gaze is all mine. It occurred to me to use the same outline image with different colours and contrast, depicting layers and representative systems within systems.

What provides me with optimism, even in the light of recent world events and the closure of the Community Psychology Masters course at VU, is the ability to share; keep sharing lived experiences, time, knowledge and understandings of power relations to help alleviate suffering. My community psychology peers are small in number, but we are fierce and passionate. I have learned that being vulnerable is a great strength. This artwork represents me, how I have the strength to share personal reflections where I feel bruised and have borne life on the chin. A reflection, of what at times, it feels like to be seen.

Address for correspondence Dr Sabina Lunja communitybridgespsychology@gmail.com



Figure 1 Contemplative Lens